

There is No Box

Dennis P. German

Somatic Intensive

Human Development

*For the body is not one member, but many. If the foot shall say, Because I am not the hand, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body? And if the ear shall say, Because I am not the eye, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body? If the whole body were an eye, where were the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where were the smelling? But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him. And if they were all one member, where were the body? But now are they many members, yet but one body. And the eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee: nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you.*

-- I Corinthians 12:14-21

Anybody who has stubbed their toe can attest to the extreme affect that this can have on them. It is difficult to believe that such a small member of our being could be so important as to make something as simple as walking problematic. Yet this is the result of our somatic being; the stubbed toe is not life threatening nor does it portend some gloomy future but the episode could easily bring on an emotional crash and a spiritual downfall.

To a certain extent, there are no small things since each is like a pebble dropped in a body of still water; the ripple often reaches the farthest shore. And what seems like a gentle lapping wave on one shore can be a tsunami on another. Thus the seemingly smallest issue can produce an insurmountable life situation; a proverbial mole hill turned into a mountain. Yet there is no call for judgment or condemnation. The lightest of burdens to you might leave me immobilized.

As we reach within ourselves to feel the infinite space of our being we must find room for compassion and sympathy. But we must also understand that the effect on another invariably impacts the rest.

As we practiced the many dances at the Somatic Intensive we enjoyed the presence of each other in a deeper way than just seeing, hearing and feeling. Even the essence of our perspiration was a catalyst for an experience that exceeded pleasure and defies explanation... except that it is as a result of us knowing the complete bond of being. This felt like the transcendence which Jeddelloh speaks of (as cited in Rehorick & Bentz, 2008). The exacting details of our movement are lost to me but the exhilaration cannot be forgotten. This was a small piece of a communal life world raised to ecstasy.

If such a oneness were in practice at every level and location of humanity the prospects of improvement in the condition of the world would be dream like. Some might cast aspersions regarding our experience or any like it saying that it was only a result of hyperventilation or oxygen deprivation or a rush of adrenalin and/or endorphins. But as John Lennon put it in the song Imagine, "...you may say that I'm a dreamer; well, I'm not the only one...". This is no nocturnal fantasy but a full persuasion of our utter reality and the more we have who adhere to this vision the greater our impact on the universe for good.

The things that preclude achieving such a state are manifold. In each life world there are a myriad of sources of input which can cause what could be lifelong damage. The transcendent reality of human nature is the proverbial two edged sword; though grandiose episodes can be had which lift the being to heights beyond comprehension, considering material circumstances, yet the reliving of passed traumatic events can

bring the most affluent to a standstill in life. These are the wounds that must heal and the battle scars which must be reconciled if the individual is to reach a higher plane of being. The juxtaposition can be seen in the third world country where a peasant who has nothing can be content, living a long life in poverty, while storied celebrities of the first world might take their own lives in spite of their adoring fans, opulent life style and/or an apparently bright future.

Sticks and stones may break my bones but words will never harm me. The old nursery rhyme, which many a child has learned, holds a simple but powerful truth. Yet words spoken to one of tender years might engage a neurological or psychological trigger which cripples the individual for life. The rhyme, when taken to heart by the individual, can cause one to overcome the hurt of the words leading to maturation. Whereas, holding onto the hurt can make the verbiage a fetish which evokes an emotional breakdown (Bentz, p. 225, 1989).

These are the spirits, often long dead, which haunt the journey, even for the most emotionally stable. We all have a little spook which might unnerve and cause us to stumble. But on rare occasions an individual might find strength in, or extraordinary gifts, as a manifestation of the ghost. One might say that the curse is also a blessing.

To heal these individually is a precarious endeavor; often a literal exorcism. And those who are so oppressed of these specters that they are debilitated in their daily lives must have avenues of remedy. Many would say that the other's issue is not the concern of another. But from a somatic and systems perspective we are all part of one great being/system and if one of us is suffering the whole is impacted. The unseen hurt of a relative or even a distant ancestor can reveal itself according to Mahr (2004).

Family constellations bind together in an inseverable web of relationships which can help or hinder any or all members.

Without a doubt another issue which might be raised is that of privacy of the hurting individual. And though this is a concern, since it has been amplified by a tendency to disassociate, first from family, and then any others who might provide aid, support and comfort in a time of need, overcoming this is particularly complex. Thus it would seem that antisocial behavior would have the propensity to propagate itself and, in a worst case scenario, cascade from one level of psychosis to one of greater debilitation successively to the point of utter emotional and physical incapacitation.

There was a time when those in such a state were cared for; it was not perhaps the best of care and many processes were of no value while other seemed sadistic. But at least they were not living on the streets panhandling and wasting the time of hospital emergency room personnel, while trying to get a bed for the night.

But we cannot truly begin to heal ourselves until we admit that we are broken. Pretending a sense of normalcy, which is nothing but a sometimes indefinable construct (Burrelsman, 2009), is an obstacle which is not insurmountable. We must see our heroes and heroines as fallible and imperfect people. Photo Shopped celebrities must be seen as the blemished people with asymmetrical features that they actually are. The occasional confession of one of these "beautiful people" is valuable and even the tabloid pictorials of those sans makeup provide a balance and realistic view of these. Perhaps public profession of imperfection and feelings of inadequacy form the highest level of society might trickle down to those of us who are barely anybody and begin a revolution of real people divesting themselves of self delusion; and then seek healing.

When we see each other in the light of truth we can embrace each other and rise to overcome the demons that confound our efforts. This might be by a session of The Five Rhythms, a Pentecostal praise and worship service, an answer to the call to prayer at a mosque, psychotherapy, yoga, family constellations, functional integration, rolfing, or any number of paths which can lead to wholeness. There are two keys to this; one is that what works for one will not work for all. The other is that, as the poet stated (Donnes, 1624), no man is an island. Each individual must begin to see themselves as one with the whole. Every culture or religion already has an element which is somatic in nature. Therefore the basic foundation is laid to assimilate all into a whole which could lead to a global, and eventually perhaps a universal, sense and presence of oneness.

As the title might imply, my point is that there is no box. Thus there is no thinking of somebody stepping outside of their box. There is no boundary between an individual and the rest of reality. The things that appear to separate us from each other are only imagined constructs of our regrets and/or fears. If we can (and we must) learn to reach out to the infinite life world in which we exist we might find the touch of another comforting, healing and strengthening.

Too long the world has taught the youth to refrain from weeping when in pain or afraid. It is thought that a man is not "manly" if he shows any weakness; it has even gotten to the point where a woman cannot show emotion. Yet it is the admission of our frailty which allows us to take the path of wholeness. By accepting ourselves and our wholeness as well as our oneness with the soma of the infinite we are able to draw from and give back as case may require.

This thinking goes hand in hand with that of my integrative paper for the Social and Ecological Justice knowledge area; that we must determine avenues of reaching out to the world of the young who will be the facilitators of this revolution of love, joy and peace. But where can we start?

I would propose an undergraduate program be developed at Fielding; call it Fielding College. And then perhaps a secondary school; Fielding Academy. In the interim those high school student in the international baccalaureate program could be a initial source of students for the college.

(I am reminded of a time in the US congress during the Clinton administration; on one side of the isle they were calling for greater investment in law enforcement. On the other side there was a call for investment in early education. The better idea was to prepare the people for life through education rather than dealing with the result of illiterates with no employable skills. But I digress...)

The situation of Fielding Graduate University is well suited for the adult learner who has already plied a trade or profession. Though there are a few younger students, it seems that for most of us that this is our swan song. If I survive as well as my immediate forebears have I might have another thirty years to provide an input for positive impact on the world. But all too soon our time will pass; we must begin much earlier in grooming the leaders of the future. We dare not allow the torch to be dropped or extinguished.

We must lay a foundation for a complete overhaul of our world. The most logical place to start is the foundation and foundations must be laid early.

References:

Hanna, Thomas (1988). *Somatics: Reawakening the mind's control of movement, flexibility, and health*. Cambridge Center, Cambridge, MA: Da Capo Press.

Rehorick, D. A., & Bentz, V. M. (2008). *Transformative phenomenology: changing ourselves, lifeworlds, and professional practice*. Lanham, MD: Lexington Books.

Mahr, Albrecht "Family Constellations – Failure, Evil, and Guilt as Sources for Loving Dedication and Compassionate Strength" California, International Transpersonal Association Conference [Conference]. Palm Springs. June 13 – 18, 2004

Burrelsman, Katherine Marie, "A Search for Meaning: The Family's Response to Serious Mental Illness" (2009). Dissertations & Theses. Paper 125.  
<http://aura.antioch.edu/etds/125>

Donne, J. (1624). *Devotions upon emergent occasions and several steps in my sickness digested into I. Meditations upon our humane condition, 2. Expostulations, and debatements with God, 3. Prayers, upon the several occasions, to Him*. London: Printed for Thomas Iones.