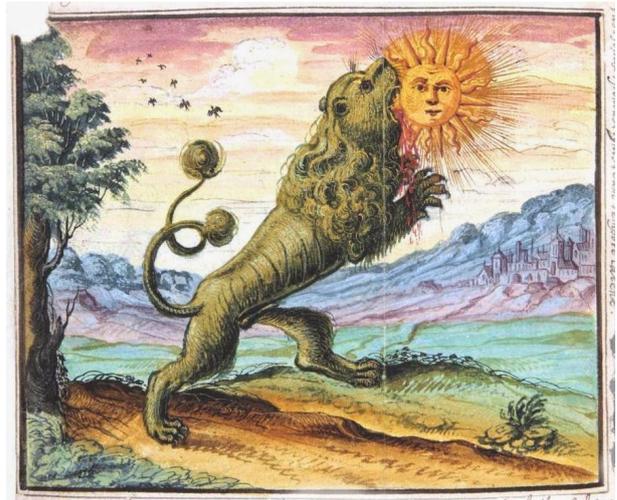


The Client and I

Relational-somatic approaches to challenging dynamics in the therapeutic relationship

with Tom Warnecke



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We need a body to think and feels with, and particularly so when powerful turbulences manifest in the therapeutic relationship and 'rock the boat'. These may occur in various contexts but commonly so with Borderline trauma and Eros or sexual dynamics. How can we provide effective therapy while being immersed in such challenging dynamics?

The image of the '*Green lion eating the sun*' is a metaphor for our consciousness becoming overwhelmed by forceful, frustrated desires or destructive impulses. At the same time, this image also symbolizes a journey that transcends such struggles and recognises their awakening or reparative potential.

This experiential workshop will present a consistent frame of theoretical conceptions and practical 'craft of therapy' skills which are explored in two parts to help participants orient within the complexities. Eros and Borderline dynamics often require similar skills from the therapist, such as a robust capacity for psycho-biological 'anchoring' for example, to safely navigate any overwhelming and unpredictable psychic and bodied turbulences arising with the powerful psycho-biological intersubjectivities of the unconscious.

Part 1 - Borderline trauma and the 'Disorders of Self'

Borderline trauma confronts us with challenging and bewildering phenomena. The 'personality disorder' construct suggests a one-person-psychology pathology but Borderline trauma is most famously associated with difficult or unstable relationships and evokes images of harassed and tormented therapists. Borderline relationships appear equally challenging for clients and therapists alike. Both may feel attacked, invaded, helpless, misunderstood or unappreciated by the other.

But the Borderline and Borderline-Narcissistic trauma are also particularly apparent as bodied experiences for both client and therapist. Hyperarousal and catastrophic anxieties, both cardinal features of Borderline trauma, suggest disturbances of very basic functions and indicate that the organism is in a state of somatic disorganisation. Chronic dysregulation of the autonomic nervous system, inadequate boundary formation and a lack of crucial psycho-motor skills reflect deficiencies in psycho-affective maturation and failures to develop a differentiated psyche-soma relationship.

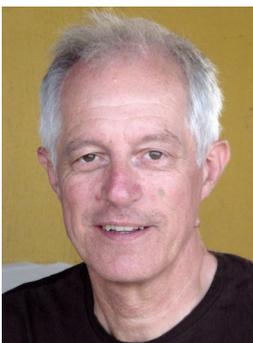
Current clinical theory can help us understand and work more effectively with psychological and somatic phenomena and disturbances commonly experienced by Borderline trauma clients and their therapists. Somatic and relationally informed clinical perspectives are illustrated by case vignettes of Borderline trauma psycho-biology and explored through an integration of theoretical discussion and exercises to explore and develop skills for therapists.

Part 2 - Eros in psychotherapy - a crucible of awakening, destruction and reparation

Expressions and manifestations of Eros and sexuality in the therapeutic relationship are challenging for therapists and clients alike and will often take therapists into profound and troubling engagement with cultural forces, personal anxieties and conceptual ambiguities. Eros and sexuality enter the therapeutic relationship in a variety of ways, for example as a sexual 'problem' or trauma, as attachment seeking, or in the pursuit of new psychological or psychosexual development. Whilst sexual problems or traumas may feel relatively "safe" for therapists, Eros and erotic desires will commonly require therapists to confront and negotiate powerful taboos. But can we afford to avoid Eros and 'sterilise' the therapeutic relationship?

Eros is increasingly understood as a progressive motivational system, a system which complements attachment driven motivations which are concerned with safety and security. Eros, as Plato already recognised, motivates us to take risk and reach out to an 'unsafe' other for a hoped-for good. Such progressive potential will most likely also manifest as a 'risk' element in the therapeutic relationship. But there may be yet more to Eros. In Greek mythology, Eros is not only the child of 'Aphrodite' but also of 'Chaos' which gives rise to aspects of Eros that can be just as challenging as erotic desires in the therapeutic relationship. The so called "negative transference" and associated attacking or destructive impulses, for example when a therapist becomes co-constructed as a 'wrong therapist', is becoming recognised as another aspect of Eros in contemporary psychotherapy. How can we work constructively and safely within Eros' crucible of awakening, destruction and reparation and let Eros' powerful potential to facilitate new connections, aliveness and vitality unfold?

This workshop seminar is conceived for both experienced therapists and recent graduates. It will introduce conceptual frameworks, which are grounded in a synthesis of current neuro-psycho-biological understanding, and provide opportunities to experientially explore this material in depth. Participants are welcome to bring relevant case material from their clinical practice - including any difficult to understand therapeutic failures - to explore and learn from.



Tom Warnecke (PgDip, ECP) is a relational body psychotherapist, supervisor, researcher, writer, and artist. He first trained in Gestalt Therapy and later in Biosynthesis with David Boadella. Besides his psychotherapy and supervision practice in London, he contributes to various psychotherapy and supervision diploma courses in Europe, and developed a relational-somatic approach to Borderline trauma. His publications include a number of book chapters, journal articles, and the book '*The Psyche in the Modern World - Psychotherapy and Society*' (Karnac 2015). He is a web-cast editor for '*Psychotherapy Excellence*', co-editor for the international *Body, Dance Movement in Psychotherapy* journal, and a member of the European Association for Psychotherapy (EAP) Executive Committee and Governing Board. He is a past Vice chair for the UK Council for Psychotherapy (UKCP).