

Formative Psychology

(The science of wellbeing and making the most of ourselves and our lives)

Formative Psychology has been pioneered by Stanley Keleman at the Centre for Energetic Studies in Berkeley California.

Its focus and approach is to work with the neurobiology of learning and behaviour - the fundamental processes that underpin thinking, feeling, and our responses to our personal experience of ourselves and the world in which we live. Formative Psychology is concerned with the act of daily living and with the body process as the basis for how individuals form both themselves and their worlds. This approach honours the universal process that animates us all while seeking to nurture a mature personal and social self. Somatic emotional education uses individual experience, emotions, states of feeling, action patterns, insights and images to discover how life has been shaped and what is ending and what is seeking to emerge.

Anatomical activity is the basic essence of what makes us human beings. Pulsatory movements in our cell structures stimulate the synapses in our body and brain that transmit information along the pathways of our central nervous system and form the basis of our neural activity, emotions, muscular effort, and behavioural responses to our personal experiences of ourselves, other people and the world around us.

The brain is the central balance organ. It constantly co-ordinates the organism it inhabits (us!) with the outside world. If there is a discrepancy within ourselves, with others or with the environment in which we live, anatomical activity occurs which stimulates the participation of our cognitive, emotional and somatic (physiological) selves. Without the involvement of all these processes it is impossible to establish a lasting learning pattern. Re-organisation and learning requires positive interventions into each of our established patterns of thinking, feeling and physical organisation. By paying detailed attention to, and building our understanding of, how we organise ourselves to have the experiences we do we can recognise the cognitive, emotional and somatic patterns that are critical to the formation of our behavioural responses and learn to differentiate more effectively between the behavioural patterns that work for us and those that don't.

Life is an on-going organising and formative process. If we can develop and deepen our understanding of how this formative process works through learning to dialogue cooperatively with our bodies, we can begin to use voluntary cortical, emotional and muscular effort to influence and differentiate our thinking, feeling and personal experience. Alignment and integration of these different functions is the most effective way of creating sustainable changes to our own experiences and behaviour and enables us to value and respond appropriately to the wide range of differing situations and circumstances that occur in our lives. Working experientially with formative methodology is the most effective way of embodying learning if we truly want to experience wellbeing and a sense of making the most of ourselves and our lives.

Knowledge and insight are desirable but they do not of themselves, without experience, lead to sustainable personal growth, change and development. In doing simple exercises we can learn ways to regulate ourselves when under stress, to reduce symptoms and feelings of helplessness and to organise a more emotionally integrated way of acting and living our

lives. We can use life transitions and crisis as a challenge to form new personalised answers to situations and to grow a warm and comfortable relationship to our body and ourselves.

Developing core stability and flexibility in our physiological, emotional and cortical selves is the foundation of this work. Constant repetition, variation and positive reinforcement of the response patterns we want begin to influence and effect the way we experience ourselves internally and externally. Taking responsibility for ourselves in this way enables us to lead our lives in a more satisfying and resourceful way.

Stress is a part of life. Understanding the psychology of stress and knowing more about how an organism adapts itself under pressure is helpful in dealing with stress related symptoms. Formative psychology using somatic emotional exercises is highly effective in the management of anxiety and depression as well as psychosomatic and stress related symptoms and illnesses such as sleep problems, headaches, allergies, eczema, asthma, nervousness etc.

How to view the Body

A Formative Application of the Developmental Continuum

Stanley Keleman

Abstract:

The process of growing a mature adult body follows a developmental continuum of shape and behaviour that is inherited and involuntary. When a person learns to use voluntary effort to influence anatomical shape, the process follows a formative developmental continuum; voluntary participation becomes the basis of subjective experience and a personally formed adult.

Keywords: Body Shape – Developmental Continuum – Formative Continuum

My work and interest is in understanding how somatic shapes change over time. I have developed my approach and formative methodology from observing (empirical research) the natural developmental processes of the body. The human soma is an ancestral genetic template replicating itself and forming individual subtle variations, (Nature – nurture). Each soma has an innate, instinctual urge to form the next stage of its existence by interacting with itself according to a developmental continuum of shapes that come into being, disassemble and reorganise. This involuntary, pre-personal process gives clues for how individuals can personalise their own forming.

In my teaching seminars and private practice I participate with people in discovering how their individual embodiment is organising to fulfil its possibilities for a personal, mature adult. Whether a person is seeking help with a specific life dilemma or desires a deeper experiential and personal life, I approach each situation by asking what somatic shapes are here (present) and which somatic shapes are trying to come into existence. I take account of the overall shape of the body and its tissue state as well as the emotional expression and subjective description from the client. Together we investigate which somatic – emotional shapes are present, which shapes are ending and which ones are seeking more form.

The Inherited Developmental Continuum

All behaviour arises from anatomical structure. There is no behaviour without anatomical structure, yet behaviour can also influence structure. I am especially interested in how the organism interacts with itself – how it develops a relationship with itself to influence itself. Because shape is behaviour, I use the terms shape and behaviour interchangeably.

The natural evolutionary process of life makes shapes. These shapes follow a developmental continuum from simple (conception) to more complex (birth) and from more form (maturity) to less form (aging).

I use four behavioural organisations to describe the developmental continuum of how shapes come into being, change and reorganise. These organisations are motile, porous, rigid and dense. The movement from one organisation to another along the continuum is fluid and pulsatory. The movement from one end of the continuum to the other is from highly motile to highly stable, from the least complex to the most complex.

The first organisation, motile is characterised by rapid change. Shapes are of the shortest duration and are the most unstable. Behaviours are mostly instinctual and involuntary and often difficult to voluntarily influence. We see motility in early cell division of the blastula or in fleeting ideas or dream images or in behaviour that has mercurial changeability. A motile somatic shape is constantly shifting and changing, swinging between expansion and contraction, inflation and deflation. It communicates: "I will be what is needed". Motile shapes are seeking porosity or rigidity.

In the second organisation, porous, motility slows and shapes have somewhat more duration but there is not yet sufficient stability for structure to be reliably sustained. Boundaries are permeable and easily influenced by inside and outside pressures. The porous somatic shape is yielding and malleable, posture may be softly slouched with loose muscles and joints that look akimbo or as if about to come unglued. It communicates: "support me, receive me". These shapes are seeking rigidity.

In the third organisation, rigid, motility continues to decrease and there is more duration and stability. Shapes now have firmer form that can be repeated and sustained over time. The rigid somatic shape is well formed and reliable. Muscles are taut, ready to spring into action. Posture has a vertical appearance of ramrod straight. Muscles can be very stiff or spastic and the range of expression is narrow. It communicates: "I am ready to act; my way is the only way". These shapes are seeking porosity or density.

In the fourth organisation, dense, motility is minimal. Structure is the most stable and has the longest duration. Dense shapes are layered and compact. They are slow to change and have the ability to sustain shape and hold form under pressure. The dense somatic organisation is compressed like a coil. It can be 'hunkered down' in protective withdrawal. It can fluctuate between slow deliberate expression and flashing eruption. It communicates: "I move at my own pace, don't make demands". These shapes are seeking porosity or rigidity.

The Formative Developmental Continuum

The relationship of the organism with itself is for me the most important relationship. The use of voluntary muscular effort stimulates the participation of the cortex and it is the ability of muscle and cortex to influence each other that enables the organism to form a voluntary personalised relationship with itself. The development of a personally formed adult is different from the form of the inherited adult because of the voluntary participation in one's own forming. The learned ability to differentiate somatic shape is how we influence our anatomical inheritance and how we create complexity within ourselves. It is this ability for self-influence that ensures the development of the personal adult.

When a person uses voluntary muscular effort to influence inherited behaviour to personalise their embodiment the process follows what I call the formative developmental continuum. The ability to voluntarily influence a somatic shape by increasing and decreasing muscular intensity is also the ability to invoke the stages of motile, porous, rigid and dense. The formative developmental continuum is distinguished from the inherited developmental continuum by the use of voluntary effort. The process by which shapes (behaviour) change form is the same. To voluntarily organise a somatic shape, to give it more form, more body means to first muscularly organise density or rigidity. Differentiating a somatic shape by disassembling the muscular pattern in small steps means to invoke porosity and motility.

Dense and rigid organisation gives a somatic shape more form. This firmer shape can then be differentiated by invoking porosity and motility. The differentiated layers can be given more form again by invoking rigidity or density. This is the back and forth pulsatory process by which shape and behaviour develop layers and complexity. The formative developmental continuum makes manifest the sequence of how somatic organisations can be voluntarily differentiated and reorganised into complex gradations of shape that give a person choices of behaviour.

When a person uses voluntary muscular effort, the body is in relationship with itself and is able to create a continuum of shapes. This developmental anatomical process is simple and complex, predictable and novel, personal and universal. The ability to embody what is predictable and at the same time novel is what makes each person a somatic poetic structure. To understand the human soma as it struggles to live its dilemmas of forming an embodied existence is to comprehend its universal and individual organisation. The ability to influence our shape (behaviour) is a source personal power, satisfaction and even happiness.

Body Shape (Organismic thinking)

A single cell, in a certain way, is a brain. It pulsates, expands, inhibits (contains) and reflects about the nature of the resistance it meets on the outside, and the kind of pressure it has to generate on the inside. Regulation of pressure by the cell sets the limits of its expansion and contraction, of how it constructs its inner world to meet the outer world, so it thinks about its own shape and how the world presents itself, it generates sensations and responds, gives itself out to the world. If there is a conflict between internal and external pressure - should the cell expand or contract? A pause or synapse is created as an inhibition (container) of action. This is a form of memory - it is organismic thinking.

- The body teaches how it is - the brain makes suggestions
- Bodily existence is like a field of flowers, a wave of shapes in different stages of development. Our bodies are a continuum of changing shapes that are sometimes motile and temporary, porous and malleable and at other times rigid and unyielding or dense and unchangeable. So the body goes from under formed to potentially formed to fully formed stages of growth, (from child to adolescence to adult, to maturity and ageing)
- Learning to voluntarily organise these shapes is basic to growing a mature personal adult who is capable of regulating their responses and expressions including alone time and intimacy. Separateness is not a retreat or withdrawal it is in fact an increase in engagement (with self)
- Voluntarily organising and regulating one's behaviour is a way to personalise the universal impersonal somatic process and is how we give individual meaning to existence.
- Voluntary muscular effort generates cortical participation, then Voluntary Muscular Cortical effort, then Voluntary Cortical Muscular effort.
- Our cellular structure is constantly forming separateness and/or closeness (a sense of isolation and/or merging)
- The Motile shape sways between quick episodes of closeness and separateness.
- The Porous shape (its opposite) inhibits separateness by absorbing or embracing
- The Rigid shape limits being close

- The Dense shape compresses which serves to limit receiving and giving thereby preserving what is.
- The feedback from the different styles of closeness and separateness influence our cortical images and emotions of how we experience ourselves and others.
- When we can influence our shape through voluntary effort we also change our experience and perception of ourselves and others.
- The human being's ability to make transitions in its age shapes, socially and personally produces distress, anxiety and doubts about how to behave. One response is to become overly reliant on inherited, learnt, involuntary, responses. An alternative response is to use voluntary muscular influence and the formative dynamic to manage and resolve cortical, emotional organismic dilemmas

Forming a Mature Adult

The key to forming a personal adult is voluntary effort. For the older mature adult there is another necessary ingredient – SLOW TEMPO. Slow means to wait for your response; it is a tempo of pausing and containing which allows the motor pattern of assembling and disassembling to develop stability and duration. Slowing and waiting is especially important in the phase of disassembling because it is here that the greatest differentiation occurs; and it is here that we want to contain and hold a response in the malleable yet firm container. It takes effort to manage the tempo of emerging expressions.

As older adults we form our future and personalise our lives by building new experiences, new neural maps and muscular patterns rather than trying to replicate shapes and behaviours that are past. When we practice making new anatomical memories we are learning to form our current and future bodies and to live our personal life narrative.

Forming Separateness and Closeness

Learning to voluntarily organise these shapes is basic to growing a mature personal adult who is capable of regulating their responses and expressions including alone time and intimacy. Separateness is not a retreat or withdrawal; it is in fact an increase in engagement. Voluntarily organising and regulating one's behaviour is a way to personalise the universal impersonal somatic process and is how to give individual meaning to existence.

Dynamic Stillness

Holding a muscular pattern with defined firm micro efforts supports the ability of the cortex to manage the excitatory wave and make a map/record of the act. Duration and repetition creates the new neural map.

The Pattern of Urgency

- Impatience is a cultural norm.
- Where is this organisation located in your body?
- Is it a demand from inside you or an external "should" or "I'd better conform"?
- What feeling does it evoke?
- What is your response to your organisation?

The way to change Behaviour

To have an experience and make it a part of your life you have to voluntarily recall it and recall it and recall it

The Tree of Life

Human bodily experience is like a cinematic living tree, whose branches leaves and roots form a life field. The body makes neural maps and remembers its efforts, expressions and responses. Images, conversations, incidents and voluntary gestures can be recalled with present tense lucidity. The soma's dialogue to personalise itself is an interplay of involuntary and voluntary organised acts that morph into the available present: a present that transcends past expressions, images, feelings and thoughts to form a personal evolutionary history of voluntary lived shapes that influence a formative future.

Maturity

Maturity's somatic structure is a porous rigid organisation and a presence of longer, softer pulses. It's pulsatory pattern of reaching and taking back is a slower rhythm of expanding and gathering, giving and receiving. Love, at this stage, is not the exploding excitement and assertive sexuality of the alpha adult. Now it is tender pulses that organise porous intimacy from within oneself and another. It is easier to receive and give with a semi porous emotional presence and to receive and hold without the density and urge to possess. It takes voluntary effort to develop the right amount of structural porosity and rigidity to sustain these deep, sweet, liquid experiences that come from our cellular collective. The process of self-organising is a way to develop somatic subjectivity and to sustain a quality of vitality which is the foundation of the mature soma.

The Personal Space Exercise

The personal space exercise creates a dialogical field that allows new inspirations, thoughts, experiences and sensory motor input to arise. It connects us to our motor-emotional memory as well as to our 'top down' and even more so to our 'bottom up' processes.

Between stimulus and response there is space. In that space is our power to choose our responses. In our response lies our growth and our freedom.

(Viktor E. Frankl)

Creative Conversation in Somatic Psychotherapy

March 2008: Stanley Keleman

Stanley Keleman is the founder of Formative Psychology, an approach that views life as an organising and formative process. The spring 2007 issue of The USA Body Psychotherapy Journal was devoted to Stanley Keleman's work and its practical applications in psychotherapy, medicine, neurobiology, acupuncture, organizational development, literature, poetry, and personal growth.

Stanley Keleman is based in Berkeley, CA, where he directs the Centre for Energetic Studies. The following is a transcript of the original audio, which is part of the Creative Conversations on the USABP website (www.USABP.org). Please note that this conversation was meant to be a spontaneous exchange, not an edited piece. For better or worse, the transcript retains the unedited quality of the conversation.

Serge Prengel : *Maybe a good way to start would be to tell us about how you arrived, starting from emotional anatomy, to Formative Psychology.*

Stanley Keleman : You know, actually, in the early chapters of Emotional Anatomy there was embedded *the “formative” concept*. Because that actually was in *The Body Speaks Its Mind*, my book, in *The Body Speaks Its Mind* there's a whole chapter on the formative process.

Serge Prengel : *So, Stanley---*

Stanley Keleman : And emotional anatomy was laying the foundation for how the body grows into the shape that it is, that we use as a diagnostic category as a way to appreciate what it is that we're working with. So the seed was there, about what Formative Psychology is, and why it's grounded in the life of the body.

So that's a background for it. What I understood, that is, when I wrote Emotional Anatomy was that the central truth of human life is that we're bodied, and that having a body has different shapes over time, in child and adolescent and adult and older adult, and that these shape changes are built in. They're our inheritance. And I saw that actually, shape—and now I mean body organization--is our inheritance and that it's the manifest principle of all animate existence and as far as we know, the living and the living environment is driven by anatomical form.

Serge Prengel : *So I want to just stop you for a minute here because there's a lot in what you say, and some of the people who listen to this are intimately familiar with it and some are much less so, are not aware of it, so I want to just bring in what I'm hearing you say is that, we go through different shapes and these shapes are not just “shape” as we use the word in everyday language but shapes as a principle of organization.*

Stanley Keleman : Correct. And these are organized forms of existing. And they're anatomical in nature, whether that anatomy is cellular or molecular.

Serge Prengel : *And one of the things, the statements I think you sometimes make is “anatomy is behaviour.” So how does this relate to transformative psychology?*

Stanley Keleman : Well, once you realize that when you see any anatomical form, when you see, say, a cell, and when you look at the cell as inside a microscope with a structure, you see that it's doing something.

It's behaving. And if you excise say, the nucleus, or other things, the cell behaves differently. So you get the idea on that small level, on a microscopic level, that anatomy is in fact not pictures in a book, but a living behaviour that's doing something. You can say that it's expanding and contracting, you can say that it's moving liquids; you can say that it's making chemical exchanges; you can say that it's making cellular relationships from one cell to another, and so forth. But it is behaviour. So then you recognize that a body shape is already behaviour. Standing upright is behaviour. And then you realize that anatomical behaviour, anatomical organization, is a behaviour, and as a behaviour it's an experience, and that as anatomical change happens, so does behaviour and so does experience and so does meaning and value.

Serge Prengel : *Ok, so that focus on the body is really where you see that the body reflects experience, and reflects value and that that's the interface, that's where everything comes into place.*

Stanley Keleman : If you say that anatomy is behaviour, and that behaviour generates experience so that experience is anatomically-based, then of course embedded in that statement is that there's sensation, there's feeling, and there's primitive and sophisticated cognition as well as expression. And so you already have a subjectivity that's inherited in that statement. It's not exactly that you're talking about a robot or a silicon chip, that the behaviour is self-regulating, it knows itself about what it does, and how it does, and what the consequences are. Now this has an enormous practical and clinical application, Serge.

Serge Prengel : *That's great; do you want to maybe talk a little bit about the practical side of it?*

Stanley Keleman : Well, the practical side is that when you begin to work physically with a person, whatever your methodology is now, you are engaging immediately anatomically. A contraction, a spasticity, or a porosity or a lack of tonus, you are addressing that, either by touch, by exercise or whatever. And that the minute you impact an anatomical organization by behaviour on that level, you are altering it. And in altering it, you are creating new experiences and new behaviours, even though they're short-lived.

Serge Prengel : *So what also you're saying is that as you're interacting, you may not be having a quote, “body interaction,” you may be talking, but you're conscious that no matter what the interaction, it's going to have a body consequence.*

Stanley Keleman : Yes, I agree with that, but I also just wanted to say, just as a sense of fun, the most used muscle in the body, people don't understand, is the larynx. And so speaking is a muscular act—it includes the diaphragm and the larynx.

Serge Prengel : *So in other words, you cannot escape the body even if you wanted to.*

Stanley Keleman : That's right. And when you begin to think about the concept of mirror neurons, you realize that talking is a form of muscular gestures making particular sounds that other people are muscularly and behaviourally resonating with. So that even in talking back and forth, you are invoking basic body orientations between people. To say speaking is not anatomically based, it has consequences.

Serge Prengel : *So when we started this train of thought with the idea, "how does this apply in practice?" the first thing is to realize that no matter what you're doing, even if you're just talking, you're already in the body.*

Stanley Keleman : That's exactly right.

Serge Prengel : *So what other consequences would this have for clinical practice?*

Stanley Keleman : You realize six of the people will tell you that they're panicked, that they have panic attacks, they will tell you that they feel depressed, or they will tell you that they don't really know how to reach out, or so forth. You realize that this is a behaviour, so you are searching, looking at how a person uses themselves, behaviourally. But you see they may have a lot of holding in, stiffening in the upper body, or in the throat, or whatever. You see that segmentally. And then you realize, I'm going to ask somebody to reach out, to try and reach out to see what the experience of reaching out is—

Serge Prengel : *So I want to just stop you a little bit to make sure there's time to digest for people who are listening to it, what I'm hearing you say is first you pay attention to the shape, and that's the embodiment of these feelings, affect or behaviour.*

Stanley Keleman : I may ask them to do that. But more likely, I would ask them to intensify the posture that they have. So let's say you see that they're squeezing their arms, or holding their arms limp, I would say— because this is the basis of my approach—use voluntary muscular effort to intensify the pattern that you are presently in. How you inhibit yourself, or you're holding yourself.

Serge Prengel : *And as you're asking the person to voluntarily intensify this pattern, do you describe the pattern to people, just to help them realize what's happening, or just let them feel it first, or....*

Stanley Keleman : That's correct.

Serge Prengel : *Ok, so first you ask them to change the movement.*

Stanley Keleman : I might just say, "How are you stopping yourself reaching out?" I might say, "Okay, you tell me you're depressed. Would you show me the physicality as you imagine it, of your own depressiveness? Are you slouching, or are you constricting yourself?", so that they try to note something about their own way of using their body. And when you ask them to voluntarily intensify, that is do it more", you begin by changing the anatomy. "You are vivifying the anatomy. You're giving that body shape, more muscular

tone, and they will begin to tell you how they experience what it is they're doing. The next step would be, to ask them to use less effort. Okay, let's say you're squeezing at 50%. So let's squeeze a little less voluntarily. Do it, let's say, 30%. You're changing the shape. And then they will tell you that they have other experiences.

Serge Prengel : *and then, to vary the intensity with which they're doing it so they notice how different the experience is in the first and the second case.*

Stanley Keleman : Correct

Serge Prengel : *So that's where there's a very important role to this approach in the voluntary movement, which is how a person can come to experience a sense of self.*

Stanley Keleman : Right. But both are anatomical shifts, and they get to see that how they in fact use themselves muscularly shifts the experience and that becomes like a revelation of, "Wait a minute. I can influence myself." And then they get an idea that they're not totally a victim to their own responses. And they see that a shifting of the intensity, of the activity of anatomical behaviour, an expression, alters how they feel themselves and how they think about what they do.

Serge Prengel: *So that's where there's a very important role to this approach in the voluntary movement, which is how a person can come to experience a sense of self.*

Stanley Keleman: So we can make two statements about this. That was a true sentence. They see that with some voluntary muscular cortical effort, they can influence sub cortical structures of behaviour, or learn habituated behaviour, like don't touch that, don't reach out, and so forth, and that they recognize that an inherited reflex pattern is influenceable by voluntary muscular cortical effort. They have feeling that they can manage by changing their anatomical shape. And what they begin to learn about this is the relationship—and this is a sort of technical statement—they learn the relationship between voluntary cortical muscular effort and involuntary muscular and emotional expressions, and how there's a cooperative organization of these two different organs or organ systems in individuating a piece of behaviour: "I'm not going to be so angry, I'm going to be less angry. I'll form annoyance rather than rage. I can differentiate the rage pattern, the inherited rage pattern, and make it into annoyance or anger." So that they see that with voluntary effort, that they can differentiate an inherited anatomical form. And then they begin to learn what self-regulation means about their own shape, their own anatomical emotional behaviour, that they have some influence, if not over another person, over themselves.

Serge Prengel: *So in lots of ways, self-regulation is a central concept because it's first introducing people to the possibility of self-regulation and then the practice of it.*

Stanley Keleman: Exactly right. And what you realize - what I have realized - is that the cortex is fundamentally an organ of self-regulation. The fact that it can plan a future, that's a form of selfregulation. So that you ought to realize that self-regulation has many levels; some of them are autonomous and biochemical and so forth, and some of them are neural, muscular, on a reflex level. And on a higher level, they begin to develop and the development now is really the key—that cortical

effort and muscular effort on a voluntary level is a developed function. It develops like learning to speak over time. That is to say, learned function, it's not an intact function that all of a sudden appears like Athena out of Zeus' head!

Serge Prengel: *Hence the concept of Formative Psychology.*

Stanley Keleman: Right. This has enormous clinical impact, because it means that a person coming to your office with a behavioural difficulty or what they want to call a psychological difficulty is now addressing themselves as learning to manage or regulate the states that they find themselves in. This is an educational growth process, an anatomical educational growth process that's using voluntary muscular effort to influence involuntary muscular effort.

Serge Prengel: *So in doing that, we shift a little bit from the paradigm of pathology to go into education, re-education, training, strengthening, improving, growing.*

Stanley Keleman: That's right. You recognize that the organism really is in trouble because it does not know how to, or has never been exposed directly, to the way that they could help develop, a means by regulating their instinctive behaviour. There is a pathology, I'm not saying there is no pathology, but a way to address that pathological situation is to try to reinstitute, that is develop, enough self-regulation. That means using muscular and voluntary muscular striated and cortical interactions to alter anatomy, which is to alter experience and behaviour and the way you use expressions, whether at work or in lovemaking. And that this is the central concept.

Serge Prengel: *Right. So you use this concept in the case of say, somebody who has had a past trauma, but I think you also use it just as a practice to help people grow and become more of who they could be.*

Stanley Keleman: Right. Well with somebody who has a past trauma you can ask the question, "Well what happened to you that you were helpless? And then how would you now organize and manage disassembling your helplessness and organizing a more active, less helpless state?" - which is another kind of question when you're interacting with somebody, and finding out how you can address the helpless pattern by disassembling its muscular, cortical component. What you could also ask, and I do, the traumatized person--for example, I had this chap who worked in a prison, who was a prison psychologist, who was knocked out--and I asked him, "Okay. Tell me, what did you form or what did you learn about being knocked out and waking up?" And I didn't ask him how he felt being hurt and unconscious only, I asked him, "Well, okay, what was the process of bringing yourself back to being alert?" And he made this enormous discovery, "I had this vision, like a dream, that a woman was seducing me, and that I heard these people's voices saying 'Wake up, so and so, wake up' and that I didn't know which way to go so I went to the voice that was telling me to wake up." And I pointed out to him that he was already aroused by his desire, and the desire woke him up, and how is he going to use that? And he said, "You know, I've always had difficulty with my arousal. And I see now that I can manage my arousal if I do this and this muscular activity." You see the line of questioning about what's forming in a trauma is an important question in helping a person recognize their own, formative process and trying to give a situation some sort of personal influence; you can influence it.

Serge Prengel: *So you know, just by the question itself you're introducing the person to their sense of agency, their sense of involvement in it as opposed to, it's happening in a passive way.*

Stanley Keleman: That's right. That's really important and it's based on the premise that even helplessness is an attempt for the organism to sustain a form of existence. And that it may be inappropriate at a particular time or it has to be lessened in its intensity. Because helplessness is a statement: Please help me from the outside. So it's really trying to elicit social form, somebody lends you, "Okay. Wake up!" And it really brings back the organizing principle into doing body psychotherapy or working with the body because it's all bodily oriented. It's anatomical shape changing form.

Serge Prengel: *So in a way there is a relationship, because you talk a lot about organizing/disorganizing but there's also the sense of, how could that not be the case when we're talking about organisms?*

Stanley Keleman: That's right. Because this is what people want to know, that there's a disorganizing phase that is disassembling what is no longer necessary in terms of intensity, and then there's an organizing phase which brings things together and makes new coalitions. And they want to know, how is a person able to influence their own muscular body postural expressions and stances? To see that what they've done was an attempt to sustain themselves over time, and how to learn from it in different situations, or from the past. I think that the future of body psychotherapy as I understood it is really the introduction of voluntary muscular and cortical effort in managing how we are bodily in the world and how we bodily experience ourselves, to build a personalized entity in ourselves that we call "self."

Serge Prengel: *Yes. So that is the constant act of creating and recreating how we form our shapes at different times in our lives.*

Stanley Keleman: Yes. And that generates emotional feeling and cognitive organizations within ourselves. You know, we could say that as we learn to use ourselves with voluntary effort we're building a cortical synaptic network of experiences that become memories which we then call our personal self.

Serge Prengel: *Which is the consequence of the underlying task being the constant forming of ourselves and organizing and changing and that these emotional parts and the synaptic connections are a result of this process.*

Stanley Keleman: Yes. This makes our work enormously important. We're way ahead of the psychological game in the tools that we have in our hand and in all the experiences we have going back to Groddeck in trying to understand the life of the body and its ability to generate feeling and experience and increase the pleasures and satisfactions of existence.

Serge Prengel: *So when you develop this approach, it's based on a sense of, what is a human being? How would you address this question?*

Stanley Keleman: I think that a human being is an organizing process that changes its shape over time and I don't know about other species, but a human being certainly is capable of personalizing its inherited body to create a personalized entity; it is capable of making say impersonal processes like sexuality, nurturing, breeding children, personal experiences that help form a person, form a family, form a society into a process of continual differentiating and inventing behaviours that change the nature of human existence.

Serge Prengel: *It's a very rich definition and full of layers of meaning, so I want to just take a couple of them. You start the definition by saying that a human being is a process. And then you see other things that it does as the way of interacting with other processes including creating processes that influence our own life.*

Stanley Keleman: Correct. And life is a formative process.

Serge Prengel: *So in other words, there is something that is in the practice of what you describe, is a sense not just of a connection with the body, but a sense of connecting with something that is much larger, a larger process, of which the body is part.*

Stanley Keleman: Well I would say it to you this way: what I'm describing is clearly an evolutionary process and I think we have to align ourselves with evolutionary theory from a biological and a psychological point of view. We're part of an evolutionary process, and therefore all life, all living, is part of this evolutionary process, or changing shape. Whether it's planetary--I can't talk about the universe because I'm not a physicist--but certainly the biosphere is changing. And the surface of the earth and the interior of the earth have changed over time. So the human being is a sub organization of a bigger animate process which is embedded in the biosphere. And there's a relationship between the large organizing process, biosphere, and its sub organizations - human beings and other animate forms. And that relationship seems to be similar to the body and its cortex, in which experience and novel events generate changes that can be preserved and differentiated and transmitted to others as a way of changing its own environment and its external environment. And that seems to be the story of our living. That is the narrative of every human being; forming a personal world in an impersonal world.

Serge Prengel: *Yes. And that sense of being a process contained in all of these other processes and in being in the middle of them and at the same time that very simple immediate sense of experiences.*

Stanley Keleman: Yes, I would say that. But that it's highly influenceable by voluntary, muscular effort.

Serge Prengel: *So the voluntary, muscular effort is in fact the moment of truth, where you have the capacity of really directly experiencing that you are, because you do voluntary movement, in effect.*

Stanley Keleman: You are creating that. You are absolutely creating the sense of "I am part of this process." I would say to you that Freud may have said that dreams are the royal road to the unconscious, but I'm willing to say more so that the emergence of cortical voluntary muscular effort is in fact the edge of evolution as far as the human being is concerned. And it

has let him into areas of self-regulation which have become reorganizing how animate life is lived, at least in this species. Just a creation of tools, methods of travel, changing our environment (which we are experts at, as human beings), has now, I think, changed, or is beginning to change how the human being alters their own anatomical processes in order to adapt to changing situations that it has created.

Serge Prengel: *So as we practice this voluntary movement, we're not just addressing a problem, we're not just growing, but we're actually in the middle of doing what is our essence to be.*

Stanley Keleman: A depressive person has, and I pointed this out in my books, a particular organizational structure that is identified with generating the depressive state, whether it's a collapsed chest that inhibits oxygenation, or whatever. And as he [the depressed person] learns to influence his body shape (the shape that's generating the sensations of depression or the behaviour and experiences), even for a brief period of time, into being less depressed, more animated, having more sensations, as he learns to repeat this process he is creating two things: a diminution of his complaining anatomical state, and a formation of another way of existing over time that becomes a memory of the actions that he's taken. Its consequences of feeling un-depressed form another lifestyle or another relationship over time and becomes habituated behaviour. In other words he learns how to form being un-depressed and what it is to form behaviour and relationships that don't have depression as its base, including another way to live.

Serge Prengel: *Yes.*

Stanley Keleman: Not restoring something, but forming something.

Serge Prengel: *Forming something, yes. Disorganizing the old form and organizing a new form.*

Stanley Keleman: Correct

Serge Prengel: *So as we're coming to the end, Stanley, I did want to ask you if there's a message you want to leave us with.*

Stanley Keleman: I think the basic message could be to remember that the anatomy, the body, the soma, is the behaviour. And a behaviour as a structure generates experience. And that if you alter the body shape, you are altering anatomy, you are altering behaviour, you are altering experience, and this feedback mechanism between the shape that was and the shape that you've just altered begins to re-organize and form another person, a more differentiated person in the world. And if we keep that in mind, we'll recognize that we're helping people shape their lives.

Stanley Keleman

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