

Working notes on two chapters in theoretical concerns which support a primary clinical practice in dance therapy

Dr Marcia B. Leventhal



*Dr. Leventhal, PhD, BC-DMT, CMA, NCC, is a dance movement therapy pioneer (second generation) from the US. Her theoretical contributions to the field include: *The Integrative Treatment Model* ©, *The Conscious Healing Dance* ©, *The Quantum Healing Dance* © and *Dance Therapy as a Primary Treatment Modality* ©. These models allow the delivery of age and developmentally appropriate treatment programs for a wide variety of both clinical and non-clinical populations, within holistic/humanistic treatment models. They are also informed by her training worldwide in alternative and complementary healing practices. Dr Leventhal was Director of the Graduate Dance/Movement Therapy Program at New York University (Professor from 1973-1990); founded the first two European Programs in Stockholm, Sweden, and at Froebel College, Roehampton University, UK and co-founded the International Dance Therapy Institute of Australia (IDTIA), where she developed the diploma of dance therapy. She also co-founded the Dance Therapy Institute of Princeton and founded intensive training programs in Kyoto, Japan, Buenos Aires, Argentina, Athens,*

*Greece, as well as teaching in many other countries. And together with her colleague Dr. Ilene Serlin, she is the Co-Founders and Co-Director of the International Institute for Advanced Training in Dance Movement Therapy, currently directing training in China, Istanbul, Turkey, and throughout the USA. She has received many awards and grants for her innovative and healing training programs and is widely published and in the process of working on her book *Journey to the Heart of Matter; Dance Therapy as an Agent of Change and Transformation*.©*

Abstract

The content of the following two items will form the basis of two chapters in a book currently being written by Dr Leventhal. The first about *The Healing Model of Therapeutic Dance* has been developed from an introductory lecture for dance therapy training used by Dr Leventhal both close to home and overseas and most recently in China. The second is similarly being prepared from her lecture notes on *The integration of two paradigms: the Newtonian and the Quantum*. They both form the basis of models and concepts used by Dr Leventhal in her work and are being shaped towards being chapters. As such, we're very privileged to be able to read them at this stage and take advantage of the content in our work. The first chapter in the making is about the structure of the theoretical treatment model of healing dance, which highlights the importance of having a structure to work from in the first instance. It is needed as a foundation for the development of methods and techniques with which to work, as well as and most importantly, a basis from which measures can be taken. This is followed by another chapter in the making which involves the juxtaposition of the Newtonian and Quantum worlds. Dr Leventhal uses both in her work, leading her clients towards finding ways of becoming more personally involved in dance movement and at a level deep enough to find personal themes that can lead them into journeys that can be indescribable. As our access to these two chapters is really privileged, it is requested that written permission is sort prior to copying, translating or quoting. Contact via email: drumbleventhal@gmail.com
Website: www.marciableventhal.com

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Working notes on: The Healing Model of Therapeutic Dance

A model offers us a structure and a theoretical foundation to build methods and techniques. It essentially allows us to measure goals vs. results and to build a body of knowledge of this particular discipline.

So, I will briefly share a few of the most relevant and outstanding elements, theory building blocks of this model, which helps us to organize and develop the dance experience into a potent and reliable modality; with a potential to reach individuals in treatment and to help them move through and into more satisfying emotional, social and personal fulfillment. Essentially, how? and what? are the key, underlying principles causing a therapeutic dance experience to grow, will be presented in this introductory lecture.

But first, allow me to share a bit of historical background and antecedents which are the foundation and elemental to a healing dance model.

1. The roots of dance therapy in its modern practice worldwide are founded in what John Martin (1965) has referred to as the “basic dance.....the dance arising from an innate potentiality of all human beings the presence of a stirred up emotional state”. Dance is the oldest form of psychotherapy known to human kind. It has been and still is a tool used by ancient Priests, medicine men and shamans. The Greeks used it to achieve states of ecstasy and abandonment, not unlike modern theory and usage of catharsis. Dance was how ancient man made sense of his world. Dance calmed one when anxious; dance prepared one for major life events (birth, puberty, weddings, rites of passage, prep for the harvest and for the hunt). Dance seemed to fulfill deeply rooted, universal urges in humans to express themselves---especially when words aren't potent or descriptive enough to express what one is feeling or longing for. In some ways dance filled the same functions that modern psychotherapy does today—helping individuals make sense of their world—both inner and outer.

2. Isadora Duncan, an early pioneer in modern dance and self-expression said : “For me, the dance is not only the art that gives expression to the human soul through movement, but also the foundation of a complete conception of life; more free, more harmonious, more natural.” And from another early modern dancer who saw the power of moving and being able to express deep seated

feelings and emotions: “the dance is not only an act of time and space; it also is the art of the consciously lived and fulfilled moment”.*

In dance therapy, there is an implied and inherent intent to assist an individual to move through blocked growth patterns and unfold into ones' fullest potential. We are not concerned with teaching someone to dance as a skill for performance or for choreography, but rather, working through issues and themes as they become manifest in ones physicalized, expressive movement and developing a range of movement to be able to express and to hold for a greater sense of one's self and potential---this is what is key to the therapeutic process. Dr. Valerie Hunt found that: “the healthy body is a flowing, interactive, electro-dynamic energy field. Motion is more natural to life than non-motion. Things that keep flowing are inherently good. What interferes with flow will have detrimental effects. As energy flows, neuropeptide information chains are apparently activated to facilitate normal healing responses”.

3. Movement expression is basic in communication, in personality development and in organic growth. We have found that by changing the expressed movement behavior, we have the opportunity to change the inner, felt world, and vice versa!

4. This model encompasses theory and elements from a wide variety of sources; perceptual motor and sensory motor development; pre-learning skills; interpersonal relationships, creative process and imagination development.

5. But key, and basic, and greatly influenced and accessed through healing dance movement experiences are:

A.-Ego/ core authentic self-development; It was Sigmund Freud who actually allowed us as dance therapy professionals to have so much of what we saw happening with clients to be validated by this early observation made by the Father of Psychodynamic and modern psychotherapeutic practice. What Freud disclosed was: “The ego is first and foremost a body-ego, it is not merely a surface entity, but it is itself the projections of a surface.....the ego is ultimately derived from bodily sensations, chiefly those springing from the surface

of the body....it may thus be regarded as a mental projection of the body". And having taken this building block of the model even further, Freud's daughter, Anna Freud in her research with mothers and infants helped her to discover that (when we begin to work with deeply seated emotional disturbances and issues), the infant often carries the affect from the Mother. So in my practice I have often been able to assist individuals in developing a more authentic self concept and identify by discovering or distinguishing what is their emotional context and what might still be a remnant from a very early bonding with the mother.

B- Another key building block allowing us to develop a model affecting sound practice and research possibilities is the effect that dance movement experiences may have upon the creation and development of the body image and the subsequent self concept of the individual. Initially research has shown us that the initial forming of the body image is created via various sensory stimulation in the infant's environment and in their relationship with their mother or caretaker. Paul Schilder, an early researcher in the development of the body image, found that it was through various kinds of actual movement and moving that a body image could be formed or dissolved. I personally studied the effect of body image on the development of a healthy self concept and how that would affect a child's socialization development. It was research done in the first master's thesis ever written about dance therapy, and the results were accepted. Subsequently, over the years many dance movement therapists have studied the role of dance therapy in the forming and re-building of a positive body image. Of course, ultimately, we are able to integrate and organize methods and techniques which blend the theory and knowledge from body-ego explorations and body image development.

C. Another key and important area in building and developing our model is the relationship of range of movement expression to self development and perceptual openness to change. Early research by Dr. Valerie Hunt found that the greater the range of movement a

person could experience, the greater their range of possibilities for understanding and reacting in their personal world. The take away piece here is that the more range in movement available to us, the larger our choices in understanding and thinking. We work with range when we explore through moving the basic elements of movement which are usually referred to as Force, Time, Space and Flow. Each of these elements can be experienced directly by experiencing their continuum. For example, Force has a continuum from light or gentle, to strong. Flow from Free to Bound, Time from sustained to accelerated or quick, etc. These elements of movement are in themselves the crucial building blocks of all movement expression and in our training, we learn to objectify and to explore moving preferences and their relationship to personality, to emotions, to even body image. Hunt found that if range of feeling expression, or perceptual reception is limited, then perception leading to reality testing and subsequent interpersonal relating will also be severely impeded.

There are many other elements which we apply and integrate into the model, but this is just a small taste and introduction of how we may begin to study the efficacy of the expressive, dance event in healing and change. Naturally we study and learn about the needs of specific populations, as we deal with energy flow and moving metaphors (For example: balance, alignment, control and strength, or self-empowerment, or "standing on our own two feet"). Research in dance therapy has shown that significant changes occur within dance therapy treatment. For example: with special populations of children we found improvements in attention/relatedness and other key learning skills. We have found that the energy "released" during dance movement therapy sessions functions as a mobilizer and has a tendency to reduce fragmentation and diminish defenses and allow for the facilitation and integration of feelings with thoughts and actions. Further, in energizing and having the opportunity to find a non-verbal voice in energy expression, depression and anxiety reactions are lessened and decreased.

In summary, the roots of dance therapy are in the ancient healing practice of dance; only in dance therapy, the focus and intent shifts to creating a holding environment for the therapeutic processes to unfold - working towards and in process and

not a product. The following assumptions are basic to our model of healing through dance:

1. Movement expression of an individual is reflective of intra-psychic dynamics.
2. A change in movement expression will result in a personality or behavioral change.
3. The greater the range of movement, the more adaptable or better able to cope with the changes and stresses of ones' environment.

4. As dance movement processes and elements develop during the training we will be offering, we will learn how dance movement helps one to re-connect with one's basic essence, rhythmic expression and life force; leading to a union with our creative source, our higher self, our fullest manifest potential.

*As these are notes from a chapter in the making, some are not yet referenced.

Working notes on the integration of two paradigms: The Newtonian and the Quantum

Dr Marcia B. Leventhal

The material that we will be exploring offers us a way to not only interpret a clients' discoveries, but also a method in which we are able to embrace and include phenomena with which we may not yet be familiar or be comfortable with. That is, expressive phenomena viewed from our clients which does not easily fit into more known theoretical models, such as for example: Object relations theory, Psychodynamic theory, etc. What I will share with you developed from many years and numerous individuals reporting from clients or workshop attendees of "hard to describe" experiences after moving with a spontaneous flow and involvement in dance movement therapy (DMT) sessions.

Also, my needing to find a way to understand what they were expressing and give meaning and substance to what they were describing – needed to be able to place them into some sort of context in which life changes and discoveries could be facilitated and understood.

Discovery of these two paradigms, the Quantum and the Newtonian, developed after many years of first working with the Integrative Treatment Model. This early model served as a foundational structure for the dance therapy sessions, regardless of which client population were being served, as it covered an Educational component, a Creative Process component and a Therapeutic Mode component, which seemed to allow me a way to define methods and goals in dance movement therapy. Ultimately, after many years

and many hours of working with clients and their reporting of experiences in DMT, I became aware that something else was needed. Understanding Object Relations Theory, Ego Psychology and Psychoanalytic Theory, and etc. were important but did not help in offering a full picture of what clients in DMT were discovering and reporting. As a matter of fact, I eventually discovered that a Psychodynamic model actually limited us in understanding the full impact of our own and our clients discoveries found via dance movement experiences.

What I found was that the model was substantial as a foundation for both developing interventions for clients' needs, and contained multiple theories for interpreting clients' expressive behavior, but based on the phenomenon that clients were reporting, there needed to be another aspect to it. Always, in my personal development of theory and methodology in the field, as I was developing the DMT program at New York University, Roehampton University in the UK and for the IDTIA in Australia and numerous other programs worldwide, I became aware that there needed another umbrella/paradigm/perceptual mode for understanding and describing "hard to explain" phenomena. We could look at, for instance, developmental challenges and milestones for special populations and be able to offer important DMT interventions. Interventions that were crucial and that we could offer psychodynamic interpretations when working with our more verbal, higher functioning clients; but still

something seemed to be missing. It seemed that we needed another way to describe, to hold, even to facilitate and understand some phenomenon that didn't fit into the theories that we have. For many years I attempted to find a discrete language for the healing-dance-movement-therapy explorations that did not borrow from developmental, perceptual-motor, or psychodynamic theories in order to describe changes clients were feeling because of the healing dance experiences. What I ultimately found were two very different ways of organizing a vast amount of material, from many disciplines, under two large rubrics or headings; or actually two paradigms and the importance of each of the paradigms and in their relationship to each other. For me, this was the beginning of an important journey to enable dance therapists to discover their own language and theory in this discipline. It seemed to allow for profound changes in individuals in treatment - but only the means to describe these heretofore remarkable changes we were discovering via DMT was very limited. So now, I will present to you, the two paradigms that I believe help substantiate, organize and give us a direction in working in this creative, nonverbal, expressive mode. We will examine the Quantum paradigm and the Newtonian paradigm in order to understand which aspects of our theoretical model support and sustain one or both of these paradigms.

I will share with you first the characteristics of each of the paradigms. To simplify our discussion, let us call the core dance movement therapy concepts and interventions, essentially, the Newtonian paradigm. And let us call the more expressive, creative, imaginative, self-expressions in our dance movement therapy, the Quantum paradigm. Basically, the Newtonian paradigm has developed from the Newtonian concept of the atom being the bottom line. Essentially, it is about cause and effect; it is time bound; about body image and body boundaries; and it is product oriented - looking for results - that can be quantified and proven - experiences. The Newtonian model is essentially linear, mechanistic, and cause and effect in its thinking and conceptualizing. We could say, it is our so called, "9-5 *consensus reality* world". And this is essentially the world of our basic dance movement therapy processes. This is where we work on body image and body boundaries; on sensory motor and perceptual motor development and developmental milestones. We work on expanding our range and exploring the elements of movement - which are essentially - Force, Time, Space, and Flow. We help individuals find alignment, balance, and connections to elements

in their daily life. On the other hand, because of the way that we explore all of these so called Newtonian elements through the non-verbal expressive dance, we often find that clients have experiences they have difficulty describing, which then means that we, as therapists, have to stretch our own perceptual understanding, in order to interpret. We have to be able to open up to a greater knowing and even not knowing! And thus, we begin to find that we start to have an understanding of the Quantum world as we explore it in dance movement therapy.

In our Quantum world, we find that time, per se, doesn't exist in our creative consciousness - we lose track of time, one minute can feel like an hour, an hour can feel like one minute - explorations feel timeless (actually, it was Einstein who said, there is no time, only space). In our Quantum world or paradigm, we find that it is not product oriented. Rather it is about exploring, without judgment or expectation, felt level experiences. Felt level experiences (those aspects of our being connected to our authentic self where we feel emotion, sense what is the right, versus the incorrect way, for us to be in an experience) "UNFOLD" to a deeper knowing, sometimes difficult to describe. It appears that in the Quantum realm, discoveries, such as those described in the New Physics (being observed changes the phenomenon being explored). And further from New Physics, we learned that all things are connected; it is not cause and effect or a linear experience, but instead non linear and a four-dimensional phenomena (affecting body, mind spirit and soul - in New Physics it is said that when a butterfly flaps its wings in Beijing, the weather changes in Los Angeles).

When we as therapists are able to open ourselves up to this Quantum world and support our clients in these deep explorations, we are offered an opportunity to elaborate, to clarify, to understand the unseen, but felt - energetically - world of spirit, creativity and feeling. And it appears that it is within this newer paradigm, the Quantum world, in which we are shifted into a more comprehensive view of phenomenon and an opening up to explorations of our full potential and because of that, it appears that it is here, that the seeds for the dance event to shift, change and heal, exist.

What I have found in being able to clarify, and understand, how the organizing of our theoretical material and interventions from one of these two paradigms, is that we are able to do the following:

1. It allows us to broaden our own definitions of healing for any population

and subsequently offer discrete interventions appropriate for a particular client population. (Exceptional Children, Frail Elderly, Schizophrenia, etc.)

2. It expands our own awarenesses as therapists and allows us to support the unfolding processes of clients and enables us to create more specific goals for said clients.
3. It offers us a tangible way to explore the imaginative and creative processes while still allowing for a concrete evaluation of changes perceived in the client – they exist simultaneously - and we balance them at the same time.

Thus, we find that having a specific model of dance movement therapy, in which we have a foundation for building and exploring clients' change, is an important first step. An early model I explored, from all the different factors that I found were contributing to my work as a DMT – I found when I began to pull them together, that there were three major component parts. As I stated earlier, the model had an Educational component, a Creative Process component, and a Basic Therapeutic Mode component. I realized that these different pieces together were what were allowing me to work with the whole person even though at any one given time, I might need to work on one aspect of that person's development. For instance, under the Educational component, one aspect might be working on developmental movement; or under the Creative Process component I might be working on spontaneity or the person's inner dance. Or under the Therapeutic component, it might be time for me to explore insight, or specific thematic material, or make interpretations. But together, as I worked with each of these areas, I kept in mind that I was working towards the development of the whole person and that the larger picture was dance movement as a healing/wholing instrument of change. And so, my model was called *An Integrative Treatment Model*. But once again, over the years, based upon profound explorations and experiences reported by clients, I learned to broaden the model and realized it could exist under two different paradigms simultaneously. As one of my former students wrote, "*So often my dance leads me back to myself to a restorative, deeply connecting and confirming place within – a place of deep inner knowing that often brings tears of recognition and relief.*"

So together, these two paradigms, as possible road maps or frameworks for understanding the full

dimension of growth and change stimulated through dance movement – allows us to develop interventions which move back and forth from a concrete specificity to a more abstract imaginative creative process exploration. These paradigms allow us to appreciate this rich inner life which can be developed, can guide us, and can offer us intuitive wisdom. It teaches us that “holding” and “witnessing” become tangible and discrete learning possibilities. I found in some earlier soft anecdotal research that when the facilitator held with intent, the client had a much different experience, reported different phenomenon than when the facilitator was simply observing. Ultimately, I have found the following to be true, observable, and repeatable, cross culturally, cross populations and so forth:

- That energy flow and various interventions based upon an energetic exchange become teachable – not mythical, energy is real and tangible.
- That expanding awareness and unfolding into a greater knowing are real goals – can be done with our own psychological being.
- And that equally important the imaginative, creative processes can be viewed with the specific concrete, project, oriented processes and together they create a Whole Person Psychology

So now to simply summarize, some of the more important points that have been shared regarding the integration of the two paradigms, The Newtonian and the Quantum;

1. It offers us a context and an understanding of varied experiential phenomenon not hitherto able to organize into known theoretical models.
2. It allows us a taxonomy, a method of exploring, the ever deepening experiences and a way to organize and decipher and put into a contextual framework what the client reports and what we are observing – it is tangible and real.
3. Holding and witnessing become tangible and discreet learning possibilities.
4. Energy flow and various interventions based upon an energetic exchange become teachable.
5. Expanding awarenesses and unfolding into a greater knowing are real and obtainable goals.

6. The imaginative, creative processes vs. the specific, concrete, product evaluative can be observed and quantified.
7. Assists in our own broadening of our definitions of healing and subsequently interventions and interpretations offered to clients.
8. We have a workable map allowing for the building of hypothesis and subsequent goals.
9. Gives us elements of behavioral characteristics to measure for change.

Final Notes

- From concrete to abstract, building and developing imaginative processes.
- A little bit of movement goes a long “way”
- There appears to exist a rich inner self which guides, has intuitive information and "contains" or is named Soul, Soul- Self, Essence, Authentic Self, Higher Self.

Editorial notes:

1. As the chapters are still in the process of being developed some parts are not yet referenced.
2. Also, some parts are written in the first person from lectures and some are not.

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