



## NOTES FROM A JOURNAL

Betty Woodsmall

Writing about my experience as a subject for the Ida Rolf course recently held at Los Angeles faces me with the problem of trying to say in words that communicate what is basically untranslatable from my inner flow of feeling and knowing. Making this attempt is important though, because from all outward appearances the Rolf procedures seem superficially mechanical, thoroughly scientific in manipulation of bodily tissue into a properly aligned structure and basically oriented to a materialistic body approach. This illusion was immediately penetrated on my very first session. Here are some of my reactions and insights taken from my journal which I recorded during the total experience.

For the first time, in the most real way possible for me, I know that the mind-body gestalt is not

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an intellectual phrase but a living, breathing reality. My body had stored in its muscular and tissue cells coded information about past experience which became projected and re-experienced from my dim and unremembered past into a now, full of all the same sounds, colors and tastes and feeling tones. This experience occurred on my first session of the Rolf treatments as my practitioner was working on the left side of my rib cage around the 6th or 8th thoracic vertebra I would guess. After the treatment, at home every time I focused my attention upon that area the recall of the feeling would reoccur again and again. I relived this feeling which I had so beautifully locked away from myself when I was 3 years old. I began to incorporate all of the meaning this experience held for me in the present and a flood of insights about myself and my actions and my relationship to the world made sense for the first time.

As the treatments proceeded, each one revealed a new aspect of myself in such a way that I could not hide from it any longer, nor did I wish to. Each week I became a different personality in terms of how I felt about my situation and how I responded to it. One week I felt thoroughly oriental and delicate like a beautiful single but perfect blossom about to open its leaves, I called myself Kamala all that week. Another week I felt that I was truly a creature from the underworld, full of darkness, hostility, and a desire to thrash out and defy all around me. Still another time I seemed to turn into a cat-like human who prowled beautifully and skillfully through the jungles of life, graceful and terrifying like a powerful tiger.

Anyway, what all this means to me now is that I saw myself in many lights as I went through the treatments, and I was continuously startled at the many faces or role one

can play and remarkably enough -- this is all within our choosing. I can be as many people as I wish. By the last treatment I wasn't sure which person I would be. What seemed right to me was that I had an infinite amount of energy freed within me so that whatever I decided to be or do I could manage it easily and confidently. I knew the wealth and variety of inner possible choices at my command.

What all this led up to for me was a feeling of needing to slow down the pace of my present life and simplify living so that I could breathe in deeply the natural flow of myself and allow myself to just be all of itself without hiding anything. I wanted time to live with my newness and freshness which was uncovered through the treatments by breaking through all the old established ways of responding and perceiving the world. For the first time I felt myself truly a center of energy which included my body as well as my brain and my soul. I felt the three functioning as a unit and pulsing and breathing rhythmically in response to each other. I knew this needed time to be fully experienced. This was not however a weak or fragile relationship which I would need to worry about losing or perhaps stepping on or hiding. This is not the case. My feeling was that the relationship was intrinsically stable and would not falter and that all the outworn responses and ways of going through the world would of themselves fall by the way due to the rhythmic form of the inner self -- me. What I wanted then was to nourish this newness, this honest, natural form of myself and allow it to take its own form in growth by not placing barriers in its path, by not deliberately slowing its progress by unnatural pressures.

Quite another part of the experience was the visualization dur-

ing the treatments of the actual inner contours of my body changing shape and the total light body image plastically reshaping itself before and within my eyes. Maybe I should just mention a few more of my thoughts, feelings and experiences.

I found during the treatments that I could consciously learn to relax certain muscle groups and thereby relieve the tension or blockage which was causing my pain. I found all kinds of pain in myself: the hidden pain caused by frozen feelings built up like crystals within my body which my system rubbed up against each day by simple muscular contractions. The freedom felt when the system could flow through and by these points more easily because the energy lock had been freed by the freeing of the bodily tissue from its abortive patterns. The pleasure tolerance level was pain in a different form. There was joy in the discovery that the body had an intelligence of its own. My body knew along the way what was still out of adjustment, that I was still not integrated, that the functioning was not at its ultimate yet. I longed for the next treatment in order that the body could be satisfied by being given more of its natural functioning pattern.

For me the experience has been the coming together of a long-time search or quest to integrate all my experiencing. The past two years I have been trying to bring the body into the picture of the total in such a way that it was not denied, or transcended, or diminished, but was incorporated in an integrated and meaningful way for me in with the other mental and spiritual aspects of myself which were dominating the picture. I feel that because of this search and because of my openness to a physical experience which could help me to bring this aspect of myself into focus, the treatments served me as a

means to fully functioning in all the dimensions of life. Connecting the body to the experiencing in its totality leads one through a labyrinth of ups and downs, ins and outs, negative and positive. It was essential that I experience my form in this very real way, I feel that because I proceeded through the total experience including the darkest aspects of what I found enclosed in myself, I am more free to choose for the positive side of my nature. I can say "yes" to life and not say "yes, except for the physical plane." I am here, living, breathing, organizing, functioning, becoming and I like myself as I am in all of my dimensions. There is a purpose and a way within this natural ordering and interrelationship of my body, mind, soul. All must be there, doing their part in order that the full expression of this form of life can be brought to awareness and experienced fully.

Another thought -- I feel that the Rolf treatments are not to be undertaken lightly as another device to be tried and thrown away later. I feel that this is a way of life in terms of needing concentration, time for contemplation, time to integrate this new experiencing, and an openness in attitude which can lead to the most revealing understanding of oneself as an organism. I feel that if one is open and willing, there are lessons here which can be useful the rest of one's stay in the present form.

About the practitioner. I feel that whoever goes into this work needs these same attitudes described for the subject. Because the experience is so much more than meets the eye, the Rolf practitioner needs to be in touch with this kind of experiencing in himself and be the kind of person who himself is in touch with this mode of living that involves changing, openness

flexibility, sensitivity, empathy for the form becoming, perception of the total possibilities in the situation.

I think Dr. Rolf is one of those rare human beings who came to us and because of --who knows what-- have a gift to give to all human beings. I have a feeling that she is dealing in something which she herself has not found the exact words for -- words which would describe the meaning of her treatments. She knows from deep inside what she is doing, and she does it -- it works. What it is cannot be charted into scientific exactness though certainly the results can be measured with scientific instruments. If she could only make the effort to clearly state by what magic she works her wonders then truly these techniques could benefit more people in more places and the training of her practitioners could be more exact and she could be sure that they will carry on the work as she does.

Whether or not this is possible remains to be seen. Certainly it would be one of those great gifts of the human race if it could be more standardized and accepted. I have a feeling that much of what she does is, however, intuitive at this stage and requires the exact combinations of practitioner, subject, attitude, setting, ingredients from the past, etc. The relationship of these is what turns the metal into gold, it is not inherent in any one of the parts.

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