



The Emotional Experience & the Meaning of the Body Sara Balzan

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When writing, there is always the fear that words can belittle deep concepts of great importance, that need instead more thoughtful reflections. The language kills whatever it touches ⁽¹⁾. Holism, humanization of care and intuitions are, for example, abstract concepts that are constantly evolving: it is difficult to grasp them and to share their significance. So, how could it not be thorny, to talk about emotions?

Feelings are delicate, and ethereal, but a force and a power almost without limit, in line with what the human potential is. Dora Kunz wrote about human intentionality and the power of the mind: that our thoughts and feelings can affect other living forms; Carolyn Myss says that we co-create our physical body through the creative power of thoughts and emotions.

Research on emotions in a scientific way begins in the late 19th century, with the birth of the idiographic sciences. Today, the study of emotions represents a fast-developing field. What is an emotion? This is a complex question. The etymology of the word contains a common root of motion, moving as well as of travel. The dynamic meanings give a sense of constant transformation, and for this reason, difficult to squeeze and hold the moment you want to talk about it. The central metaphor of emotion is the one of energy, force, and violence; emotion is vitality-effect ^(2,3). Feelings are energetic expressions ready to deviate our existence. Human emotion is an extraordinary power, yet we sometimes fall into the trap of perceiving only the limited materiality of the physical body and get confused about our potentials.

The ability to express our feelings, to create emotional connections with others, and to witness our own emotions are human "superpowers." The feelings of a caress transform the body, although physiologists are not able to document this transformation ⁽⁴⁾. The biosciences have difficulties in admitting the existence of the nonmaterial, as in the case of feelings; though the relationship existing between the brain, psyche and mind is now unquestionable even in the scientific world ⁽⁵⁾. Neurobiologists have shown that neuropeptides, substances produced by emotions, are thoughts turned into the matter: the emotions reside in our body and interact with cells and tissues; It can happen that the body has an emotional reaction and secretes chemical substances related to emotions even before the brain has registered the issue ⁽⁶⁾. Aristotle said that the soul is the shape of a natural body that has life in power ⁽⁷⁾. This intense consideration deserves further reflection. Aristotle points out that it is not the body in its materiality that constitutes the essence of living, but the living body in which the spiritual part, which also affects the emotional sphere, gives its shape to it. Draper writes that the body is the hologram of the whole lived experience: past, present and future perceptions are merged into a single forge. A Therapeutic Touch therapist, when touching a body or getting in touch with its energetic field, touches its history, its culture, reaches its family, and perhaps even its soul.

The study of emotions can provide a wider understanding of human being. Neurosciences say that individual biographies, with their different emotional experiences, produce somatic variations not only in the long term (in the field of the evolution of species) but also in the very short term, materializing and shaping our organs. It is a process of materialization, then, not mere sedimentation ⁽²⁾. An individual's physical body makes possible certain emotions, or can nullify them. Conversely, feelings can affect bodies or change them: small wrinkles on the face, a gastric ulcer or a spike of serotonin ⁽⁸⁾. Feelings can also heal when, intentionally, sending benevolence and peace.

Most of us admit that illness affects our mental and emotional state, but not that the contrary is also true ⁽⁹⁾. Tuning into a patient's emotional state becomes, therefore, an essential step in caregiving and healing: by touching patient's bodies we touch forms given by sensations, and accompanying patient's feelings we can understand and better heal and take care of the somatic part. When healing a person, the focus should remain on the understanding of the other's experience, relying on curiosity and imagination. Here comes the principle of letting go of assumptions to follow the creative mind of intuition without reasoning or judging to practice an attitude of availability and human generosity. This sounds like an invitation to enter the spectacular nature of human beings: instinctive, deep, simply emotional! ⁽¹⁰⁾

It is essential in a healing relationship, to be able to transmit our presence and our conscious similitude to the person in charge: "I exist the way you do; I know, everyone feels and lives events in different ways and has their own emotional experience". We have the same thoughts and we experience the same emotions. All of us are simply human!

To be a TT healer is a conscious and intentional effort, and we have to recognize our own limitations that can make us feel inadequate and uncomfortable. But to advance we need friction. Wittgenstein says: "We have got onto slippery ice where there is no friction and so in a certain sense the conditions are ideal, but also, just because of that, we are unable to walk. We want to walk so we need friction. Back to the rough ground!" ⁽¹¹⁾.

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