

Integration – From Structure and Function to Psyche and Spirit

An Interview with Gael Rosewood

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Gael Rosewood

ABSTRACT *Gael Rosewood shares thoughts on integration, drawing from her studies with Ida P. Rolf, PhD, Judith Aston, Emilie Conrad, and others. She considers both structure and function, as well as the psychobiological and spiritual aspects of integration.*

Anne Hoff: Gael, I feel like you're going to have a very valuable perspective on integration. First, your history with Rolwing® Structural Integration (SI) goes back to time with Ida P. Rolf, PhD, and you've been faculty at the Rolf Institute® [now the Dr. Ida Rolf Institute®] for both Rolwing SI and Rolf Movement work, and also taught some of the early 'combined studies' classes. Then you've also been deeply involved in other fields that have a perspective on integration, like Continuum. Give us a short version of your story for newer Rolfers who might not know your name.

Gael Rosewood: I met Ida Rolf in 1968. Before I was even through the Ten Series, I was auditing her training in 1969 and completing it in 1970. At age twenty-two. I was one of the younger people she agreed to train at that time. My entry into this profession was a bit slower for the first decade as I had some growing

up to do. But during my auditing phase of training, Judith Aston was being trained as a practitioner. Ida asked Judith to develop Rolf Movement as a way for clients to further integrate SI into their daily lives. Ida then told me to study with Judith, and so I did over the next ten years. The goal of Rolf Movement, from Judith's excellent teaching, was to help clients discern an experiential difference between better and worse support, alignment, congruency of intensity or rest, responsiveness and full-body participation with functional intentions. It was in 1978, if I remember correctly, that I began to teach Rolf Movement after Judith Aston had moved on from the Rolf Institute. A group of Judith's students formed a committee at that time, working together to formulate the principles and processes of Rolf Movement. Then our committee cooperatively created the curriculum for the lead-in preparatory

classes for Rolfing SI students as well as a Rolf Movement training. I participated in teaching those trainings as well as the first combined studies program. In 1987 I joined the faculty as a Rolfing instructor as well and taught both modalities for fifteen years. After that I made a transition from being a faculty member to teaching Continuum and offering occasional CE classes for the Institute.

AH: Thank you. Quite a long history. What was your earliest sense of integration? Did you have any inklings before Rolfing studies – a sense of how things came together or an ability to recognize that? Was that part of what drew you into Ida Rolf's vision?

GR: No, I don't think so. I was just arriving at adulthood, if you could call it that. I was just bumbling around, experimenting and having the usual dramas of that age. Well, I could back up and say that I had a gangly sense of myself, with an awkward social sensibility. People took me for being younger than I was. Perhaps we could say that I was not very well integrated. In my early experiences of receiving Rolfing sessions, I had some very strong psychological insights that surprised me. They gave me a perspective into the relationship between my history (today we would call it trauma), my body, and my psyche. I went through a pretty strong sense of transformation during the Rolfing process, but it wasn't until I audited Ida Rolf's class that her concepts became clear. I started to be able to see what she was talking about as it manifested in the clients. That was when I became passionate about this work, even as the power of it scared me.

AH: You received a nonverbal, nonconceptual understanding of what integration was in your experience of receiving the Rolfing sessions.

GR: Yes. I felt the possibility to become somehow different within my own skin. I

wouldn't say it was as lucid as the thought of integration; I just saw that there was a possibility for me to live more from the inside out and to feel more complete somehow. This reduced my social self-consciousness.

AH: I think that was what attracted a lot of people to Rolfing SI back then. My sense of the 1960s and 1970s is that many people were interested in human potential and felt Rolfing SI was going to support them in that. Even if you don't equate potential with integration, I think that aspiration speaks to the idea of integration.

GR: Yes, I think you're right. I was living and working at Esalen® Institute when I met Ida Rolf. She found an avid audience there. Esalen was called a human potential center and offered many different workshops that explored the possibility to open, grow, and heal old wounds, or to become more creative or fulfilled. Therapy became a form of self-exploration and enhancement rather than a stigma for those who were not able to function as 'normal'. Ida Rolf's work fit right in with that movement.

AH: Going through Rolfing training, what did you learn and understand?

GR: Well, I'm going to preface that with the sense that the human body is full of possibilities for functional adaptability; from skiing to pole vaulting, from tightrope-walking, to Houdini twisting. Humans seem to be very curious to explore what their particular contraptions can do. Meanwhile, at the end of the day, there are certain necessities that support healthy function and a better chance for living pain-free without a drugged physiology. As I studied with Ida Rolf, I understood that Rolfing SI is an educated examination of our human design in order to participate with this structure of ours in a more conscious way. Ida Rolf said so much when she proclaimed that gravity is the therapist.

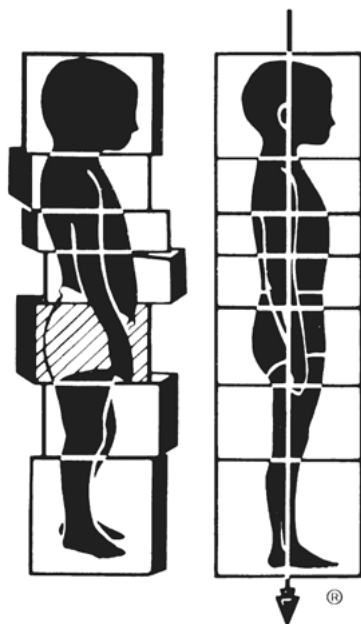
She was saying that gravity is an ongoing informing parameter. And it is so easy to ignore. The general population never particularly equates structural problems with a misuse of weight-bearing in their everyday posture and function. The idea that we have to hold ourselves upright with muscular effort or with core strength (as it is often referred to these days) can lead to a mistaken and an unexamined attitude that standing upright means to fight gravity rather than to work with it.

AH: I imagine that even as Rolfers we can look at it too narrowly; body alignment relative to the 'Line' can become a visual construct in our offices but the real work is integrating the body into how to *live* on this planet and its particular gravitational field.

GR: Yes. And these days I think many of us are discovering that our electronic devices can easily become mediums for disembodiment. Even those of us, well-educated in somatic awareness, can find ourselves in zones that ignore the signals of discomfort and discontent within our body's relationship to gravity. We, however, have the advantage of recognizing these symptoms and knowing how to find our way back. Rolfing SI conveys an ability to transmit ground force evenly and effortlessly through our body. It means that we're cultivating a cooperative use of our joints by aligning their centers. We learn to see and feel when strain occurs, when the segments of our body compensate in counterbalance rather than in finding an alignment in which the center of one segment is well aligned with the centers of the other segments. This was Ida Rolf's perspective and teaching. It is a potential within our human design.

AH: I'm noticing that your language is very spatial and geometric. It's not anatomical in a limiting way. It includes anatomy,

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The Rolfing SI logo.

but you're speaking of the anatomy holistically rather than with a specificity that takes the body apart into little pieces.

GR: Yes, that's true. It takes us back to Ida Rolf's logo for Rolfing SI (see above), the stacking of the blocks. I think at times we get so fascinated by the details of anatomy that we can forget the whole. This is not to say that the details aren't important though. The net result, to speak holistically, is an even use, as much as possible, of ligaments, bones, and musculature. Again, by establishing the centerline of transmission, we also find our strongest and most secure place of support. Weight-bearing ends up being shared and distributed in a more three-dimensional manner. The hallmark of integration when these factors come together is a visual sense of length and lift, a lightness of dynamic balance. Ida Rolf was teaching us to assess the potential for better integration by imposing a virtual grid, as we assess a client's posture. By seeing the body with the possibility for a more vertical centerline, we could then determine what veered away from that, what was in counterbalance to this vertical line. This helped us to determine where the strain patterns were in the body that were pulling it off center.

AH: How did Ida Rolf talk about a body when she had a client standing up in class? What type of language did she use to talk about the randomness or the integration?

GR: That's such a big question. It's also over fifty years old in my memory. In a

very broad way, by the use of this virtual grid she was training us to see how a body was aligning with gravity and its own centerline. The vertical line represented the force of gravity coming through the body. The virtual horizontals were conveying to us the ways that the body was counterbalancing, pulling laterally, sidebending, or rotating, rather than finding even support bilaterally and front to back. The horizontals were teaching us not only to see counterbalance, but also to see where a deficiency of support would rob us of a certain three-dimensional expression of our body's spaciousness. This served me well until I started teaching movement classes.

When I began to teach Rolf Movement, I noticed that we had much more clarity when we were assessing posture, but when it came to movement, there was so much more going on. We didn't have the same simplicity of language to describe either what we were seeing or what we were looking for. The fuzziness of our assessments without a common understanding of what we were looking for continued to egg me on. It made me question, what does integration look like in movement? We know that humanity in general has an innate appreciation for grace in movement, yet, what does that really mean? What is it that we are seeing? The qualities that Judith Aston delineated were certainly indicators of a more pleasing aesthetic. Yet, when it came to walking, what were we looking for? Ida Rolf indicated that we were carrying social, cultural, and personal imprints that affected how we stood and how we moved. They were our adaptations to fit into our place and time – social mannerisms, the clothes we wear, the traumas in our history, etc.

I found that these imprints became much more expressed in movement. If you have the opportunity to travel, you can observe that how we move spatially around each other, how we express ourselves in movement is very cultural. Beyond that, we are affected in our physical expression by our gender, familial influences, our sports or exercise routines perhaps, and other defining aspects of our identity. Then on top of that, bodies are proportioned very differently from each other with longer legs or a longer torso, or there's a hip replacement or a car accident. And movement manifests differently given our stage of life. Children might walk very differently than somebody in their

seventies. All of this comes to bear on our movement expression of walking.

This makes it really hard to define improved integration in walking. And, ultimately we spend more time walking than standing still, so it has an enormous influence on our structure. What's the potential that we're looking for in a functional aspect of the human body? In 1989, I had been working with David Clark, and we took on this question, only as far as walking was concerned. The question that we were asking ourselves was to define natural walking, the human design of natural walking. We wanted to create a template, like Ida's virtual grid, in order to see what might be a potential for a better supported, more easeful, more integrated expression of walking? David was a great colleague for this project. We had great fun bouncing ideas back and forth. He has a stronger background in science and physics. His enthusiasm spurred me on to write about this.

After we presented our paper "Natural Walking" at an annual meeting [Ohlgren (aka Rosewood) and Clark 1995], the discussion on this topic continued to evolve. Serge Gracovetsky was invited to share his research at the Rolf Institute annual meeting. And many people have contributed to more clarity of language and insight into understanding integration and function. Hubert Godard brought much more agreement of language and principles, very particularly to the way that our perceptual habits preordain postural and functional tendencies. And I am very grateful to Mary Bond for her dedication to teaching classes and producing books that bring experiential understanding to the subject of walking.

AH: You put out an audio recording on walking at some point. Is that based on the same principles as what you share in the article, and would you like to talk about that?

GR: Yes, at one point, I wanted to put something together that people could listen to while walking. It allows them to explore habit patterns and new possibilities. Creating this audial version was a harvesting of all the bits and pieces – well, not all of them – but aspects that I have taught to clients, when the information fits into a session. I wanted to bring it all together. It's funny because I had thought about this for a good fifteen years. During that time technology went from portable cassette players to CDs

to downloading an app on a mobile phone. It's great that it took me so long because the latest technology is much more efficient. It's available on iTunes; it's called Walking Meditation 1 with Gael Rosewood (Rosewood 2013).

Ida Rolf's grid had a simplicity. When its order was transposed onto the body visually, the relationships of all the parts came together as a whole pattern. The goal of the natural-walking template is similar. It is a sense of the human design for movement. Just as gravity takes us to a law of planetary existence, greater than our individual bodies, so humans share something in common with the animal world, and the animal world shares something in common with the plant world. I am speaking of the double-helix spiral. This is a fractal, which replicates over and over again from flower petals to DNA. It's apparent within the weave of connective tissue.

Tom Myers elucidated the nature of the spiral in his book *Anatomy Trains*. This fractal pattern of spirals, repeating over and over within nature, again relates to gravity. Water falls in spirals around the vertical of the gravitational force. The forces that govern the interplay between water and gravity must also be a part of our human design, I think. Embryological development is postulating that the responses of water within the container of womb and gravity create patterns that shape our bodies. This background template gives us the freedoms of three-dimensional expression in movement without giving up the solidity of support coming from a vertical line. I think that this is so much more intricate than the expression of contralateral coordination in walking. When a body comes under duress either through pressure and compression, the protective response within it is to rotate – this prevents broken bones or torn ligaments better than

remaining static. As we go through life, our body develops preferences and those preferences always involve rotations. In other words, one spiral within the double-helix tube overpowers the counterspiral.

What I'm saying here is that this double-helix is expressed not only as contralateral movement in walking; it is in the design of the body, in the bones, in the joints, in the tissue. To make an example, take the screw-home mechanism of the knee, this is an internal rotation of the femur and an external rotation of the tibia when the knee comes into a closed-pack position. The balance of these two rotations, these two counterspirals, help to center the knee when it is weight-bearing. If one rotation overpowers the other, the knee is pulled off center. Or to use another example, look at the function of the tibia and the fibula at the ankle. During flexion or extension, there is a counter-rotation between them that needs to have freedom of rotational expression for balance and full mobility at the ankle.

Understanding these details within the normal function of joints helps us to assess function while a client is on the Rolfing table. If there is an imbalance in the double-helix spiral, it will show how the joint is overpowered by one of the spirals and thereby pulled away from the centerline functionally. To apply this vision or template to the whole body we see our body respond like water to gravity. Ground force allows us to lift, but this is not just an up and down response. In order to take a step we need to shift our weight from one leg to the other, and this lateral movement while preparing to step forward initiates a spiral. This spiral is countered above in what is called contralateral coordination. These two spirals in union keep us centered over a core of support even as we are shifting our support from one leg to the other. We have three-dimensional expression and

core support simultaneously. When this comes together congruently through our whole body, there is a dynamic balance that offers lightness and lift. Gracovetsky was showing us how crucial the spine is in the orchestration of this coordination. This is a huge contribution and breakthrough from the former kinesiology model of robotic, segmented walking. Yet, truly the human design for walking is within every joint, every muscle.

AH: The simplified grid can't convey the dynamism and three-dimensionality of the double-helix.

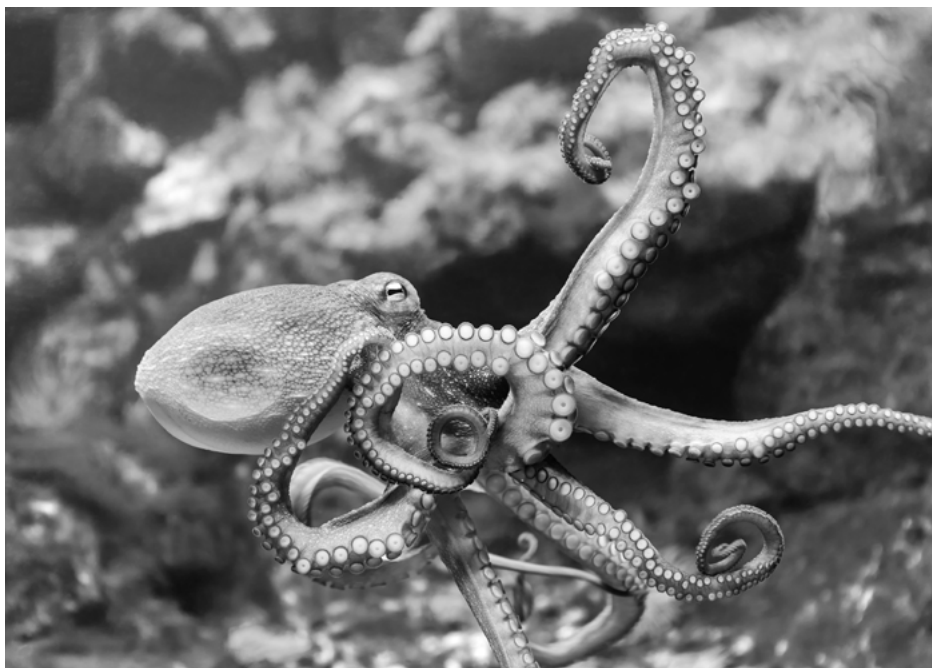
GR: Yes. That's it. The grid couldn't really do the job when it came to movement.

AH: Say more about the contralateral element.

GR: Bonnie Bainbridge Cohen first brought the concept to my attention. Babies are instinctually programmed developmentally to organize and coordinate the spine and the limbs. And the preparations all lead to the ability to stand up and walk. When babies start to crawl, they are developing the contralateral function in exaggeration and with extra support from all fours. The pelvis is rotating one way along with the legs and the shoulder girdle is rotating the other way along with the arms. The spine is learning how to put this equation together smoothly. Ideally, when it comes to walking these two spirals in counterbalance allow the chest to be supported first by one leg and then the other. There is also the expression of lateral movement due to the pelvis shifting from one dominant support leg to the other. When people leave pieces of this three-dimensional expression out, there is some degree of loss of support and certain segments overwork or lose length and lift. Whether it's a few vertebrae, a knee, the neck, the stress is due to a lack of holistic expression in movement. As an aside, I want to say that the military marching style of our culture was adapted into the fitness culture as well. Military marching involves a static spine, carried straight ahead. Arms swing from the shoulder joints and legs swing from the hip joints. The chest is held. The neck is held. There is no lateral movement to speak of.

AH: Gael, the image that's coming to me is that this military style of movement is something you could simulate with a marionette. It would require a complicated marionette, but it still has that sort of

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Emilie Conrad, originator of Continuum Movement, said the octopus was her teacher. Photo credit: Henner Damke – stock.adobe.com.

clunkiness and limited linearity. Where what you're describing as the double-helix, there's no way you could simulate that with an instrument – a marionette or even a robot. It's extremely organic. I love how you talked about how the waterfall falling as a double-helix. It might look like a straight fall, but there's something more mysterious and organic happening. With the human body, it's what makes for grace, elegance; it's what brings flow and beauty to movement rather than the clumsiness that's there when we first try to learn to move in a certain way.

GR: Yes. That's well said. This was my problem: when I went to the kinesiology books back in the beginning, trying to understand what to say about walking, it was a muscular lever-pulley model, a marionette model. I tried to follow the instructions in the kinesiology book. I couldn't take the first step. I thought, there's something wrong with this model. This is what Gracovetsky has done with his research: he showed that the spine was not static, that walking was not a lever pulley model. With his scientific research he opened the door to think about walking in a new way. This, combined with the research into connective tissue, has given us a whole new platform for thinking about movement, an alternate system of organization beyond levers and pulleys and muscles and bones. I wish that Ida Rolf got more credit for this. She was telling us in the sixties that we were working with connective tissue.

Someday, she said, science would catch up with its importance as an organizing, intelligent system.

AH: I'm reminded of the field of biotensegrity – how we've moved from tensegrity, thinking of static built structures, to the biotensegrity of living organisms and their very intricate relational elements.

GR: It is remarkable what has come to light via science and our ability to see living tissue in action. The research on connective tissue is fabulous. It would have made Ida Rolf's job so much easier back in the day.

I want to take the topic of integration to the Rolfing table and the relationship that goes on between practitioner and client, because this goes into a realm that is not about anatomy or theory. We are finding the moments and the interactions that help clients make sense of their experience whether it is Rolfing SI or Rolf Movement.

Personal somatic awareness is crucial to integration, but this is not a formula, this is a unique conversation between the two individuals who find the meaningful conversation of the moment. As we are working with individual clients, we are

opening up, whether by hands-on or verbal guidance, a greater awareness of what might be in the way of a higher order of function. The answer to that question is so variable, completely individual. As we are with clients, hopefully we find the moments to teach or guide them to be more discerning to the feedback of their somatic experience, with the sense that there is always a choice. To make or allow an adjustment, one needs to be present enough to the sensate experience to notice, for example, what bracing might feel like, what holding patterns might be inhibiting the ease of breathing. Many things can be inhibiting a better resting place or a fuller participation in an action. Self-image might be in the way, or ideas that have crept in from other somatic disciplines about correct posture or how to breathe.

Sometimes this means helping somebody to start to notice that they have parts of themselves walled off, numb perhaps, isolated, not able to participate. If this has been the status quo for years, then it can be sensitive territory to become aware of what has been compartmentalized physically or emotionally. This is often where trauma

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therapy comes in because the nature of trauma that still lives in the body is numb, inhibited, or compartmentalized functioning. Integrating to a fuller extent is a new ability to be more fully at home within oneself with more availability to spontaneity and choice. Day by day this is a moving target. But the questions are: What is in the way? What new choices could I make that serve a higher order of well-being?

This moves us towards psychological territory because what is in the way can be our judgments of ourselves: performance anxiety, self-inflicted pressures, not being willing to allow certain sensations to come forward, chronic worrying. When we include the psychological realm, integration can mean surrendering: surrendering to being one's true size, true shape, true age, gender, personhood. To become more discerning and to have more sense of options and choice often means confronting our habits of perception and function in new ways. It can be as mundane as how one sees through their bifocals when they're reading, and noticing how that might create strain in the neck. Or it could be much more intricate and involved if, for example, new awareness leads to noticing how one has been hiding out from oneself or from others.

Obviously the psychological realm can be extremely complex. And yet progress in the realm of further integration can be as simple as the awareness question: How do I feel after eating that strawberry shortcake with all the whipped cream? And how about that beer? This is how we shift our habits toward something healthier and wiser. The point I am making is that somatic awareness, interoception, guides us towards growth and better

integration. This territory is so much more than just the habits of structure, posture, and function of the body. And we as practitioners are in a unique position to explore some of these territories with our clients when the opportunities emerge. As we say in this school, the map is not the territory.

AH: I love the word surrender, it evokes the idea of *wu wei* – non-doing – which creates an effortless freedom. It's like the action analog of rigid posture versus natural alignment.

GR: Right.

AH: The psychological piece is so important. Circling back to the Esalen environment, where people had an understanding – whether they were doing Rolfing sessions or Gestalt groups or some other thing – that integration meant the mind and the body did not live excluded from each other.

GR: Yes. I think that this has come a long way in our culture during the last fifteen, twenty years. Therapies such as family constellations (Bert Hellinger's work), Somatic Experiencing® trauma work from Peter Levine, Womb Surround work from Ray Castellino . . . even some of the plant-medicine ceremonies (ayahuasca ceremonies, etc.). These are all methods of working with the whole person in terms of how they have been constellated via family, birth processes, trauma, etc. What you're saying when you brought up *wu wei* and surrender brings me towards what I learned from my Continuum practice, so I'll talk about that.

I met Emilie Conrad, in 1978, and I was very briefly in a bit of a crisis. I had been a Rolfing practitioner for ten years, and I was starting to have pain in my hands

and arms. I loved the work, but I didn't care to cripple myself in service to it. I was up against that challenge. I was also a bit challenged by the fact that I had been in a spiritual practice that wasn't working very well for me. When I met Emilie, and I watched her move, something was transmitted immediately in her movement. She demonstrated a movement expression of the body that I had never considered possible. It was like watching water move. Because Ida Rolf had said, we're working with connective tissue, I also was seeing the transmission of movement through her connective-tissue system. This was definitely not a lever-pulley model in any way. I was fascinated on two accounts: from a professional point of view, thinking about connective tissue and what it offered as an alternative system of movement, and personally I felt a sense of possibility to find a different way to care for my body that would allow me to continue my work without hurting myself. Furthermore, unlike my former spiritual practice, Continuum was so, so pleasurable and left me feeling whole and at peace.

Emilie said that the octopus was her teacher. By the way, there's a new film called *My Octopus Teacher* (Netflix 2020). There are YouTube videos of Emilie Conrad speaking and moving (see, for example, Continuum Movement 2013). There's also the Continuum Teachers Association website (continuumteachers.com) and the Continuum Movement website should readers like to see what I am speaking about.

AH: You received a transmission from Emilie that informed you about potential in your own body.

Continuum taught me to be able to give my culturally adapted system a break from its perceptual and functional habits. I could shift into an appreciation for my animal body and its birthright of belonging to nature, the elemental world, a different orientation to time than the clock. This practice gives my breathing a chance to re-regulate without my ideas of what it should do. This is an autonomic systemic change that includes the nervous system as well. Typically, it comes about with a shift in my perception of time and internal spaciousness.

In the most philosophical or mystical answer to the meaning of integration, we are learning to let go of the illusions that keep us from experiencing a more complete belonging with the whole.

GR: Yes. I've been with her practice since 1978. It continues to teach me. To go back to the subject of integration, I developed a broader appreciation for the body. I started this interview speaking of a fascination for our body's potential. Continuum took me into the realm of playing with movement for its own pleasurable impulses. In other words, taking the functional goals of manipulating the environment out of the equation and following what the body chooses to do for itself from micro, little impulses of movement to full-body configurations that were not directed by an idea of getting from here to there or getting this or that done. Both Ida and Emilie saw that our cultural adaptations came with a price. Our relationship to the speed of our electronic world, the segmentation of chairs, the 'talking heads' nature of our culture . . . even the box-like structure of cars and houses affects our nervous system, our relationship to time, and ultimately the very tissues of our body. We forget the infinite world of movement possibilities and live, in general, within an ever-decreasing range of expression and sensual enjoyment in the engagement with life. Like Ida, Emilie saw that this was a very dangerous course for humans to take in relationship with each other and the planet.

This brought me to a very deep appreciation for the body's intelligence of a broader receptivity to sensation and movement. This practice over time led me to discover our capacity to find a higher order of parasympathetic function. This means setting aside our habits of perception for everyday function in order to allow this to happen. Our parasympathetic function controls our heart rate, breathing, sleep . . . all the autonomic functions. We cannot tell this system what to do. We cannot control it. And when it is out of balance, anxiety, insomnia, digestive disorders, and immunity are affected. We are in an epidemic beyond the pandemic with these disorders. Continuum taught me to be able to give my culturally adapted

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AH: A higher order of parasympathetic function?

GR: Yes, this is another form of integration. Like structural integration, it involves coming back into a sense of belonging that is broader than the boundaries of our own skin. Continuum seeks to find an experiential sense of being a participant with the elemental world. What happens if we experience being of earthly nature, not just resting on it. We are water, 70% or more. What happens if we become the tides, the eddies, the spiraling, the marsh lands within ourselves via movement expression. Emilie said that there is no life without water. It is an intelligent system. Ida said that connective tissue was an intelligent system. So fluid movement puts an elemental intelligence together with one's own tissue. Suppose we relate to our breathing as an unbroken connection to a breathing world? What happens if we let ourselves feel embodied as if we were more animal than human – a fish, a snake, a lion? Emilie said, "This is our birth right, to feel our belonging to the orchestration of life's eternal dance of creation." This sense of integration is a way back home from my point of view, but in a different way.

Ultimately what this means for me is that integration is our current learning curve. As we are assimilating a very complex world with many elements coming at us simultaneously, what is it that supports us now? What is it that we need to feel whole, as whole as we can, and as resourced and resilient as possible? We know that

we can have mishaps along the way. We know that accidents or illnesses or losses can set us back. When we get set back, we have a default reset pattern in the body, which is a lower order of integration. It can feel chaotic and disordered. But the good news, when you've been on this journey of exploring integration, is that you know the difference.

In knowing the difference, you also have a recall pattern of how you arrived at the higher order and what it felt like. There's a certain artistry in knowing how to find your way back. This artistry becomes wisdom over time. Remembering that we have choice, a sense of agency to seek higher order through the elements that took us there before; elements such as support, ease, responsiveness, surrender, being true to ourselves. We learn to trust our capacity to re-find it when we have lapses, as we all do. The learning curve keeps evolving. In the most philosophical or mystical answer to the meaning of integration, we are learning to let go of the illusions that keep us from experiencing a more complete belonging with the whole.

What is it that keeps us feeling separate and fixed and without choice? Conversely, what takes us in the direction of feeling that we actually are a part of life so completely that we can slip the coil of the functional body and slide out into various energetic realms from cellular to stellar? This life's inquiry of mine from Ida Rolf through Continuum has taught me that the body is a portal for this kind of learning, this kind of wisdom and seeking. I don't have to disembodiment in order to engage with other energetic realms.

AH: Say more about that.

GR: I go through the sensations of the body and through the sensations of participation, of surrender, as well as presence in order to reach some of these places that feel as if they are absolutely a part of the natural world from cosmos to cellular in one unbroken chain of creation. My skin is not a barrier separating me from this felt sense.

AH: It sounds like the body is a portal, but you don't leave the body or transcend the body in going to the spiritual or stellar, rather there's a way the body is integrated in those experiences.

GR: Yes, because I am absolutely centered in somatic experience at the same time. I am not disembodied.

AH: Which is a far cry from the religious or mystical traditions that had people renounced the body, beat up the body, or

in some way, constrain or reject the body to try to get to a spiritual state.

GR: That's right, at least from our lineage of Western culture when the Age of Reason took over. I think the Taoists and some other traditions were on to practices that did not separate body and mind or spirit and body. This brings me right back to Ida Rolf and what she was saying when I was studying with her. She was very annoyed with the 'yogs' – that is how she referred to yogis, I don't want to say it that way. Her vision of Rolfing SI was to take responsibility for the human experience in relationship to the planetary, to the Earth, and to bring our wisdom and our care and our stewardship back to the Earth. This was her aspect of wanting us to create a more solid relationship through gravity, to the Earth, as well as the . . . No, I have to just interrupt myself again. Her vision was that we could continue to grow in maturity and spiritually without renouncing the body. But to do that we had to become an open system to Earth and sky. We had to be a 'something between Earth and sky'.

AH: That the integration of the body became the portal for the next evolutionary step, right?

GR: That's it.

AH: Didn't she often use words like 'evolutionary'?

GR: Yes. She was worried about the direction humanity was taking. Emilie Conrad said exactly the same thing in her own words. The neocortex dissociated from the heart makes the human being a very dangerous and irresponsible species. To integrate our rational mind with the heart involves staying at home in the body, not dissociating from the body, away from the intelligence of the heart. A human being that is not integrated between the neocortex and the heart becomes a dangerous creature; destructive, greedy, suspicious of others, and territorial.

AH: Belonging is very important. It's not just body experience in the reptilian hardwired sense. It's body experience as

the mammalian brain developed to have the capacity for love, caring, and nurturing. That's the heart quality of the body that's expressed in belonging and love.

GR: I would say that. Yet I would say that the reptilian is not the problem. The reptilian has the intelligence of the parasympathetic system. This is what Continuum develops. How can you be with the impulses of the movement that come from . . . not from the directive aspect of the brain, the neocortex, or even the expressive aspects of the limbic . . . the reptilian brain governs the parasympathetic or perhaps now we are thinking of it as the gut body, the intelligence of the enteric system.

AH: Have you ever read the book *A General Theory of Love* (Lewis, Amini, and Lannon 2001)?

GR: I have, yes.

AH: There's a sentence in there where the authors' thrust is very much about the part of the brain that only develops in relationship, the mammalian part. They say that if you don't develop that part of the brain, then you're left with the reptilian brain and the neocortex, which they describe as an intelligent reptile. Their view is that that defines a sociopath.

GR: I understand that logic. That is true. That there's the territorial aspect of the animal world without the mammalian sense for resonance and empathy and compassion. I understand it from that point of view. I was thinking of the reptilian brain differently, the brainstem and its regulatory function to breathing and heart rate, etc.

AH: What is clear is that all of them are equally important. Each aspect of the brain has a gift, and if we try to run too much with one of them, we're missing part of our potential, part of what would take us to an evolutionary movement rather than a sort of fragmentation or dead end, so to speak.

GR: Well said. Thank you, Anne, for this invitation and the conversation that you have fostered.

AH: Thank you Gael, for all of your contributions and sharing!

Gael Rosewood met Ida Rolf in 1968 and began studying with her in 1969. In 1978 she joined the Rolf Institute faculty to help develop and teach Rolf Movement. In 1989 she became a Rolfing Instructor. Although she is no longer an active part of the faculty, she still teaches continuing education (CE) classes in both modalities. Gael also studied with Emilie Conrad and Susan Harper over forty years. She has been teaching Continuum since 1991. Her other studies have included Peter Levine's Somatic Experiencing training, visceral manipulation, nerve sheath release, cranial/sacral, scar, and bone work.

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