



Meeting Stanley Keleman and his Emotional Anatomy

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It is especially meaningful for me to write about Stanley Keleman and the Emotional Anatomy DVD, for Emotional Anatomy, the book, was the pivot of a turning point in my life. My first contact with Stanley's work happened upon my reading Emotional Anatomy in 1986. The book caused a profound impact on me, for I was deeply impressed by its theoretical soundness, as well as by its innovative language. The vision of the human being as *an embodied subjective process, self-organizing and continually evolving* captivated me immediately. I decided to learn that work; two years later I left Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, and moved to the San Francisco Bay Area, where I've stayed for six years working with Stanley Keleman. This was a life transforming experience, both personally and professionally. Stanley's powerful, generous, and deeply human presence has informed my learning process throughout time, and our relationship has been part and parcel of my formative endeavor all along.

In 1993 I began to talk with Stanley about his visiting Brazil and about the development of Formative Psychology here. After my return, I founded the Brazilian Center of Formative Psychology in Rio de Janeiro, in 1995, where I've been developing formative work through classes and workshops, and Stanley has visited us several times in the past coordinating workshops for our groups. We have also established a Formative Psychology Professional Program, from which came the six people who now compose our professional team here. This twenty-six-year partnership with Stanley has enriched my life and given me much support in developing my work. However, most important of all, we have formed a solid and human friendship, which I value immensely and which has become for me a living reference of what it means to have a formative relationship.

I've gone back and forth from Berkeley to Rio many times since 1994, and Stanley has also helped me form an inclusive two-world reality in which I've lived with comfort and joy. In 2007, Stanley mentioned he was interested in forming small groups for deepening studies in Formative Psychology. He said these groups were to be intimate and personal, "the way I believe in teaching and learning these days." Since 2009, I've been in a regular group that gets together with Stanley for a few days and has conversations about formative psychology. This has been an invaluable forming experience, as well as an educational model to be reproduced in the future. Among other things, the friendly and intimate ambiance of these meetings gave birth to the Interview Project with Stanley in 2012 and 2013. A cooperative partnership between the Center for Energetic Studies and the

Brazilian Center of Formative Psychology made it possible for us to make a series of interviews, which have originated seven video clips with Stanley, currently available on YouTube. What I present here is then embedded in 26 years of formative work, which has become also a way of living and thinking my life.

What spoke so strongly to my heart that made me stay in California for six years and choose Formative Psychology as a life path?

A few things impacted me deeply:

- The concept of the human being as an *embodied formative process*, continually forming itself.
- The existence of a *somatic language (and concepts)* to talk about the bodily processes.

- The concept of a pulsatory **Emotional Anatomy**—anatomy and emotional reality being *one inseparable phenomenon*.
- The concept of **Personal Evolution** based upon *somatic and neural plasticity* and on *voluntary muscular-cortical self-influence*.
- The existence of a well-structured, sound working methodology—the **Five Steps of the Formative Practice**—that provided me with the necessary tools for working with myself and others.

“Keleman views the body as an emotional-anatomical continuum of many layers of organization whose architecture and way of functioning compound the human subjective experience. In other words, the body, with its layers of inherited and formed history, stands as the source of human subjectivity” (Cohn, 2007, pp 21).

According to Keleman, all human experiences are embodied and grounded on anatomical organization. Anatomy is a pulsating, multidimensional, and plastic reality, and the architecture of our internal spaces involves a dynamic relationship between pulsating tissues, organized in different degrees of tonus, pressure and speed, and generating emotional and cognitive experiences (Keleman, 2012). The Emotional Anatomy DVD beautifully depicts the concept of a pulsating anatomy, evoking in viewers the experience of our own living pulse. Personally, after years of formative work, I take this DVD as a gift, bringing alive in moving images much of what I had experienced and much of what I had imagined in reading the book. The whole thing came alive and this felt like receiving a gift!

The images of people creating gradations in the muscle-emotional

intensity of postures, gestures, and attitudes affirm the Formative postulate that *voluntary modulation of the motor act is an asset to human life*. The images show how the use of muscular-cortical effort makes it possible to alter the intensity of emotional states, facilitating the creation of new behaviors—voluntarily unfolded from an involuntary act. It also makes clear that behavior is an anatomical shape in motion generating subjective experiences, that anatomical organization equals action patterns, which equals behavior and experience. Watching the DVD we actually see ourselves as malleable organisms, part of a biological matrix, endowed with somatic and neural plasticity as well as with voluntary capacity, able to change shape and to influence ourselves through voluntary motor-cortical acts. This is powerful to see. The cooperative nature of our body-brain-hand relationship and their pulsatory reality appears in beautiful superimposed images, revealing the dynamics of human plasticity and personal evolution. The DVD also clearly shows how we shape ourselves by the way we use ourselves in situations, offering an alternative to the diagnostic models commonly present in the psychological culture.

Keleman’s somatic-emotional methodology (1987, 2014) is based on neuro-anatomical and physiological principles, and on the properties of plasticity and variability in the body and brain. We’ve learned that the actions of the body are mapped through synaptic connections, and that the repetition of an act strengthens these synapses, consolidating brain maps and stabilizing behavior (Edelman, 2000, pp 54-63). This is how we learn, and how we form habits in response to challenging situations. The formative practice uses voluntary micro movements to activate muscular-cortical connections and modulate the

intensity of a muscular act, creating a variety of action patterns. Using voluntary effort to create a variety of intensities in an emotional attitude creates new synapses and neural circuits. This implies a reorganization of brain maps and neuromuscular connections, which now comprise a larger network of circuits, and an increase in the repertoire of behaviors and emotional experiences. The Emotional Anatomy DVD pictures the interconnectedness of body-brain-hand-inside-outside-macro-micro human processes, and the emergence of voluntary **personal self-regulation**. It pictures how the practice with micro movements creates a diversity of actions and experiences, forming new ways of being present. This allows people to choose how to act in different situations, and contributes in a powerful way to end the experience of helplessness and victimization in relation to one’s habitual behavioral-emotional patterns. This can make an enormous difference in a person’s life and to me, is one of the most important contributions of Stanley’s work! The DVD shows how voluntary self-regulation can empower people as formative agents of their own life. It means that people have the freedom to choose how they wish to be in the world, that they are able to participate in their own evolution and thus influence their future. This represents an enormous asset to human existence.

Voluntarily differentiated actions, internal experiences and personal narratives form the tripod of human subjectivity. Stanley Keleman has presented us with the possibility of personally influencing all three of them, and to form a more satisfying life. This is a promise of freedom and hope, and a gift to the entire human community, to which I am deeply grateful.

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