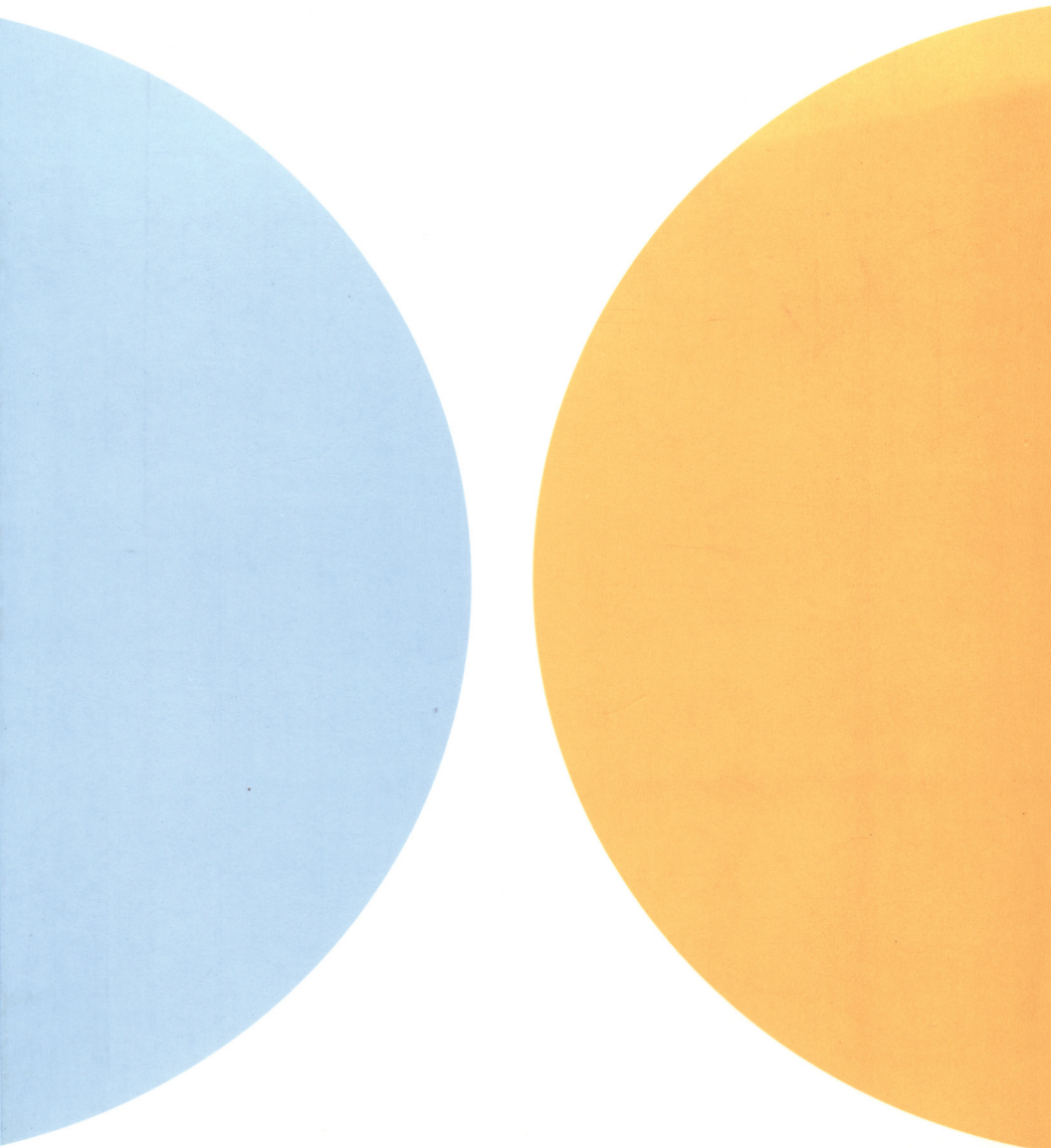


# Embodied Theories

EDITED BY Ernesto Spinelli & Sue Marshall



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Edited by

*Ernesto Spinelli*

and

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## Series Editor's Introduction

IT IS BOTH A GREAT HONOUR AND A PLEASURE to welcome readers to the SPC Series.

The School of Psychotherapy and Counselling at Regent's College (SPC) is one of the largest and most widely respected psychotherapy, counselling and counselling psychology training institutes in the UK. The SPC Series published by Continuum marks a major development in the School's mission to initiate and develop novel perspectives centred upon the major topics of debate within the therapeutic professions so that their impact and influence upon the wider social community may be more adequately understood and assessed.

### **A brief overview of SPC**

Although its origins lie in an innovative study programme developed by Antioch University, USA, in 1977, SPC has been in existence in its current form since 1990. SPC's MA in Psychotherapy and Counselling programme obtained British validation with City University in 1991. More recently, the MA in Existential Counselling Psychology obtained accreditation from the British Psychological Society. SPC was also the first UK institute to develop a research-based MPhil/PhD programme in Psychotherapy and Counselling, and this has been validated by City University since 1992. Largely on the impetus of its first Dean, Emmy van Deurzen, SPC became a full



training and accrediting member of the United Kingdom Council for Psychotherapy (UKCP) and continues to maintain a strong and active presence in that organization through its Professional Members, many of whom also hold professional affiliations with the British Psychological Society (BPS), the British Association of Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP), the Society for Existential Analysis (SEA) and the European Society for Communicative Psychotherapy (ESCP).

SPC's other programmes include: a Foundation Certificate in Psychotherapy and Counselling, Advanced Professional Diploma Programmes in Existential Psychotherapy and Integrative Psychotherapy, and a series of intensive Continuing Professional Development and related adjunct courses such as its innovative Legal and Family Mediation Programmes.

With the personal support of the President of Regent's College, Mrs Gillian Payne, SPC has recently established the Psychotherapy and Counselling Consultation Centre housed on the college campus which provides individual and group therapy for both private individuals and organizations.

As a unique centre for learning and professional training, SPC has consistently emphasized the comparative study of psychotherapeutic theories and techniques while paying careful and accurate attention to the philosophical assumptions underlying the theories being considered and the philosophical coherence of those theories to their practice-based standards and professional applications within a diversity of private and public settings. In particular, SPC fosters the development of faculty and graduates who think independently, are theoretically well informed and able skilfully and ethically to apply the methods of psychotherapy and counselling in practice, in the belief that knowledge advances through criticism and debate, rather than by uncritical adherence to received wisdom.

## **The integrative attitude of SPC**

The underlying ethos upon which the whole of SPC's educational and training programme rests is its *integrative attitude*, which can be summarized as follows.

There exists a multitude of perspectives in current psychotherapeutic thought and practice, each of which expresses a particular philosophical viewpoint on an aspect of being human. No one single perspective or set of underlying values and assumptions is universally shared.

Given that a singular, or shared, view does not exist, SPC seeks to enable a learning environment which allows competing and diverse models to be considered both conceptually and experientially so that their areas of interface and divergence can be exposed, considered and clarified. This aim espouses the value of holding the tension between contrasting and often contradictory ideas, of 'playing with' their experiential possibilities and of allowing a paradoxical security which can 'live with' and at times even thrive in the absence of final and fixed truths.

SPC defines this aim as 'the integrative attitude' and has designed all of its courses so that its presence will challenge and stimulate all aspects of our students' and trainees' learning experience. SPC believes that this deliberate engagement with difference should be reflected in the manner in which the faculty relate to students, clients and colleagues at all levels. In such a way this attitude may be seen as the lived expression of the foundational ethos of SPC.

## **The SPC Series**

The series evolved out of a number of highly encouraging and productive discussions between the Publishing Director at Continuum Books, Mr Robin Baird-Smith, and the present Academic Dean of SPC, Professor Ernesto Spinelli.

From the start, it was recognized that SPC, through its faculty and Professional Members, was in a unique position to

provide a series of wide-ranging, accessible and pertinent texts intended to challenge, inspire and influence debate in a variety of issues and areas central to therapeutic enquiry. Further, SPC's focus and concern surrounding the ever more pervasive impact of therapeutic ideas and practices upon all sections of contemporary society highlighted the worth, if not necessity, of a series that could address key topics from an informed, critical and non-doctrinal perspective.

The publication of the first three texts in the series during 2001 marks the beginning of what is hoped will be a long and fruitful relationship between SPC and Continuum. More than that, there exists the hope that the series will become identified by professionals and public alike as an invaluable contributor to the advancement of psychotherapy and counselling as a vigorously self-critical, socially minded, and humane profession.

PROFESSOR ERNESTO SPINELLI  
*Series Editor*

## Notes on Contributors

**Michael Jacobs** is a leading figure in psychodynamic psychotherapy who, until January 2000, was director of the counselling and psychotherapy programme at the University of Leicester. Following early retirement he moved to Swanage in Dorset, which is his base as an independent consultant in psychotherapy and counselling. He has a small therapy and supervision practice, undertakes occasional teaching commitments, especially in the area of supervision, and lectures or runs workshops on a variety of topics. He continues to edit books in a number of different series, which often span different therapeutic orientations, and he still writes in the field of psychodynamic therapy and counselling, the area where he is best known. He is registered with UKCP, and is a Fellow of the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy, for which organization he chairs the Practice Development Committee. He is a member of the British Association for Psychoanalytic and Psychodynamic Supervision.

**Windy Dryden** is a world-renowned rational emotive behaviour therapist and is currently Professor of Counselling at Goldsmith's College, University of London. He is a Fellow of the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy and of the British Psychological Society. He is a major contributor to the literature on counselling and psychotherapy, having written or edited 124 books, and edited thirteen major book series in the area of counselling and psychotherapy.

**Malcolm Parlett**, a former experimental psychologist and then qualitative researcher, has put a lot of energy over a twenty-year period into explaining, promoting and practising gestalt psychotherapy in Britain. He is the founding editor of the *British Gestalt Journal* (since 1990); a co-founder and teaching and supervising member of the Gestalt Psychotherapy and Training Institute; and a Visiting Professor of Gestalt Psychotherapy at the University of Derby. In addition to gestalt teaching, in Britain and internationally, and his therapy practice (group and individual) and supervision, he works as an organizational consultant. He has written extensively about gestalt therapy, notably in developing ‘field perspective’ – central to present-day gestalt thinking and practice. This is the focus for a book which is in preparation.

**Dorothy Rowe** is an associate Fellow of the British Psychological Society. From 1972 to 1986 she was head of the North Lincolnshire Department of Clinical Psychology. Since she left the NHS she has been engaged in research, writing and teaching. Her research and writing have focused on the questions of how we create meaning and why we suffer. She is the author of twelve books and regularly gives lectures and runs workshops in the UK and internationally. Her books have received wide public acclaim; she is particularly well known for her books on depression and how to deal with it. She no longer practises as a therapist but follows the developments in the field of psychotherapy through her work both academically and in the media.

**Miles Groth** is a highly respected and eloquent spokesman of existential psychotherapy who is on the Faculty of Wagner College, Staten Island, New York. He trained as a psychoanalyst and continues to see patients in addition to teaching and writing. In May 1999 Dr Groth organized the first conference on existential psychotherapy to be held in New York since the late 1970s. He is a member of the Society for Existential Analy-

sis, the American Philosophical Association and the American Heidegger Conference.

**Anthony Stevens** is one of the world's leading Jungian analysts and regards himself as in the 'classical' tradition; however, a number of other influences, among these being the work of John Bowlby, also contribute to his work. He has degrees in experimental psychology and, like Bowlby, believes that analytic theories and practices should be open to empirical verification. For the last ten years he has been actively engaged in exploring the links between Jung's archetypal hypothesis and developments in the new discipline of evolutionary psychiatry. He has published books and papers on this subject, on his own and in collaboration with the evolutionary psychiatrist John Price. He has now virtually retired from analytic practice and devotes his time to writing and teaching both in the UK and in Zurich, St Petersburg, the US and Canada. He is a member of the Royal College of Psychiatrists, a senior member of the Independent Group of Analytical Psychologists, and a member of the International Association of Analytical Psychologists.

**John Rowan** is a counsellor and psychotherapist in private practice in north-east London. His contributions to the explication of humanistic psychotherapies have deservedly gained the status of 'classic texts'. He teaches, supervises and facilitates groups at the Minster Centre in London, where he is also Link Tutor with Middlesex University. He is on the editorial boards of *Self & Society*, the *Journal of Humanistic Psychology*, the *Transpersonal Psychology Review* and the *Counselling Psychology Review*. He leads workshops on Creativity, Sub-personalities, Men's Consciousness and Transpersonal Psychology in a number of different countries. He has had twelve books published, as well as many chapters and papers in journals. He is a founder member of the UK Association for Humanistic Practitioners and sits on its Membership Committee. He is a Fellow of the British Psychological Society and

Deputy Chair of the Examination Board of the Division of Counselling Psychology. He is a Fellow of the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy.

**Alvin Mahrer** is Professor Emeritus, School of Psychology, University of Ottawa, Canada. Author of eleven books and over 200 publications, and recipient of the Distinguished Psychologist Award of the American Psychological Division of Psychotherapy, he is probably best known for his work in four areas. One is his comprehensive experiential psychology of human beings, personality and social change. A second is his experiential psychotherapy and method of having one's own experiential sessions. A third is his discovery-oriented approach to psychotherapy research. The fourth is his application of philosophy of science to the advancement of the field of psychotherapy.

Having introduced our contributors, it is only right that the editors say something about themselves:

**Ernesto Spinelli** is the author of numerous articles and texts dealing with various aspects of existential psychotherapy and phenomenological psychology. He is Professor of Psychotherapy, Counselling and Counselling Psychology at The School of Psychotherapy and Counselling, Regent's College, London, and is the editor of the new SPC Series of psychotherapy texts published by Continuum, of which this present book is among the first.

**Sue Marshall** is an integrative psychotherapist in private practice in East Sussex and Kent. She teaches on training courses at the Tunbridge Wells Counselling Centre and also works as a supervisor and runs workshops. She is a member of the Society for Existential Analysis and is accredited by the UKCP.

# I Embodied Theories: An Introductory Overview

*Ernesto Spinelli and Sue Marshall*

THE INITIAL IMPETUS for this book originated in a fascinating passage recounted by Sigmund Freud in his autobiographical study (Freud, 1925). During one of his first meetings with the French neurologist, Jean Martin Charcot, the young Freud was stunned to hear him pronounce: *La theorie, c'est bon, mais ca n'empêche pas d'exister* ("Theory is fine, but that does not negate what exists"). It had occurred to us that, of the great diversity of factors that exists for all psychotherapists, the most directly accessible yet least considered is that of their current stance toward, and relationship with, their chosen theoretical model. More specifically, we were interested in addressing the general question of how psychotherapists' lived attitude toward their preferred model serves to shape not just what they do and who they present themselves as being when interacting with their clients, but also how it reflects and impacts upon their more general currently lived way of being and the varied attitudes and concerns which shape and inform it.

All therapists rely to a great extent upon their theoretical models in order to give meaning and purpose to their work with clients. If one were to ask a therapist what model or theoretical framework he or she subscribes to, it would be surprising not to be given a straightforward reply. Further, if that same therapist were to be asked to provide an outline of the preferred model's principal tenets and assumptions, one would expect that the



task would not be experienced as being overly onerous or challenging. And, if one were to persist and ask the therapist how he or she came to be allied to that model, it is not unlikely that an autobiographical account specific to the question under consideration could be presented without too much difficulty. Indeed, various worthwhile and educative texts have already been written examining various representative therapists' personal journeys of discovery leading to their association with a particular model of psychotherapy (Dryden, 1992; Mullan, 1996).

What has not been sufficiently considered or written about, however, is how such representative therapists have subsequently come to interpret – and, likely re-interpret – their theoretical models from *an embodied standpoint*. If one's adopted theoretical approach can be likened to the clothes one wears with which to both cover and delineate the overall shape, contours and expressive potential of one's body, then our interest lies in questions that seek to address and explore such issues as: How does this theory 'fit' you? What sense of 'movement' does it allow, encourage or restrict? When you first came across it, was your initial reaction one of 'This is just what I had in mind and have been searching for for years!?' Or was it 'How odd and unusual! I wonder what I'd look like if I tried it on?' What parts or aspects or features of it do you continue to appreciate and treasure, feel irritated with or concerned by, or don't notice or pay attention to at all? All these questions, and many more that could be conjured up with relative ease, point to the overall concerns and focus of this text. Its primary aim is to provide a context through which various psychotherapists attempt to explore and communicate what and how it is for them to embody their chosen theory.

As such, the contributors have been encouraged, wherever possible, to avoid the more common approach of considering their theoretical model from a primarily abstract perspective designed to provide readers with a general outline of its most salient and unique characteristics. In much the same way, the

authors have been asked to keep to a minimum the recounting of those parts of their autobiographies which seem pertinent to their development as practitioners or which have led them to the adoption of the model. Both these focus points, while undoubtedly interesting and deserving of analysis, serve to distance the account from its author either because, as in the first case, the emphasis lies on the abstract and general rather than upon the concrete and personal/specific; or because, as with the latter, it shifts the temporal focus toward the past rather than seeks to address that which is current in the author's lived experience.

Instead, the contributors have been presented with the task of addressing the issue of how they 'embody' the theories they practise; that is to say, they have been invited to write an account that attempts to examine those features and aspects of their chosen models which significantly and currently inform and clarify their professional lives as expert psychotherapists, as well as those aspects of their more personal lives which they are willing to disclose to public awareness and scrutiny.

But, the reader might well ask, why should we, and our contributors, concern ourselves with such questions? What makes them sufficiently significant that they should merit the interest of our authors and readers alike? In part, we could simply state that there exists something about the very enterprise of psychotherapy – perhaps as distinct from most, or all, other professions – that requires such unusual explorations. It seems, to us, to be something about 'the very nature of the beast' that deems it pertinent, if not necessary, to engage in these enquiries. On further reflection, however, this type of enquiry also seeks to address a broader, if no less relevant, set of concerns.

Psychotherapy has never been so popular nor as much in demand as it is today. Over the last decade, training programmes and academic courses in psychotherapy have increased dramatically in Britain, Australia and North America. In a similar fashion, both Britain and Australia have

encouraged the development of various ‘umbrella’ organizations such as the United Kingdom Council for Psychotherapy (UKCP), the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP) and the Psychotherapy and Counselling Federation of Australia (PACFA). These organizations have begun to register and accredit psychotherapists and counsellors who fulfil specialist criteria for practice. In addition, the British Psychological Society (BPS), the Australian Psychological Society (APS) and both the American and Canadian Psychological Association (APA and CPA, respectively) maintain Divisions and Sections whose professional focus lies in the allied territories of psychotherapy and counselling psychology. Recent developments in Britain – mirroring, at least in part, those of their counterparts in North America and Australia – have moved to the point where it is highly likely that during the next few years the statutory ‘licensing’ or regulation of psychotherapeutic practitioners will become a reality.

At the same time, however, the ‘boom’ in psychotherapy has also generated wide-ranging concerns about the enterprise and its consequences – concerns which have focused principally upon instances of abuse (be they sexual, physical, financial and/or psychological) perpetrated by therapists upon their clients. More generally, the tendency – potential or otherwise – for both psychotherapists and their clients to assume that therapy alone can ‘make things right’ for people or, alternatively, that therapy alone can provide the means for serious and beneficial critical self-awareness and insight have been rightly criticized as being arrogant, dangerous and just plain stupid.

Much of the current ‘backlash’ against therapy seems to us to be in part a reaction to the presentation of psychotherapy as the panacea for all our psycho-social ills. This view of the profession is a deplorable misunderstanding and debasement of psychotherapy. For, rather than being about the attainment of certainty, security, ‘perfect harmony’ or whatever other final and fixed stance to life one might fantasize, psychotherapy, if anything, is geared toward the recognition that uncertainty and