

Oiling the Tin Man's Armor and Healing His Heart II: Reich's and Feldenkrais's Preparation for Treatment

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We return in this series of essays to the story of the Tin Man in the Wizard of Oz. In the first essay (Bergquist, 2023) we focused on diagnosis. We are ready to prepare for treatment. The author of this wonderful multi-book tale (and musical), Frank Baum, seems to have decided that this mission-quest was “just what the doctor ordered” (Baum himself being the authorial doctor).

Like Baum, we can send the Tin Man on the mission with Dorothy, Toto, the scarecrow (and later the Cowardly Lion). It is a twofold mission. They are not only on a perilous journey to the Emerald City (where Oz resides) but are also confronting at every turn the Evil Witch (and her flying monkeys). The witch is trying to thwart their efforts, obtain the ruby slippers from Dorothy, and revenge the death of her sister (who was hit by Dorothy's falling house).

As we all know, the story and movie produced by Baum and MGM has a happy ending (which is very important given the trying times of 1939 when the movie was released). The Wizard able to assist the Tin Man in acknowledging that he has a heart by awarding him a philanthropic award – in the shape of a heart. Furthermore, it should be noted that the weapon used (inadvertently) to kill the Witch was Water! Thus, any trauma regarding rain and water would have been abrogated for the Tin Man (who had a name by the way. It was “Hickory” – but we don't really ever use his name).

Thus ends our story. Perhaps we were not needed in addressing the requests made by the Tin Man? Or might we have done a better job than Frank Baum or MGM. Did the Tin Man really need to go to the Emerald City and discover that the Wizard was actually a huckster. If nothing else, our treatment team might be needed to address the ills of real people rather than those created on sets of the MGM studio.

I propose that our treatment team has much to do in the real world—for there are many Tin Men and Tin Women to be treated and Frank Baum isn't around to provide the happy ending. Today, many of us are stuck in our own personal armament. We are defending against the often-traumatizing challenges of mid-21st Century life. Psychological rain is falling on us. Our armor is quickly rusting. Our hearts are wounded and encased in the rusted armor. We need some oil and some healing of our heart.

Two Primary Members of the Treatment Team

Enter our treatment team. It is headed by Wilhelm Reich and Moise Feldenkrais, the two men we recruited for our diagnostic team. They are fully qualified to help oil the armor of mid-21st Century tin men and women--and they can help to heal the hearts of these troubled men and women. I provide a more complete introduction of these two men in this second essay.

Wilhelm Reich

Wilhelm Reich was born to Jewish parents in Austria on March 24, 1897. He received his medical degree from the University of Vienna in 1922 and became deputy director of Sigmund Freud's outpatient clinic. Reich soon became one of Freud's favorites and at one point was considered to be the successor to Freud in the burgeoning psychoanalytic field.

However, he eventually fell out of favor with Freud (as did Jung, Adler and many other aspirants), in large part because he was moving beyond the prescribed boundaries of traditional Freudian practice. While Reich aligned with Freud regarding the importance of sexuality, he was developing his own unorthodox theories and practices regarding the nature of sexual energy. This departure from the "normal" views regarding sex would later lead to major controversy and even legal problems for Reich.

Perhaps of equal importance was Reich's shift to a radical political posture. Along with many other young analysts, Reich sought to blend the psychological theories of Freud with the social/political theories of Karl Marx (this effort centered on what became known as the Frankfurt School). He even spent time in Russia with his wife in 1929, during the time when the Soviet Revolution had successfully deposed the Czar and Joseph Stalin was in full control of the country.

As a young clinician in the 1920s, Wilhelm Reich expanded psychoanalytic resistance into an inclusive technique called character analysis. According to Reich, character attitudes were developed by an individual to block against emotional excitations. These attitudes (and their physical manifestation) became the object of treatment. These encrusted attitudes functioned as an "armor," which Reich later found to exist simultaneously in chronic muscular spasms. Reich published a highly influential book in 1933 regarding the development and treatment of human character disorders.

This classic work was titled *Character Analysis* (Reich, 1972). This book and subsequent publications by Reich became highly influential in the psychoanalytic community – even though he personally remained an outcast in the formal psychoanalytic community. Through his presentation on character armor, Reich was able to bring mind and body together. Character analysis opened the way to a biophysical approach to physical and mental disease and the treatment of these ailments.

With a life that was often in turmoil (multiple marriages, affairs with patients, and failed clinical and teaching appointments), Reich eventually migrated to the United States in 1939. He established an institute focusing on sexual energy (based on his theory of "orgone energy"). As in the case of character armor, this theory regarding biological energy (with a sexual focus) was never given much formal support. However, it strongly influenced the work of other members of the medical and mental health profession—especially Alexander Lowen (1994) (the architect of "bioenergetics"). Reich's theory even received the attention of Albert Einstein!

Wilhelm Reich's life ended tragically. He was hounded legally for his political views and for marketing strange (unproven) electrical gadgets (including orgone accumulators). He ended up in a Federal Penitentiary. Reich was also considered to be mentally ill by many people (including those in the press) given his "bizarre" interest in UFOs and various psychic thought processes. Wilhelm Reich died in prison on November 3, 1957.

Moshe Feldenkrais

As in the case of Wilhelm Reich, Moshe Feldenkrais's parents were European Jews—living at the time in what today is the country of Ukraine. Moshe was born in 1904 and was raised in Belarus. Having moved to Palestine in 1918, Moshe Feldenkrais worked as a laborer and began to study self-defense (including Ju-Jitsu). Following his subsequent migration to France during the early 1930s, Feldenkrais obtained a degree in engineering. He subsequently was awarded a Doctor of Science degree from the University of Paris. Marie Curie was one of his teachers.

Like Reich, Moshe Feldenkrais was strongly influenced by his encounter with a masterful teacher. In his case it wasn't Sigmund Freud; rather, it was Jigoro Kano, a leader in the field of Judo. Having earned a Black Belt in Judo, Feldenkrais began to blend his engineering background (studying the structure of human bodies) with his Judo (studying human movement). This exploration would soon be engaged in a different country. Like Freud, Feldenkrais, as a Jew, had to escape to England in 1940. He aided the war effort by serving as a science officer in the British Admiralty.

Feldenkrais' interest in the interplay between the human anatomy and movement became more immediate after World War II, when a personal injury led him to begin developing his own approach to rehabilitation. Feldenkrais began to offer lectures and training programs regarding his new treatment methods and published his first book on his method (*Body and Mature Behavior: A study of Anxiety, Sex, Gravitation and Learning*). In this book, Feldenkrais (2005) touched on some of the same topics as Reich. Like Reich, he also became interested in many other topics and theories—including those offered by Gurdjieff (a noted mystic).

In 1951, Moshe Feldenkrais returned to Palestine (now Israel, an independent Jewish state). He again applied his scientific knowledge to ongoing defense efforts (this time it was Israel)—and became the personal trainer of David Ben-Gurion (Prime Minister of Israel). Feldenkrais' fame (and work) soon expanded—especially in the United States. He offered training programs in both Israel and the United States during the 1960s, 1970s and early 1980s.

The Feldenkrais method involving the gentle manipulation of the body had arrived—though it had its detractors. They were not as vehement as those who criticized Reich's methods, but they still led to some push back from both sides of the mind-body debate. The widely accepted integration of physiology and psychology had not yet taken place. Moshe Feldenkrais died on July 1, 1984 at age 80 in Tel Aviv Israel.

Similarities

There were several common characteristics in both the background and life experiences of Reich and Feldenkrais that helped to shape their perspectives and practices. First, they both claim a Jewish heritage—with all of its opportunities and challenges. One element of this heritage is the importance placed on the human body by Judaic theology. While Christianity tends to be enamored with the mind (and spiritual matters)—often pointing to the evil wrought by the lustful physical body-- Judaism has always acknowledged the vital role played by our body in both the secular and sacred world.

As Jews and as advocates of cutting-edge perspectives and practices, Reich and Feldenkrais were often outsiders in their chosen profession and outliers regarding the treatment procedures they were advocating and teaching. Deeply embedded in their innovative work was a shared interest in many different fields of inquiry. They were both Interdisciplinary and brought ideas from other cultures and many different sciences to bear on their own treatment methods.

Along with their more cerebral interests, it should also be noted that both Reich and Feldenkrais loved machinery. For Reich, this love ended up in his construction of various contraptions that accumulated psychic energy. Feldenkrais's love was somewhat more mundane and grounded in his engineering background. He was interested in the machinery of the human body (as well as machinery that contributed to the defense of countries where he resided).

Finally, there were important similarities that resided in the social/political environment in which both Reich and Feldenkrais operated. They were both mixed up in political and warfare matters. Reich spent time in Russia during the 1930s and was strongly influenced by the words offered by the Communist leaders and by the "good" things he witnessed in this communist (and authoritarian) society. Conversely, Feldenkrais seems to have been operating more as an engineer and patriot than as someone who was exploring revolutionary ideas about the way in which a country should be governed. He was contributing to the war effort in Britain and to the defense of Israel.

Reich's beliefs regarding Communism got him in trouble when he migrated to the United States. His attention to the verbiage of Communist leaders (such as Stalin) also seems to have been misaligned with his disdain for words (in psychotherapy). When working with patients Reich was more likely to focus on what the patient's body was telling him than what was coming out of our mouth—yet he listened to the word of Stalin rather than to the message being sent from Stalin's arrogant physical stance or his actions. We will see that this misalignment regarding words and body also seems to be showing up in Reich's actual therapy sessions.

Feldenkrais found a much less rocky road on which to travel while living in Europe and Palestine/Israel. This did not mean that Feldenkrais was immune to utopian thought or experiences. Before Reich was spending time in Russia, witnessing the outcomes of the 1918 revolution, Feldenkrais was in Palestine during the actual time of this revolution (1918). He witnessed (and may have participated in) the remarkable societal invention known as the kibbutz. This collaborative farming enterprise had been initiated in Palestine only a few years earlier.

For Feldenkrais, cooperation and shared governance was being engaged in a rural setting where people worked together on the land. Feldenkrais was himself not afraid to get his hands dirty and his body moving as a laborer in Palestine. The utopian vision of cooperative labor to be realized in the kibbutz was quite different from the utopian vision of collectivity that was promulgated (and distorted) by Joseph Stalin. While Stalin was declaring his utopian vision from a balcony in Moscow, the kibbutznik were enacting their utopia in the earth of Palestine.

Holistic perspectives

Both Feldenkrais and Reich offer analyses concerning the functioning of the human being that bring together elements of the human being that are often treated separately by those who are seeking to understand how we all operate and often are also seeking to heal those human elements that are dysfunctional. Feldenkrais provides a portrait of the human brain that is holistic (anticipating many of the contemporary perspectives on cortical functions). Reich's portrait is holistic in a different manner: he is looking at the intimate relationship that exist between body and words.

While Feldenkrais and Reich take a somewhat different approach to finding integration of human elements, I suspect that they would support one another's perspective if they had even met one another. Most importantly, their holistic perspectives inform the concepts they offer regarding human dysfunction and the treatment modalities they recommend (and practice themselves) to ameliorate these dysfunctions.

Feldenkrais--Dynamic interplay among cortical functions: In setting the stage for his description of treatment plans that help to "oil" the armor, Feldenkrais (1981, p. 19) writes about evolution of the brain:

Nervous structures do look for order, and find it when and wherever it exists and make one where it does not exist. Only a very complex nervous assembly, consisting of such a great number of units as there are in most living creatures, needs consistency and constancy of environment. Primitive nervous systems do not play tennis, nor do they swing from one branch to another thirty feet away. Primitive systems are slower and are not so dependent on organizing invariants. All living creatures are smaller and weaker than their grown-ups, some for shorter some for longer intervals of time. Weak organisms need a more or less constant consistent world so that they can learn and grow into strong organisms. The organism is in itself quite a world of microbeings which needs constancy, order, invariance, homeostasis. if it is to exist.

Thus, for Feldenkrais, the simpler organisms are just fine living with less complex neurostructures – as long as their environment remains consistent. We might even say that they are fine when living with and protected by their own armor and living in a specific, limited environment. They could stand there in the woods and not move for many years—provided that the woods don't change. Then along comes Dorothy and the Scarecrow, who oil the armor and allow the Tin Man to move. This, in turn, means that the Tin Man (with his complex brain) can move through a variety of environments on his way to Oz.

Feldenkrais (1981, p. 24) adds to this evolutionary analysis by considering the status of organisms when they are born:

When we pass in review many of the species it becomes evident that the lower the species' place on the ladder of evolution the more complete is the wiring in of the nervous system at birth. The connections of the synapses, neurons, or whatever are ready and the apprenticeship is shorter the lower the species are on the ladder. In man, we see the extreme end of this process. The human infant has the longest apprenticeship of all the species, to my knowledge.

Although everything necessary to maintain life and growth is already connected in the nervous and glandular systems at birth, the specific human functions are not wired in at all. No baby was ever born who could speak, sing, whistle, crawl, walk upright, make music, count or think mathematically, tell the hour of the day or night, or know what it is to be late. Without a very long apprenticeship lasting several years none of these functions has ever been observed. As far as these specifically human functions or activities go, the connections or the wiring in of the neural structures have advanced already in the womb but compared with those of the adult they are non-existent.

For Feldenkrais (1981, p. 25) there is a strong preference in all organisms for order and an invariant environment – even when organisms (such as human beings) have the increasing capacity to handle change and new environments. This often means that a disorderly environment is made orderly when processed by the brain. All elements of the brain operate in an integrated, holistic manner to ensure this order:

The neural substance that organizes order in its own functioning also makes order in its environment which in turn improves the orderliness of neural function. The neural substance organizes itself and thereby selects and alters the incoming messages from the environment into invariant sets to make repetition possible. It takes many continuously changing messages from the environment before the organism succeeds in perceiving them as unchanging entities. So great is the ability of the nervous system that it creates order where instruments made of any other matter will register a blur of continuous variations. Just think of taking a photograph of a greyhound running toward you while you are sitting on a galloping horse.

Thus, it is not clear that the Tin Man really wanted to be oiled and set free—just as it is not clear that the cowardly lion really wanted to take on the challenges of a disorderly (and threatening) environment. Both the Tin Man and Lion might have been perfectly content to remain in the forest (with forests from the perspective of many psychoanalytic and Jungian analysts representing a primitive state of being). We regress, in other words, so that the world we perceive and that we process can remain orderly.

Finally, Feldenkrais (1981, p. 72) turns to the distinction to be made between the less complex brain of most organisms and the highly complex brain that has evolved in human beings:

Your brain, and mine, have a very long history. Our nervous systems are among the most complex structures in existence. They have very old layers covered by less old ones and then more recent layers. Each new layer is a formation that functions more finely. The older are primitive, and abrupt in the all-or-nothing way. Each layer checks the older ones and supersedes them. The newer the formation the finer its function. It makes action more graded, more differentiated. The older structures function more reliably faster and need less apprenticeship. The newer layers switch themselves off and allow the former more reliable swifter formation to take over and assure survival. The finer, more varied newer parts will take over once the emergency has ended. The old structures are not destroyed; they just become latent, less obvious but essential in an emergency. Any situation that cannot be dealt with at leisure will produce a regression, i.e., the older formation will take over. The newer the neural structure is,

the slower it is. Gradation and variety need time and apprenticeship for deliberation and choice, following the weighing up of the pros and cons.

In this extraordinary analysis, we find the anticipation of contemporary neuroscience analyses, as well as the analyses offered by those in the emerging field of behavior economics. First, Feldenkrais offers an important distinction between the ‘old’ brain and ‘new brain’ (primarily prefrontal cortex). As more recent analysts, such as Jonah Lehrer (2009) have noted, the new brain is easily overwhelmed by emergencies and acts slowly when under pressure. The old brain tends to take over in these challenging stressful situations. If there is nothing but stress in one’s life, then the old brain will always be in charge and orderliness will be demanded. The armor remains in place and new environments are avoided.

Behavioral scientists such as Daniel Kahneman (2013) join with Feldenkrais in noting the slow process being engaged by the new brain. “Deliberation and choice, following the weighing up of the pros and cons” is in the province of the “slow thinking” advocated by Kahneman. This slow thinking, in turn, is a requisite if we wish to leave the forest and journey to Oz or some other destination that in no way resembles the forest.

All of this processing of the external environment and all of this shifting from one part of the brain to another part requires that all elements of the brain are involved. A holistic-operating brain is required whatever the stage of evolution to be found in any living species—though this holism is particularly important in the life of an evolved species such as the human being who has a choice between various states of neural and behavioral freedom. As “evolved” humans we can choose to leave the forest – though only if we recognize the challenges we will face as well as the complex neural processing required in these changing and challenging environments.

Reich--Words and Body: Freud spoke of the power based in the “talking-cure”, believing that words (psychoanalytic treatment) could heal the body (curing “hysteria”) as well as the mind (curing “neuroses”). Reich similarly believed that words could play a major role in confronting the physical as well as psychological elements of character armor. Coming out of his Jewish heritage (as does Freud and Feldenkrais), Reich finds it easy and comfortable to integrate the mind (particularly verbal functions) with the body.

We can trace this integration and the power of the word back to the first statements in the Old Testament of the Bible (Torah) in which God *Said* there would be light, water, land, living creatures—and ultimately human beings. It is through words and pronouncements that God created the universe—and our Jewish practitioners of psychotherapy and physical therapy created physical and mental health.

In many ways, Reich moves beyond Freud in providing an integration of word and body. He proposes that character armor is forced in the dynamic interaction between body and the language being used by the person encased in armor. Reich not only takes a jab at Freud’s diagnosis (verbal identification) of his own throat cancer, but also at Freud’s emphasis on verbiage in traditional psychoanalysis and deemphasis on the body (particularly the muscular structure and tension within this structure). Reich

offers the following observation regarding this interaction between body and language in *Character Analysis*:

... apart from its function as communication, human language also often functions as a defense. The spoken word conceals the expressive language of the biological core. In many cases, the function of speech has deteriorated to such a degree that the words express nothing whatever and merely represent a continuous, hollow activity on the part of the musculature of the neck and the organs of speech. On the basis of repeated experiences, it is my opinion that in many psychoanalyses which have gone on for years the treatment has become stuck in this pathological use of language. This clinical experience can, indeed has to be applied to the social sphere. Endless numbers of speeches, publications, political debates do not have the function of getting at the root of important questions of life but of drowning them in verbiage.

In this quote we see that language is often the villain and that sole reliance on the word will never adequately address problems associated with character disorders. However, it should be noted that Reich confronts a contradiction here. While offering a clear position on the mis-used or over-use of verbal language in psychoanalysis, Reich was still reliant on “the talking cure” (as Freud originally called it) when seeking to discover defensive routines that are blocking the flow of energy in his patient’s body.

Reich also makes use of verbally based therapy to bring about the diminution of these defenses. This inherent tension in Reich’s original work is somewhat resolved in his later almost exclusive attention to the redirection of bodily energy through the use of machinery (energy accumulators). Those (such as Lowen) who built their own work off of Reich’s original perspectives and practices, have also tended to have a more consistent focus on the body and less on the talking cure.

Outliers

There is another important characteristic shared by Reich and Feldenkrais. They are both rebels. Malcolm Gladwell (2008) would identify them both as Outliers—and in this capacity we find that both of them found both success and repression. Gladwell might be pointing to cultural influences (their Jewish heritage) or to the way in which they approached elusive issues (from a holistic perspective). We can turn to another observer of rebellion and unique forms of success—this being Thomas Kuhn. Writing about scientific revolutions, Kuhn (1962) employed the term “paradigm” when describing the deeply embedded set of assumptions and structures supporting “normal science.”

Kuhn suggests that a change (revolution) in a specific scientific domain often comes from someone who resides outside the mainstream of normal science—because of their ethnicity, gender, geographic location, or lack of affiliation with a prestigious institution. Reich and Feldenkrais certainly resided outside the mainstream of their own fields of endeavor (psychotherapy and physical therapy) and found it hard like virtually all paradigm-challengers to find much initial support for their perspectives or practice.

Feldenkrais (1985, p. 91) reflects directly on the deeply embedded and rigid opposition to his own work and the subsequent cost of rebellion:

We teach such a rigidity of mind and body that we need “breaking in”, for any but familiar, habitual conditions. In fact, the human nervous system is eminently suitable for change. Our early experience prepares us for conditions analogous to those known our parents, allowing only for minor differences. Any significant change demands a deep, revolutionary modification in our attitude and response. Using the property of the nervous system, which we work so hard to diminish, it is possible to form individuals capable of coping with a changing world without such intense emotional upheavals that bring many to prostrated breakdowns.

Feldenkrais (1985, p. 91) also identifies “emotionally unstable” conditions (both collective and individual) that are particularly conducive to the emergence of “revolutionary” ideas, while reminding us of challenge faced by the revolutionary outlier:

We find emotional instability almost universally (1) in nations that are in the process of deep social and economic transformation, and (2) in people who dare to deviate from the traditional mode of action of their parents, their class, or social group. Those who have dared to go off the beaten path, and would have had a chance of getting somewhere if they were properly equipped, are precisely those who have failed to make even the usual success of their lives.

Gladwell should reframe Feldenkrais’ rather pessimistic appraisal by indicating that the result of the revolutionary’s work might not be so much the absence of ‘usual’ success in their life, but rather the presence of an “unusual” success. It is not only the revolutionary’s perspectives and practices that are “new”—it is also the fundamental criteria of “success” that resides outside the existing paradigm.

Differences

The background and experiences of Reich and Feldenkrais were in many ways quite similar. Both men envisioned and enacted therapeutic approaches that incorporated both body and mind. Nevertheless, the treatment modes that emerged for these two pioneers were intended to further different aims. Wilhelm Reich and his follower, Alexander Lowen (1994) wished to directly heal the wounded human heart as well as the human body. They believed that energy which usually flows freely through our body has been blocked as a result of some trauma in our earlier life. The blockage and sustained stress and muscular tremors resulting from this blockage produces rigid character armor. The trauma itself must be treated and this requires talk-based psychoanalytic treatment.

This psychotherapeutic perspective is not held by Feldenkrais nor the practitioners he trained. Feldenkrais was less concerned with directly healing the wounding heart than with providing clients/patients with the tools needed to move freely and live life in a healthy manner. It is through the “liberation” of the human body that we get on with our life rather than being immobilized in a rigid physical structure. For Feldenkrais, stress is reduced through movement—whatever the source of this stress. If we heal the body, then the healed heart is likely to follow. It is a matter of digging in the dirt (physical movement-oriented therapy) rather than speaking from a balcony (verbally based therapy).

Healing the Heart: Wilhelm Reich

A very controversial (and some would say “mad”) psychoanalyst, Wilhelm Reich provided a very insightful observation about the “Character Armor” that some of us wear as a way to protect against vulnerability. Reich proposed that this armor was contained primarily in our muscular system.

Furthermore, it was a form of psychic defense that contained the history of the patient's traumas. For example, later in life, Reich attributed Freud's jaw cancer to his muscular armor, rather than his habit of excessive smoking. He went further, suggesting that Freud, as a Jew living in antisemitic Vienna, was always “biting down” impulses, rather than expressing them. Freud’s armor was thus concentrated in his mouth and throat.

Given this brief background, we are ready to address several questions in this essay: is Reich’s character armor the same that encumbered our beloved Tin Man of Oz? What about the tin women and men of mid-21st Century life? Like Sigmund Freud, our Tin Man required some treatment of his joints. However, was the Tin Man more fortunate than Freud in that he got some oil to liberate his armor and could join Dorothy, the scarecrow, cowardly lion and Toto in a mission-quest that would eventually liberate his heart?

These questions are important to ask—even if the Tin Man is a fictitious character in Frank Baum’s novels (and Hollywood’s movie). They are important to ask because we see Reich’s character armor in people with whom we associate (and perhaps in ourselves). We observe a pattern of rigid behavior and seeming indifference among many women and men to the interactions of people around them.

It is not that these men and women are sociopaths or hermits living in a cave. They work with and around other people and are often quite effective in getting their work done and monitoring the work of fellow employees. And these folks clearly care about those with whom they live and work – it is just that this caring attitude doesn’t show up very often. Like the Tin Man of Oz, they all have a large heart—but it is encased in their armor.

Character Armor

Character, as Reich uses the term, is equivalent to what today we call “personality.” We now tend to use the term “character” when describing the presence or absence of virtue in the decisions being made and actions taken by someone. For Reich, it is not a matter of virtue—it is much more a matter of the dynamics operating inside people who are quite rigid in their behavior as well as their values and perspectives on life. To the extent that “virtue” is a part of Reich’s “character armor” it is a virtue that is resistant to any change and is applied indiscriminately (and often with passion and a touch of vengeance) in all situations.

Having set the stage for Reich’s (1972, p. 155-156) presentation of a more detailed and systematic portrait of character armor, Reich offers the following description:

[W]e have to deal with . . . the factors that cause the character to assume the definite form in which it is operative. In this connection, it is necessary to call to mind some attributes of every character reaction. The character consists in a *chronic* change of the ego which one might

describe as a *hardening*. This hardening is the actual basis for the becoming chronic of the characteristic mode of reaction; its purpose is to protect the ego from external and internal dangers. As a protective formation that has become chronic, it merits the designation "armoring" for it clearly constitutes a restriction of the psychic mobility of the personality as a whole. This restriction is mitigated by the noncharacterological, i.e., atypical, relations to the outside world that seem to be open communications in an otherwise closed system. They are "breaches" in the "armor" through which, depending upon the situation, libidinal and other interests are sent out and pulled in again like pseudopodia. The armor itself, however, is to be thought of as flexible. Its mode of reaction always proceeds according to the pleasure-unpleasure principle.

We thus find that Reich's character armor has an atypical relationship with the outside world. The armor not only rigidifies internal dynamics, but also protects against the influence of the external world. Our Tin Man no doubt "weathered the storm" in his armored condition. The rain, wind and snow would have little impact on him.

Reich (1972, p. 155-156) continues:

In unpleasurable situations the armoring contracts; in pleasurable situations it expands. The degree of character flexibility, the ability to open oneself to the outside world or to close oneself to it, depending upon the situation, constitutes the difference between a reality-oriented and a neurotic character structure. Extreme prototypes of pathologically rigid armoring are the affect blocked compulsive characters and schizophrenic autism, both of which tend toward catatonic rigidity.

We find in this statement an interesting (and often overlooked) condition of Reich's character armor. It can expand and contract. While the armor always remains in place, it is "situationally" adaptive to the outside world. What would a "pleasurable situation" look like? Will psychotherapy make a difference? We will consider these matters shortly. Now on to the final section of Reich's (1972, p. 155-156) summary description of character armor:

The character armor is formed as a chronic result of the clash between instinctual demands and an outer world which frustrates those demands. Its strength and continued *raison d'être* are derived from the current conflicts between instinct and outer world. The expression and the sum total of those impingements of the outer world on instinctual life, through accumulation and qualitative homogeneity, constitute a historical whole. This will be immediately clear when we think of known character types such as "the bourgeois," "the official," "the proletarian/" "the butcher," etc. It is around the ego that this armoring is formed, around precisely that part of the personality which lies at the boundary between biophysiological instinctive life and the outer world. Hence we designate it as the character of the ego.

In this final statement, Reich seems to be paying homage to Freud's basic assumptions about the clash between instinctual urges (the Id) and societal expectations and requirements (the Ego). Reich moves beyond Freud, however, when he introduces up to the ways in which character armor relates to specific

societal roles (a topic to which I will turn shortly). At this point, we turn to the matter of flexible armor—does it suggest that armament can be a “state” condition rather than a “trait.”

Trait vs. State: Armor as character or symptom

Perhaps the most important questions to ask when seeking to treat the rigidifying effects of armor is to determine if the armor in one’s client or patient can readily be removed or if it remains firmly (and resistantly) in place. Can the armor be worn during battle but taken off when the battle no longer is being waged. If this is the case, then the armor can be considered a temporary and situationally based *State* of one’s personality. Does it expand and contract as Reich suggests?

Is the armor, instead, being worn even at home—long after the war is no longer being waged (and lions have long since left the savannah). We see armor being worn all the time in the painful and poignant portrayal of the drill sergeant in “The Great Santini” (a movie based on Pat Conroy’s novel). While armor probably should be worn when this man is training new Marine recruits, it should be taken off when he is at home. Instead, he wears the competitive armor while playing basketball with his son on a backyard court.

He overwhelms his young son and finishes the game by slamming the basketball into the net. He exits the court leaving behind a devastated son. The sergeant’s wife stops him and reminds him that the purpose of playing the game was not to win but instead to spend some quality time with his son. The sergeant had lost the father/son relationship game big time. He couldn’t take off his armor. Armor for the sergeant was permanent. Under these conditions, the armor is considered a permanent part of the person’s personality. It truly is character armor and is identified as a personality *Trait*.

I turn back to Reich’s (1972, p.48) own words to gain greater clarity on this issue:

Whereas the symptom corresponds solely to one definite experience or one circumscribed desire, the character, i.e., the person's specific mode of existence, represents an expression of the person's entire past. So a symptom can emerge quite suddenly, while the development of each individual character trait requires many years. We must also bear in mind that the symptom could not have suddenly emerged unless a neurotic reaction basis already existed in the character.

This statement would suggest that character armor is an established trait that is not easily changed. While character armor might not be embedded in one’s genes it is acquired gradually over time (from childhood to adolescence). While there might be state based “symptoms” that emerge periodically during one’s lifetime, the character armor is impervious to the outside world. The Tin Man could have remained unchanged (though perhaps rusted) for many years in the forest.

What then about the potential impact of psychotherapy on the armor—can therapy at least expand the armor. Here is what Reich (1972, p. 48) declares:

In the analysis, the neurotic character traits as a whole prove to be a compact defense mechanism against our therapeutic efforts, and when we trace the origin of this character "armor" analytically, we see that it also has a definite economic function. Such armor serves on

the one hand as a defense against external stimuli; on the other hand it proves to be a means of gaining mastery over the libido, which is continuously pushing forward from the id, because libidinal and sadistic energy is used up in the neurotic reaction formations, compensations, etc. Anxiety is continually being bound in the processes which are at the bottom of the formation and preservation of this armor in the same way that, according to Freud's description, anxiety is bound in the compulsive symptoms.

Thus, it seems that therapy can have only a limited impact—for the libido (and primitive impulses) are not going away meaning that one must remain on guard with armor fully in place.

Reich (1972, pp. 167-168) has this final statement to make about the matter of trait and state:

Summing up, we can also say that the neurotic character, both in its contents and in its form, is made up entirely of compromises., just as the symptom is. It contains the infantile instinctual demand and the defense, which belongs to the same or different states of development. The basic infantile conflict continues to exist. *transformed into attitudes which emerge in a definite form*, as automatic modes of reaction which have become chronic and from which, later, they have to be distilled through analysis.

By virtue of this insight into a phase of human development, we are in a position to answer a question raised by Freud: are repressed elements retained as double entries, as memory traces, otherwise? We may now cautiously conclude that those elements of infantile experience which are not worked into the character are retained as emotionally charge memory traces; whereas those elements which are absorbed into and made a part of the character are retained as the contemporary mode of reaction.

With this conclusion, we are inclined to consider Reich's character armor to be bound up in a highly resistant psychic formation. It is a trait that contains childhood memories and fears that are never forgotten or resolved. It is a trait that requires constant vigilance against powerful, ever-present instinctual drives and impulses. It contains armament that might expand or contract but is always present. The Tin Man remains unmoved—until Dorothy and the Scarecrow show up. Can contemporary Tin Men and Tin Women look forward to a liberating Dorothy or Scarecrow? Is there a squirt of oil and liberation of the heart to be found in the future of these rigidified men and women of the mid-21st Century/ That is the fundamental question to be addressed in this essay.

Armor as a holistic portrayal with a homeorhesis perspective.

In seeking to answer the question of treating character armor in the mid-21st Century I will dwell a bit longer on Reich's description of dynamics associated with the formation and maintenance of character armor. I approach this further analysis of Reich's work by offering a related concept: homeorhesis.

Central to Reich's conception of the psychic armament that is to be found among many people (especially those who come to him for therapy) is a version of what many systems theorists call "homeorhesis". While most of us are aware of the tendency of all systems to return to homeostasis (point of balance) if they are to remain viable, the process of homeorhesis is less commonly identified or

appreciated. This is the tendency of viable systems to return to some established pattern. It is not only that systems tend to return to some performance level (homeostasis)--systems also tend to return to a way in which this performance takes place (homeorhesis).

Reich (1972, pp. 51-52) has introduced a form of homeorhesis in his description of the dynamics operating in the formation and maintenance of armor:

The character armor is the molded expression of narcissistic defense chronically embedded in the psychic structure; In addition to the known resistances which are mobilized against each new piece of unconscious material, there is a constant resistance factor which has its roots in the unconscious and pertains not to content but to form. Because of its origin in the character, we call this constant resistance factor "character resistance."

It is in Reich's description of "character resistance" that we find the powerful process of homeorhesis ("typical behavior") in operation:

On the basis of the foregoing statements, let us summarize the most important features of character resistance.

Character resistance is expressed not in terms of content but normally, in the way one typically behaves, in the manner in which one speaks, walks, and gestures; and in one's characteristic habits (how one smiles or sneers, whether one speaks coherently or incoherently, how one is polite and how one is aggressive}.

It is not what the patient says and does that is indicative of character resistance, but how he speaks and acts; not what he reveals in dreams, but how he censors, distorts, condenses, etc. The character resistance remains the same in the same patient, regardless of content. Different characters produce the same material in a different way. The positive father transference of a woman suffering from hysteria is expressed and warded off differently than that of a woman suffering from a compulsive neurosis. Anxiety is the defense mechanism in the former; aggression in the latter.

For Reich (1972 p. 126), the basic orientation remains in place even if severity of the neurosis is reduced. Patterns of behavior remain in place even if they appear less often or in a less dramatic manner. Ideally, strong patterns of behavior that get us in trouble when we are anxious are now used in a helpful way. The pattern doesn't change—it just might be less disruptive:

. . . [T]he patient's entire being undergoes a "change," which is more apparent to people who do not often see the patient than it is to the analyst. The inhibited person becomes freer; the fear-ridden, more courageous; the overconscientious, relatively less scrupulous; the unscrupulous, more conscientious; but that certain indefinable "personal note" is never lost. It continues to show through, no matter how many changes are brought about. The overconscientious compulsive character will become reality oriented in his conscientiousness; the cured impulsive character will remain impetuous but less so than the uncured character; the patient cured of moral insanity will never take life too hard and will consequently always get through easily,

whereas the cured compulsive will always have some difficulty because of his awkwardness. Thus, though these traits persist even after a successful character analysis, they remain within limits which do not constrict one's freedom of movement in life to the extent that one's capacity for work and for sexual pleasure suffer from them.

It is in this very powerful pull to remain unchanged at a fundamental level that we observe Reich's holistic perspective in full operation. Like Feldenkrais, Reich views human behavior as a unified (and unifying) system that is not easily changed with regard to its fundamental properties (homeorhesis).

Impact of Armor

I conclude my reflections on Reich's character armor by pointing to the impact of the armor on the life of those who have clad themselves with this armor. In brief we know that character armor restricts movement and choice. Furthermore, it blocks the flow of energy and leads to the loss of energy—for considerable energy is required to contain anxiety. If the flow of energy is blocked, then there is little to combat the anxiety.

Put in other terms, character armor produces the "freeze" response that I wrote about in the first essay. We imagine lions (sources of anxiety), find these lions to be quite powerful and fast. As a result, we can neither fight the lion nor run away. Instead, we must "freeze" in place (hence the armor). This freeze, in turn, requires that our movement is restricted—and our choices limited. In this state of helplessness (and hopelessness) we are vulnerable to the attack of additional imaginary lions and to an even greater increase in anxiety. A vicious cycle is precipitated, leading not just to mental dysfunction but also the attack on physical health.

Reich (1972, pp. 82-83) offers his own insights:

[T]he character erects itself as a hard protective wall against the experiencing of infantile anxiety and thus maintains itself, notwithstanding the great forfeiture of *joie de vivre* which this entails. If a patient having such a character enters analytic treatment because of some symptom or other, this protective wall continues to serve in the analysis as a character resistance; and it soon becomes apparent that nothing can be accomplished until the character armor, which conceals and consumes the infantile anxiety, has been destroyed.

The central question can again be broached: can the character armor be "destroyed." Can the Tin Man actually discard his armor. What remains of the Tin Man when the armor is removed?

For Reich (1972, p. 200), the restriction in movement ("freeze") is actually brought about by the Ego (realistic element of self) in recognition that new environments can't be handled if the armor remains in place. In fact, the new environment is likely to trigger an even greater strengthening of the armor:

Through the armoring, therefore, the ego receives a certain strengthening. At the same time, however, and precisely as a result of this, the ego's ability to act and its freedom of movement are curtailed. And the more the armoring impairs the capacity for sexual experience, the more closely the ego's structure approximates that of a neurotic, the greater the likelihood of its future breakdown.

Thus, we see that character armor remains in place as a result of not just the challenge offered by instinctual impulses (functions of Freud's Id) but also recognition by realistic elements of one's internal psyche (functions of Freud's ego) that change and the movement to new environments will often make things even worse.

Given these reinforcing, homeorhesis dynamics, it is easy to appreciate the resistance of someone with strong character armor to embark on a journey of change. Why venture to Oz and its many challenges when it is quite adaptive to remain fully protected in the forest. I would suggest that the challenge to change is even more daunting for those people who cloth themselves with armor as part of their job.

The Armor of Uniforms and Roles

Sometimes, we see armor that people display in quite visible ways. They are wearing uniforms and are often engaged in roles that relate to safety and life-and-death issues. They are police officers, firemen, members of the military, physicians, and judges. We want to see them in uniform and are at least mildly disconcerted when they are in "civilian" clothes.

There is even the armor of the C-Suite. The men are "required" to wear coat-and-tie. There are the comparable tailored dress or pants suits for female execs. It is only the renegade software executive of Silicon Valley who can wear polo shirt and tan pants. It should be noted that the armor can be abandoned on casual Friday. Nowadays there is also the "anything goes" (at least below the waist) attire when working at home and communicating via Zoom.

The armor of those providing safety and treatment, as well as those in the C-Suite, seems in one sense to be very appropriate and justified for these men and women from diverse professions and occupations. It is a matter of collusion: we want these uniformed men and women to be error-free. They must at least pretend to be error-free. Better yet, wearing the armor, they come to believe themselves that their decisions and actions are error-free.

They need to reduce (perhaps even eliminate) their own cognitive dissonance: I must believe that I make no mistakes. Otherwise, as someone who is imperfect, I am undeserving of this uniform and the people's trust in me. Those in uniform are vulnerable to vulnerability (the shattering of their image). Who do they turn to for help – other members of their same role group? Uniformed people tend to hang around uniformed people. What about those who rely on the uniform? They are also vulnerable and need to ensure that they can trust the competence and intentions of those in uniform.

Armor and Persona

A "softer" version of Reich's character armor is to be found in the description of "persona" by Carl Jung and his associates (Jung, 2013). As a prominent psychoanalyst who broke away from Freud, Jung suggests that all of us carry around and present to other people a "mask" (persona) that allows us to present a self that is appropriate to the specific setting in which we find ourselves. While this persona can be changed somewhat from one setting to another, it tends to become rather stiff and unchanging as we grow older or as we begin work in a specific job and are assigned a specific role in our family and

society. The persona becomes rigid and takes on the characteristics (and pathology) associated with Reich's character armor.

The Persona does serve a positive function when it doesn't become rigid. Personas not only enable us to act in a predictable manner (which is reassuring to other people with whom we interact) but also enable us to "engineer" our own presentation self: we can be kind, humorous, challenging, aloof, earthy . . . whatever works best for us.

Most importantly, our persona protects us from vulnerability. Like the Cowardly Lion, we can appear to be fearless when we are actually terrified. We can appear competent when faced with a task that is way over our heads ("beyond our pay grade"). At times, we need a mask given the diverse and unexpected challenges of mid-21st Century life and work.

The Impostor Syndrome

Finally, there is the armor worn by an impostor. In returning to Oz, we know that the Wizard was an imposter. He was found out by Toto and soon had to provide "real" assistance to Dorothy, the Scarecrow, the Cowardly Lion – and our Tin Man. We might also view the Lion as an impostor. He is pretending to be ferocious – and brave—yet is actually a coward. We might even think of the cowardly lion and the Wizard as having their own armor. In many ways, the impostor away from Oz is simply one form of "celebrity" that is engaged for manipulative purposes. The manipulation leads to creation of a public figure that is either a distortion of reality (like the Lion) or an entirely fictionalized character (like the Wizard) that has been created by someone for personal gain and power.

As in the case of Sennett's analysis of the actor on stage, the impostor exists and is successful because other people go along with the false reality. In the world of Oz, it is only the dog, Toto, who points out the cowardly ways of the Lion as well as the deception of the Wizard. Without Toto's hold on reality, there is collusion between the impostor and his/her "audience."

Kets de Vries (2003) notes that we want to believe that the impostor is the real person. It is important (even critical) that this person is skillful, knowledgeable, kind or whatever we wish him/her to be. This is another case of dissonance reduction. Just as we want policemen to be honest, physicians to be knowledgeable and CEO's to be skillful, so we want the impostor to be the real thing (whether serving as an accountant or airline pilot).

Kets de Vries uses the term "true impostor" when describing the intentions and behaviors of those people whose "identity is based on impersonations rather than actual attainments and accomplishments." He uses a different term when describes the rest of us folk: "neurotic impostors." We are the "individuals who feel fraudulent and imposturous while actually being successful." We have "an abiding feeling that [we] have fooled everyone and are not as competent and intelligent as others think [we] are."

While Kets de Vries has identified a specific subset us who are living in contemporary times, we would suggest that the term "neurotic impostor" applies to most of us. It is recognition of the "persona" we carry with us most of the time or even the "character armor" we wear as a burden when interacting in

our challenging and ever-changing world. As a colleague once said (in quoting some unnamed source): “which of us won’t be taking the first train out of town tonight when told that all has been found out about us and will be revealed tomorrow to everyone in our life!”

Oiling the Armor: Moshe Feldenkrais

Unconscious dynamics were just as important for Moshe Feldenkrais as they were for Reich. However, these dynamics were primarily concerned with the implicit way in which human beings (and virtually all sentient organisms) engage and monitor their bodily functions and physical movements. From a physiological perspective we can point to the source of most monitoring of these functions and movements in the more primitive (reptilian) brain. Known officially as the archipallium brain, this sector of our brain resides primarily in the brain stem and consists of the medulla, pons, cerebellum, mesencephalon, the oldest basal nuclei – the globus pallidus and the olfactory bulbs.

We rarely pay attention to the operation of these functions or the coordination of these movements— unless we are attempting somehow modify one of these functions (very hard to do) or learn a new skill associated with the movement. For instance, we can pay attention to our breathing and try to slow it down, ensure that it is based in the movement of our belly, or simply decide to take a deep breath.

This is all fine and good; however, we can’t keep attending to our breathing. We must attend to other matters. So, at some time (in short order) our breathing once again becomes “unconscious” and is turned over to our reptilian brain. Similarly, we can learn a new way of hitting a golf ball or, for the first time, learn to ride a bike or steer a car. We are attentive to each (or at least most) steps in the required movement; however, once again we must eventually relegate this movement (now skillfully embedded) to the primitive sector of our brain.

Thus, the lack of consciousness comes not from a repression of primitive impulses, but rather from a relegation of many functions and movements to our primitive brain. We don’t block the movement of energy in our body as a result of anxiety; rather, we direct some of this energy to the “automatic” but essential life-sustaining functions of our body. Just as the free flow of energy requires that we “unfreeze” our psychic functions, so the proper functioning of our physical body requires that energy is free flowing and not “frozen” in place.

For Reich, the free flow of energy is the outcome: it helps us heal our heart; for Feldenkrais, the free flow of energy is the means to an outcome that is just as important: the freeing of our bodily functions and our movement. Feldenkrais provides the oil that frees the Tin Man to move and join the journey to Oz. Reich provides the psychic insights that enables the Tin Man to find his heart in Oz.

The Whole Body

At the heart of Feldenkrais perspective is a focus on the entire human body. He attends to all of the functions and movements that we tend to take for granted. At the center of Feldenkrais’s systemic

perspective, is one of the physical positions we assume that is often taken for granted: this is our Posture. Feldenkrais (1985, p. 53) firmly stakes his position regarding the importance of posture and corrects the limited (non-systematic) perspective that most of us take when thinking of posture:

First, the idea of posture itself is fairly new, and in most minds posture and position mean the same thing. Posture is misleading; it suggests fixity as much as position. For example, we say someone has a nice posture when we mean that she stands straight; that is, vertically, she stands as high as she can; in other words, she has assumed a straight vertical position. Well, one can assume a good position while having bad posture, because posture is concerned with the way the good or bad position is achieved.

It is here where Feldenkrais's systemic perspective becomes fully visible:

Position describes the location and configuration of the various segments of the body. Posture describes the use of the entire self in achieving and maintaining this or that change of configuration and position. Posture is therefore describing action, and is a dynamic term. One can slouch, lower the head, and adopt the most awkward position in good posture and assume the same position in very bad posture. Posture relates to the use made of the entire neuromuscular function, or more generally, the cerebrospinal whole; that is, the way the affect, the motivation, the direction, and the execution of the act is organized while it is performed. Posture must, therefore, be used to describe the way the idea of an act is projected and the way the different segments of the body are correlated to achieve a change or maintain a state. A cripple may have excellent posture, although the positions he assumes are all abnormal.

We see in Feldenkrais' perspective a holistic portrait of the human body. All elements of the body work together to yield a firm structure (posture) which can be conducive to positive health or conducive to ill-health. Furthermore, operating as a single, unified force and function, our body provides a tone that impacts profoundly on our sense of well-being. Much as Reich's character armor is a fully integrated feature of the human personality in some people, so the posture (representing the full body functioning) is an important feature of the human presentation of self and mode of navigation in the world.

Feldenkrais's posture (in its fullest systemic manifestation) provides us with a holistic sense of "well-being" much as Antonio Damasio's (2005) somatic template provides us with an ongoing (and typically unconscious) sense of mood—and well-being. Neither the information provided by our posture nor by our somatic template is conscious; however, it has just a great impact (or perhaps greater) on the way we think, feel and act in the world.

Touch

For Feldenkrais, additional emphasis is placed on another physically based aspect of human experience that is rarely acknowledged. This aspect is: Touch. Like Posture, Touch impacts on our basic sense of well-being—and strongly influences our interpersonal relationships.

In making the case for the important role played by Touch, Feldenkrais (1981, p. 5) notes that words can hide—however body (touch) can never hide:

Words, as somebody said, are more to hide our intentions than to express them. But I have never met anybody, man or animal, who cannot tell a friendly touch from an evil one. Touching, if unfriendly even in thought, will make the touched stiff, anxious, expecting the worst, and therefore unreceptive to your touch. Through touch, two persons, the toucher and the touched, can become a new ensemble: two bodies when connected by two arms and hands are a new entity. These hands sense at the same time as they direct.

I would push the analysis even further by suggesting that the “authority” to Touch another person is very important regarding all manner of social interactions. We touch other people by shaking their hand, giving them a hug, or simply touching their hand or shoulder. In recent years the matter of touch has taken on greater significance. Who can we touch and who can’t we touch? In what way, if any, can we touch other people? Politicians are allowed (even encouraged) to shake hands and perhaps a pat on the back and a hug for those who are close associates—but nothing more (as we know from some actual or threatened scandals). Gender, age and nature of relationship play a critical role. Social norms, conventions and even legal rules inform our touching behavior—as does the role we might be playing as a “professional.”

In the health care sector, for instance, some medical professionals (such as doctors and nurses) can “touch” a patient, while this is “off-limits” (other than handshakes) to administrative staff, technical support people and most volunteers. Teachers can’t touch their students, not can psychotherapists, lawyers, financial planners or architects (to mention just a few of the professions). Veterinarians can touch our pet – but not us! Those who cut or dress hair can touch (but not below the head), while physical therapists have full reign to touch most parts of our body. This is where Feldenkrais enters the picture as someone doing “physical therapy.” He can not only touch his clients, but also encourage them to touch and be touched by other people. It is all quite complicated—and seems to always be in flux.

Speech

Feldenkrais (1981, p. 143) goes on to trace out implications of non-verbal functions (particularly tone of speech) that are operating in the human body for psychotherapy:

Many things are not obvious. Most psychotherapies use speech to get to unconscious, forgotten, early experience. Yet feelings go on in ourselves long before speech is learned. Some pay attention not to what is said but to how it is said. Doing this enables one to find the intentions behind the structure of the phrasing, so that one can get to the feelings that dictated the particular way of phrasing. In short, how one says what one does is at least as important as what one says.

In this statement, we find Feldenkrais pointing to the “nonverbal” aspects of speech—which have received more attention in recent years [notably through the writings of Albert Mehrabian (2007)]. Once again, we find an element of human behavior (how we speak) that is rarely conscious—but is often telling (especially to other people) regarding our attitudes about not only ourselves but also the person

with whom we are relating. It is not only touch that can rarely hide. It is also how we convey words. We can point to numerous analysts of nonverbal communication over the years who have identified many other ways in which deep-seated attitudes, emotions and interpersonal concerns “leak out” through our facial expressions and spatial distance from other people—as well as Feldenkrais’ posture and tone of voice. (e.g. Sommer,1969; Hall, 1990)

Habits of thought

With the assessment by Feldenkrais of the power inherent in many bodily functions—I have only mentioned three (posture, touch, tone of speech)—are we likely to find that this power extends to the very way in which we think. While it is clear from Damasio’s analysis, that the somatic template can at times disrupt and distract our thought processes, it is another matter to suggest that our body influences the very way in which we think about our own internal psychic processes and about the world in which we operate. We know that non-verbal movements (such as touch) and tone of voice can impact our relationships with other people—do changes in these relationships change the way in which we think: We know that our gut has more neural links to our brain than any other system in our body—but does this mean that our thinking is influenced by what is happening in our Gut.

The most obvious way in which to make a connection between physical functions and bodily movements as they might influence thought is to consider their impact not on the slow, deliberative thinking that is based primarily in the pre-frontal cortex, but in the fast, often habitual thinking that is based primarily in our limbic system (particularly the amygdala). Given that the limbic system is more closely tied in with the reptilian brain, it is easier to speculate that the fast thinking (portrayed by Daniel Kahneman, 2013) is more vulnerable to “bodily” influences than is slow thinking. Kahneman focuses in particular on the heuristics that form the base for fast thinking.

Heuristics, such as relying on the latest information we have received or looking at the world in the same way as most other people, will mostly play a central role if we are tired, distracted or anxious. These conditions are all related to bodily functions. We might push it even further. Are there “bodily heuristics.” Do we move beyond the knee jerk reaction when we respond automatically (and autonomically) to a particular state of body? Are there some fundamental heuristics associated with our posture.

Just as character armor may influence the way in which we think and feel about ourself and our world, so our posture (viewed from Feldenkrais’ holistic perspective) might help to determine or at least frame the way in which we think about ourself and our world. Perhaps there is a heuristic associated with feeling in or out of “alignment” or a heuristic associated with being “in touch” or “out of touch” with an idea or feeling.

It is not just our thinking and our bodily functions that become habitual, but also our resulting behavior. We are engaged in actions, to use the title of one of Feldenkrais’s books, that are elusively obvious. We know these behaviors are occurring but fail to acknowledge their prevalence. One of Feldenkrais’s acolytes, Alfons Grabher (2010, p. 55), puts it this way:

For very common tasks we do many hundred times per day, like turning the head to the left and back to centre again, everyone has their way of doing so. It's far more difficult to look at the details of this move because they are hidden by habits. To look beyond these habits and become aware of the actual movement, is a key learning requisite in the Feldenkrais Method. Being able to learn to focus on movement itself (instead of focusing on a goal) is an intrinsic part of every lesson.

We can turn specifically to Feldenkrais's (1981 p. xxix) own words:

Many troubled relationships come from inadvertently carrying over seemingly good habits of thought to where they do not apply. Somehow we behave as if good habits are always good. We think or rather feel that we need not bother about behaving otherwise. It is not so obvious that good habits can make us unhappy. It is an elusive truth. Yet habitual lack of free choice is often, nay, usually, disastrous.

This final point made by Feldenkrais is a real dilly. He goes beyond the Behavior Economists in their suggestion that habitual (heuristic-based) thinking and decision-making is easy to do and is likely to be the fallback when we are tired, distracted or under stress. Feldenkrais suggests that we somehow assign a positive value to these habits and that we are not motivated to seek out alternatives to our habits.

Leon Festinger (1957) and his colleagues in the field of social cognitive psychology might propose that we are likely to experience very uncomfortable cognitive dissonance when considering new habits (and declaring our old habits to be less than great). Feldenkrais offers a simpler explanation: we are often happy with our current habits and see no reason to change them. Truth about the actual destructive impact of many habits apparently is quite "elusive."

I would offer a third option. Our habits and the way we move and portray ourselves (in clothes, mannerism and modes of speech) are reinforced by the deeply embedded social norms and expectations of the society in which we live and operate. The truths about our habits are elusive precisely because they are supported and encouraged by the social system in which we live. Like fish that swarm in our seas, we are not only unaware that there is an alternative to the swarm but are also unaware that we are swimming in water. I illustrate this point by turning to an analysis offered by Richard Sennett—a highly insightful critic of social behavior.

The Fall of Public Man

Much as we went beyond Reich's own perspectives to reflect on the armor that is found in society—as a way of exploring the armor to be found among 21st Century men and women—so we will go beyond Feldenkrais's analysis to explore an element of human behavior to be found in society. In this case we first turn back to the way people related to one another at an earlier period of time. In *The Fall of Public Man*. Richard Sennett (1976) writes about the shift in human behavior and non-verbal expressions that occurred in European society several centuries ago. These shifts relate directly to what Feldenkrais has to say about the influence of human functions and bodily movement on our sense of self and society.

For many years, the condition of European cities was deplorable. Sewage ran in the streets (which were nothing more than muddy wastelands of filth and disease). The bodies of those living in these conditions were constantly being challenged. Men wore hats and walked with their women folk on the curb side of the street because inhabitants of the rooms located in the buildings beside them were pitching their waste products out the window and onto the street (and hats) below. Human movement was being strongly influenced by life on the streets.

Under these conditions, there was no need to “dress up” when going outside. Rather, formal wear was reserved for “at home” living. Men, women and children wore their fine clothes at home and presented their refined manners at home. Thus “private man” was refined. They left their courser behavior for the streets outside—where a primitive battle was being engaged between their own health and the pollution to which they were exposed.

Contrasting with “private man”, “public man” was crude and less restrained. Reich would say that the character armor was reserved for domestic life during these times. Feldenkrais would say that the freedom to act in public was a source of anxiety-reduction (as compared to the limits to action required in the home). The Jungians would concur that the “persona” was most consistently engaged at home and that the “persona’ was less restrictive in public.

According to Sennett, this all changed with improvement in the conditions of European cities (as well as shifts in numerous other conditions of European societies). Folks began to dress up when going outside and dressed in a more informal manner when at home. They were suddenly less restricted in their movements when in their own domestic setting. Feldenkrais would suggest that this might have changed the very way in which these “private” men and women viewed themselves and the outside world.

We see this at an extreme during the second half of the twentieth century, with the common attire at home often being sweatpants. This looser and more comfortable clothing allowed not only for the abandonment of restrictive armor (dressing formally), but also for the opportunity for free action and exercise (after all, “sweatpants” were initially intended for exercise and athletic endeavors). By contrast, as we have already noted, the office attire became suits, ties, pants suits and finely styled hair. In the twenty first century, as we have also noted, the options have expanded with “casual Fridays”, work at home, and digital communication. Do we find that “casual” attire and “casual” behavior results in “casual” thought and feelings?

Richard Sennett wants us to remain for a little while in an era when public man became more formal and ceased to be the less protected, hat-wearing citizen of an earlier era. He noted that there was one sector of European society that remained quite open, unprotected and devoted to dramatic activity: this was the actor in theater (and later movies). This person not only exposed the vulnerability of mankind in the roles he/she played on stage, but also was “victim” of exposes of their real life. They were subject to public scandals (“acting out”) as extensively conveyed in newspapers and other printed tabloids (and later radio and television).

In essence, the actor signed a pact with the devil: I get to be successful in show business but yield the rights to my personal life. Sennett noted that this led to the creation of “celebrity” status. Furthermore, celebrity-status soon was assigned not only to actors and actresses, but also political figures and even some business leaders. We are fully aware of this Faustian trade-off today: if you want to be successful in many fields, you must become “famous” and a “celebrity” with your personal life (strengths and weaknesses) all available for public display and analysis. We need only look at the public scandal created by Wilhelm Reich and Moise Feldenkrais—who were both “outliers.” For Feldenkrais this meant the constant struggle to gain a “positive reputation” with his practices being considered “reputable” rather than being “fringy.” For Reich this outlier status even meant incarceration and untimely death

How do we work with a public figure – a “celebrity”—who has lost her/his private self? What do they protect? In exposing their own vulnerability do they teach other people, inspire openness among other people, or simply play into the fantasy worlds and envy of their public? To what extent are the leaders with whom we work – who do not qualify as “celebrities”—burdened with some of the trade-offs of “celebrity-ship” (without all of the financial remuneration)?

The key issue would seem to be the setting of appropriate boundaries. When does “public man” (and “public woman”) step out of the spotlight? We often help our highly successful clients to find a sanctuary to which they can retreat (Bergquist, 2017). This sanctuary should not only provide strong boundaries, but also be a source of renewal and a place where our client can act freely!

They can interact with family, friends and colleagues who are fully trustworthy. For the client we have already mentioned, it is purchasing a home in another city where she can be “herself.” One of our other clients finds this sanctuary closer to him. It is his sailboat which is moored in a nearby bay. For a third client it is her cottage on a lake. One of our other clients identifies his sanctuary as nothing more than the daily trip by car into work.

There is also the matter of “retirement.” When does the public figure step away from her highly conscribed and quite public role? What is her next role in life? And can she find gratification in this new role? What about the legacy that this public figure leaves behind? It is important for our client to recognize that she may be stepping “off stage” but her accomplishments (and stumbles) will remain “on stage” for many years to come. In some sense, she is only slowly retreating from the spotlight. She can now act with greater freedom—the armor can be replaced with a comfortable sweatsuit.

Vulnerability: Armor and Heart

In conclusion, we return to the work of Manfred Kets de Vries. He proposes that leaders are often addressing the vulnerability of those working with them, as well as their own vulnerability. The more vulnerable we are in any specific situation, the more challenged is our own psychological equilibrium (Kets de Vries, 2003). In seeking to re-establish equilibrium, we are likely to engage in splitting (separating the world into clear cut “goods” and “bads”), projection (ascribing to other people what we reject in ourselves), or denial (refusing to acknowledge what is going on inside ourselves or in our environment). These are all primitive defensive routines that we witness going on all around us today

(and not just in our clients). They are routines that rigidify our persona and block the movement of energy in our body. We arm ourselves on behalf of our vulnerability.

Facing this vulnerability, we must gain a steady sense of self, gain the capacity to test reality, and tolerate anxiety and uncertainty in our life—if we are to set aside our armor. Kets de Vries suggests the following goal: “the ease with which the individual can articulate his thoughts and emotions, his ability to perceive the relationship between his thoughts, feelings, and actions, and his desire to learn . . .” We would suggest that these goals are worthy of our efforts to shed our own armor—or work with those who are heavily armored.

This work is especially important when we are addressing the needs of women and men who face the challenge of leadership or are in the business of providing safety and ensuring equity in our troubled society. At times, they must clad themselves with armor, cloak themselves with a persona, or confront their own sense of being an impostor who might soon be exposed. They must think twice about actions that they take and about how these actions can help to relieve the inevitable anxiety that they experience. All of this is inevitable—but it need not be habitual. We should all check out own armor, our restricted movement, our persona and our impostor-fears. Are we vulnerable? Are we stuck? Do we know when to move and where to go? Are we immune or perhaps frozen in place? Answers are required.

Conclusions: Reich meets Feldenkrais

The two men never meet though their “conceptual” paths crossed at the Esalen Institute in California. Both Feldenkrais and Reich’s protégé, Alexander Lowen, provided training at Esalen. This is a legendary retreat site where body and mind intermingled during the late 20th Century. It was a primary site of the human potential movement in the United States. Furthermore, the spirit of Fritz Perls and Gestalt was alive and well at Esalen—along with the rich and provocative theories and perspectives of Fritjof Capra, Theodore Roszak, George Leonard—and Abraham Maslow

By contrast, the training provided by Feldenkrais in Massachusetts would have been less oriented toward the Gestalt-based integration of body and mind, and more oriented toward the structural mechanics of bodily movement (Feldenkrais’s background). Differences between the orientations offered at Esalen and Amherst probably paralleled the contrast between East Coast human relations training (offered by the National Training Laboratories in Bethel Maine) and West Coast human potential training (offered at Escalon and other seaside and wooded settings).

I would suggest that the perspectives and practices of Reich and Feldenkrais have converged in recent years with the formulation of an integrative model of physical and mental health treatment. Called the *Biopsychosocial* approach to the assessment and treatment of human ills (Satterfield, 2013), we suspect that both Reich and Feldenkrais would have smiled at the alignment of this approach with their own views. They might even have gently (in the case of Feldenkrais) or more vociferously (in the case of Reich) taken some credit for the formulation of this approach – and with some justification. Most importantly, they would have found that this integrative approach might guide effective treatment of tin

men and women of our mid-21st Century world. Perhaps these restricted and self-wounding clients could now begin to move freely –and their heart could be healing.

We thank all members of our treatment team for the wisdom they offer and the hope they engender in treating rusted armor and encased hearts.

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