

# Emotional Anatomy in 3D

## An Interview with Stanley Keleman

By Nancy Eichhorn, PhD

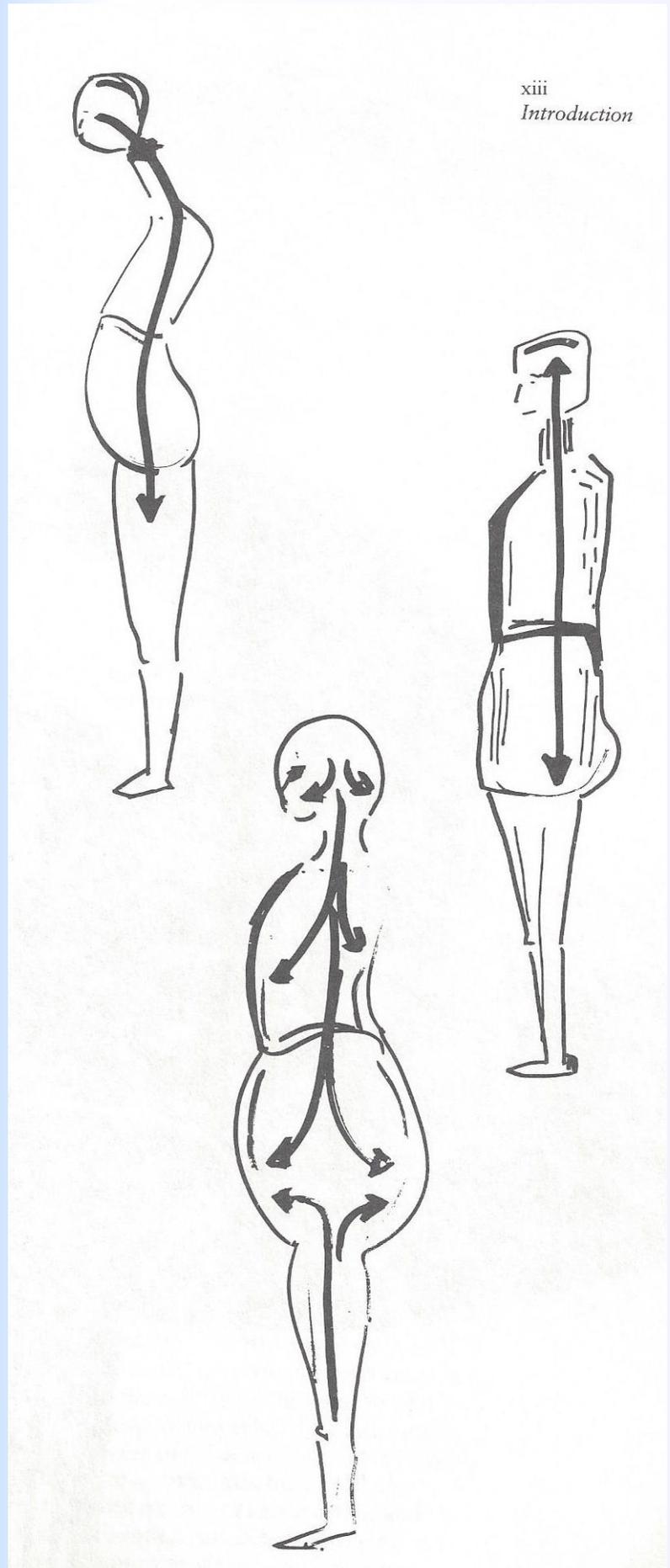
Stanley Keleman's ability to be in relationship with me, to pulsate in and out, to respond to my overwhelm by slowing down to allow me time to catch up resulted in an enlightening interview. It transformed the experience from a space of frustration as his monologue, as our dialog outdistanced my hand as I scribbled words on a notepad, to a platform of fun as I explored my own thought patterns while simultaneously summarizing his statements 'to get it'—to feel as if I were understanding what he had to say and why it was important, and 'to get him'—to feel into him and understand his presence in my life in this moment. There's a story here, for me as well as for our readers, about Stanley Keleman and his new DVD entitled, *Emotional Anatomy*.

## Emotional Anatomy: The Structure of Experience

Stanley wrote his landmark text, *Emotional Anatomy: The Structure of Experience*, to map the geometry of somatic experience in 1985. As founder and director of the Center for Energetic Studies in Berkeley, California (1971-today), Stanley developed his therapeutic and educational approach, trademarked as Formative Psychology, based on his methodology and conceptual framework for the life of the body. He has spent the past 50 plus years creating, teaching, researching, writing, presenting. He shared that it was time to bring his seminal text to life in a virtual way.

“I came to a point 10 years ago where I thought I needed to update my book, *Emotional Anatomy*. When I was assembling the images for the DVD, my wife died and that delayed everything. It was a big challenge to overcome,” Stanley said. He shared his truth with such a gentle tone that in response I felt nudged into a quiet space, a moment of reflection. His life partner passed, and he used his way of being in this life to embody the experience and move forward. There’s a sense, an embodied sensation that occurs when you meet a master teacher/practitioner. A small ripple started in that instant and grew as our time together continued.

“I assembled the DVD the same way I had done for the book. The images came first and the text followed. The images tell the Formative story. For the book I sat down at this big table in the meeting room with the images all around me, with big rolls of butcher paper, and I wrote the text. I wrote what I was thinking about the pictures I had already drawn. I wanted to write a Formative book and what an experience that was! For the DVD, I wanted moving images to convey the sense of the body’s internal dynamic



not as a mechanical event but as an animate forming that generates feeling and meaning.”

The audience that buys the book and the DVD often attend Stanley’s workshops. He said that most people would assume his students were 100% body workers but actually that’s not the case. A substantial group of his students are artists, painters, and dancers, and then there is another entire contingent who are interested in philosophy and cognitive understandings.

“People have an idea of the body and they seek to improve it, care for it through diet, exercise, good relationships and fulfilling work but they do not always think of the body as the source of our psychology, of our thinking, feeling, and the orientation of our values,” Stanley said. “The bodied life is bigger than health or exercise, it’s how we are alive and how we manage that life, how we form our values and make meaningful choices. The body is the source and an orientation for what an embodied life is like. Philosopher, dancer, painter, psychologist, body worker, it’s all about how voluntary acts can influence their life and their way of experiencing themselves and the world.”

Stanley’s intention when creating the DVD was to make the images in the original text more experientially available. “I wanted people to have the experience of the images being more than an objective idea because they are, in fact, conveying real anatomical experiences. He decided to follow the principle he followed when writing *Emotional Anatomy*— let the images tell the story.

“Someone could sit down and go through the book, image by image and understand the concepts,”

Stanley said. “The DVD images convey all the information you need to know.”

The DVD has six chapters: Creation: the Body Plan; The Pulsatory Accordion of Body Shapes; The Stress Continuum; The Inflating and Deflating Emotions; The Continuity of Emotional Expressions; the Emergence of Voluntary Self-Influence; and Voluntary Muscular Self-Regulation. There is also a 12 -minute segment with Stanley discussing the DVD’s content. His intent during the audio-only portion is an introduction to set the tone for what viewers would see. I found the information he provided in those 12 minutes guided my viewing, provided the framework I needed to follow through the artistry and musical flow of the imagery. Rereading Stanley’s book further supported my viewing (for in-depth reviews of the DVD, please see the companion articles in this supplement).

“I had a lot of fun making the DVD,” Stanley said, his passion and enthusiasm for the project apparent in his tone of voice and the punctuation at the end of his sentence. “I had to find a way to make the images move to convey anatomical structural complexity and at the same time stay within my budget. I was educating myself and entering into a formative endeavor. I understood the creative process. Ten years of heavy-duty metal sculpting helped me understand what it means to put your hand to something and give it form.”

“The images for the book and the DVD were created in my somatic imagination, they arose in my dreams, on my walks, reading books, seeing movies and videos, and certainly from working and interacting with people. I was constantly reaching around for a

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piece of paper, for anything I could find to scribble my ideas. Some of the images in the DVD are taken from the book and given dimension, and movement, and interaction with other images. Others are taken from videos prepared for teaching seminars and adapted by layering images to represent everyday behavioral functions.”

The DVD is a vision, a philosophy, and a methodology. Stanley braided concepts from *Emotional Anatomy* with the principles of Formative Psychology and its methodology. When teachers show this DVD to students, when therapists sit down to watch, timing is everything. “I don’t think people’s attention span is more than 30 to 32 minutes and then you need a break. Visually, I broke the DVD into 32-minute segments so you can watch one part at a time. When I show it in class or teach from it during a workshop, I first show it with no words, no talking. I simply offer

looking at it and taking it in at whatever level is possible for each person. Then when it is done I ask, ‘Tell me what you experience.’”

In the DVD, Stanley uses the image of the jellyfish as the primordial statement of every human expression—pulsation. Pulsation is the basis of all animate life. It is cellular metabolism, the heart beating, respiration, neural excitation, and it is in the behaviors we recognize as thinking, feeling, acting. Swelling, and shrinking, extending and gathering can, to a degree, be managed by voluntary effort, Stanley said. We are creating a state of personalized embodiment as we move from being an inherited body to forming our own personal body. Voluntary self-influence is the body’s way of personalizing the impersonal.

“Living is a pulsatory event. Any behavior has cycles of activity and cycles of less activity, times for extending and times for gathering

back,” Stanley said. “Every muscular act, every loving act, every cognitive act. Any interaction, from mom-to-child to woman-to-man, the activity is there and subject to lesser or greater amounts of voluntary differentiated influence.”

“Nina Bull was my first mentor,” Stanley continued. “She taught me that Freud’s unconscious is a body behavior. The body is a library of action patterns that are below the threshold of our field of awareness. When I work with people, they learn to experience their own style of reaching out and gathering back, how their motor behaviors generate feeling and meaning. They enter the experiential field and are then able to differentiate their acts.

Stanley highlighted the pulsatory function during our interview. “It is how we extend ourselves for contact and move forward and gather back- How we pause and manage ourselves so we are not

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too fast or too intense. How I change and how I behave with you is how we make a pulsatory back and forth to form a connection and a contactful dialogue.”

“For me, the unconscious,” he said, “is the body’s basic pulsatory rhythms of its own excitatory processes. The body organizes motor/emotional maps of actions in the cortex. Pulsatory excitation becomes motor maps that set the action patterns of the body. These action patterns form a library of differentiated acts in the cortex then down the line to associated muscular behavior patterns. The brain is action oriented. A feeling or thought is about an act or the inhibition of an act. It is not about-controlling the body, rather the cortex differentiates inherited behaviors. Inherited patterns need to be aroused so they can be differentiated, however sooner or later we all learn that immediate expression of an inherited instinctual behavior may not be in our best interest. People often do not know how to change their behavior or feeling. Understanding experientially how to organize a behavior, that there are a sequence of steps between the beginning and the completion of an act, is about learning to increase and decrease the muscular intensity of an action. To ‘do it more and do it less’ is voluntary self-influence. Self forming is the voluntary influence of inherited patterns of action.”

According to Stanley, life is a formative process. And at the heart of

the human organism is this formative process, and the body’s concern is maintaining itself, this animate structure we experience as ‘me’.

“The body first follows an involuntary inherited genetic program; however, the body also has the ability to voluntarily differentiate inherited acts that then become synaptic organizations and muscle cortical behaviors that are not pre-determined. Voluntarily influencing the body nature and the memories we make in the process of doing this become our personal body and our personal life. From conception on the body’s intent is to form itself. As adults we can use the body’s formative process through voluntary effort to form new shapes, new memories, feelings and relationships,” he said.

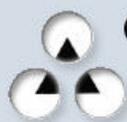
His intention when writing *Emotional Anatomy* and then again when creating the DVD was to illustrate how the body changes and voluntarily forms itself. Both efforts take destiny out of the realm of mysticism and magic.

“The main interest of the organism is not sexuality, nor relationships. It is interested in maintaining its animate form over a long period of time that allows for personalized sexuality and relationships. The driving force for animate life is to extend the life process, and to do so, structure is essential. For structure to maintain animate life, it must remember its motoric experiences so they can be

repeated. The body organizes itself with excitatory tension and muscular pressure. This tension/pressure can expand and contract. It can maintain an inside and outside surface. It is elastic, permeable—it lets some things through, not others. When it is full, it says so; when it wants more, it says so. The body is able to contract and expand according to its needs and its pulsatory patterns.”

“The Formative method teaches how to use motor acts to change body shape, which changes experience. How the body is aroused and contains that arousal, how the body forms behavior is primarily the body speaking with itself in nonverbal language. As acts become more and more differentiated and voluntary, people learn to give words and personal expression to their experience. For me the psychology of the body can only arise from the experiences of the body itself. My dictum is: Form yourself or be formed by others.”

As our time came to a close, Stanley shared that creating the DVD was an act of love. “It was one hell of a lot of fun,” he said. “I’m swimming in learning things about myself that is just delightful.”



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