

Abstract

How do psychotherapists discern when and how to act in relation to the moment-to-moment unfolding situation, in order to optimally support the therapeutic process for each client? In this dissertation, I explore this often-elusive and unspoken aspect of knowing.

This research project investigates the role that kinesthesia, movement and the lived body play in shaping experience and knowledge. The specific aim is to examine, make visible and verbalise how movement shapes the practical knowledge of psychotherapists. The Aristotelian concept of *phronesis* is highlighted, referring to practical wisdom and the capacity to relate to situational specifics.

The study is positioned within the theory of practical knowledge, employing a method that weaves together three threads: 1) Focus groups and individual interviews with psychotherapists, 2) Autoethnographic writing from my psychotherapy practice, 3) Theoretical concepts. Central to the dissertation are the following: Edmund Husserl's *longitudinal* and *transversal intentionality*, the *speaking* and the *spoken speech* as defined by Maurice Merleau-Ponty, and Nicholas of Cusa's descriptions of two aspects of reason, *ratio* and *intellectus*. I also elaborate on Jonna Bornemark's concepts of *pactivity* and *arches of paradoxical values*. Through a dialogue between empirical material and theory, questions are posed and responses are formulated.

I describe the psychotherapists' capacity to create holding of the therapeutic situation as a bodily knowing and a pivotal professional skill that can be cultivated through practice. Holding is characterised as a pactive movement, indicating the capacity to be receptive to situational specifics and based on these, judge how to act to progress the therapeutic process. Verbalisation of lived bodily experience is a central theme throughout the study. I conclude that clearly defined concepts that are anchored in a thought system are needed in order to give ontological weight to *phronesis* and bodily knowing.

Keywords: Practical knowledge, movement, *phronesis*, psychotherapy, lived bodily knowing, kinesthesia, gestalt therapy.