

# M o v e m e n t

By Emilie Conrad-Da'oud

*"Move'ment 1. Moving or being moved. 2. moving parts of a mechanism (i.e. clock or watch). 3a. Body of persons with a common object. 3b. Campaign undertaken by them. 4. Activities or whereabouts of a person or group. 5. Mus. principal subdivision of a longer musical work. 6. Bowel evacuation. 7. Progress."*

*Oxford Dictionary, American Edition, 1995*

Science tells us we are a world of movement. Objects that we think of as static are moving, but not in discernible ways. Rocks, mountains are all "moving" with various rhythms and frequencies.

The conventional notion of movement is that it is something that turns on and off. It is usually thought of as a specific activity: walking, running, or scratching our heads. When we stop these activities, we are "still," "not moving."

I make a distinction between what we call functional movement, which implies a "body," and biological movement in which the body is not a designated object and does not maintain a specificity of form. In this, we can say that movement is what we are, rather than something we do.

As a young woman, I spent many years living in Haiti; there, I had the opportunity to choreograph and to be the lead dancer in a folklore dance company. I was deeply inspired as I steeped myself in ancient snake-like movements that seemed to spring from the earth itself. Messages sent

through the dancers' legs and spines undulated with the pulsations of unseen cosmic forces that hinted at the beginning of all form. The whispers of early winds, the smells of ancient Earth entered me with aromas I have never forgotten.

In 1967, still stirred by my Haitian experiences, I started a movement inquiry that was eventually called Continuum. Through intricate wave motions, I began to explore these questions: As living systems can we engage in the formative tendency of life more directly? As intelligent beings, can we live in a culture but not be bound by it? Does our organism have a destiny separate and apart from the concerns of personality?

What we commonly refer to as a

body is basically movement that has become stabilized. When we see a newborn, essentially we are looking at the movement of water made flesh. We are seeing a fluid system meeting the vibrational field of the earth, where an elegant exchange begins to take place. As this exquisite system adjusts to its new atmosphere, a

gradual stabilizing occurs.

Liquid grasps, eyes focus, experiments are made. The baby rolls, thrusts, jerks, flails...trying out the best possible sequences to ensure survival on Earth.

The very nature of stabilizing impels the fluid

system to coalesce, giving the support that is needed to become functional. Fluidity consolidates as new requirements are met. Our oceanic memory pales as the demands of life on land become more immediate. All is forgotten, except for the primordial characteristics of our intrinsic environment.

We learn to crawl, to stand, to move forward through the savannas, the mountains, the cities, outer space. This stabilized creature called human, what is it? Can we ever know?

**As living systems can we engage in the formative tendency of life more directly? As intelligent beings, can we live in a culture but not be bound by it?**

The fluid presence in our bodies is our fundamental environment; we are the moving water brought to land.

In utero the amniotic and the embryo engage in a sphere in which there is no separation. Our early existence is inclusive: the embryo recapitulates our planetary process, we contain all forms, all possibilities. A claw, a fin, a hand are all blueprints in this biomorphic plan. Chemical codes will determine whether we will have a snout or a nose. The web between our fingers, the membranous dura mater and esophagus, the suspiciously protozoan curve of our brains and viscera that lie pulsating in water, are vestiges of ancient worlds here before we were, resonating in us through their varied undulating messages.

As human beings, we are an accrual of many life forms that have been shaped by our oceanic origins, still pulsating as the intrinsic world of our organs, our connective tissue, our nerve fiber. We are a process of millions of years of an open-ended experiment. Our forms have been designed and redesigned, unendingly adaptive and innovative.

All form is temporal. Its demise, or its need to reconfigure is inherent. In movement there are no objects. There is only fertile probability awaiting an urging. By defining an object or creating a boundary, such as a "body," we establish a limit.

In order to survive efficiently, we must stabilize and in a sense "stop the world." We must define ourselves as a designated self in order to survive. I must know that when I'm hungry I can feed my mouth and not yours. My ability to survive appears to need to identify this bounded state that I call myself. We can live successfully within our environment, and do all that is necessary to ensure that

tomorrow will come. But that is not all we are. We are also the flowing expression of a divine and complex intelligence that has formed us for a purpose we may never know.

Stabilization is vital for efficiency, but it becomes rigid when uninformed by

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new probabilities. Maintaining an identity of the body as our only designated form, we, as biological systems, actually narrow our vectors of expansion. With increased stabilization there is a compromise in adaptability. Infants have a capacity to heal because they are "flux," mutable and relatively open systems. Healing becomes a more arduous process as we fall victim to our assumptions about our bodily reality. We can encompass more than one description. We can learn from our "flux," which gives us pure information and nourishment. It can improve our world by not limiting us to the boundaries of our own thought.

In 1974, I made a decision to experiment with spinal cord injuries. My question was, "If we are movement, then what is paralysis?" Perhaps our

medical model needs to be updated. Perhaps paralysis is in the model and not in the spine. If we acknowledge ourselves as dynamic energetic systems that are primarily movement, we could say that in paralysis there is a compromise in function, but not in movement. What I have been discovering is that movement can innovate new function.

Movement, or the lack of it, relates directly to how we are breathing. In the case of trauma, breath is usually suspended, which will also suspend movement. Shock will contribute to paralysis by its emotional immobilization. Spinal shock sometimes wears off, but emotional shock can go on for years.

When working with people demonstrating such extreme physical compromise, I begin by introducing a variety of breaths. Breath will begin to activate our fluid systems and bring about novel intrinsic interactions where the throb of life becomes apparent. Complex intrinsic movement, stimulated by using breath in a profusion of ways, brings warmth and flow to what once appeared to be frozen and unresponsive.

No official protocol has ever been developed for the elaboration of spinal movement in cases of paralysis. By using an embryogenetic (biomorphic) model I encourage movement in the cerebro-spinal core. As intrinsic movements become more abundant, a neurologically rich matrix is created for the budding of new neural pathways. I believe that our ability to innovate lies within our biological core.

As life currents become increasingly visible and articulate, and as rigidity melts into the mutable play of form, there is a gradual lowering of the level of injury and ambulatory movement eventually becomes possible.

My concern has always been with the ingenious ways we become self-limiting; and how all our various cultures define the parameters of what is knowable. Western culture, in particular, has brought about the industrialization of the body, with a devastating and alienating effect. For us, mechanical, repetitive movement is accepted as desirable, and this mechanization lies at the core of how we live and describe our world. Does this have any connection to a flowing vital process called a human being, whose form is based on the movement of water?

In these many years of teaching Continuum, whether I am dealing with a specific healing process, or with the limits we put upon ourselves, my concern has always been to bring us to a greater participation with the underlying motif of life on Earth: organism as environment.

As each of us becomes more fluid and resonant, defensiveness disappearing like worn out flesh, there emerges a larger unity in which communication at the level of cells and fluids becomes vastly enhanced.

We are processes, terrestrial and beyond. Our relationship with our planet is maintained by the resonance of our fluid systems with all fluid systems, human and other.

Creative "flux" is essential for the enhancement of our functioning. In "flux," we cannot identify "parts." This "flux" is our existential unity and creates a resonant chord with our planet. It provides us with an ability to function as biological systems rather than cultural entities. All distinctions dissolve into flowing variations, into a matrix of divine expression. There appears to be an intelligence and strength to this flux that goes beyond our thinking. Our ability to innovate lies, as far as I can tell, in this softening of form, where

all becomes liquid.

We are open systems, able to respond to the immediacy of change. Our notion of "body" undergoes a metamorphosis. We no longer identify with ourselves as bounded forms exclusively, but we can enter the waters of our own existence without reservation or plan. We are the process of life constantly unfolding itself.

The universe we are living in is in a constant exchange of information and nourishment. I see this as a fundamental activity of the human on this planet and perhaps beyond our Earth as well. Blood, rivers, oceans, cerebrospinal fluid, all fluids are in a state of resonance, a unity without boundary.

Our biomorphic ancestry makes itself known to us directly and informs us personally. God is not elsewhere, but in the very movement of our formative tendency, continually manifesting itself through the play of mutable forms.....continuum..... □