Radical Somatics and Philosophical Counseling

By Jeffrey Maitland, Ph.D., Advanced Certified Rolfer © 1998

INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

"Radical Somatics and Philosophical Counseling" was written in response to an invitation to present a paper at the December 1998 American Philosophical Association meetings in Washington, D.C.. I have been practicing philosophical counseling for years both within and outside my practice as a Rolfer. When I learned that there was an organization called the American Society for Philosophy, Counseling, and Psychotherapy that was devoted to the theory and practice of philosophical counseling, I immediately became a member (ASPCP is a division of the American Philosophical Association). A few months after joining I was invited to deliver this paper. Since my paper deals with a number of fundamental issues that bear directly on our understanding of Rolfing, I thought it might find some interest among readers of the *Rolf Lines*.

Even though most of us in the alternative somatic practices espouse a non-dualistic approach to our work, dualism infects all of our ways of thinking about what we do—so much so that it actually undercuts our work at every level. Dualism is a metaphysics, an epistemology, and a theory of perception. Dualism is so pervasive and fundamental to how we think about mind and body that even when we think we are giving a holistic and non-dualistic account, we are often only haplessly evoking its self-defeating way of understanding reality. Dr. Rolf, for example, espoused monism. But monism provides no real advance on dualism because it accepts the self-defeating founding premisses that generate dualism. My paper administers an antidote for dualism by providing a sketch for an evolutionary, phenomenological, non-dualistic, non-mechanistic approach to life and the mind/body problem.

As you will see, it is actually part of a much larger project in philosophical biology, cognitive science, and its relevance to Rolfing and transformation. It deals with the nature of consciousness, perception, and the cognitive theory of life. It makes a strong case for a non-dualistic conception of embodied consciousness, and, unlike most of contemporary cognitive science and biology, it argues against the mechanistic approach to life and consciousness. It also introduces a new evaluative taxonomy (called psychobiological intentionality or orientation) that allows Rolfers to take account of how a person's worldview affects structure and vice versa.

Organisms and their environments co-evolve. Part of the truly astonishing niche into which we humans have evolved is cognitive. The very structure of our evolved psychobiological nature makes us all instinctive philosophers. As a result, we all develop worldviews, full fledged or half-baked notions and concepts about who and what we are, how we fit into our world, and how the world works. Sometimes these views are elaborate reflective constructions. But more often they are tacit and prereflective: sometimes inchoate, sometimes consistent, sometimes appropriate, sometimes self-contradictory, sometimes confused, and sometimes nothing more than mythopoetic phantasies. Many of the tacit concepts and notions that structure our experience not only go unrecognized by us, but sometimes also fuel our dysfunctional patterns.

Since soma and worldview are bidirectional, they influence each other. The extent to which we either recognize or miss this influence is the extent to which we either release and integrate or fail to release and integrate our clients with gravity and their environment. Whether we have words for it or not, a holistic, integrative practice like Rolfing is always bumping up against this intermingling of soma and worldview. By proposing a new evaluative taxonomy that includes the taxon of worldview, I am conceptualizing and giving voice to an aspect of the whole person that all of us at one time or another have attempted to affect in our practice. With this fifth taxonomy, I am trying to build awareness of a profoundly important feature of our psychobiological nature that I have always felt to be missing from my

original formulation which included only the structural, geometrical, functional, and energetic taxonomies. Besides including the worldview taxon, the fifth taxonomy also includes the psychological taxon and taxons that classify thwarts to perception and self-sensing.

Please keep in mind that "Radical Somatics and Philosophical Counseling" was written for philosophers and those who have some understanding of the history of philosophy, science, and as well as some of the recent developments in biology and cognitive science. Part of the paper rests on an understanding of the prereflective/reflective distinction and the concept of intentionality. You can find a discussion of these phenomenological concepts in Chapter three of my book, Spacious Body: Explorations in Somatic Ontology (Berkeley, 1995).

You will also notice the use of the word "deconstruction" in the text. Deconstruction is a technical term used in some contemporary philosophical circles to describe the process of laying bare the presuppositions of a theory and then criticizing them to show that the theory is without foundations. A complete deconstruction of dualism would also require a deconstruction of monism, for example. The first philosopher to refer to this form of analysis as deconstruction was Heidegger. My use of the term "deconstruction" should not be taken to mean that I support the misprisions and self-defeating nihilism of Derrida and other French post-modernist thinkers who also use this term.

RADICAL SOMATICS

I am speaking to you today as both a philosophical counselor and an advanced somatic practitioner. It is in this context that I mostly practice philosophical counseling. When I was invited to deliver this paper, it occurred to me that the most useful topic I could share with you is my perspective on the role of the body in philosophical counseling.

I won't have time to lay out how I understand the mind/body problem in any detail, but I think you should know that I come to these issues from a couple of related philosophical perspectives. Besides being a Rolfer, I have also been a student and practitioner of phenomenology and Zen for more than thirty years. I would argue that Heidegger pioneered the way toward what Merleau-Ponty finally managed to successfully accomplish, namely, overcoming ontological dualism. By further deconstructing the Platonic/Cartesian metaphysics, Merleau-Ponty was able to resuscitate the living human body from its catatonic existence as a Cartesian soft machine.

One of the theses of this talk is that the lived-body is the most ubiquitous, but clinically underappreciated, presence with which all forms of therapy and counseling must come to terms. For this reason, I used the phrase "Radical Somatics" as part of the title for this article. The word "radical" should be understood in its original sense as the "root" or "source" of something, not in the sense of an "extreme." Consciousness as I will show is not other than the body. It is, rather, an evolutionary elaboration of the lived body's perceptual powers. If the full implications of this view that thought is an elaboration of flesh are understood, it follows that all forms of medicine, therapy, and counseling must become holistic. It also follows that philosophical counselors must learn to take account of how a person's worldview can be anchored in distortions of the flesh and somatic practitioners must learn to appreciate how somatic dysfunctions can be fused to a problematic worldview.

In the first two sections I will sketch how I understand the nature of the body and consciousness and then draw out the implications of my view for philosophical counseling and any form of medicine or therapy. In the third section I will summarize a few case histories to demonstrate the somatic nature of philosophical counseling and the philosophical nature of somatic manual therapy.

HOW TO THINK ABOUT CONSCIOUSNESS, WORLDVIEW, AND THE BODY

Like Merleau-Ponty and most Buddhist philosophers, I am neither a monist nor a dualist. I would even go so far as to say that what we refer to and experience as consciousness in ourselves is an extraordinary, evolutionary adaptation and elaboration of the basic perceptual capacities common to all living organisms.[1] No matter how rudimentary or complex the organism, wherever you look you see some sort of perceptual ability coupled with some degree of sentience (or what I call self-sensing and Merleau-Ponty calls corporeal reflexivity). Human sentience is clearly the most elaborate and complex evolutionary adaptation on the earth. When these abilities are more thoroughly elaborated through the evolutionary development of language and the ability to reflect on our situation, consciousness and self, as we know them, are born.

The problems we might have with understanding how consciousness is a modification and elaboration of the perceptual capacities of the lived body come not so much from the claim itself but from the gratuitous founding assumptions of dualism that define and divide our nature and experience into two incommensurable, mutually exclusive realms.

Even though many philosophers and scientists in cognitive psychology and evolutionary theory reject dualism as a self-defeating position, and even though contemporary philosophy has pretty well dismantled the Cartesian myth of mind as an immaterial substance, many thinkers and researchers still embrace the other side of Descartes' distinction between mind and body and understand the body as a mere object that takes up measurable space. The body to their way of thinking is kind of a soft machine. It is common in science and evolutionary theory to construe living organisms, including human organisms, as an exquisitely and hierarchically organized, but cobbled together collection of little machines.

Although I am critical of this mechanistic approach to living organisms, I am not a vitalist. Just as the denial of dualism does not imply the affirmation of monism, so too the denial of mechanism does not necessarily entail the affirmation of vitalism in any form. In distinguishing the animate from the inanimate we can point to many interesting characteristics. One of the more important is the incredibly complex hierarchical organization of living organisms which produces powers not found in inanimate matter, such as self-organization, the capacity to form boundaries, the capacity to respond, to take in and release energy, to grow and differentiate, to replicate, to maintain a steady-state balance or homeostasis by means of complex control, communication, and feedback systems, and many more. Researchers in artificial intelligence and artificial life have already modeled some of these characteristics in machines and are increasingly confident that all characteristics of life can either be given a mechanical explanation or be realized in a mechanical form. But there is one feature of living organisms that is not easily conceptualized as a mechanical phenomenon, and that is the capacity for self-sensing.

All living organisms, even one celled organisms, have the ability to sense and respond to their environment. Obviously, a one celled organism has no reflective sense of self. But it does have a kind of perceptual sensitivity and, with the creation of its own boundaries, a rudimentary unreflective, anonymous identity which allows it to distinguish itself from what is not itself. (In the assimilation of another organism an amoeba must be capable of distinguishing between itself and what it is digesting, otherwise it might digest itself.) As Gregory Bateson pointed out, inanimate matter reacts to stimuli, but living beings respond[2]. Kick a rock and you get a rather predicable reaction. But kick a person or a gorilla and you are likely to get a variety of rather disturbing responses. Every living being responds to its environment.

You might think this ability to respond and distinguish between self and other is not really such a big deal. While it may be a useful way to distinguish between living organisms and inanimate matter, it is not powerful enough to show that the mechanistic approach to life is problematic. After all, a thermostat is a machine that responds to its environment. And if that is not convincing enough, just consider the existence of those sophisticated remote sensing robots that are capable of responding to specific environments in rather surprising ways. Given what researchers in artificial life and artificial intelligence have accomplished so far in making "responsive" machines, you might be tempted to conclude that it is only a matter of time before we create responsive machines that begin to emulate more and more of what we easily recognize as consciousness. Because of the advances in these fields, you might even believe, like so many scientists, that every characteristic of life will ultimately yield to a mechanical explanation and a mechanical realization. If we can create a mechanical heart that manifests the functioning of a human heart, and if the mind is a modification of the body, then it seems more than reasonable that someday we could create mechanical minds.

I am more than willing to concede that you can extend the use of the word "respond" to cover how many of our existing machines behave. But the critical difference between how a machine and a living organism responds to or perceives its environment lies in self-sensing. In responding to and perceiving its world a living organism does something that no machine has so far accomplished it senses itself sensing its environment. Self-sensing is a fundamental feature of how living beings perceive their worlds and this capacity is not found in inanimate matter or among our most sophisticated machines. I agree with those contemporary philosophers, cognitive scientists, and biologists who reject dualism as an untenable and self-defeating position. Like these theorists I also do not believe that consciousness as we ordinarily experience it is other than the body. What I take issue with is the machine ontology that sits at the core of most scientific investigations of life that suggests the human body is some sort of machine or complicated organized collection of mechanical processes. So far no researcher has thought to mechanically model self-sensing. If it ever occurs to anyone to try, however, I do not believe they will succeed. Self-sensing is not something of which machines are capable. The hardware is all wrong. Or perhaps I should say that sentience and consciousness are not a matter of hardware at all.

On this particular point I think the functionalists have it wrong. Functionalists argue that a far more fruitful line of inquiry is to ask what a mind does rather than trying to determine what sort of a thing a mind is. To their way of thinking, if we could delineate with some precision what a mind does, then it ought to be possible to realize these capacities in another medium such as a machine. But I doubt that mind or consciousness could ever be realized through mechanical means because the hardware of which machines are constructed is simply the wrong stuff from which to nurture sentience and consciousness. Living creatures are not cobbled together from hardware. They are woven from and have evolved from a much softer wear.

While it is probably true that the first living organisms descended from transitional machine-like inorganic forms, living creatures are not composed of little macros or robots, and mind or consciousness is not "the mere effect of a mindless cascade of mechanical processes," as Daniel Dennett claims in his wonderful philosophical explorations into Darwinian thinking.[3] Why? Because perception and self-sensing are an inseparable feature of the self-organization of living beings, and robots and mechanical processes are not capable of self-sensing. I am not denying that evolution is purposeless, mindless cascade of many kinds of processes. I am not denying that some of these processes may even have a mechanical realization. But I am denying that living beings are some kind of natural machine as Descartes and many scientists insist. I am also casting doubt on the functionalists' assurance that consciousness will someday have a mechanical realization.

What we share with all living creatures is perception and the concomitant capacity for self-sensing. The self-sensing that belongs to perception constitutes what is called awareness in other life forms. Even though the sort of self-awareness that we call consciousness in ourselves is astonishing in comparison to the self-sensing that constitutes the awareness of other forms of life, the self-sensing that belongs to perception is, nevertheless, the ground from which human consciousness evolved. In our own case, our lived body's ability to perceive its world and to perceive and sense itself perceiving is coupled with two more remarkable powers: the ability to use language and the ability to step out of the flow of prereflective lived experience and reflect on it. This ability to re-present experience to ourselves linguistically and reflectively is what gives rise to our experience of our own consciousness and self. Since I am able to step back from and reflect on what I just experienced, I can claim this body, all these energies, feelings, sensations, perceptions as my own. I can know and say to myself, this is me and recognize that the objects of my perception are not me. What we call consciousness or self is a linguistically tempered, reflective self-sensing. It is an elaboration of the perceptual powers of our body or more specifically, an elaboration of the self-sensing of our body. Consciousness is not other than the lived body, and since it is a product of the body it is neither the essence nor foundation of what we are. As a result of these considerations, I think it is reasonable to reserve the word "consciousness" for what we humans have and use the word "awareness" to describe what other organisms have.

When we try to re-present to ourselves that which knows and perceives the world we are struck by what is probably the strangest thing of all about ourselves – that which perceives the world and senses itself sensing the world cannot be present to itself the same way that the objects of our world can. It is just this uncanny aspect of our nature that misleads us into thinking that our consciousness must be some sort of mysterious nonphysical, non-bodily stuff. I perceive the book in front of me, I turn it around it my hands, I smell its newness, I can measure it and weigh it. But when I try to grasp that which senses a world and senses itself sensing a world, I cannot do it in the same way. I can certainly turn my attention toward that which perceives the world in the same way I turn my attention to any object of perception. But I cannot hold myself before myself in the way I can hold a simple object before myself.

This self that knows and perceives a world has no shape or outline. Since this elusive reflective meaning bestowing self-sensing that we call consciousness is not an object that takes up measurable space like the other simple objects of our world, it does not fulfill Descartes' overly narrow definition of what constitutes a material object. I cannot weigh my consciousness or determine its circumference, and I cannot draw a picture of it. Although I do not live my body as a simple object that merely takes up measurable space, I can step out of the flow of prereflective experience and treat it that way. I can narrow my experience of my body and treat it like a simple object. I can weigh my body, for example, before going on a diet. Since we can reify our body as an object that takes up measurable space but cannot perceive our self-sensing in the same way, we are continually tempted to imagine that consciousness must be a non-bodily, nonphysical thing that has a different ontological status than our body. When we contemplate this uncanny feature of our nature and improperly describe it

according to Cartesian presuppositions, naturally, we are led to embrace a view of our own consciousness that defines itself by excluding the body.

But Descartes' overly narrow definition of materiality is faulty and misleading. We are not always tempted to call something nonmaterial just because it fails to take up measurable space. Consider, for example, what might be called a style of comportment. We recognize each other in the unique ways we walk, gesture, and express ourselves, but these unique styles of comportment cannot be treated as things that take up measurable space. They are as much a part of our perceived world as rocks, apples, and books. Although we cannot depict, weigh, or the find the circumference of a style of comportment, we also do not believe that it is some sort of mysterious nonphysical something or other that exists in another realm of being. But when it comes to our own consciousness it is common to indiscriminately accept Descartes' narrowly conceived definition of materiality and thoughtlessly embrace the mechanistic metaphysics of science which insists that our body is a soft machine.

The mechanistic metaphysics of science had part of its origin in Galileo's insistence that science investigate only what could be measured. From this reasonable methodological recommendation Galileo drew the unwarranted metaphysical conclusion that what could not be measured was subjective and existed in the nonphysical mind of the beholder. We can measure the weight and size of an apple, but, in Galileo's and Descartes' view, the experience of its redness and sweetness is a subjective property existing not in the apple, but in the immaterial mind of the beholder. In such a view, if all perceiving beings ceased to be, color, sweetness, bitterness, love, and the like also would cease to be. Bedeviled by these gratuitous assumptions, many people find it perfectly reasonable to assign an incorporeal existence to our linguistically tempered reflective self-sensing. Many even are tempted to believe that, in some mysterious way, consciousness might even exist independently from the body. But this faulty description of reflective self-sensing is one of the first phenomenological mistakes of dualism.

As I am suggesting to the contrary, consciousness as we ordinarily know and experience it is a linguistically tempered reflective act that is grounded in our biology. Since it is a process that developed from the lived body, it is not the essence or foundation of our nature as dualism leads us to believe. It has evolved in us as a most remarkable adaptation and elaboration of the capacity for self-sensing found in all living organisms. We rightly attribute forms of awareness and even intentionality to many other organisms because our bodies share, albeit in a much more elaborate form, many of the same processes, communication systems, feedback loops, control systems, hierarchical levels of organization, and organic materials. Through the process of natural selection, nature has taken millions of years to fashion what we recognize as awareness in other organisms. And when coupled with the evolutionary development of language and the ability to reflect on experience, self-sensing becomes the extraordinary feat we recognize in each other as consciousness. Consciousness is not a nonmaterial ghostlike thing as Descartes' definition of materiality leads us to believe, but an astonishing modification and elaboration of our own body's self-sensing perceptual capacities – not the body conceived simplistically and strictly as a soft machine, but the body that Merleau-Ponty fleshed out as the lived body. Thus, as Merleau-Ponty recognized so clearly, the complete deconstruction of the mind/body problem requires not just dismantling the incorporeal conception of mind, but also rethinking the often unchallenged assumption that the body is nothing but a soft machine.

Because of the worldwide popular fascination with holistic medicine, many conventional physicians and health care providers are now proclaiming their anti-Cartesian sentiments using the crude philosophical language common to many practitioners of alternative medicine. With little or no philosophical understanding of the issues involved, they accept the very descriptions of body and mind that presuppose the self-defeating premisses of dualism and carelessly declare that body and mind are one. Not realizing that there is no need to ask about the mind-body connection if body and mind are one, they conduct conferences about healing and the "mind-body connection." But if you appreciate how what we call consciousness is a modification of the lived body (not the machine body of Cartesian dualism), then you see how the problem of explaining the so-called mind-body connection simply evaporates.

Our bodies are not soft machines and we are not ghosts that inhibit them. What phenomenology discovered as intentionality is not a property of some kind of non-bodily transcendental mind, but a somatic or psychobiological being-oriented-toward-and-being-solicited-by-a-world. I can make a functional distinction between my body and my worldview, but how I live my worldview is not separate from how I live my body. Flesh and thought are not two ontologically separate realities, but two different ways of talking about the same form of intentionality. If we dwell phenomenologically on our

own situation, even in the most cursory manner, it is hard to miss how much of our suffering actually involves a complex deliquescent intermingling of somatic dysfunctions with conflicted cognitive or psychological processes.

IMPLICATIONS FOR PHILOSOPHICAL COUNSELING AND SOMATIC THERAPY

Soma and worldview are bidirectional. They are distinct but not separate aspects of the whole of what we are. The implications for any form of therapy or counseling are straightforward: since cognitive fixations and somatic fixations can be so profoundly intertwined, giving up one's problematic worldview often requires being released from one's somatic conflicts and vice versa.

In his excellent explication of Merleau-Ponty's deconstruction of the concept of "consciousness" and "body," M.C. Dillon says, "Thought must be conceived as an extension of the body's perceptual powers, a development of reflexivity that is latent in perception...he [Merleau-Ponty] calls for a 'hyper-reflexivity' that thematizes and thereby neutralizes the distortions introduced by reflective thinking...if reflection transforms the world by introducing an I, a thinking thing, then a further reflection can make itself aware of that fact and go on to understand that I as a product (rather than the condition) of thought...The I of subjectivity, the reified agent of thought, comes into being through language, and the resulting grammatical habit becomes the basis of a philosophical prejudice. When the genesis of the I is understood, the I can return to the perceptual world and take up its proper abode in the lived body."[4]

Dillon's analysis of thought as an extension of the reflexivity latent in the perceptual powers of the lived body is an illuminating statement of how Merleau-Ponty understands the intertwining of thought and lived body. We also can immediately recognize in Merleau-Ponty's concept of hyper-reflexivity one of the more useful tools of philosophical counseling. But there is a naive confidence in Dillon's assumption that hyper-reflexivity is all that is required for overcoming conflicted and fixated forms of embodiment, or as he misleadingly says, the self's taking up its proper abode in the lived body. His assurance that hyper-reflexivity can overcome an alienated form of embodiment is not borne out in the everyday work of somatic therapy, psychotherapy, or philosophical counseling. Overcoming alienation and finding our way back to healthier and less conflicted forms of embodiment is just not that simple.

One of the more profound signs of a healthy integrated person consists in a high degree of freedom from conflicted forms of thought and, what often comes to the same thing, freedom from conflicted forms of embodied intentionality. The alienation that is so prevalent in the modern world shows itself most clearly as conflicted and fixated forms of embodiment. Intentionality, as Merleau-Ponty says is oriented space. It follows that a conflicted intentionality is a conflicted orientation in space that shows itself in the flesh, in conflicted ways of being-in-the-world, in conflicted forms of temporality, and in distorted thinking.[5]

I recall a depressed graduate student in philosophy who was dissociated from her feelings and collapsed body telling me, "You know, after years of therapy, I have come to understand that the philosophical theories to which I am most attracted and willing to defend arduously are the ones best suited to support my neurosis." Dillon's conclusion is too quick because it fails to appreciate how much of what we might call conflicted thinking, the distortions introduced by reflective thought, are anchored in perceivable distortions of the flesh and often serve to support defended and dysfunctional behavior. "Taking up the proper abode in the lived body" is a matter of living our embodied intentionality in a less conflicted, more integrated way. Finding our way back to this way of being is almost never a simple matter of engaging in hyper-reflexivity. Often the return from alienation to integration is a rather lengthy and sometimes perilous journey requiring a variety of somatic, philosophical, and psychotherapeutic interventions. Clearly hyper-reflexivity is a very important tool of philosophical counseling, but by itself is hardly sufficient to show the way back to a less conflicted form of embodiment.

The claim that the body must be given its due in the context of all therapy would not be at all problematic to most somatic therapists. In fact, to those of us who deal with the body holistically, such an idea seems all but tautological. But I would guess that such a claim might not be so obvious to some philosophical counselors or psychotherapists. Twenty years of clinical experience and thirty years of Zen practice and phenomenological investigation have shown me, however, the body cannot be ignored in therapy or counseling of any kind. I have worked with too many clients who were unable to give up a conflicted worldview that was at the very core of their suffering because their tacit philosophical presuppositions were anchored in somatic fixations. If these somatic fixations are not released appropriately and in the right sequence, any attempt on the part of the philosophical counselor to assist the client in seeing his way clear of these prob

lematic philosophical presuppositions will meet with resistance or failure. Cognitive interventions can be completely ineffective and useless when the somatic aspect of the client's conflict is overlooked.

Since worldview and soma are bidirectional, it is equally true that many somatic dysfunctions are tied to problematic worldviews. Just as some philosophical counselors may not fully appreciate how a client's worldview can be rooted in somatic dysfunction, many somatic practitioners, whether they are Rolfers, osteopaths, chiropractors, or physical therapists, do not fully realize how profoundly a client's tacit or reflective worldview can influence the outcome of their therapeutic interventions. Even something as simple as a vertebra "being out of place," as it is often inappropriately described, can resist treatment because it is connected to an unspoken but problematic worldview.

In order to demonstrate the intertwining of soma and worldview I will discuss two case histories below in some detail. But first let me make my point a little clearer by ending this section with an interesting case. In our classes at the Rolf Institute we teachers always give demonstrations of our work on people who pay a much reduced rate to be our models. In an advanced class, a local Rolfer was a model for my co-teacher, William Smythe. Our colleague told Bill how the first series of Rolfing he received years ago had freed him from a long-standing depression. Rolfing had allowed his collapsed body to find a more upright stance. Bill and I recognized that he maintained his body in an unyielding and tension-laden conformity to a rigid notion of ideal posture that is common to Rolfing and many other somatic practices. We correctly surmised that he maintained this posture because he was afraid that he might literally collapse back into his depression. Over the years this rigid stance caused him a lot of discomfort. He had sought further sessions of Rolfing for relief, but to no avail. Much of the work he received was the forceful and painful kind for which Rolfing is unfortunately known. Bill immediately recognized the futility of the forceful method and approached the sessions differently. Realizing that some of our colleague's rigidity was rooted in a traumatically induced immobility response, Bill masterfully employed very gentle techniques designed to thaw aspects of his soma which were immobilized in high sympathetic arousal. The strategy worked well and when coupled with a little philosophical counseling about the problematic nature of the concept of an "ideal body" and how his adherence to it was creating his discomfort, he was able to finally let go of his rigidity and release some deeply held anguish. As a result, his tension began to disappear and his life become easier.

THE HOLISTIC APPROACH

I am not suggesting that every somatic intervention must include philosophical counseling any more than I am suggesting that every philosophical intervention must also include manipulating the body. But since consciousness is a modification and extension of the body's perceptual powers, understanding how a client's worldview can be an expression of his conflicted somatic intentionality can be very useful to the philosophical counselor. Knowing how to track the somatic aspects of how a client thinks about his world, for example, can make your work easier by showing where and where not to offer your philosophical probes.

This sort of understanding is especially critical if you believe as I do that every form of medicine, therapy, or counseling ultimately must be holistic.[6] My claim that holism is the only tenable approach for every form of health care may sound somewhat excessive especially when you consider that almost every form of medicine and therapy practiced today is employed in a corrective rather than holistic manner. Corrective strategies, whether they are employed by philosophical counselors, somatic manual therapists, or physicians, all approach the client in the same way. Specific problems are approached without concern for how they are expression of the whole person and how he lives his world. At times these specific problems can be handled quite appropriately without looking beyond the particular local somatic dysfunction or the particular conceptual or logical confusions of the client. But there are many more times when a particular cognitive intervention may not do the intended job or a particular somatic intervention does not hold because the whole person cannot adapt to or support the intervention. Recall the example of the graduate student in philosophy who was attracted to and arduously defended philosophical theories that supported her dissociation and collapsed body. Hyperreflexivity or a rational treatment of her philosophical position could hardly be expected to make any difference. If a client's psychobiological orientation cannot adapt to or support an intervention, then she will either maintain or return to the previous dysfunctional state or strain and disorder will be driven elsewhere – or both.

We are all familiar with the typical examples from manual therapy where a client's low back pain is treated piecemeal and symptomatically. Each time the client returns for therapy his low back is again treated

in the same localized way. Unfortunately, the pain almost always returns because the practitioner has not paid attention to how the low back problem is maintained by compensatory patterns of strain and dysfunction throughout the whole body. The same thing can occur in philosophical counseling. You work with a client's very specific conceptual confusion and after a while discover that you have gotten nowhere because you missed how his specific confusion was a part of his larger tacit worldview. I remember working with a client who was attracted to New Age Panglossian explanations of the events of her life. She especially liked to explain away her failures and avoid examining her resigned nature with statements like, "No matter what happens, it always happens for the best." After a lengthy discussion of the problematic logic of her view, my client said, "Your logic is much better than mine, but I like my view better."

Somatic and worldview fixations are dysfunctional whole patterns that usually involve the being of the whole person. They are rarely a local problem in the body or a specific confused concept. Because they are unified whole patterns themselves, they usually impel the whole person to adapt and reorganize around them. The concept of "fixation" is especially compelling when referring to psychological complexes and obsessions or to philosophical obsessions. In the context of holistic manual therapy, however, a fixation implies a localized kind of problem in the body that has no inherent connection to the whole. The existence of such localized fixations in the body is pretty much a rarity. Therefore, I also designate all fixations, whether they are found in our joints or worldviews, as "order-thwarters." This is a way of calling attention to the fact order-thwarters are unified whole patterns that are involved with and compromise the organization and freedom of the whole person.

A human being like every living being is a unified seamless whole in which no one part or aspect is any more fundamental to the organization and make up of the whole than the whole itself. Order-thwaters are patterns of perturbation that force the larger whole with which they are involved into new patterns of organization. A thwart at one level of our being tends to be a thwart at all levels. Since self-sensing constitutes part of our organismic identity and is distributed throughout the self-organizing pattern of our psychobiological nature, every system wide thwart to our psychobiolgical organization also constitutes a thwart to our self-sensing. These thwarts to self-sensing compromise our freedom and make us less than we could be. They adversely affect how we perceive the world, how we move, how we feel, and how we think. The more integrated and healthy our form of embodiment becomes, the freer we become from these order-thwarters. The freer we are from these thwarts to our existence, the clearer our self-sensing becomes and the freer we become. In fact, one of the hallmarks of a healthy integrated person is clarified self-sensing. Interestingly, it is also part of what Zen Buddhism means by the Bright Clean Bodhi Mind.

I want to emphasize the point that every system wide thwart is a thwart to self-sensing as a way to underscore the fact that somatic therapy and philosophical counseling are never simply corrective practices – they are inherently holistic. They are not just about fixing parts or engaging specific philosophical confusions. They are about freedom, about enhancing the being of the whole person, about allowing people to find themselves, about living richer and fuller lives, about feeling and being whole, about knowing who and what we are and how we fit into the larger whole of which we are an expression.

This goal cannot be grasped properly, if at all, in the mechanistic paradigm which provides the conceptual support for the corrective approach and compels us to see the body as a soft machine, as a complex piece of hardware composed of simpler pieces of hardware. Machines can be treated correctively because they are made of parts and because they are not unified self-organizing wholes capable of self-sensing. Parts break and can be replaced. But human beings are not some sort of fancy machine made of parts. They cannot be disassembled the way a car can. Disassemble a body and what you get are pieces of meat, not parts. Every physician, therapist, and counselor must, therefore, continuously develop and evolve the ability to perceive the being of the whole person and, at the same time, see how order-thwarters show up at every level of a person's being – structurally, geometrically, functionally, energetically, and in the midst of our forms of psychobiological intentionality and worldviews. I call these levels the five evaluative taxonomies. The fifth taxonomy, psychobiological intentionality, addresses what we ordinarily designate as mind. But because 2500 years of dualistic thinking in the Western world has prejudiced our use of the word "mind" as a disembodied transcendental entity, I call this fifth taxonomy "psychobiological intentionality" as a way of calling attention to how mind is an evolutionary elaboration of the perceptual powers of the body. It includes psychological taxons, taxons that classify thwarts to perception and self-sensing, and the taxon most familiar to philosophical counselors, the worldview taxon.

The three questions that face every practitioner are: "What do I do first?", "What do I do next?", and "When am I finished?" In order to answer these questions effectively we must be able to determine whether the best course of action for our client is holistic or corrective. Since only the holistic practitioner can determine whether a client should be treated holistically or correctively, every clinician must become a holistic practitioner and learn to see with holistic eyes. We also must be able to apply the principles of intervention and conduct a sufficiently comprehensive evaluation. A comprehensive evaluation not only requires being able to perceive how order-thwarters show up across the five evaluative taxonomies mentioned above, but also being able to track how particular interventions distribute their effects through the five taxonomies. The principles of intervention assist in creating a treatment strategy by helping us prioritize the order in which to treat the order-thwarters uncovered by our evaluation. Principles of intervention are like fundamental or constitutive rules from which a chain of reasoning proceeds. I have already alluded to one above. It is called the "Principle of Adaptability" and says that pyschobiological order is a function of the whole person's ability to adapt to ever-changing internal and external environments. In the context of somatic therapy or philosophical counseling it tells us that if a client cannot adapt to our intervention, then he will either revert to his previous state, or our intervention will drive stain and difficulty elsewhere in the whole person – or both.

The idea that consciousness is an evolutionary elaboration of self-sensing and the perceptual powers of the lived body leads to the view that no matter what kind of therapist or counselor you are, you must always consider the whole person, his embodiment and way of living his world. Understanding how thought and flesh intertwine is paramount to a successful outcome. In essence, every practitioner must become a holistic practitioner. If you can see your clients holistically, then you can determine whether their problems can be approached from a purely corrective standpoint or from a holistic standpoint. But if you see your clients from a corrective standpoint only, by necessity you are not seeing the whole person. If you are not seeing the whole person and only treating local or specific problems, you cannot know the effect of your interventions on the whole. If you cannot track the effect of your interventions on the whole, you will be unsuccessful in some cases without knowing why and in other cases you may inadvertently make your client worse. I believe that many clinicians, especially the more experienced ones, often make these determinations intuitively. But only those who understand and are attentive to the differences between the holistic and corrective approaches can clearly and responsibly determine which approach is the best for each client. Thus, every practitioner must develop holistic eyes – and every form of medicine, therapy, and counseling must become holistic.

CASE HISTORIES

Since I am arguing that my view that consciousness is an evolutionary elaboration of the perceptual powers of the lived body leads to the recognition that all somatic therapists and philosophical counselors must practice holistically, it would be useful to see how this understanding plays out in working with clients. As you might imagine, much of my work as a Rolfer is about dealing with pain and somatic dysfunction. But I also work with a significant number of clients who come to Rolfing as a way of dealing with philosophical, psychological, and spiritual issues. I will discuss two clients who exhibit a conflicted intertwining of flesh and thought in an especially interesting way.

CASE ONE

The first case history dramatically demonstrates how easing patterns of strain and introducing a higher level of organization in the body and its relation to gravity can profoundly alter one's ethics and worldview, how a person's worldview can be somatically maintained.

Beth was in her mid 30's. She was extremely intelligent and witty. Since she did not trust men, she was wary of me and shared very little of herself during the early stages of our working together. Only after she gained some trust in me did she tell me that her father was horribly abusive. He often referred to her as a "little piece of shit." She was a single mother of a 10-year-old son. After a number of failed relationships and a very difficult marriage and divorce, she gave up trying to have relationships with men and chose a lesbian lifestyle. She lived with her lesbian lover and worked hard as waitress trying to make ends meet.

Her body was amazingly immature in its appearance. If you covered her face in her before photographs, she looked like a fearful, disheartened, deflated 12 year old. After only a few sessions, however, I noticed some rather dramatic changes. Besides the obvious improvements in posture and the increasing ease of movement that are so characteristic of Rolfing, her body began to mature. She became more animated and her body caught up to her chronological age. Almost overnight she began to look like a mature women.

After our third session, she shared

that she had stopped shoplifting. Until that moment I had no idea that she engaged in this sort of activity. She told me that she only shoplifted at the big department stores. She justified her behavior to herself on the grounds that these men had more money than they needed, that she was owed something for the suffering she had experienced at the hands of all the other rotten men in her life, and that she had a hard time making ends meet. She realized that she had been projecting her anger at her father and the men in her life onto the rich men she imagined owned these stores.

Three or four sessions after she gave up shoplifting, she told me that she had ended her relation with her female lover. She acknowledged that she wanted warmth and love in her life just like everybody else. But she also admitted that she had become too frightened to pursue any kind of intimate relationship with men because her experiences with them had been so painful. Once she realized that she was using homosexual love to satisfy her needs, she realized that she was using her lover in a way that was no longer right for her or fair to her lover.

Before she shared these revelations, Beth and I never talked about shoplifting or her gay life. She came to these changes in her psychobiological orientation on her own. All I did was work with her body in a respectful way that did not violate her boundaries or contribute to her low self-esteem. If she had asked for my opinion about her shoplifting, I would have discussed the ethics of her behavior as a philosophical counselor. But I also realize in retrospect that any discussion about the ethics of her shoplifting would have been futile. Her shoplifting was fused to her pain and anger at men and bound too severely to her immature and immobile body structure. Even if Beth had brought the topic up for discussion herself, I am convinced that any attempt to address the ethics of her shoplifting would have compelled her to terminate her work with me. I probably would have been perceived as just another self-righteous patriarch telling her what a terrible person she was.

Her immobility and immature appearance were tied to the traumas of her life. She was somewhat dissociated and her body was frozen in a high state of sympathetic arousal. Like every other severely traumatized individual, she had lost much of her ability to defend herself. Her remarkable transformation during the early stages of our work together began with her being able to trust me and the process of Rolfing. As the Rolfing manipulations eased the patterns of strain in her fascia, she was able to discharge her highly tuned sympathetic state and clarify her self-sensing. As a result, she regained more of the inherent mobility and motility of her body, recovered many of her lost resources, and, as a result, learned to better fend and care for herself. She improved her financial condition by receiving some training and getting a better paying job. As she released her fear and clarified her self-sensing, she learned that she could trust herself and her body to guide her choices toward a more mature future.

These changes in Beth's psychobiological orientation were the direct result of the myofascial manipulations of Rolfing. The fact that she experienced Rolfing in a safe therapeutic environment was also a critical factor in her transformation. But it is important to realize that in the early stages of our work together, I did not employ any philosophical or psychotherapeutic techniques.

This case clearly demonstrates the profound hold our flesh can exercise on our ideas and how we live our lives. It also underlines the importance of giving the body its due in any psychotherapeutic and philosophical counseling session. If the flesh does not agree with the logic of a cognitive intervention, there may be no significant change in a person's worldview. Sometimes all that is required to change a person's outlook on life is a little more order in the flesh and a little more clarity in self-sensing. Of course, it not always as simple as this case makes it appear, and I am not suggesting that therapists should make it their business to change a person's sexual orientation.

CASE TWO

Donna's case is a bit more complicated than Beth's but demonstrates in a fascinating way how a person's tacit worldview can contribute to maintaining her pain. Donna is a married working women in her late 30's and the mother of two children. She sought out Rolfing for the relief of pain in her right shoulder (glenohumeral) joint, which became more pronounced with movement. She received a number of sessions from me and other therapists in our physical therapy clinic where we practice a team approach that integrates conventional and alternative practices. The manual therapy she received gave her little to no relief. After a few weeks of therapy at our clinic she went back to her doctor. He discovered that there was a bone spur on her acromion and recommended surgery. After the surgery Donna returned to our clinic for more manual therapy. She experienced no complications from the surgery and her pain was well on the way to being alleviated. Unfortunately, fate intervened and involved her in an automobile accident. Her pain came back with a vengeance. She continued to receive intensive manual therapy

at our clinic for a number of months following her accident. I worked with her at least once a week. After most sessions she would get some relief. But always her pain returned – sometimes within a few hours, sometimes within a day.

At first I didn't notice the almost obsessive way Donna continually complained and worried about her situation. After all, her pain was real and it was seriously interfering with her busy life. She clearly wanted to get well. She was not an overly controlling person or an obsessive compulsive. Like most people whose pain continues well past normal expectations, she often wondered why this had happened to her and was beginning to fear that her shoulder would never heal. Since shoulder injuries and rotator cuff strains are often very difficult to treat and sometimes never get better, her fears were well grounded. She engaged me in talking about her situation. The metaphysical and spiritual implications of pain. We discussed how she held her body in various activities, how she walked, how she sat, and so forth. We also discussed her sleeping position. She mentioned that she slept on her side with her arm above her head. For obvious reasons, I strongly suggested that she not sleep this way. She took my advice and her pain let up just a bit, but not enough to satisfy her or me. During every session she talked and worried more and more about her problem always trying to come up with a new way to adjust or change the way she did things, sharing her latest strategy for recovery and her worried disappointment in its failure. Slowly I began to realize that her worry and need to do something about her pain was a bit excessive.

Finally I suggested that she try on an idea. I reported that I had noticed over many years of working with people in pain that the kind of worrying she was engaging in often interfered with healing. I said that excessive reflection on our own suffering was sometimes a serious impediment to recovery. I asked her to imagine a situation in which she was surrounded by all the healing energy she needed to get well and that this healing energy was doing everything it could to get into her body to do its work. "Imagine," I said, "that your excessive dwelling on your suffering is the very thing that is preventing the energy from entering your system, and that what you must do to allow the energy to do its work is to stop worrying." I also asked her to be attentive to how she responded whenever she felt even the slightest twinge of pain, and to notice how easily the appearance of her pain catapulted her once again into dwelling on and worrying about her shoulder. I directed her to set her worrying aside and not to tarry the slightest with her pain when it showed itself.

After two weeks of not dwelling on her shoulder, her pain decreased by ninety percent. She was greatly encouraged by this turn of events. We continued her therapy at the clinic and she continued to improve. Even though she was almost pain free, during a session she began worrying about the small discomfort that she was still feeling in her shoulder. As she talked about the lingering discomfort, her worry escalated and suddenly the severity of her pain increased to the level it had been right after the accident. She was horrified and I was aghast at how much pain she was experiencing.

I immediately asked her to move into hyper-reflection and to experience both the fullness of her pain and how it was being held by her in reflection. I asked her to notice how her worrying and reflecting on her situation was sufficient to bring her pain back. I suggested that she cease her worrying. She complied and as she gave up her reflective worry, her pain dissipated just quickly as it appeared. We decided that the appearance of her pain at this point in her therapy could be used as a sign of her excessive reflection. From that moment on whenever she felt pain she simply stopped thinking about it and it disappeared.

She continued the team approach at our clinic and was happy with the results. A few weeks later I saw her for another session. Her pain was negligible and she was confident that her life was back to normal. We chatted easily as I worked with her shoulder. She reported that she was very upset at the news that Linda McCartney, wife of ex-Beatle, Paul McCartney, had died of cancer. I was surprised by this and asked why the death of someone she only read about would be so upsetting to her. She replied that Linda McCartney was a vegetarian, that she practiced yoga, and had worked hard at living a healthy peaceful life. Donna also devoted herself to a similar program and confessed that it was unnerving to learn that someone could die of cancer even after devoting so much of herself toward living a healthy life.

Curious, I asked her if she believed something like the following: there are a set of rules that define how life is to be lived, and that if we do our best to discover and follow them, God or the universe will make sure nothing too awful befalls us. Immediately the intense pain in her shoulder reappeared and her eyes filled with tears. As further investigation and discussion revealed, even though she had never really brought her view into full reflective awareness, she tacitly held a view something like the one I articulated for her. As it turned

out, this view was at the heart of her excessive attempts to control and deal with her pain. She believed that if she could only discover how she had strayed from the right way of living and using her body, she could correct her mistakes and be free of her difficulties. We talked in some detail about her tacit presupposition. I did not try to argue against her view, but only give her other views against which she could contrast her prereflective tacit worldview. I explained how other spiritual traditions left lots of room for the occurrence of random, meaningless events that are capable of derailing one's life. I also mentioned that some traditions even believed that God is also learning and evolving. Once she brought her tacit worldview into reflective awareness and was able to contrast it with other views, she realized that she really was not committed to her view and abandoned it on the spot. She has been free of shoulder pain ever since.

I was surprised by how quickly and easily Donna's pain disappeared upon giving up her excessive reflection and worry. I was even more surprised by how suddenly it returned when she re-engaged her excessive worry. But it wasn't until she shared her upset over Linda McCartney's death that I realized that her excessive worry was rooted in a tacit philosophical view of how the world worked, a view that unreflectively spurred her to continually interrogate her pain and experiment with ways to manage it. She was an intelligent woman who had her life in good order. She was not driven by a neurotic need to control her world and she was not an obsessive compulsive. But her unexamined worldview, which may have been influenced by her catholic upbringing, drove her to take too much responsibility for healing herself and compelled her to think excessively about her problem and how to solve it. You might say she had a bad case of philosophically maintained pain. Clearly, if I had pursued a standard Rolfing or manual therapy approach and had never touched on her tacit worldview, Donna would still be in pain today.

CONCLUSION

I began this paper with the claim that the body is the most important but clinically underappreciated presence with which all psychotherapy and philosophical counseling must come to terms. I then began a deconstruction of the myth of the ghost in the machine, emphasizing the machine ontology at the core of many biological theories in order to demonstrate how consciousness is an evolutionary elaboration of the perceptual self-sensing of the lived body. This provides a theoretical foundation for my view that all forms of therapy and medicine are inherently holistic and that philosophical counselors and somatic practitioners must learn to attend to the complicated and deliquescent ways soma and worldview are related.

I provided some brief case histories to illustrate different forms of conflicted psychobiological intentionality. I carefully picked my examples so that you could clearly see how a person's worldview can be rooted in her soma in one case, and, in the other, how a person's worldview can contribute to maintaining her pain. The first you could say is an example of a somatically maintained worldview and the second an illustration of philosophically maintained pain. At best this paper is only a sketch of a much larger project devoted to demonstrating these points, but hopefully I have set in motion a useful investigation toward that end. ❑

1. Although I am critical of certain aspects of Humberto Maturana and Francisco Varela's important Santiago theory of life, I agree with their central thesis that perception and life are the same process. They argue that autopoiesis (self-organization), perception, and, hence, cognition are the defining features of all living organisms. Autopoiesis and perception arise together as two aspects of the same phenomenon. Thus, their theory is both a theory of life and a theory of cognition. Since they are critical of dualism and its representational theory of perception, their theory is an important and interesting challenge to the Cartesian presuppositions that inform much of biology and cognitive science. Unfortunately they also maintain a commitment to Descartes' machine ontology. As a result, they neither recognize nor grasp the importance of self-sensing in perception (the importance of this point for understanding the difference between machines and living beings will become clear later in this article). But a more unfortunate consequence of their theory of perception as structural coupling is that it does not overcome the self-defeating nature of dualism. It actually reinstantiates the problematic nature of dualism at a new level, at the level of the organism where the structures of biological embodiment function as a transcendental constituting agency.

2 Gregory Bateson, *Mind and Nature: A Necessary Unity*, New York, 1979, p. 101.

3 Daniel Dennet, *Darwin's Dangerous Idea*, New York, 1995, p. 300. See also Kinds of Minds, New York, 1996.

4 M.C. Dillon, Merleau-Ponty's *Ontology*, Evanston, 1988. pp. 110 – 111.

5 For a discussion of conflicted forms of lived spatiality and lived temporality see my book, *Spacious Body: Explorations in Somatic Ontology*, (Berkeley, 1995).

6 For a more complete discussion of the differences between the corrective and holistic approaches see my discussion of the three paradigms of practice in my book, *Spacious Body: Explorations in Somatic Ontology* (Berkeley, 1995) pp. 145 – 152. For a study that compares the holistic and corrective approach to the treatment of chronic low back pain, see "A Third Paradigm Treatment Model Using Soft Tissue Mobilization and Guided Movement-Awareness Techniques for Patients with Chronic Low Back Pain" By John Cottingham, P.T. and Jeffrey Maitland, Ph.D., The Journal of Orthopaedic and Sports Physical Therapy, September, 1997, Vol. 26, No. 3, pp. 155 – 167.