

**Danis Bois**

**THE SELF RENEWED**

*Introducing Somatic-psychoeducation*

Translated by H el ene Pennel

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*Man is for himself neither a soul, separate from the living body, nor a certain living body, separate from the soul that unites with it without fusing with it. Man is the product of both, and the sense he has of his existence is none other than that of the ineffable union of the two elements that constitute him.*  
*Maine de Biran*

*We live in an era where the divide between body and mind is gradually closing. However, in the attempt to unite the physical and psychological dimensions, a one-way hierarchy is all too often established which favors one (the psyche) as it expresses itself through the other (the soma, seat of disorders considered to be primarily psychological). Somatic-psychoeducation is an emerging discipline which attempts to reconcile the body and the mind fully, and to put them on equal footing.*  
*Danis Bois*

## Preface

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This book touches me in more ways than one and has a strong resonance with my own journey, starting with the career path of the author. It is the fruit of the work of a truly introspective practitioner who has for the last twenty years reflected on his own practice, carefully analysed it, documented it and fed the results of his findings back into his practice as his writing demonstrates, making him a researcher in his own right. Though he is now a university professor in charge of a research laboratory, Danis Bois' work remains rooted in his experience.

This dynamic approach to practice seems essential to me. Because I have experienced it myself more than once, I recognize its inherent quality of the “obvious” which overturns the value system of knowledge: indeed practice is always a step ahead of established academic research. Why? Because it is the fertile ground for creation and invention. To quote the phenomenologist Tenguely, a “wild region” lies within lived experience; by this he means an area of emergence outside of the control of reflective consciousness which,

for this very reason, facilitates the creation, invention and perception of new intuitions contained within the experience of practice. Danis Bois provides a clear example of this process. What is important with a practice-centered approach, unlike some pure research programmes, is that it does not require the creation of applications to fit the research. The results it produces can naturally be used by professionals. This book illustrates this type of approach in the field of body-centered psychotherapy that the author has called Somatic-psychoeducation.

All this being said, an emerging current such as this would make little sense if it was not seized, explored, tested and shared with others, or confronted to MET BY the huge diversity of people and their wide ranging pathologies. This aspect of the author's work also resonates in me, because much of my work stems from my pugnacious, continuous and repeated attempts to modelize the material emerging from my experience as a practitioner of explicitation. Indeed, what is to understand one's own practice, if not an act of reflection requiring the practitioner to focus introspectively on his lived experience, precisely so that he can identify in what he has done, felt, thought or savoured, the elements which need to be kept, then developed and formalized? It is true that new phenomena can only emerge within experience, but it is meaningless without the vigilance of a practitioner to grasp them. It requires a practitioner with the vocation of a researcher, able to persevere in the intention to classify and document what has been observed.

Danis Bois has clearly integrated introspection into his research methodology. He also uses it in a very congruent way in his therapeutic approach, particularly under the innovative form of "sensorial introspection". In doing this, he has no hesitation in openly using an act that the XXth century tried – wrongly – to disqualify in every possible way. Yet, how is it possible to refer to one's lived experience, without practicing some organized form of introspection? With his work, the author reveals a genuine first-person approach.

What can be said subjectively, that it to say from the subject's own point of view, can only be rooted in the actual experience of the person analyzing it.

Another aspect of Somatic-psychoeducation that particularly interests me is its formative dimension. Being trained as a psychotherapist, I am sensitive to the fact that working with patients is also about educating them. In fact it is possible to reverse the intent to one where the patients learn to care for themselves as a way to get better. After all, even therapists have bad days and experience existential difficulties. What makes the difference is the way each patient learns to self-care. What I find superb is that, in his process, the author has put the formative dimension at the heart of his therapeutic approach. To my knowledge, no other therapeutic method has done this.

As I read this book, I was touched by the chapters covering the different fields of application of Somatic-psychoeducation. All psychotherapists are familiar with the headings under which many of the conditions mentioned fall and have to deal with in their practices. From this emerges a new awareness resulting from a profound change of perspective: the concept of psychotherapy – despite the various techniques in existence – always presupposes the primacy of psychology to heal the psyche. And so, ever since psychoanalysis, the concept of psychotherapy has been constructed to offset the physical treatment offered by the medicine of the body: on one side there is the physical treatment and on the other that of the psyche. It is true that some psychological techniques use the body in some transient way, to listen to it as it reveals its meaning (the “focusing” from Gendlin), to let it overflow through hyperventilation (Rebirth) or to push it to its limits (Reichian therapy for example). With Danis Bois' approach, we discover a totally innovative (psycho)therapy which is not rooted in

the psyche, but in the “Sensible”<sup>1</sup> of the flesh, in tuning into the body, touching it and mobilizing its subtle substance. The body is considered in an original way, not just to be treated for itself, but as a preferred way to engage the whole dimension of the patient, including the psyche. In fact, as I review my words, I realize that they are powerless to bring to light the originality of this approach, as well as the truly unique quality of the relationship to the *inner movement* experienced through the body.

I would not presume to write in this way, if I only had an academic knowledge of this. In my interaction with Danis Bois and his team, it quickly became obvious that I would not be able to communicate with them unless I understood what they call “inner movement”, “supporting point”, “Sensible”, etc. To this end, I had to experience this work in my flesh first-hand. I therefore lived the experience of the Sensible. I was very touched by it, I savoured it fully, and I can in the end only admire the remarkable congruence of this original approach.

This book will not only interest professionals in the field of therapy; it is also accessible to a large audience motivated by self-development and challenged by life. Additionally, it will be of great benefit if it brings phenomenologists specializing in bodily experience to question directly the relationship that their constructs have with their own lived experience, whether current or potential.

There is no doubt in my mind that, beyond its therapeutic dimension, Danis Bois’ research is also a phenomenology of the Sensible body. And even though the complete formulation of such a

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<sup>1</sup> The term Sensible is the English term we have chosen for this book for the French word “sensible”, which is usually translated as sensitive. This is to convey the idea of a particular “sensibility” of the body matter which has effects on both body and mind as is explained in the following chapters. We use a capital letter to differentiate this use of the word from its most familiar one.

phenomenology still belongs to the future, this book is a huge step forward.

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