

EMBODYING EXPERIENCE A TRANSCENDENT JOURNEY

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The subcortical brainstem and cortex are the main characters in the embodying and rebodying dialogue of the inherited body becoming a personal body. This ongoing relationship, mediated by voluntary muscular cortical effort, plays a key role in influencing inherited locomotor and expressive patterns that generate feeling experiences that influence behavior, states of arousal, and the making of memories. This process is the basis for embodying experiences and the rebodying of motor acts and experiences. Voluntary effort is an agent in the embodying and rebodying of personal experiences of embodied aliveness.





A study of what it means to be embodied opens the door immediately to a transcendent point of view. Having a body is the gift of the genetic and epigenetic process. The genetic code preserves the actual event of creation and transmits it over and over again so that bodied life can evolve and develop. The epigenetic code, linked to voluntary muscular cortical effort, preserves the differentiated inherited and personally influenced behavior memories. The unique gift of human life is thus the ability to be embodied and—as an embodied creature—to be able to *rebody* differentiated motor experiences, extending the inherited and voluntarily formed acts and thereby transcending inherited nature.

The formative approach develops the connection between inherited motor acts and muscular–cortical influence, which differentiates the accompanying feedback as feeling. Motor acts generate feeling, the by-product of the organism’s motoric readiness metabolism that generates specific somatic arousal and sensory feeling—such as feelings of fear, or knowing whether to strike out or investigate, or to wait or be ready to run. Feeling comes about through a delay of an act’s completion. The incompleteness of a motor act generates feeling or an experience of a readiness and intent to complete an act.

How a person lives depends on how they use themselves *muscularly*. Somatic muscular acts and their cortical influence translate action into feeling and inter- and intra-personal relationships. A person has to use themselves muscularly in order to carry out any activity. Do they use themselves in such a way that it carries social approval, or their own truth of intent? Do they try to imitate others, or find a way to their own organized personal expression? Many people do not learn to recall, repeat, and edit their own acts voluntarily: either they repeat an expression but do not connect it to feeling, or they have feeling not connected to action.

Going back to 1954, my concern has been the life of the body and how action is connected to feeling—and how a person can edit an act and its feeling, and re-embodiment it, giving it muscular, neural, and chemical organization. This is at the heart of understanding the language of organismic life and points to how the organism transcends its inherited acts. This formative organizing process is the language of the process of experiencing cortical, muscular, visceral acts of knowing. Having a *soma* (Greek for *body*), for me, is the same as having a soul.

The human form is a structure of preserved memories of a specific behavioral form, which we call being human. This is a process of editing developmental acts and organizing behavioral structure so that experiences can be recalled and used again and again over time. This embodying–rebodying process is central to human behavior. A person is an ongoing living incarnation of mul-

multiple self-organizing acts, or stages, of forming internal and external relations that result in new behaviors and experiences. The voluntarily generated knowledge of forming differentiated muscular acts and feelings is at the heart of the evolution of the human adult and the relationships and bonds that are formed through voluntary cortical muscular acts.

Freud said, "Anatomy is destiny." Humans have always known this. How a person lives himself and becomes himself is through an inherited library of acts or social rules, or through voluntary muscular cortical acts. These acts express the embodied history and experience of knowing how to repeat our behavior and meaning. In modern times, certainly in my lifetime, one of the things we have learned is that the human being—as a physiological and a psychological structure—has much more plasticity and elasticity to rebody itself than was believed in previous eras. This knowledge has come about through such pioneers as Alexander Lowen, George Groddeck, Matthias Alexander, Nina Bull, Moshe Feldenkrais, and Ida Rolf.

Human structure is a process of shape-making—a series of events that creates a shape that reflects both

ied. These differentiated feelings and their somatic organization open the door for working with people and resolving their dilemmas about how to be in the world.

The organism organizes and dis-organizes its memories of experiences in a way that has a particular personal order, a particular muscular cortical style, that can be repeated and differentiated by gradual increments of increasing or decreasing anatomic intensity and duration, and thereby its intent. This relationship between volitional and non-volitional effort has an influence on behavioral form and its feeling, forming a personally embodied memory of that intimacy.

Living seems to take what has appeared (a happening experienced) and edits it, giving it duration and, by doing so, makes a different organization that can be reused in many situations. What one learns from this is that human action is an interplay of involuntary and voluntary efforts, a gestalt of pulsatory, kinetic, morphological image shapes that appear and disappear during a lifetime. The involuntary and voluntary morphological metamorphosis of human somatic shapes is a continuously forming, un-forming, and reforming pattern—from embryo to infant, from infant to child,

from child to adolescent, and so to young, middle, and aged adult—appearing, disappearing, and rebodilying. It is an open-ended, personal, finite process that includes the pre-personal timelessness of the arc of human ages. Many people have difficulty in knowing how to participate and influence their process. Changing behavioral shape requires more than training, instructions, or mimicking.

In 1963, I picked up a book of sacred writings and read a sentence that struck me as a true understanding of the human situation: "And man is not yet; he is but a promise." I understand this statement to mean that a human being is by nature incomplete, and that he must, with voluntary effort, form himself to be more differentiated by developing voluntary muscular emotional cortical skills to reorganize the inherited or trained body that also includes the shape of our ancestors. We share our ancestors' general appearance, but how we use ourselves and try to form ourselves is different, for we have

natural (inherited) and voluntary personal history. When looking at a person's somatic macro and microanatomy we see a history that has been lived and shared for millions of years as well as the years spanning a single life's arc. In discovering how to organize a somatic attitude and its accompanying feelings, a person can disassemble or differentiate its intensity, duration, and intent through voluntary muscular cortical effort. It is in small increments that the mastery of managing intensity of feeling and intent (and a knowing how to repeat) is embodied. From this voluntary organization and disorganization we learn how compression, both its rigidity and its porosity, is organized, reorganized, and rebod-



created different cultures and different societies as well as different bodies. Human existence is about evolving the human dimension, using past learning experiences to transcend former behaviors.

Important teachers, whether they are called philosophers, psychologists, biologists, or mystics, recognize that to be human is to form a human dimension. The Declaration of Independence states that life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness are unalienable rights. These rights certainly encourage voluntary muscular cortical effort to form one's own life; so, just as children learn from adults and adults learn from children in a co-bodily interaction, the forming adult continues to learn from himself throughout his life—deepening connections and forming bonds both within the self and with the world, in an open-ended, ongoing, and reciprocal forming and re-embodiment process. This voluntary embodying and rebodying process makes vivid the experiential knowing that creates the possibilities for influencing, developing, and differentiating new experiences and allows relationships to form. The personal sharing of embodying and rebodying is being one's own parent invested in protecting, nurturing, and extending human existence. To be invested in this process with voluntary effort is to be intimate with oneself and others. And to voluntarily sustain an intimate pattern within oneself is the human freedom—the innate right to form a personal existence.

To form yourself means coming to grips with that which is bigger than your personal self. The Great Being forms all of us in its image. All of us in our upright shape are formed in the image of that which has made and created life. Then we shape ourselves according to social demands to protect the gift that was given to us. As we develop the ability to embody our acts and experiences by voluntary muscular and cortical editing efforts, we create a consistent personal form to carry out specific actions and feelings—in our intra- and inter-communications, expressive roles, and tasks. Embodying and re-embodiment ensures we have multiple somatic shapes, roles, relationships, and experiences.

In my book, *Embodying Experience*, I laid out some of the fundamental principles of what it means to live a formative embodied life: that there is a connection between having experience and embodying experience, and that to delay an act's completeness creates porosity and generates information as experience. First, the web structure of porosity makes it possible to edit the acts and offers possibilities for forming new know-how behavior and knowledge; then, delay encourages editing of an act and grows feeling feedback and cortical synaptic connections. This porous organization of an action

and its feelings is a knowing about how to make use of morphogenesis's possibilities: it expresses the gift of a freedom to form (and continue forming) a complex *being present*, a somatic dimension of feeling alive.

Being bodied is a behavioral structure, a remembered, self-organizing, governing, ongoing formative process. It is a pulsatory accordion of morphological experiential frames, with duration and various shades of feeling, which alter expression and are remembered, recalled, and reenacted with voluntarily effort, again and again. This is the cycle of embodying the experienced

and the rebodying dialogue between the cortex and the body's subcortical structures. Such voluntary acts shape behavior and are self-governing remembered acts and experiences. This cycle's function is made experiential in the formative process's five steps, listed below, that include acting, experiencing, giving more or less body and then rebodying into a memory map for voluntarily recalling, repeating, and rebodying.

The Five Steps in Embodying Motoric Cortical Experience

The five steps involved in embodying motoric cortical experience are:

1. To somatically experience the shape and state of your organismic expressions.
2. To recognize how you are muscularly and cortically sustaining these patterns.
3. To voluntarily influence assembling-disassembling of intensity, duration, and intent.

4. To wait for the *soma* to respond and experience the altered somatic architecture.
5. To support and edit your efforts' experiences and rebody them as a personal style of living.

Step One is to be able to muscularly or cortically experience what one is doing non-verbally or to sense internally a behavioral pattern or role—it is an interrupting of the muscular pattern of the readiness to act. Step Two is to recognize the urgencies of the organization's varying intensities and durations. Step Three is to disassemble and reorganize the ongoing attitude of acting. Step Four is where a person begins to gather a pattern of expression and intent, leading to Step Five, which is to develop a trial-and-error style of expression and editing or differentiating—a practice that sets a memory, making it recallable and repeatable.

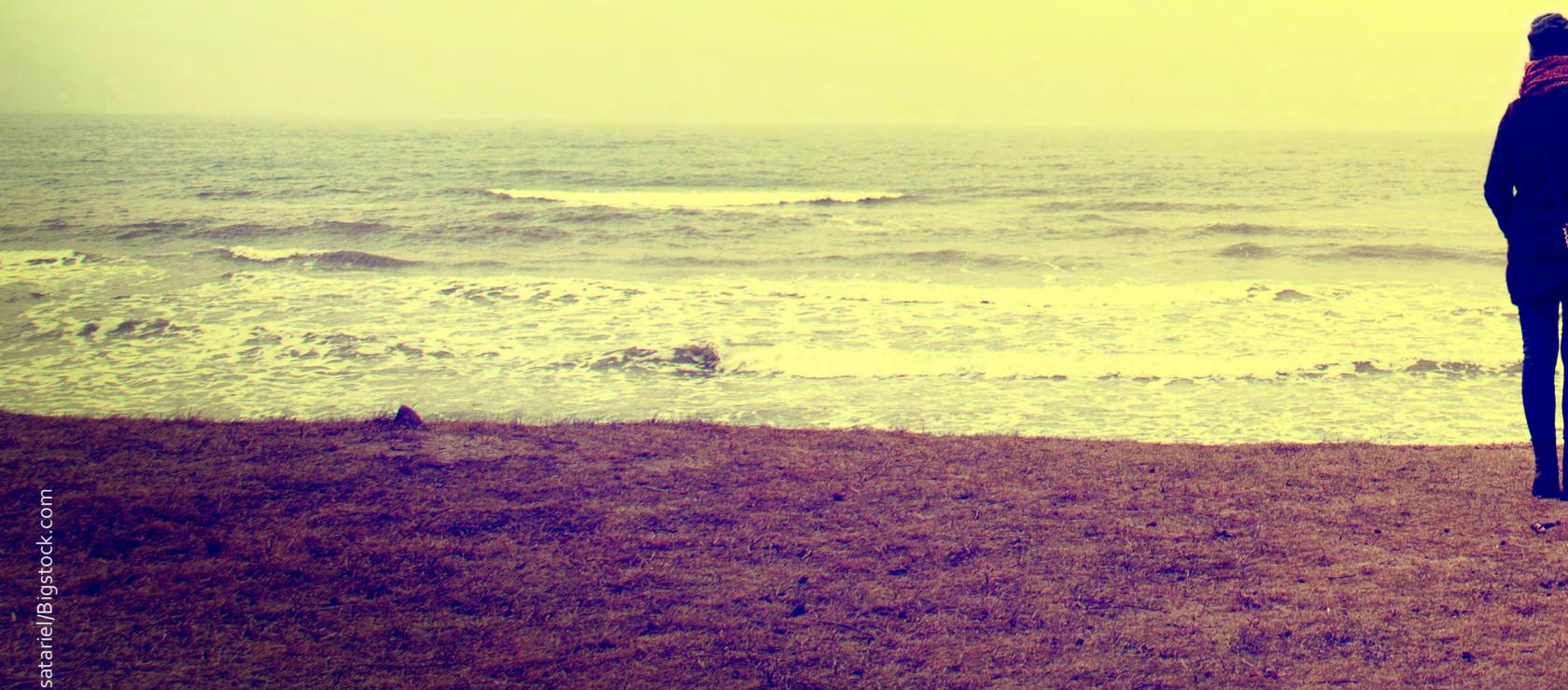
This recognition and experience of doing something and acquiring knowing brings a person right to the heart of living and the risks and potentials of forming an act. The voluntary muscular and cortical effort of intensifying and de-intensifying is the self-touching intimacy that forms memories of the forces of embodying one's experiences of a personal way of existing.

Step Four is the somatic shape's collage of involuntary and voluntary expressive motor images, feelings, and investigatory possibilities and narrations. This is a porous, elastic pause—shape of anticipation where a motor act is experienced as a potential of kinetic forces of expressions and arousal. For some, this is a magical moment; for others it is a threat to their social role or belief pattern. This pause includes what is alive in them as a potential—as an experiencing organizing architecture

with degrees of knowing, feeling, and intent. This special experience of the upwelling's wave of tissue shapes and states of the human dimension is what some call consciousness and what I call cortical–visceral–peristaltic knowing. Step Five is the trial-and-error editing step intimately involved with the embodying experience. The recognition that shape is the geometry of its inherited and voluntarily formed embodying process, a living memory of its history of forming its experience, is made possible here.

The five steps of the formative process develop the organism as an agent of its inherited life force that continually organizes a somatic structure that gives a personal morphology to its existence. This formative process develops its own psychology from its own motoric experience. Formative psychology is the psychology of embodied and embodying personhood.

Being embodied and embodying are two different experiences. Bodily responses of embodying make interior connections and cellular differentiations in a tide of arousal's alertness and different temperatures that migrate to inhabit the body of origin with anticipation of arousal's anatomic behavioral change, satisfactions, and memories. The experience of voluntary acts of embodying how we use ourselves is a pulsatory metabolic tide of motor muscular cortical acts of varying intensity and duration—a swelling, pausing, gathering-back wave. Being alive is an endless kaleidoscopic spectrum of shades of arousal and alertness, a geometry of motor, neural, and hormonal metabolic feeling states. This basic pulsatory landscape of being embodied, of having a body—of being embedded in a world—is augmented by the arc of the experiencing of the muscular–neural



"knowing how to", which generates the feedback of voluntary effort's experiential knowing. Change is a warm or cool wave of voluntary self-attending muscular, motoric, neural, and hormonal acts of alertness, of an assembling dynamic tension, a gathering of additions, a forming, an organizing of a dimension of being in the world and creating a world of salty sweetness.

Embodying as a process is similar to waking from sleep, where muscular urges appear with a dominating urge, and where feelings and images form connections and relationships that are continually forming the cortex and its source—the body itself. The five-step function makes vivid the voluntary muscular cortical acts of rebodilying our inherited shapes to experience the awakening of a library of remembered "how to" memories of voluntary muscular cortical embodying acts of being a world and developing the spectrum of aliveness.

Working formatively with a dream figure makes embodying available. A professional person, a fit and trim rigid mesomorph of 60 years, dreamed of being in a shark cage in the ocean. She was gripping the suspending rope to pull the cage up. I told her the dream figure was an image of the cortical map of an attitude of gripping, and I asked her to assemble a muscular model of the dream figure in a slow step-by-step fashion, and to attend to the tension pattern of the gripping attitude. This made possible the establishing of a link between the muscles and the cortex, between the cortical underformed motile map and the emerging assembled muscular map. As she increased the tension with voluntary muscular cortical effort, she intensified, differentiated, and edited the assembling of the gripping pattern in the muscles and in the sense of tension in the brain, eyes,

and floor of the mouth. This created more muscular body for the dream figure and the muscular cortical attitude of holding and compressing. The rising pressure grew her understanding of the compressing attitude as a resistance to extending boundaries, a restricting of the sense of freedom to create possibilities to act and experience. After establishing the ability to organize the restricting pattern, which was linked to the difficulty to act differently, I asked her to disassemble in slow, deliberate steps what was assembled voluntarily. There appeared the ability to alter the attitude of compressing and restricting, and to experience a window of space, a sense of possibility to be less restricted in muscle and cortex. Voluntarily altering the restrictive attitude and experience allowed for other differentiated possibilities and the beginning to narrate another orientation, another story.

This is an abbreviated story of the body dreaming a motile or porous under-bodied figure, finding and bodying the neural feeling-connection by adding and editing the neuromuscular locomotive and expressive possibilities for embodying new motor and cortical experiences, and applying the new attitudinal possibilities to life situations. This is experiential understanding of how to generate feeling from motor connections, alter anatomic structure, and rebody a way of behaving, feeling, and thinking. This is the individual's ability to embody and rebody the inherited body and form a personal embodied reality.

The secret of the human is to recognize that each individual is a formative organism, an organism that generates excitement, feeling, and thought from its own organismic materials, and assimilates it, transforms it,



reincorporates it, and forms itself to extend its differentiated embodied existence. The embodying process affirms that the body is life itself and that editing and rebodilying itself (its experiencing of its life) brings the deepest and most profound insight into one's nature; it is the godhead. A person's journey is to live and personalize their pre-personal life. To form yourself—your life—is to form the human dimension within yourself, to form your humanity.

The five steps become a way of having access to life experiences as a key to creativity and satisfaction that give birth to and mature values of concern, cooperation, maturity, and a future. These are not ideals or intellectual concepts but cellular truths that rise up in a person, seeking a way to embody and express themselves within the person and with others.

Forming is a rebodilying process that generates and remembers its experiences—its intensity, intent and know-how—to create, develop, and reuse what we have been given. When we immerse ourselves in the river of self-forming experiencing, we are bathed in the nonverbal, nonconceptual, nonvisual, and nonidealistic world. We are indeed in the sea of pulsatory waves and winds as we create a personal form with its own waves and winds that answer its own questions and announce you are the hero of your own life, which has a thousand faces.

When people use the five steps they find their pulsatory continuum that swells and gathers back, creates a form and morphs into other somatic structures. This natural function of bodied life brings one to the doorway of a formative knowing which is an awareness of a mythic-poetic, innate understanding of life as a formative process that we partake of.

This was summed up in 1932 by the philosopher V. E. von Gebattel, when he wrote: "The body forms itself in anticipation of the aim it serves; it assumes a shape . . . a shape for doing work, for fighting, for feelings, as well as a shape for loving" (*Monatschrift für Psychiatrie und Neurologie*, 1932, 82, p. 113).



Stanley Keleman is a pioneer in the study of the life of the body and its connection to the emotional, psychological, sexual, and imaginative aspects of human experience. He is the founder of Formative Psychology®. At the core of Keleman's thinking is the understanding that a person develops and changes his mind by reorganizing the body. Psychological insight is important but, of itself, does not create sufficient change. Emotions, feelings, and thoughts are organized body patterns, and new behavior comes about by reorganizing these old patterns and re-embodiment new acting patterns. How Keleman does this is discussed in his books, *Emotional Anatomy* and *Embodying Experience*, and his DVD of *Emotional Anatomy, Bonding, and Patterns of Distress*. Born in Brooklyn, he now lives in Berkeley, California, where he maintains a private and group practice and is Director of the Center for Energetic Studies.

