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The Body in Psychotherapy: By Russell Rose

I understand the psyche as being a Complex Adaptive System, comprising body-mind patterns and processes that react, respond, and adapt to emotional experience and conflict in complex, holistic, relational, and systemic feedback-loops.

In any emotionally charged event, there are many interlinked processes that operate together to form the subjective experience, mostly subliminal and not restricted to the verbal-reflective mind; including the cerebral, circulatory, respiratory, nervous, hormonal, digestive, tissue and muscular systems.

Each participant in the drama also brings to the occasion a psychological history, including their own attachment wounds and learnt adaptations based upon previous experience, and the extent to which a current crisis triggers an old wound is the extent to which it may resonate in the psycho-energetic field of the current interaction. Some of this may be known and in awareness, but whatever is repressed or dissociated as disturbing, the bodymind will nevertheless communicate nonverbally through character-attitude, posture, prosody, and energetic presence.

Through right-brain processing and corresponding somatic experiencing, each reads the dissociated expressions of the other, and begins to co-organise in search of a response that does justice to the conflicted urges to protect the self, protect the other, protect the relationship, and protect the relational self. Much of this intra- and inter-subjective process is again unconscious and expressed non-verbally.

In a healthily resolved experience, these conflicts are mutually satisfied, and the event is integrated into each psyche and the relational-psyche with relative comfort. Otherwise, conflicts remain and to the extent that they are unbearable they will be dissociated from in order to restore a *semblance* of equilibrium. Each inhibited expression and incomplete process has a complex bodymind pattern of thoughts, tensions, non-verbal communications, and energetic momentums. If these unresolved crises are traumatic or repetitive, these patterns become habitual, frozen into the psyche as bodymind character-structure, perpetually and concurrently seeking invisibility, expression, and relationship.

The bodymind carries this history of wounded attachment into subsequent relationships with significant others, particularly those with whom there is an invested attachment, often drawn to those who might either enact the primary story, or else collude in a perpetuated defence against it. The psychotherapist *is* a significant other, and I bring to the therapeutic encounter *my* dissociated attachment wounds, expressed in non-verbal communication and energetic presence, along with my character-inclination to both enact the client's story and collude in defence against it.

It's through attention to my body, my client's body, and the relationship between the bodies that I can become informed of underlying patterns, transferential constructs, enactments, or a conflict between feeling and narrative. Attention to the body helps me to realise that something is happening, offering an opportunity to bring the co-organised dissociated expressions into awareness.

What remains dissociated is carried by my bodymind into the supervisory relationship, where again it will co-organise and co-construct in *parallel process*, offering another opportunity for conscious manifestation.

It's not only that I *have* a body, but that I *am* a body, and that we are, to some degree, each other's bodies.