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### A 'Space-Energetic' Paradigm in Psychotherapy

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#### Abstract

Space-energetic paradigms in psychotherapy as a form of work with consciousness as a charged, loaded volume has a centuries-old traditions in the East, but it is developing successfully in the West and in Russia as well. Images of dreams, paintings, images of carnival characters, spontaneous drawings of patients, the data of the test "*A constructive figure of a person*" (developed by the author), illustrate the presence of a whole set of corporal sensations and inner space in the consciousness of a person. These data correspond with the results of somato-psychological studies, which show that each feeling has its own bodily equivalent.

Corporal and space sensations, connected with the person's emotional experiences, may serve to initiate the self-regulation process of the organism. Methodology, described by the author as "psychocatalysis", works with consciousness on two levels: the mind (intellectual level) and the body (energetic level). There are two types of work: 1) to dissolve the old, dysfunctional, spontaneously-formed internal reactions of the organism (neurotic tenses, psychic traumas, etc.); and 2) to form the new states which may be necessary for a better experience of life. Particularly, the method of "accompanying of the culture into the nature" is very useful for correction of psychopathic behaviour disorders, the difficulties with hyperactive children and other kinds of destructive behaviour (alcohol-, drug-addictions, gambling, criminal activity and so on). Multiple applications of the methodology are described by the author in his book "Things in body" and in lots of articles. The author systematically shows them at his seminars in Russia and abroad.

**Keywords:** Body sensations, Spatial sensations, Emotional experiences, Somato-psychology, Psychocatalysis.

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#### Introduction

A view on one's 'conscience' or psyche as an energetically 'charged volume' is particular and typical within India, China and other Asian countries, where meditative skills have a history that is centuries old. Particularly in the East, with the conception of a 'subtle bodies' and 'chakras', the conceptions of energetic channels within the body have been elaborated on widely ... Such concepts exist in Russia as well, but they are spread out more into the popular mystic or mythological arena amongst sorcerers, magicians, shamans, and healers. Official medical science behaves very warily towards any form of 'energetic space' view on consciousness, so as not to compromise itself and its 'scientific' paradigms. We can also easily remember the Western authors amongst the exceptional people, who considered it necessary to recognize such phenomena, reminding ourselves of the work of Johannes Schultz, Wilhelm Reich, and Karl Gustav Jung. These authors all paid attention, though differently, to the existence of the phenomena of 'energetic space'. Schultz and Reich both worked with 'spaces' within the body; Schultz (Luthe & Schultz, 1969) developed his relaxation method in 1932, Reich worked

with his 'armoured segments' (Reich, 1983) first publishing in 1933; and Jung paid attention to the intercorporeal phenomena (Jung, 1951) where he talked about 'synchronization' and about the 'unifying field', that is often quite common with phenomena that are otherwise seemingly separated.

We can find some similarities within Schultz's autogenic training, which, in its essence, it is a call to immerse oneself in one's inner space and body sensations in order to make them homogeneous and so that they can become more 'equable' ... It is a medical relaxation technique designed to lower blood pressure. Reichian body-oriented psychotherapy is much more dynamic, being an energetic type of therapy work focusing on many aspects of the body and its connection with the mind and the psyche. Jung's conception of 'synchronization' presupposes a connection of the phenomena, which haven't any direct causal relationship, but they can be seen aspects as unified by a wider energetic field.

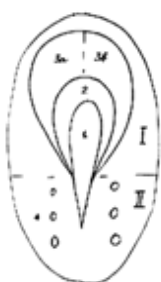
Recently some different groups of methods have been developed, which evidently operate with similar notions of energetic, space and distant interactions. Such methods are now becoming widespread among psychotherapists and professional psychologists. The mental 'space' was revived and became paramount: it is quite a fixed and rigid view, whereas the corpuscular view of the person became changed to more of a dynamic wave perspective. The human body, human population and nature itself, now appear to be an organism, intercommunicating not only chemically, mechanically and so on, but also as an energetic force field. Arnold Mindell talks about "the lines of the force" (Mindell, 2007); Bert Hellinger, with his "placings" exposes the space, which is near to the person and thus "not indifferent" (Hellinger et al, 1998). I only mention these people (briefly) as the most significant phenomena of the general psychotherapeutical process of development. Amongst similarly oriented Russian methods, there exists the bio-sensorical therapy by Zakharevitch (2008), the holo-dynamical consulting method by Khokhlova (2008), and others, though I think that these may be slightly less developed in this direction.

Psycho-catalysis (Ermoshin, 1999, 2008) which I promote with my colleagues from the Institute of Psycho-catalysis, also uses a frame of reference where it is possible and necessary to pay attention to the organization of energetic space within human consciousness. Here are the main postulates of my method of work:

- 1) Human consciousness has 2 levels: there is a new "brain consciousness" operating on the basis of the Central Nervous System, and there is an "ancient ganglion of consciousness", operating on the basis of Autonomic Nervous System
- 2) There are native biological primary reactions, which are not very differentiated. These are from the ancient consciousness, constructed from the developments of biological evolution. And then there are cultural learned, especially human and secondary "responses", which are the products of the new 'brain' consciousness.
- 3) We should therefore work with both levels. The new level is a cognitive, intellectual level. A logical and a figurative thinking are also the 'higher' types of the consciousness. The ancient, 'lower' level is much more energetic, vegetative, pre-figurative, pre-logical level.
- 4) We have access to the energetic level (the level of the spontaneous reactions) through the investigation of corporal and space sensations and also through increased body-awareness.

Generally the whole spectrum of the energetic, informative, corporal-space sensations are very valuable because with their help you have greater access to the processes of the reactions of the organism to the challenges of life: you 'feel' alive.

In a brief article, it is, of course, impossible to describe all the abundance of different phenomena that I have been exposed to during my professional work and investigations, carried out for a period of over 20 years. For example, here are only few outward, visible images, correlating with each other:



1. Images from the patients' dreams
2. Images of their paintings
3. Cultural, anthropological and carnival images
4. Photos of people who are experiencing different emotional states
5. Spontaneous drawings of patients.
6. The data of a test "A constructive figure of a person".

### The images of dreams (by V. Kasatkin, 1983)

These visual images come from a dream of a man, who feels a light ache in the frontal-parietal area (1); and then a light ache in the fibrous part of his head (2);



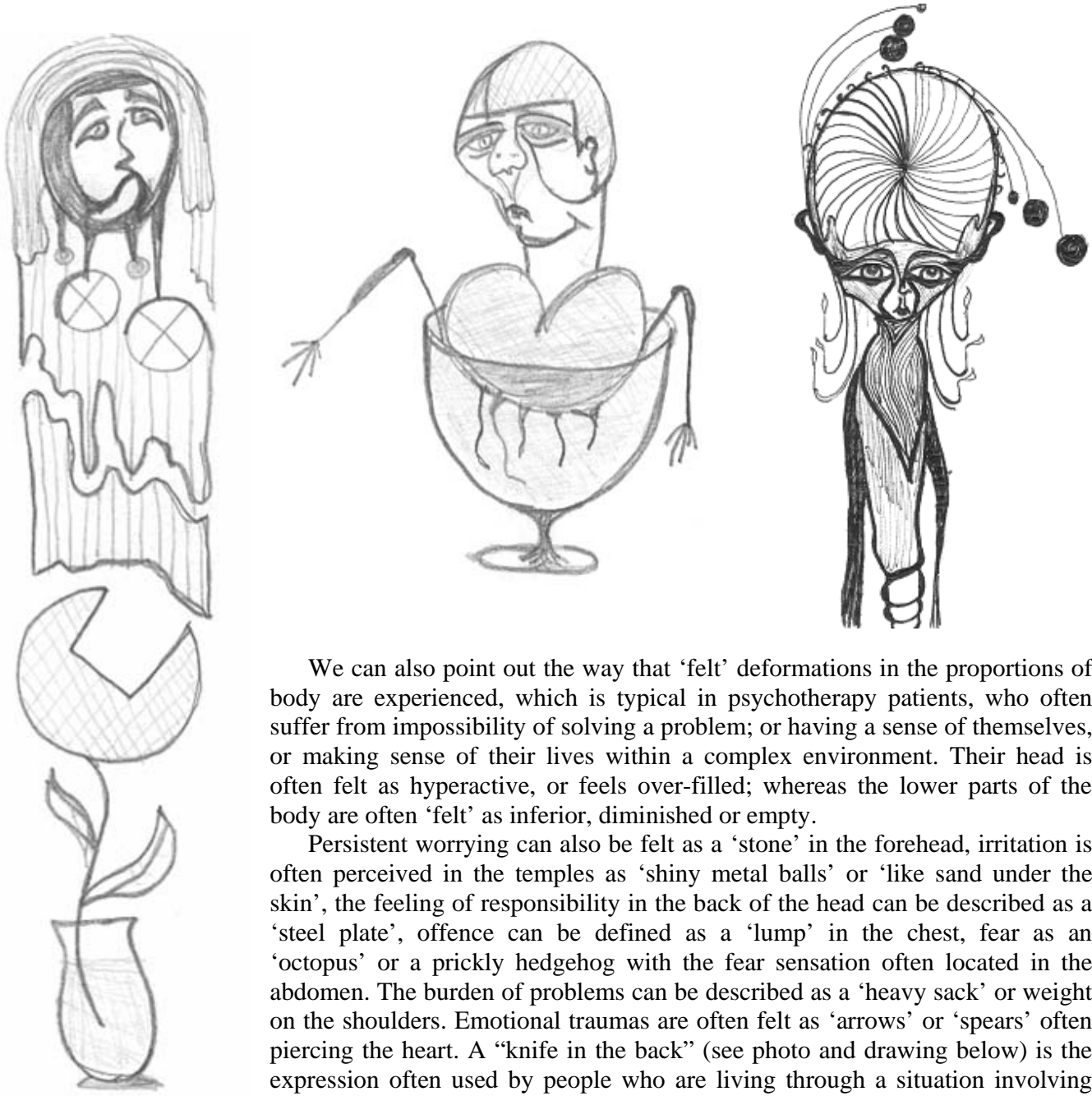
This is followed by images from other patients; a light ache in the frontal area, which is strongly pronounced (the zone is pointed out by a paunch above an eyebrow) (3); and when the person feels a heaviness in the head, irritation of the eyes, an ache in the face or in the trunk, a light numbness in the hands and feet (4); a light ache and heaviness in the frontal-parietal area (bulging forehead) (5); an ache in the face and heaviness in the head (6); and finally a fear, with difficulties in the breath and an ache in the back (7).

You can see the expression of the sensations on the pictures, which often form the basis of coming to psychotherapy: the sensations of swelling, overfilling of the head, when it feels 'furred' and so forth. You can find similar images in Stanley Keleman's (1985) book, *Emotional Anatomy* that portrays what he describes as "insults to form".

On the last picture, you can see a different sensation, which is often felt by patients, where someone else (in the dream) is personifying their somatic experiences. Mindell also writes about these phenomena very well in his first book, *DreamBody* (Mindell, 1984).



## Spontaneous drawings from the patients



We can also point out the way that ‘felt’ deformations in the proportions of body are experienced, which is typical in psychotherapy patients, who often suffer from impossibility of solving a problem; or having a sense of themselves, or making sense of their lives within a complex environment. Their head is often felt as hyperactive, or feels over-filled; whereas the lower parts of the body are often ‘felt’ as inferior, diminished or empty.

Persistent worrying can also be felt as a ‘stone’ in the forehead, irritation is often perceived in the temples as ‘shiny metal balls’ or ‘like sand under the skin’, the feeling of responsibility in the back of the head can be described as a ‘steel plate’, offence can be defined as a ‘lump’ in the chest, fear as an ‘octopus’ or a prickly hedgehog with the fear sensation often located in the abdomen. The burden of problems can be described as a ‘heavy sack’ or weight on the shoulders. Emotional traumas are often felt as ‘arrows’ or ‘spears’ often piercing the heart. A “knife in the back” (see photo and drawing below) is the expression often used by people who are living through a situation involving some sort of a betrayal.

## Carnival Images

The first photograph was taken during a Carnival procession in Italy: this sort of image often reflects the experience of patients who felt betrayed (like “a knife in the back”). The second photo reflects the classic ‘armour’ of the defence mechanisms, often formed by people who come into collision with their reality (“*I can't see, I can't hear, I don't care about anything*”).



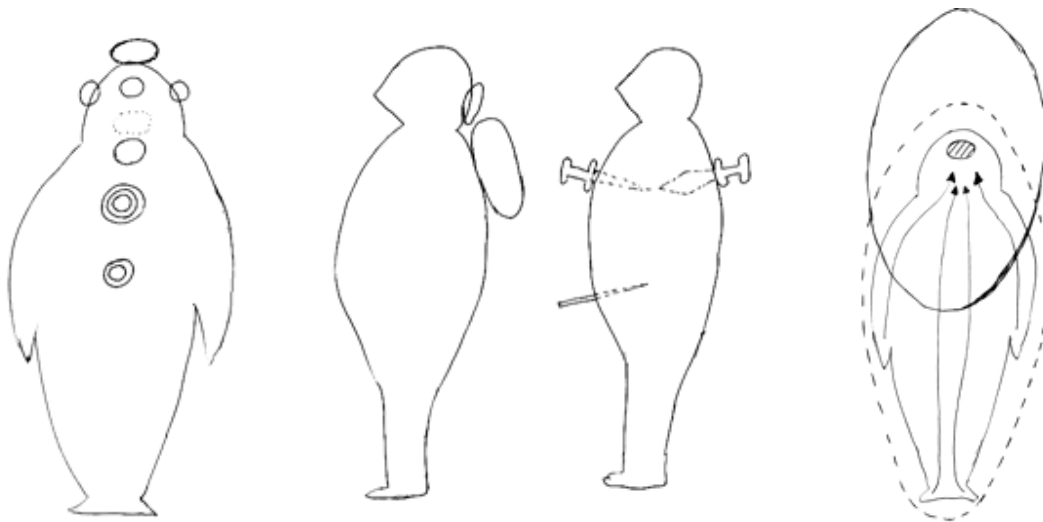
### **A constructive drawing of a person**

The next cited series of constructive drawings of a person (whole page below) were done simultaneously and reflect the sum of the patient's experience, a variety of physical and psychical tendencies, which a person can go through at essentially the same moment. We can see their readiness to uphold their principles (the first figure on the left, made of rectangles), and then their state of reflection (the second figure); then there is the state of "getting a meal" connected with the necessary purchases (the bags); and then the tiring of their hands and legs (the third drawing); there is then a proud feeling, connected with the professional activity of a person (the patient is an ecologist); then comes the experience of irritation (the first drawing in the second row) and the need for the rest; then the experience of the lightness and weightlessness (the un-shaded figure, made of balls) showing the necessity of surviving with the help of "a great idea"; he says that likes his work but his salary is too low which makes him protest (the third drawing in the second row) against the "capitalism" of modern life,; and also against the society of the consumption (the fourth figure, second row, with the inflated trunk and square head). The combination of all these is the more realistic figure 'artist' at the bottom; larger, showing more detail and emotion





Emotional traumas often make themselves felt as weights on the head, back and body or in the heart; or as arrows or spears, piercing the heart. People, who went through the experience of the treachery feel ‘the knife in the back’ as we have seen. The experience of anxiety, for instance, is specifically unbalancing for the person's state: he feels heaviness, the head is growing warm, the legs become ‘empty’ and ‘cold’.



The young man (in the photo (below) taken in India) is a seller of little roots. He fell asleep. The hands are spontaneously laid together on the chest, where he possibly feels the pain of disappointment.



The phenomena of such corporal sensations, accompanying several emotional states experienced by a person, can be used in psychocatalysis to re-start the auto-regulation of an organism. If you realize the formed contour of how a person see himself, depending on the answers to a number of questions, you can intuitively estimate such experience from the functional point of view and decide, whether you should nourish that aspect further (if it is positive) or help it break up and dissolve, if it is negative.

‘Corporal space’ sensations proved themselves as the shortest way of working with various states of different kinds, which were formed throughout life of a person: either neurotic tensions or consequences of psychological traumas, massively ‘sharp’ traumas as well as diffusive ‘blunt’ ones. Phobias, in particular, are considered as

diffusive traumas in psycho-catalysis and done away with very effectively, during one session in most cases.

The basic methodology is described in the book, *Things in the Body* (Ermoshin A., 1999). Furthermore, we investigated unique opportunities of forming new states, not just of breaking up the dysfunctional ones. The methods of 'joining' culture with nature and other things allow pathogenic tendencies to correct themselves; they help the psychotherapeutic work with hyperactive children and form the possibility of some self-control being introduced; and the concept of psycho-corporal space is also very useful in work with addictions and other destructive tendencies of behaviour. Several articles, describing this way of work, are published in the Russian journal «*Psychotherapy*». Details of the work with testing and drawing may be found in the book “Geometry of the experiences: the constructive drawing of a person in the psychotherapy practice” (Ermoshin A., 2008)

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