

The Unconscious Is the Body Yes, But Which Body?

by Germana Ponte

translated from the original Italian with the help of Bruna Blandino

After 12 years of practicing and teaching Focusing I got one thing clear: the unconscious is not the physical body in a narrow sense. The physical body is certainly involved in the felt sense forming process, but there is more. Gendlin himself says that in Focusing the body is something more, something wider than the physical body. I would say it is about our whole being in the world.

Let's have a closer look at a practical example. If someone insults me, one of the ways I could sense that is "as if I got punched in my stomach." But please note that is "as if..." and I didn't get a real punch. It is rather a bodily impression that summarizes a complex event. Behind this impression, there is a form of intelligence that knows everything about me. It knows what the insulting person means to me, it knows how much I value what was insulted, and much more. It is not a cognitive intelligence, which might summarize the event by saying, "how does this person dare to insult me," "maybe I deserve it," or "what have I done to this person to make them behave like this?" And so on.

Rather, I want to focus on this implicit intelligence. It seems to work in the background, regardless of my awareness, and it seems to know much more about me than my conscious knowing. It works through its knowledge at the speed of light and summarizes it in a felt sense, which holds all the elements of this small drama.

Let me give you a personal example. If I had to synthesize the core of my personality, I would say that at around age 4, I had reached this existential conclusion: "Fuck you all (referring to adults), I'll do it myself." This decision determined my way of being in the world. But, did that small child really think and decide this? I would say not at all. I have another significant memory going back to that time. I remember I always wanted to "understand" what the adults were saying to me, what they were really meaning, the nature of things that were surrounding me, etc. I was understanding a little of everything but then a fog dimmed my view. It is the natural order of things, since my cognitive part was still developing at that time. And yet, there was already an implicit intelligence able to sum up my experiences and to decide, making basic imprints on my life.

This implicit intelligence learns from experience but it is too complex and extraordinary to ascribe only to evolution. Something tells me that it is more similar to an intelligent program that evolves and interacts with the world. Or better, life on earth is like a series of programs that accompany different levels of evolved life, allowing all to play this game of life. I believe that there are three basic programs, which are then customized. They manage three evolutionary levels: existing, doing, and thinking (the last one is, by now, only for humans).

In a word, there is much more in us than what we have so far understood about the true nature of living beings. And Focusing is the best instrument I know to unveil this amazing mystery, because it enables a subjective approach, as a “science from within,” as Gene pointed out. Now it’s our turn to carry his work forward.

If you are interested in knowing more about my point of view on this topic I invite you to read my book: *Il Focusing e la Saggezza Del Corpo: Dalla Persona all'Essenza* (Focusing and Body Wisdom: From Person to Essence). I hope that it will be available online in English by the end of 2018.