

Body of Knowledge: In Touch with Healing

Ralph Maliphant, Dip APNT
Massage Therapist and Rosen Method Bodywork Intern
Leonard Stanley, Gloucestershire, UK
ralph@maliphant.fsbusiness.co.uk

Abstract

This article draws on a long therapeutic journey to discuss unexpected shifts of awareness beyond the normal everyday state. Studying such experiences throws light on ways in which we limit ourselves and distort our perception through conditioned responses: there is the possibility for change when we allow ourselves to be reached and affected. I see parallels here with Rosen Method Bodywork and use examples from my own experience to illustrate the process. We can assist our growth as individuals and our “in-touchness” with our clients by paying attention to insights obtained at moments of “awakening,” and I discuss some of these processes by reference to quantum mechanics, chakras, and the perceptual domains of the left and right hemispheres of our divided brains.

I am reminded of the title of C. S. Lewis’s spiritual autobiography *Surprised by Joy* when I review personal experiences far beyond my expectation. Many of the events described here took place long before I discovered Rosen Method Bodywork, but in their unexpected nature they guided me to this path and speak to the complexity of interactions taking place outside our normal awareness. As a Research Scientist now practising as a Massage Therapist, and a Rosen Method Bodywork Student, I have a special interest in the long-term consequences of formative experiences, especially those distressing events that could not be managed and became lodged in our soft tissue: as Caroline Myss (1998, p. 111) has said, “your biography becomes your biology.” Our response to significant events from pre-birth to the present is recorded in our physical body and, if retained as chronic tension, will be played out in our characteristic attitudes (see later). We then become cut off from the fullness of natural healing processes and the true richness of life. Under appropriate circumstances, however (as exemplified in the practice of Rosen Method Bodywork), the hold these strictures have on us can be diminished and we may then find ourselves in an unknown space—surprised by joy!

There is much to be learned by studying such experiences: not only can we contrast the possible with the usual to discover the extent of our cutting off; by reaching out to the implications, we can begin to see the true nature of “what is” and marvel at the possibilities if we seek appropriate healing. Freud (1933/1973, p. 90) said that “pathology, by making things larger and coarser, can draw our attention to normal conditions which would otherwise have escaped us.” In like manner, we can gain insight into our normal workings by examining those rare events that accompany a significant change in consciousness. Steve Taylor (2010, p. xiv) views these moments as waking from the sleep of our normal state:

Some materialistic scientists believe that awakening experiences are just ‘tricks of the mind’ caused by abnormal brain functioning. As a result, they claim they have no more validity than a hallucination or a dream and the vision of the world they give us is an illusion. But I believe that the reverse is true: these experiences are *more* real than our normal state. It’s more accurate to see them as a kind of ‘waking up’ from the sleep of our normal state. Our normal consciousness is narrow and restricted and gives us a false and limited experience of reality. That’s why, in awakening experiences, there is a sense that our consciousness has become wider and clearer and that we have gained access to a deeper and truer level of reality which is normally hidden from us.

We cannot be fully awake at all times, but by investigating changes that take place when we “wake up”—and perhaps gain some sense of how this happens—we can be helped to move in the right direction.

I do not imply that Rosen Method Bodywork is directly linked with non-ordinary states (although, of course, being truly in touch is not ordinary, being rather rare in the modern world). However, I suggest that if we want to be truly present and “in touch” with another, we need to become aware of processes that distort or limit our perception of “what is.” It is also instructive to “feel into” the Rosen experience—into the processes that take place as we become less held. Surely, this is a “waking up.” When distressing experiences, finding no resolution (particularly likely within the child-mind), become somatised in body tissues, there is a (necessary) loss of “in-touchness:” we are not fully being. If this constrained state remains unmet, it will affect our interactions and increase the probability of further strictures. We are left in a state of semi-consciousness. In truth, this is the norm, varying only in degree. In her book *Healing through the Dark Emotions*, Miriam Greenspan (2003) states that “To let it go, you have to let it flow” (p. 78). This certainly seems to be what takes place in the Rosen experience as some examples in this paper will illustrate. As we heal, we become more whole. But, sometimes, extra-ordinary circumstances can work in a similar way, freeing us temporarily to see more clearly: we can gain insight into our own distortions and thus be encouraged to persevere along our therapeutic path.

The left and right hemispheres

Some years ago, my partner was feeling very low and, beyond my understanding, I experienced an immediate awareness that I could take her to something that would provide the needed solace. I didn’t know what this was or where it was, but I somehow knew that I could take her there if I “let it happen.” She agreed that we would set out in the car to travel to this unknown destination. I took care to drive sensibly whilst allowing myself to be guided in some way. We wound our way over the Cotswold countryside for about an hour, discovering ourselves some 40 miles away travelling down a little lane I could never rediscover that ended where we knew we were intended to be. There, as we stood outside the car, was a wonderful sea of blue flax, unseen until now. That balm was utterly healing—a magic beyond our own divining! We couldn’t see any of this until reaching the end of the lane, and I never detoured on the journey. The result was perfect ... we had indeed been taken to what was needed.

This was an unusual experience for me; I am not normally so attuned. But on that occasion something changed. I’m aware that—perhaps typically for a man—I tend to “think through” issues: I use the rational, analytic ability of my brain’s left hemisphere to seek for a way forward. There was none of that this time. My partner’s condition reached to a different part of me, quietening linear thoughts that could provide no solutions and allowing insights for connection to be received, aided by the intuitive faculty of the right hemisphere.

It’s clear that we can enhance our connection with “what is” by improving access to the functions of our right hemisphere.¹ This is crucially relevant for our current society, as evidenced by Iain McGilchrist (2009) in his book *The Master and his Emissary: The Divided Brain and the Making of the Western World* (Maliphant, 2010; book reviewed in this journal, Volume 3, Issue 1), and I believe that it is central to the practice of Rosen Method Bodywork. The issue is not so much about “how to be *in touch*,” as “how to stop distracting ourselves or *cutting ourselves off*.” I can illustrate this with an example from a recent Rosen practice exchange. My “client” was lying face-down with my right hand on her lower back and my left hand curling over her left shoulder. My attention was focused on the activity sensed by my right hand. My client commented: “That pressure is just perfect: things are really happening!” Checking in, I queried, “Around your lower back?” “No, around my shoulder,” I was corrected! Only then did I realise the subtle work that was going on through my left hand

¹ Betty Edwards (2008) describes methods for enhancing this in her updated classic *The New Drawing on the Right Side of the Brain*, and comments (p. xx), “In order to gain access to the subdominant visual, perceptual R[ight]-mode of the brain, it is necessary to present the brain with a job that the verbal, analytic L[eft]-mode will turn down.”

whilst free of the rational focus I was giving to its partner: essentially, my predominantly left-hemisphere attention limited the “in touchness” possible through my right hand, whilst my left hand was “free to be.” I don’t yet know whether the left hand is generally a more-sensitive tool (the province of the right hemisphere), but I have certainly become aware that allowing the left hemisphere to dominate is counter-productive.

Similar evidence can be found elsewhere. In a small singing group I joined a year ago (for those “terrified” of singing), in the middle of a practice round I recently found myself anxiously thinking “I don’t know what comes next” whilst observing my voice continuing perfectly—it was only my intellectual mind that “didn’t know.” During my time in Canada, in the ‘50s and ‘60s, I was fascinated with research work on computer chess, particularly the fact that top players were still able to beat the best computer programs in spite of the fact that many more steps could be analysed by the computer than any human could process linearly (in the way I and other novices played). I concluded that the best players were not processing linearly with a dominating left hemisphere. When I apprehended the board as I might a face, without consciously analysing, my game improved considerably: it is apparent that we have access to much more information than we normally utilise because we habitually filter it through the dominant left hemisphere.

I don’t think this will be news within the higher echelons of the Rosen Movement (training processes are clearly designed to work with the whole person), but I do think that understanding it can help pave the way for those setting out on the path.

Realizations

I attended my sixth Intensive during the writing of this paper. The preparation time seemed like a crossroads: I *know* the effectiveness of Rosen Method Bodywork but am all too aware of my current limitations—it feels like I have a long way to go! In writing this paper, I am largely speaking to myself, drawing attention to the profound difference that can result from perceptual changes, seeking to aid my journey along the path towards Internship and Practitioner status. At 76, this is quite a challenge, but one that I have reason to feel fairly confident about (see Appendix).

For 20 years of my life, I was a research scientist working in the field of Electromagnetic Radio-wave Propagation (in Canada, the Arctic, and the UK). I’ve since discovered an unexpected relevance to my current work (Barbara Ann Brennan, who wrote *Hands of Light: A Guide to Healing Through the Human Energy Field*, was previously a scientist in atmospheric physics at NASA; I was a Principal Scientific Officer involved in atmospheric physics at GCHQ, Cheltenham). It was the magical conveyance of information over vast distances, embedded in the invisible radio wave, that enchanted me when, at the age of 14, I started building shortwave receivers and listening to distant countries. Now, I marvel at the energy fields carrying communications within and around the human organism.

The actions of our cells are determined by subtle energies and therefore affected by our perception: in *Molecules of Emotion*, Candace Pert (1999) indicates that emotions and their biological components establish the crucial link between mind and body; and in *The Biology of Belief*, Bruce Lipton (2005) shows that DNA is controlled by signals from outside the cell, including the energetic messages emanating from our thoughts. I think I see evidence of this when observing Rosen Method Bodywork being carried out by those at the top of their profession: comparison with myself at this stage helps me identify where I *limit myself* and thus reduce my connection with the client. This situation does little to relax primitive elements of the client’s organism primed to detect risk. But when I experience the “flow,” I can appreciate that so much more is becoming possible.

The potential influence of another caring person, particularly the presence of a concerned therapist, can be deduced from this statement by Ariana Faris and Els van Ooijen (2009, p. 32):

We see the self as constructed through interactional processes via responses to internal and external feedback, and human nature as dependent on the processes of being seen and acknowledged by another.

The authors were referring to their work within the field of psychotherapy and counselling but the observation holds true in any context and is a useful construct by which to view the approach of a Rosen Method practitioner. Being seen and acknowledged by another is an experience that is difficult to analyse or even to clarify with words, but it appears to be a fundamental requirement for the human being and is a quality that makes all the difference in a therapeutic setting. The extent to which we can “see” another depends on much more than technical know-how, or even intention, and my purpose in writing this paper has been to show how greatly we limit ourselves through processes related to our everyday state of mind.

Insight

The certainty with which we view the world around us maintains the perceptions we hold to be true, but remarkable events can take place when circumstances free us of the tyranny of our preconceptions—our prejudices. I know all too well how damaging such a judgment can be, as illustrated when I formed a false opinion about one of the participants collecting together for a therapeutic workshop:

I gazed round the group and witnessed one individual twisting his body and stretching his limbs like a body-builder. I thought he was “showing off.” When the circle formed and each of us indicated how we felt about the group, I was horrified to find myself being singled out by this man pointing at me and saying: “He looks right through me, thinks I’m fake!” Sitting in the middle of the circle subsequently, he and I confronted each other and spoke out feelings from our different places. Part way through our sharing, something in his words caused me to reach out and touch both sides of his body. I was mortified: my hands pressed against steel; he was encased in armour with no give at all! That experience shattered my illusions and, comprehending his experience and endeavours to be free of strictures, I melted in a wave of compassion. As he became visible to me, so I became visible to him...

That event took place over 30 years ago, but I’ll never forget it. I needed to be brought in touch with my own prejudice before I could “see” the other. It was the start of a significant sharing and a true seeing of each other. Perhaps a prejudice against another should make us look for something similar in ourselves, as I discovered and wrote to myself in the following poem:

THE ENEMY WITHIN

I built a castle all mine own –
 A fortress fit to bear
 The onslaught of a thousand foes –
 Not one could reach me there.

The walls, they gleamed like solid gold,
 Reflecting in the eyes
 Of anyone who gazed thereon,
 An impenetrable disguise.

And yet, no safety there was found,
 No hiding place for me:
 The walls could only act their part
 If the foes outside would be.

What good was there in walls so strong
 And battlements so fine,
 When the foe was waiting for his strike
Within this tomb of mine?

Emerging

It seems to me that progression along a growth path (as required for any therapist) takes place predominantly through being helped to jettison false perceptions or beliefs, discovering, as we travel this road, the somatic counterpart that resides in our body tissues, a once-valuable protection that now limits us. As a simplifying concept, I characterise the impediments to blossoming of our true self as “knots” within our being; these physical and non-physical “knots” inevitably distort our perception of the world around us. But knots lend themselves to being undone, and unexpected circumstances may move us in a non-linear fashion—a “quantum leap”—beyond the grip of our familiar prejudices.

It appears that reality is far more bountiful than our distortions allow us to see. Awareness of this fact can have a major influence on our journey and certainly affect our connection when we engage with another through the medium of Rosen Method Bodywork. That connection was such, when receiving in a recent Intensive, that I was enabled to experience a truth hidden from me for nearly 70 years. I was five years old at the start of the Second World War, and living in Bristol which was heavily bombed. During the many on-slaughts, nearby houses were demolished and an incendiary bomb landed on our front fence. We moved to a safer part of the country two years on and, in adult life, my sister and I believed we had experienced only excitement over the war-time escapades, being too young then to understand the horror of it all. In my Rosen session, I discovered otherwise. Part way through the session I experienced something new, and commented that my belly felt full of sharp steel pins. I was in no way prepared for the response: “That sounds like shrapnel,” and its acuity rocketed me back to those war-time experiences. For the first time in all these years, I felt the legacy of fear and anxiety that must have been prevalent at the time, especially in parents of young children, that I must have picked up at a more unconscious level. Another knot was unravelling and I experienced a great feeling of release as the reality surged through my body.

I think this illustrates the particular nature of Rosen Method Bodywork, which isn’t a remedial process, a “doing to,” but a deep engagement with the client as a result of which the self is able to emerge; essentially, the body-self is able to *trust*—our cells respond to the authenticity of the connection and we “let go” of habitual defences. There can be significant emergence of the self through other modalities, but Rosen Method is unique in its form of engagement with the client process. The soft hand is not manipulating, not “doing” something to relax tense muscles (however valuable that may be), but rather engaging with held tissues in a mutuality experienced by both client and practitioner: the *organism* experiences itself as *known* and thereby is brought in touch with itself. The verbal contact aids this process; whilst the words are inevitably processed in the mind of the receiver, the content *resonates* with the bodily experience—as discussed by Dorothea Hrossowyc (2009) in a previous issue of RMIJ.

I believe that the Rosen process is similar to the increased connection we can have with reality when we are psychically less constrained. As with an infant responding to its mother’s touch, there is a mutuality that is felt by being “met.” We needed the defence, the ever-watchful guard, because we found we could not be at one with the world around us: we were not met when vulnerable and in need, and so the organism became cued to protect itself by anticipating danger wherever it might appear, programmed by past experience. Our bodymind becomes *constrained* through its ever-present vigilance. Paradoxically (because it maintains an unconsciousness), it is simply impossible to be truly present when in this state. The soft hands used in Rosen Method Bodywork inform both client and practitioner, and the in-touch words—“evocative language” as described by Alan Fogel (2009, pp. 31-33)—assist the ever-deepening process of embodied self-awareness, to bring the client in touch with their truth, their “being.” I can only describe this as a “happening” because the experience is so active, so fluid—literally, an awakening!

Einstein and the legacy of Descartes

I think that my intuitive linking with the distant field of flax that brought solace for my partner could be an example of “instantaneous non-locality,” a consequence of Einstein’s equations of quantum theory that

one part of the universe may have instantaneous knowledge of another part through the *quantum interconnectedness of all things*. Instantaneous, here, means exactly that, without any transfer through time even at the fastest rate possible, the speed of light (86,000 miles per second). Einstein found it difficult to accept this metaphysical outcome; he called it “ghostly and absurd” and concluded that his equations must be incomplete. But his objections arose from a common sense view of the world which, like ours, was highly determined by the legacy of René Descartes. This 17th century philosopher sought to know what is real by discarding any perceptions he could doubt until he was left with something that was certain. He finally came to a fundamental truth that he expressed as “Cogito ergo sum”—I think therefore I am. This led Descartes to view the mind as primary, so he divided reality into two parts: mind or thinking substances (*res cogitans*) and matter or mechanical, extended substances (*res extensa*) which he concluded could then be examined in greater and greater detail as though any element was independent of the realm in which it existed. This Cartesian division formed the basis of Isaac Newton’s mechanics from which classical physics was born. Not only physics, but the whole of Western thinking, medicine in particular, became subdivided into more and more specialities—as though each was independent of the other—with “the mind” and “the body” being treated as quite separate and independent aspects of a human being. This perception, passed down through the generations, forms the basis of what we think of as “common sense.”

In *The Tao of Physics*, Fritjof Capra (1991) informs us that rational knowledge (largely the province of the left hemisphere) is derived from the experience we have with objects and events in our everyday environment. It belongs to the realm of the intellect that simplifies into *representations* of reality and we need to be aware of its limitations: “Because our representation of reality is so much easier to grasp than reality itself, we tend to confuse the two and to take our concepts and symbols for reality” (p. 35). The natural world is one of infinite varieties and complexities with events happening simultaneously, not in an orderly linear sequence that our rational mind can handle—Newton’s model of the clockwork universe.

Western civilisation, dominated by a patriarchal hierarchy for thousands of years, has invested almost exclusively in left-hemisphere processing in education, politics, economics, religion, etc., concentrating on linear, analytic, verbal and reductionist skills. The right hemisphere of our brains with its intuitive, holistic processing is strongly linked with the feminine and has been undervalued and under-employed in our culture. And yet its faculty for synthesis is crucially needed now. We know that early experiences hugely determine our future passage through life, and many of our clients will be struggling with bodyminds affected in this way. But the perceptions determined by the milieu in which we live can also affect our outlook and can lead to a distorted sense of “what is.” Examples in this paper illustrate how greatly our perception influences what is possible and, I believe, provide a fertile ground of guidance for anyone seeking to gain more complete connection.

Quantum mechanics

Quantum theory has shown how much our view of the world determines what is available to us, and this links in with processes by which we become disconnected from the fullness of available healing. But quantum mechanics is a recent discovery developed during the past century and it is far from intuitive; it will be many years before its insights become part of the Western zeitgeist.

Our common-sense perception of “what is” was founded on limited knowledge, and this perception clouds our seeing. As Claude Bernard (1813-1878), a French physiologist, said: “It is what we think we know already that often prevents us from learning.”²

The ability to walk with bare feet on red-hot coals without getting burnt is difficult to accept unless one has experienced it, because we “know” that fire burns. But the most important factor in being able to walk without getting burnt is the mind-set. While walking on the coals, it is essential to “know” that you won’t get burnt and to hold yourself almost “aloof” whilst progressing. When I experienced this, we were instructed not to celebrate until told we were off the coals. A celebratory mind-set is just as scattered as a fearful one

² Cited in Duncan Barford (2002), p. 226.

and it appears that this sets up the conditions we are more familiar with. A rogue coal apart from the rest, even though it may be cooler, is likely to cause burns under these conditions. Perhaps this is linked with wave/particle transitions taking place at the elemental level. Such a change might also explain reports of indigenous Africans, under trance, being seen to pass a spear through an arm and subsequently withdraw it *without leaving any injury*.

The quantum-mechanical aspect of consciousness needs to be appreciated in order to understand the unified nature of bodymind. This physical/non-physical duality is analogous to the wave/particle nature of electromagnetism.³ Danah Zohar (1990, p. 9) comments:

The most revolutionary, and for our purposes the most important, statement that quantum physics makes about the nature of matter, and perhaps being itself, follows from its description of the wave/particle duality – the assertion that all being at the subatomic level can be described equally well either as solid particles, like so many minute billiard balls, or as waves, like undulations on the surface of the sea. Further, quantum physics goes on to tell us that neither description is really accurate on its own, that both the wave-like and the particle-like aspects of being must be considered when trying to understand the nature of things, and that it is the duality itself which is most basic. Quantum ‘stuff’ is, essentially, both wave-like and particle-like, simultaneously.

This “both ... and ... simultaneously,” so characteristic of quantum “stuff,” has been clearly stated in regard of body-mind by Shunryu Suzuki (2003, p. 25):

Our body and mind are not two, and not one. If you think your body and mind are two, that is wrong; if you think that they are one, that is also wrong. Our body and mind are both two *and* one.

Zohar continues (pp. 9-10):

This Janus-like nature of quantum being is summed up in one of the most fundamental tenets of quantum theory, the Principle of Complementarity, which states that each way of describing being, as a wave or as a particle, complements the other and that a whole picture emerges only from the ‘package deal’. Like the right and left hemispheres of the brain, each description supplies a kind of information that the other lacks. Whether at any given time elementary being displays itself as one or the other depends on the overall conditions – crucial among which, as we shall see later, may be whether or not anybody is looking, or when they are, what they are looking for!

Human and universal energy fields

When our rational minds take full control we are likely to limit the possible to fit in with our expectations. I experienced the significance of this in a remarkable workshop⁴ led by John Pierrakos (1921-2001) who founded Core Energetics in 1973 (see Pierrakos, 1990). At the end of the weekend, for the first time, he began to talk about the nature of his work (as distinct from working with us). We had formed a circle, sitting on the floor, and I was diametrically opposite Pierrakos. He commented that his work was “a manifestation of Christ consciousness in this age.” I found myself unmoved by this, presumably relying on a left-hemisphere viewpoint. But then, suddenly, I experienced myself up on the ceiling, looking down at myself cross-legged on the floor⁵ and saying “I would have thought that would have affected you, Ralph.” Just as I was denying

3 For further information, see: Jim Al-Khalili (2003, pp. 42-51) and http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/wave-particle_duality (accessed 28 March 2011).

4 Held at the Gerda Boyesen Institute (Biodynamic Psychotherapy Center) in London in 1980. Dr. Pierrakos’s wife, Eva (1915-1979), a spiritual teacher, had channelled a series of lectures over a 22-year period which formed the foundation of Pathwork and guided John in transforming his practice of bio-energetics into Core Energetics.

5 Similar “out-of-body” experiences are discussed by David Chamberlain (1998, pp. 187-189), including scientist John Lilly’s experience of watching his own birth!

any affect, I was utterly overwhelmed by a massive energy stream pouring into the crown of my head, coursing through my torso, along my arms, and shooting out of my fingertips. I felt as though I was in an electric chair: it was all I could do to withstand the throbbing current, but I had no way of turning it off. The energy field around me felt like a sorbo-rubber barrier preventing me from touching anything, and I'm utterly convinced that anyone with clairvoyant vision would have seen red, orange and yellow plumes spurting out of my fingertips. Time seemed eternal but I think it could only have lasted seconds. When we all eventually stood up, my legs wouldn't support me and I had to be helped to my feet by those next to me.

I'm not sure what brought about the change but am clear that, for that period of time, I became a conduit for some kind of cosmic energy (the "Universal Energy Field"⁶), presumably through opening my crown chakra. I suspect that my experience of looking down at myself from the ceiling came about through a projection outwards following the opening of my previously "closed" (reversed/inverted) crown chakra. Perhaps my left hemisphere, finding it impossible to explain my experience, gave up (see Note 1), thereby freeing its hold on what is possible.

In *Hands of Light: A Guide to Healing Through the Human Energy Field*, Barbara Ann Brennan (1988, p. 79), herself a protégé of John and Eva Pierrakos, indicates that:

The crown center (chakra 7) is related to the person's connection to his spirituality and the integration of his whole being, physical, emotional, mental and spiritual. If this center is closed, the person probably does not have an experiential connection to his spirituality. He probably does not have "cosmic feeling" and does not understand what people are talking about when they speak of their spiritual experiences. If this center is open, the person probably often experiences his spirituality in a very personal form, unique to the individual. This spirituality is not one defined by dogma or easily related with words. It is rather a state of being, a state of transcendence of the mundane reality into the infinite. It goes beyond the physical world and creates in the individual a sense of wholeness, peace and faith, giving him a sense of purpose to his existence.

Well-being

It appears to me that energy is the *sine qua non* of life, and our well-being is a function of how much or how little we block its flow. Before I experienced Rosen Method Bodywork, I was aware that therapeutic massage engages with more than just the physical constrictions: as energetic freeing takes place, emotional and psychic changes are apparent. For me, as a practitioner, this is the ultimate purpose of any therapy—movement from a state of dis-ease to well-being—and so it was with delight that I later discovered the power of Rosen Method Bodywork in this regard.

I once attended a therapeutic group where a young woman who experienced herself as "held," in the sense of being held-in, presented with a very stiff jaw. This is a classic control situation: if parents impress upon their child that crying is an expression of weakness and should be avoided, the child will learn to tighten the jaw and push out the chin to hold back tears, "swallowing" the emotion. This conditioning is likely to continue into adulthood. The therapist saw this as a primary blockage—locking in repressed emotions—and worked bioenergetically⁷ to ease the strictures. Personally, I had not viewed this woman as being attractive; however, as I watched changes taking place as the blockage was eased and colour rose up in her face, I saw a transformation: the lady was beautiful! She was truly alive; her inner beauty flowed out through the physical for all to see. It was a wonderful and wondrous transformation—as an old English proverb says: "Peace within makes beauty without."⁸

Beauty, as I see it, is in the blossoming of the organism, whether it be a human being, a tree, or any other living entity. Beauty is seen through the natural flow: beauty is a process. We make ourselves less beautiful (less alive) when we block this flow—when we hide ourselves within our armour. And we suffer; we become ill or dis-eased.

6 See Lynne McTaggart (2003) *The Field: The Quest for the Secret Force of the Universe*.

7 See Alexander Lowen (1983).

8 Cited by Judith Lasater (1995) in *Relax and Renew: Restful Yoga for Stressful Times* (p. 42).

Therapy aims to alleviate suffering. This might be focused on a specific aspect, but all therapy seeks to aid the flow of “being” within the organism. This is particularly apparent in therapeutic massage, and Rosen Method Bodywork takes the process further through its enhanced level of attention.

Changes taking place in a person become manifested on all levels. The blocking of experience that can be clearly identified on the physical and mental/emotional level distorts and blocks or even “closes” the corresponding chakra (each chakra is related to a specific psychological function), see Brennan (1988, p. 71):

Whenever a person blocks whatever experience he is having, he in turn blocks his chakras, which eventually become disfigured. The chakras become “blocked,” clogged with stagnated energy, spin irregularly, or backwards (counterclockwise) and even, in the case of disease, become severely distorted or torn.

In *A Dictionary of Mind and Body*, Donald Watson (2003, p. 86), comments:

The various chakras are associated with specific aspects of the personality and with parts of the endocrine system. The solar plexus chakra, for example, is regarded as the centre of emotional life, and if overactive may result in strain on the pancreas, indicating the possible onset of diabetes (which can follow emotional shock). An underactive solar plexus, on the other hand, suggests someone who represses deep feelings, and has often been seen in cancer patients.

Awakening

Some years ago, I experienced something remarkable when I drove to pick up my partner from a one-to-one therapy session. I had done this several times previously but I wasn't prepared for what I encountered on this occasion. When I opened the door, I saw her radiating! Settled on a rug, she appeared to be in a state of bliss. In amazement, I asked her what had happened. Apparently, through bioenergetic bodywork, she had been able to experience herself within a “spiritual garden” that she always knew was there for her but had never before been able to enter. She had undergone a radical change of consciousness, literally being at one with everything⁹—experiencing utter peace—and in that state, as I saw her, she was radiating throughout the room!

What I particularly like about that experience is that it was objective. I had no expectations at all, simply providing transport for the occasion. It wasn't *my* state that caused me to see the energy radiating out. Whether others would have seen it, I don't know; perhaps my intimate relationship with the lady in question brought me into harmony with the energy—tuned me in to the same wavelength—but there can be no doubt that the event took place as I describe it. We are told that “oneness” is our true state, experienced when our mind with its “common sense” viewpoint no longer controls; perhaps the radiation of light (electromagnetic energy) is fully consistent with the remarkable energy flow that results when we are truly “being”—as depicted in early images of Jesus.

I was reminded of this event when listening to a radio interview¹⁰ which included an account of time spent in the remote mountains of Norway. When nature is experienced entirely free of man-made artefacts, there is a remarkable experience of being in the present—in “now.” I suspect that being lulled away from “now” by commercial advertising, or drawn into the past or the future through other agencies, takes us away from what is and brings about a kind of fragmentation. As Alan Fogel (2009) has demonstrated in *The Psychophysiology of Self-Awareness: Rediscovering the Lost Art of Body Sense* (reviewed in RMIJ Volume 2, Issue 2), when we are “out of touch,” regaining in-touchness with the body can be a crucial way into the “now,” towards healing and wholeness.

9 James Austin (1999) discusses “oneness” and “unity” in *Zen and the Brain* (pp. 530-534) and comments on merging: “No longer does the central witnessing awareness feel that a proprioceptively informed *physical* self is remaining ‘inside,’ isolated from the rest of that other physical world ‘outside,’ as it had seemed to be previously.”

10 Sandi Toksvig: “Excess Baggage,” BBC Radio 4, 10.00-10.30, Saturday, 29 May 2004.

The more defended we are, the more alone we are, hidden within our defences. This is a very painful state of being, so much so that we may cut off from feeling it! Although we may fear being seen (through a learned lack of trust), the human organism longs to engage in life, to be met and be touched. But denial is central when the suffering is great, and the nature of Rosen Method Bodywork (I would say the “magic”) is such that it “speaks” directly to the organism—the embodied self—that is awakened by being truly met.

Resolution

I have now completed my sixth Intensive—and so much has changed as a result of all the interactions. Towards the end, I was being worked on in a small group by the leader of the Intensive, Johan Siegnul. After significant work on holding areas around my knees and behind my heart, I turned onto my back. Johan, observing my chest (which felt to me like a rigidified tank), commented that he could probably drive a steam-roller over me and I wouldn’t even feel it. I agreed! I subsequently felt the reassurance of his hands as reminiscent of a very early stage of life: my head was not thinking and I felt strangely linked with lying in a pram on my back as was the way in the ’30s when babies were often put out in the garden to sleep in the daytime (and, I surmise, would cry for some time on waking before someone heard and responded). Remarkably, Johan then asked one of the participants to move closer and place a hand on my chest, followed later by others until there were ten hands on my chest! It felt incredible and so wonderfully safe. I could feel my body transforming like a deflating balloon until I was like a flat fish flopped on the table! The experience was utterly transforming and my baby-self could not have felt more met. It was some time before I found myself able to sit up following the session’s aftermath—it really felt that I was too young an infant to achieve that!

I long ago sensed that my lengthy journey would travel back through time, eventually revealing my earliest experiences. The starting point was over 40 years ago when, in evening therapeutic groups, I eventually managed to stop blocking the tears that this “brave little soldier boy” had been conditioned to prevent. I’ve experienced many different approaches and know that they’ve all facilitated my journey, aided and abetted by significant shocks along the way. Discovering Rosen has been the culmination for me, reaching organically to the self through a fulsome meeting with “what is.” I no longer feel so incompetent as Internship beckons: it’s a journey I truly relish!

Miriam Greenspan (2003) observed in *Healing through the Dark Emotions*, that “the inability to bear the core triad of grief, fear, and despair is the source of much of our individual and collective emotional ills” (p. xii). Our body tissues know all about our suffering and the defences we have employed. These defences shape our body and our interactions with the world around us, creating a habitual way of being. Until we begin to discover ourselves with the help of some transforming agency, we are to a greater or lesser extent *reactive*. The consequence on the world stage is all too apparent. We cannot properly become part of the great movement for change in the world without seeking our own healing. The body remembers without censoring, and Rosen touch “opens a pathway through the protective defenses of the self, into the core of their essential nature, which leads to a healing of these innermost places” (Rosen & Brenner, 2003, p. x). As we heal and become accessible to true interaction with others, our authentic self shines through and we become more able to be present with our hands and truly see and acknowledge the other when we practise Rosen Method Bodywork. Consideration of extra-ordinary events (even minor ones) that take place when we are psychically less constrained and our habits less dominating can move us beyond the false certainty of learned responses and open us to experiencing something much closer to the reality that is within and around us.

Appendix: Near-death experience

Twenty-three years ago, I went through a near-death experience on my way to hospital after collapsing from Pulmonary Embolism (I tore my Achilles tendon playing tennis to get fit and the immobilising plaster-cast resulted in blood clots that invaded my lungs). The medics considered I had no chance of surviving long enough to get to hospital 15 miles away. I believe the fact of my survival was due to my state of mind.

During the journey, I experienced myself transported to a wondrous realm, beautiful beyond words and incandescent white! It gave me the impression of a landscape, as though trees were present all around, but I cannot say that I saw trees, only that it seemed like that to me. It appeared as an opportunity; I knew I could enter that world if I chose and that it was the most perfect place to go. If I'd had no earthly connections I would have entered willingly, but I could not bear the thought of leaving those behind to their inevitable suffering. In moments of consciousness in the ambulance, I had been agonising over the fact that our mortgage might not get paid off in the event of my death. I'd just transferred to a new company and wasn't sure about the insurance: it seemed imperative to me that I survived. Although the doctors in the emergency room couldn't explain my survival, I knew it related to my perception of the consequences on my family if I died and the mortgage wasn't paid off!

Returning from the edge of death is inevitably life-transforming—it feels as though there has to be meaning in the event, that there is purpose in the remaining journey. When, six months later, a gypsy approached me in a car-park, saying "You nearly died recently," I took particular note when she then said "And you'll live to 96" (of age, not 1996 as a sceptical colleague quipped). I took all this into account later on when I discovered Rosen Method Bodywork and began giving serious thought to training at a rather late stage of life.

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