

## CONFERENCE REVIEW

# Body Psychotherapy During a Time of Pandemic

*International Online Conference*

December 19<sup>th</sup>, 2020 ■ Bologna, Italy

## Madlen Algafari

# W

hen Covid brings together a planet of body psychotherapists...

This international online conference, held in Bologna in December 2020, was organized by the Società Italiana di Biosistemica, and presented by Maurizio Stupiggia and Rosanna de Sanctis.

The one-day conference delivered a memorable experience. Offering various perspectives on the pandemic, the gathering was heartwarming, well-organized, mind-opening, and universally unifying. The moderators wisely introduced the speakers, who did a marvelous job connecting psychotherapy, biology, arts, aesthetics, philosophy, and the architecture of space and time.

Our Spring/Summer 2021 issue will present the major talks delivered during this one-day international conference. In preparation for the upcoming issue, Madlen Algafari, our editor-in-chief, gathered some noteworthy thoughts and presentation excerpts.

### Maurizio Stupiggia

University of Milan

*“Common suffering unites us, connects us to our ancestors, and to those we are close to. We must stop denying the irreversibility of the new! We can react with denial, with panic, with simplification... or with growth. We must talk not only of post-traumatic stress, but also of post-traumatic growth.”*

### Li Wentian

Wuhan Mental Health Center

*“We, the selected 180 volunteer members of the psychological support team at the psychological rescue hotline during the Wuhan pandemic, share our expertise... We have fine-tuned a three-step system to address the psychological health of our population, including the doctors, Covid sufferers, their families and children, the elderly, as well as all those who had suffered from the disease. Our research shows that despite the rising depression levels, suicide rates have not increased. Even though the need for dealing with everyday psychological issues has increased, previous psychological problems have decreased. Our research also showed that somatization among Wuhan citizens has increased more than in other Chinese cities.”*

### Fabio Carbonari

Reich Institute, Rome

*“The words emerge and emergency have the same root.*

*The virus is not a foe. It awakens the search for meaning.”*

## Frank Rohricht

London University

*"We examine the positive aspects of this negative situation, and how it stimulates personal growth in the areas of improvement of close relations, social support and mutual help, self-dependence, creativity, searching for a meaningful context, turning toward inner resources."*

## Ozden Bademci

Maltepe University, Istanbul

*"In our research, we evaluated how our body psychotherapy students were dealing with the experience of these months of pandemic."*

*The conclusion is that the pandemic is an opportunity to rely on ourselves, to grow, to turn inwards and question ourselves. An opportunity to get to know ourselves."*

## Vittorio Gallese

University of Parma

*"We have become more distant yet closer. There is no I without You. We are homo duplex... Mirror neurons register the same activity during online contact as with live contact."*

## Corrado Sinigaglia

University of Milan

*"We need to be physically close to perceive the other's agency, while with online contact something changes in the subjectivity. Interaction between us is hindered, trust decreases, the third neutral space – our office – is missing."*

## Genovino Ferri

New York Academy of Sciences

*"Dialogue becomes triologue in online contact. Instead of here-and-now, we have here-there-and-now with a deficit of sensory stimulation. If we cannot feel, we cannot know, and we cannot feel without a body!"*

*We are interconnected with everything on the planet.*

*The virus came along to remind us of this!"*

## Giovanni Stanghellini

University of Chieti

*"The pandemic enhances one vector of our lives, and that is disembodiment!"*

*The connection with our most primal senses is severed. This dematerialization is dragging us away from our nature..."*

*While some patients reveal themselves more through Zoom, others cannot do without physical contact."*

## Gabriel Graca de Olivera

University of Brasil

*"The world is seen as dangerous – where should we seek protection?"*

*Masks depersonalize us – we all have the same face...*

*Many patients feel the lack of real physical contact with their loved ones... The Self can only exist in the context of relations. Two presences are necessary for a true meeting! The relation through the screen is more superficial."*

## Rubens Kignel

University of São Paulo

*"Microorganisms live in us just like we live on Earth. The virus teaches us solidarity – just like the cells in our body are in solidarity with the vast number of viruses, bacteria, and fungi within us. We cannot live without this impurity; it is at the basis of life. Otherwise, the striving towards absolute purity will lead us to Hitler, to intolerance and discrimination – to the racial, the religious, the gender- or disability-based..."*

*Psychotherapy seeks the truth in order to set us free! Freedom is within! We are finding internal freedom in the contact with ourselves. Silence is freedom!"*

## Stephen Porges

Indiana University

*"Until now, we did not link the screen with what is personal. Intimacy was linked to live contact. Now, we have discovered that a screen can also give us that feeling... From the polyvagal point of view, online contact could even be more relaxed and less anxious for some patients..."*

*We have a coronavirus pandemic announced by the media, but we also have a pandemic of subsequent consequences."*

## Massimo Biondi

University of Rome

*"Visceral resilience in unexpected times positions us between miracle and fear... When we are prepared, we know the possibilities, but lack of preparation calls on resilience...It is as if we had lost our ability to deal with the unthinkable, the unpredictable, the irreversible, the incommunicable, the indefinite, the incomplete, the immeasurable. Adapting to the current situation requires effort... There is individual resilience, but there is also community resilience as a stress coping mechanism. Small joys pave the way towards big survival. Body psychotherapy supports this resilience."*

