

Sit-ups and Paradigm Crunches

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As far as I have been able to ascertain, no particular technique exists for tailoring the exercise towards visions and dreams. They come out of the blue.

Bench Press by Sven Lindqvist. Heard on The Next Big Thing, OPB Radio (Lindqvist 2003)

Where It All Started

When I went to Zurich for the first Process Work intensive course in 1986, I encountered an approach to the body like none I had ever seen. I had been dancing, teaching dance, and working as a movement therapist and body worker for 20 years at that point. I had also been actively searching for an approach to the body that would help me with the kinds of emotional experiences that were emerging in my students and clients as a result of my work with their movement and bodies. This quest was the beginning of my wrestling with two divergent approaches to movement and the body: 1) the prescriptive approach, which grew out of my ballet, modern dance and bodywork training, with its emphasis on alignment work and good posture, and 2) the Process Work idea that the body is doing something meaningful no matter how strange and even “dysfunctional” it may seem.

After feeling alternately pulled and crunched between these two approaches and finally wrestling the conflict between them to the ground, I concluded that this experience was essential in order for me to embrace the Process Work paradigm. I would now postulate that wrestling with a paradigm is a primary way to know both the paradigm itself and whether or not it is in accordance with your deepest beliefs. A para-

digm can be embraced only after those things you have compromised from your own experience or are fighting in it are resolved—not that you are convinced, but that you acquire a deep enough understanding to see how the new view works with your own experience. Ultimately, this struggle may lead to new understanding and the evolution of the paradigm in new directions.

Studying this crunch led me to a new vision for movement and exercise that grows out of a synthesis of movement work and the process approach. It includes experiences that we normally exclude or marginalize during a workout. This article has the dual purpose of talking about the paradigm crunch and how I resolved it, and some of my discoveries that came out of that struggle.

Part I, *Roots and Gifts*, defines paradigm as I use the concept, and discusses the roots of my original approach to movement with some of the attitudes, experiences and beliefs that I initially found difficult to reconcile with the Process Work paradigm. It goes on to show how movement itself was instrumental in resolving the tension between the two approaches. Part II, *The Crunch*, explores the details of the conflict by looking at body experiences as the roots of healing. It goes on to explore the use of multi-leveled awareness on a

body experience and some new ways of thinking about emerging tendencies in movement. Part III, *Exercising in Parallel Worlds*, presents some of the tools and learning that set the stage for exercising from the inside out. A transcript of an exercise session illustrates the use of these tools.

Part I Roots and Gifts

What Is a Paradigm?

In *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* Thomas Kuhn (1996) introduced the idea that scientific fields have sets of assumptions that are shared by those in the field. These assumptions help shape the rules and goals in that field. He called this a paradigm. Paradigms help keep coherence in the work and training in a field and don't change easily. In my experience as a learner, a paradigm makes a sort of corral around certain experiences that says, "This is it" and "This is not it." This in/out feeling creates a clash when you have two disciplines, one on each side of the fence, especially when each has personal, collective, and spiritual meaning for you *and* they look like they exclude one another.

One of my corrals held the Process Work paradigm with its focus on unfolding multi-leveled experience, delving into what was happening in the disturbances to intended movement, and the unpredictable outcomes of following awareness of all experience including that which seems wrong, accidental or disturbing. The other held a more known paradigm of seeing disturbance as something that needs to be relieved in order to reach a state of normalcy. For instance, as a dancer I was trying to gain the physical skill and personal development that would make me a marketable dancer.

I was passionate about dance technique and approached it with the paradigm that if I held tension in non-functional ways, I should find ways to let that tension go in order to be a better dancer. I didn't have a sense of the value of the tension.

Bartenieff Fundamentals helped me achieve technical goals and make my dream of free expressive movement come true. Coming from

a dance technique background, my body work had the same goal-orientation.

One of the discrepancies in approaches to the body between Process Work and my other body work experience is the absence of a model of pathology in Process Work. In Process Work, if tension in the body is inhibiting a more efficient movement pattern, it is seen as a meaningful piece of information that needs support so that the information enfolded in that experience can be lived in every aspect of the person's life. The resistance to that information, or the difficulty in living it, is also an important piece of information that needs attention.

Process Work says that what's happening in the body is important. Not just the "good" stuff like grounding and feeling centered, but also the *disturbances* to your efforts to becoming grounded and moving efficiently. I remember at that first intensive course being encouraged to hold off relieving tension until I had gotten a chance to get to know it a little bit. Being adventuresome, I agreed and was encouraged by the results to explore further in different situations. Here's an account of how I experimented with it in a Modern Dance class one day:

I asked the class to walk across the floor in rows of three. Simply walking, covering space without anything else happening, is not easy. On that day I played a rhythm on a drum as the first three people walked. After four counts the next row of three joined them and so on. As each row joined I saw that we had some work to do. It looked like each dancer had many things happening at once in his or her body. The next time across the floor, I asked them to have a clearer intent in space and to simply go forward. I reminded them of technical things that would help them do that. The results were worse. They looked the same but more restrained. It didn't look natural or fun.

I suddenly remembered my Process Work studies and suggested that they again walk across the floor and notice what their bodies were doing that was extraneous, or different from their intended walk. This is a basic Process Work movement exercise designed to help focus on what's "happening" besides what you

intend. It was a lot of fun to see everyone follow their movement in creative and unconventional ways. I suggested that their movement might remind them of some creature or mythical or historic person, or that they might add sound and invent a character from their spontaneous movement. They had a great time going across the floor with their newfound inventions. I was relieved and delighted by this creative wonder unfolding in the studio.

When we were done I suggested that perhaps what they invented had something to do with them or was a resource that they needed in their personal lives. The class was almost over and I found myself disappointed that we hadn't been able to make more headway with their technique. Suddenly it occurred to me that we might try the plain walk again. This time it was amazing to see everyone from rank beginners to the most advanced students accomplish what we had set out to do in the beginning. It was the clearest walk I had ever seen!

It was great to be getting such positive results from my experiments, but I found myself conflicted. We had unfolded the experience disturbing the walk, and had been able to improve the dancer's technique, or the "intended" movement. It is important to help people develop their technique in a dance class, and I felt satisfied with the use of my new knowledge in that class, but I felt that my old skills for helping people with finding clarity and efficiency in movement were not as exciting—they felt redundant in light of my new learning. I saw people light up with creative excitement when we unfolded the part of the walk that wasn't intended. Yet I didn't want to abandon the understanding, worldview, and skills that are so exciting to me in dance technique.

This struggle continued for the next 10-15 years as I worked out some of the basic conflicts in my experience and in my thinking.

The Roots of My "Old" Approach

I graduated with a Bachelor of Music with a major in Dance, went on to earn my MA in Theatre/Dance, and taught dance at Western Washington University, where I founded a dance company and worked with actors. I

continued my career as a performance coach, free-lance choreographer and dancer and expanded my studies of movement by earning my Certificate in Laban/Bartenieff Movement Analysis, the first, and to my knowledge the most thorough, attempt to understand, categorize, and name elements of movement as it progresses through bodies in space. The Laban approach includes a body of work called Bartenieff Fundamentals, which was developed by Irmgard Bartenieff, a student of Rudolf Laban.¹ She was one of the earliest dance and physical therapists who worked with physically and mentally disabled children. She used Laban's methods as the basis for developing her Bartenieff Fundamentals, a movement education model, and had remarkable success with this population. The Laban/Bartenieff model names fundamental patterns and principles that underlie all movement, from the simplest to the most complex. It has a wide variety of applications. It can be used to identify, name and notate a person's movement preferences. It can help a person discover, and, if necessary, correct her movement patterning. It is also great for identifying and working with pain and movement problems. Laban and Bartenieff's work touched me very deeply, opening up new inner worlds and a new way of understanding and processing physical reality.

After becoming a Certified Laban Movement Analyst, I worked as a movement and body therapist and was invited to teach in the Laban Certification Program at Western Washington University. After I moved to Zurich I continued to choreograph, teach dance and perform. Up until this time my approach to movement had been to learn to execute clear intended movement. In my dance training I was looking for ways to move efficiently with a large range of qualities that were clear in space and to do it in a way that would care for the longevity of my "instrument"—my body.

I sought out Process Work because the movement work I was doing was eliciting emotional responses and psychological content in my students and clients with which I didn't have the skills to work. At first, the two systems

completely dovetailed, each supporting the other. Then as I understood each more, I recognized that there were differences in their world views that conflicted in me.

I felt that I had two worlds that were equally dear to me and that couldn't communicate with each other. One glaring difference was the principle in Process Work that movement that is happening spontaneously is potentially meaningful when unfolded, even if it seems awkward or dysfunctional. By approaching movement this way I have found unexpected parts of myself that give me the feeling of limitlessness and freedom. It has helped me embody experiences that bring me close to my essence and fulfill the deepest parts of myself.

In my previous movement work, I was reaching for clear external goals which corrected or marginalized movement that was seen as a "mistake." When I reached these goals I felt well, like I was finding a connection to my wholeness or something sacred that embodied my personal power.

Yet, there was a problem. When I was focused on one the other was invisible to me. I was caught between two worldviews that were like lovers. Believing in one betrayed the other. Two of the ways I explored the conflict were through Authentic Movement and my exercise practice. Wrestling with this paradigm crunch helped clarify the parameters of each as well as the limitations of my understanding of them. Each "difference" showed me the way to a deepening understanding of each as I sought ways to embrace every movement experience.

Current Movement Roots: How Exercise and Authentic Movement Contributed to the Resolution

Over time, my exercise program has changed from being a set program to being a workout from the inside out. I have done a variety of things including weight lifting, aerobic dance classes, and running, to name a few. Up until the last few years these seemed like a rote program that I followed. I used to get into the zone of feeling good with the exertion and feeling in shape and on top of it, but was missing some deeper meaningfulness. More

recently, noticing experiences that I usually marginalized like subtle body experience, visions, and sound and unfolding them has not only made exercise more meaningful but also changed the way I move. I have chosen examples that help show this connection. My regimen at the moment is 40-75 minutes a day doing anything I want. I usually work on the elliptical trainer and treadmill with some weight lifting, sit-ups, Bartenieff Fundamental exercises and stretching to finish up. Bringing awareness to this routine and working from the inside out has made it seem like I am meditating or getting a daily therapy session. Part III will go into this in depth.

Authentic movement is a method that grew out of Jungian-trained Mary Whitehouse's work. She developed an approach to movement that was an outgrowth of Jung's active imagination, and was further developed by Janet Adler. In an authentic movement session the two participants occupy two roles: a witness/observer and a mover. In the version of authentic movement that I practice, the mover moves for 20-35 minutes, following her spontaneous movement by noticing impulses to move, and where movement is already happening in her body. The witness observes the mover, while monitoring her own experience. These experiences can be deepened by taking them into writing, drawing or meditation. After the movement session each participant shares her experience with the other. I do this work once or twice a week. It is a time to focus awareness on the movement happening in my body with no intention other than to experience it. I use Process Work tools to help me unfold the movement. I am indebted to Nisha Zenoff for introducing me to Authentic Movement in 1988 when we were both living in Zurich, to Jean Fogel Zee, with who has lovingly taught me a large part of what I know about it, and Tina Stromstead who has helped me understand it in relationship to Process Work.

Movement as Part of the Solution

Authentic Movement helped me get out of my conflict between the two paradigms. After years of struggling for understanding between

the two parts within me I found the beginnings of a new point of view in an Authentic Movement Session. Here's how it went:

In one of my weekly Authentic Movement sessions with Jean, I was jumping up and down, bouncing like a ball. Suddenly I stopped, like a rock falling onto the earth, without a wiggle or adjustment. I was amazingly still.... Then I would start again, over and over, bounce, bounce, bounce... different directions, my hair flying then blop...stop...solid...still. In the stillness I started to notice that my shoulders tended to fall forward and that I was holding up my head against this forward pull. I was so intrigued with the bouncing and stillness that I resisted this forward tendency until it started to hurt my neck. Then, following this unintended movement, I allowed my head and shoulders to slowly fall forward and found myself bowing down. I felt a sweet humility, like I was yielding to something with deep reverence. Like in a dream, it was suddenly clear to me that I was yielding to my gifts! I knew that if I weren't humble before my gifts I would just be jealous of them and I would not be able to use them. But, what did this mean? Jealous of my own gifts? What gifts!? What a koan!

Over the next weeks something started to happen that had never happened before. I started to embrace more of my body and movement experience. Experiences that I had pathologized and thought I had to change, like my yearning for ease in movement, became a constant meditation. These things that I had marginalized were the key to understanding the learning I had done over the years about how different approaches to movement worked together. There were four things in particular that had been put aside that were useful: my love for movement; long-termed yearnings that I have for certain kinds of movement; my vast knowledge of the subtle anatomical and kinesiological details of movement derived from my studies of Dance, Anatomy and Laban/Bartenieff Movement Studies; and, surprisingly, this nearly two-decade old paradigm crunch between Process Work and more mainstream approaches to the body and movement. At first this final "gift" looks more like a curse, but it

has turned out to be the richest challenge of my life.

My Love for Movement

I am often surprised by what my body does when I follow it. It seems to "know" things I don't. It allows "me" to step aside and for "it" to reveal things that amaze and comfort me, like in the bouncing experience above. Even mundane and uneventful movement holds a mystery when "I" step aside. With this kind of awareness, a simple step can be an interface with mystery.

I am excited about focusing on the sensations I have as I move, or noticing how I am moving: what is the quality or expression? Is there a character emerging? I like to notice what supports me physically, where movement begins, how it progresses through my body, and how it ends I like to ponder how I relate to space—do I fill space or am I small in it, do I move through it in a straight, flat, curved or perhaps a spiral path?

Sometimes I can't tell if I am making the movement or if it is making me. It is a co-creation between me and something emerging.

My Yearnings

My fascination for following the movement experience in my body is related to a yearning for "connectedness"—that sense that if one part of your body is moving with a certain expressive quality it is connected to and supported by the rest of your body. Moving from the deepest muscles gives me core support. I feel grounded and centered. Paradoxically, with this support I can explore three-dimensional movement in a way that makes me feel as though I temporarily escape the effects of gravity. Without gravity's pull I am free to let go of my normal "bearings" and follow what's closest to that inner core. I am looking for both: a fluid, free, flying, limitless ecstasy and an unpredictable, unintentional, spontaneous magic on the edge of creativity. It connects me to something eternal. Finding this experience in movement has helped me contact and believe in my core values. It gave me the courage to not let go of my values when they

seemed to conflict with others', but to go deeper into their roots.

My Laban/Bartenieff Training

Laban/Bartenieff work is one of the most powerful resources I have for seeing movement and understanding what I am seeing in terms of immediate experience. Aside from the body level experience of efficiency and connectedness, Laban/Bartenieff work offers a theory of our relationship to space, and a description of the qualitative aspects of movement. If you remember two characters from the movies that have some similarities and try to describe each of their movements, you will be exploring this aspect of movement. For example the teacher in *The Karate Kid* had strength, as did the Klingon warrior Warf from the *Star Trek* series, but each had a different kind of strength. Laban called these qualities *Antrieb*, which is a German word meaning the engine or the inner drive. It has unfortunately been translated into English as "effort," but is more like the expressive "it" coming out of the movement. This is part of what connects to the deeper meaning of movement. Noticing these kinds of differences as I run or work out has helped me be precise in unfolding movement. If one kind of strength suddenly turns into another kind I probably have an "edge" or resistance to the first kind of strength.

While the first gift (love of movement) gave me a new position in the debate and the second (yearning for connectedness) an attitude that supported me, Bartenieff's work gives me instruments for navigating the complex world of movement. Having explored the personal meaningfulness of a large array of movement and having a nomenclature for what I see helps me notice details of movement more easily.

Finally, my fourth gift, the paradigm crunch, pressed me into finding a way to resolve the tension I felt between the process paradigm of using awareness to support what is happening and the more "corrective" nature that I experienced as a dancer and body worker. On one hand, as a dancer I am trying to improve performance either on stage or in my body's workings. I found that this goal could some-

times interfere with an awareness of what was happening in the body.

Part II The Crunch

As a Laban/Bartenieff body worker, my personal goal was to relieve pain and discomfort, and further, to help a person establish movement patterns that would correct the underlying movement "dysfunction" that created the problem in the first place. This approach is based on the medical model that sees "health" as being as symptom-free as possible. Dealing with the problem requires eliminating the disturbance as a means for restoring health.

This approach to healing is somewhat mechanical in that it sees the body as a machine that can be repaired. Indeed, there are many instances when this is a life-saving approach that we should not ignore. This contrasts with the Process Work idea that there is something meaningful in the experience that you are having in your body and that unfolding it will lead to health regardless of whether or not the symptoms are relieved.

This distinction can make a person feel forced to join one camp or the other. One relieving discovery for me was that both approaches are grounded in body experience and both are necessary. The first approach I call "relieving discomfort." This approach originates in the almost universal tendency to spontaneously shift out of uncomfortable positions or situations. The second, which I call the "amplification" approach, originates in the human tendency to self-amplify symptoms by "worrying" them, as when you keep probing at an aching tooth with your tongue. You have surely experienced of each of them.

Relieving Discomfort

If you'd like to try an experiment, take a small break from reading when you finish this paragraph and scan your body to see if there is some minor discomfort that would be relieved if you adjusted your position. When you have identified the discomfort, go ahead and adjust your position.

For most of us, when we feel discomfort we automatically and unconsciously adjust our

bodies to relieve the sensation. In the same vein, when we feel pain from an injury or illness our impulse is to relieve it and heal it—to make it better. We move our heads to relieve a stiff neck, we stand up straight to relieve back pain. We go to movement trainers and body workers to help us learn new patterns in order to feel better in our bodies or to help relax our muscles. This system of healing is largely causal—tension is caused by pressure in our lives; if we overwork one part of our bodies or don't have proper alignment, we get chronic body problems; if you eat well and have good support you feel more confident. There are many wonderful approaches that help us “adjust” our bodies and get more functional and comfortable. When we are sick we see a doctor who will help relieve our symptoms.

Relieving discomfort is essential to survival. If there is a serious symptom that needs immediate attention, it is often wise to attend to that before unfolding the experience in the symptom.

The Amplification Approach

Do you remember the last time you had some mild (or even not so mild) pain? There's a certain kind of pain that we tend to self-amplify, i.e. stimulate the area where the pain is in order to explore it. Have you ever seen someone with a toothache poke at the tooth and worry it with their tongue, or have you had a sore muscle in your leg and moved your leg or touched it in order to feel it? For some it's difficult not to pick at certain kinds of skin irritations. There is a certain fascination and discovery in feeling the sensation of the symptom.

This leads to another approach to healing. Exploring the details of the symptom makes us aware of an unfolding experience that has not quite emerged but is meaningful. When we pay close attention to our symptoms and let go of our attempt to explain or understand them, we find dreamlike experiences that hold keys to mystery.

A limitation of this model is that most of us don't have a conceptual framework or skills for catching and unfolding these dreamlike experiences and realizing their potential for growth and co-creative living.

In this framework, symptoms are not seen as pathology. We could say that following the dreamlike experiences in the symptoms and unfolding them is also a form of health.

Much of my conflict about my movement world and my Process Work world revolved around the seemingly contradictory nature of these two approaches to body experience. However, unfolding the direct experience of a symptom or other body experience is only one part of the Process Work paradigm. Another is using multileveled awareness to perceive different parts of an experience. Multileveled awareness or experience is a tool that helps support a range of experience from the normal, mainstream or everyday, to dreams and dreamlike waking experiences, all the way to subtle, nearly imperceptible ones. This multileveled view of experience, formulated by Arnold Mindell, was one of the things that helped me resolve the sense of being pulled between paradigms. It allowed me to “elder” or support seemingly contradictory experiences in a more satisfying and democratic way. We will take a closer look at this approach to experience in the next section.

What Is Multi-levelled Experience?

The concept of multi-levelled experience helps give a framework for holding, embracing and unfolding those experiences that are everyday, dreamlike or just emerging. In the *Tao Te Ching* (English, and Feng trans., 1989), Lao Tsu says that there are two Taos; the Tao that can be spoken and the Tao that can't be spoken; those experiences that are known and verbalizable and those that are less known and harder to describe. This notion recurs in perennial thinking from many cultures, for example, the 9 levels of consciousness of the Buddhists, the Australian Aboriginal concept of the dreaming, and even psychological systems that use the concepts conscious and unconscious. In *Quantum Mind* (Mindell, 2000) Arny Mindell first talks about three levels of awareness: Consensus Reality (CR), Dreaming or Dreamland, and Sentient Experience. The second two levels belong to a broad category he calls Non-Consensus Reality (NCR). (See Amy Mindell's

diagram on page 63.) Amy has diagramed it like an ice cream cone with CR on the top, because it receives the larger part of our attention, dreaming (dreamland) in the middle, and sentient experience (flirts and essence) at the bottom, because it is barely perceivable. These are like parallel worlds happening all the time. We can move from world to world by using the awareness of the different levels. I will explain each level in an example of a body experience that I woke up with one morning.

Example of CR and NCR in Breathing Process:

One spring morning I woke up unable to breathe freely, with a lot of tension in my chest. This is particularly troublesome for me since in the past I have had debilitating asthma attacks, especially during the spring when there's a lot of pollen in the air. After trying to relax and open my breathing and failing, I stayed with the experience of tension.

Consensus Reality

CR experience is the Tao that can be spoken. It is the experience that you would say is "really" happening. My experience of the tightness in my chest was the "real" part of the experience—it was caused by pollen in the spring. If I had had the right instrument I could have measured the reduced volume of my breath. In more serious episodes, I have used medication to treat the symptom. This time I was able to focus on my breathing and the message it brought. My first interaction with this symptom was to try the technique of relieving discomfort by trying to relax and open my breathing. When this didn't work I switched to the amplification technique.

I felt the details of the tightness to find out about my experience of this particular tension. It was not a pleasant experience but I decided to trust it and put my discomfort aside for the moment. As I studied the details of my experience, my hands moved to my chest and ribs, pressing in. I felt as though something were closing me in and compressing my upper body.

Dreamland

The "dreaming" entered when I noticed my hands pressing in on me. These hands could

have been the beginning of a figure or personality that presses in. I started to wonder whose hands they were. The whole experience took on a dreamlike nature with various characters emerging. This "dream" had two characters: one was "me," feeling tension and not being able to breathe very well and the other was something pressing in on my chest. In order to follow that experience in dreaming I amplified the part of the movement that I experienced as happening to me, rather than amplifying something I was doing.

I amplified the feeling of those hands as if they were actually out there pushing me in by curling up into a small ball and letting my entire body feel the tension.

As I did this I started to feel that I was following something different from the original experience in my chest. This pressure didn't feel the same as the original restriction. It was very familiar, in the realm of what I could name. (The strength had changed into what a Bartenieff Movement Analyst would call "bound flow.") It was familiar but it didn't have any excitement or energy.

One of my problems was that I choose to "be" the figure that is more like me, the one feeling compressed, rather than the one that presses down on me who is "not me." I got to an "edge." There was not much energy in playing that role because I knew it pretty well. At the edge of my known experience, I followed a familiar path back towards consensus reality. This often happens around new experiences. Either there is not a pattern for the new experience or there is something in the field that is not in favor of the experience. Sometimes these edges are small, while at other times there are larger conflicts with what is emerging. The work may stay at this edge for some time before it can proceed. Mine moved along with a little nudge.

I went back to the original experience to see what I had missed. I noticed that the tension was deep in my chest, not in the outer muscles that I was using to make myself into a small ball. I amplified this feeling in my chest and used my hands to make a tight knot that I also felt in the deepest part of my chest.

I was now starting to embody the part that makes the pressure, using my hands to recreate the feeling. I was not just being pressured but now pressuring.

As I did that I felt myself totally relax around the knot. I felt like the knot of what I was calling “tension” was something inside of me. It had a quality that is hard to name. It felt like something that I could trust entirely to help support me in some new tasks I was taking on. It supported my trust in my own experience and my questions. What I was calling tension now felt like a center of strength and certainty. I can still feel it there, like a strong, supportive and stable core. That tension/strength has come back to me several times to remind me to keep focusing inside. This has given me the courage to follow many of the experiences that I talk about here.

Sentient Experience

Have you ever tried to name that certain something in the Mona Lisa’s smile? What kind of experience is behind such a smile? It seems to be beyond description. This is what it is like trying to talk about sentient experiences. This is the level of experience where, if you pay attention, you know something is there but you can’t quite say what it is in words. It is a level of experience that mystics are interested in, having to do with the immeasurable part of us and our relationship to the Tao, God, eternity or whatever you name it yourself.

Sentience shows up in subtle body experiences. These experiences lie below the problems of everyday life and show a dimension invisible from the dreaming or consensus reality levels. One of the ways you can experience the sentient level as it unfolds in any moment is by slowing down, breathing, going blank, paying subtle attention, and noticing your body being moved by a subtle force. This sentient force is not only moving your body but is something essential, guiding your life. It is an emerging tendency, not yet known.

The experience in my example that I am having difficulty naming, but that I am calling strong and supportive, is approaching a sentient experience. I can talk about what it *does* but not really what it *is*. Calling it “strong” doesn’t

quite capture its essence. Not being able to name it helps me stay with the experience. My mind reaches to name it in order to understand it, but for the moment the experience lives in an unnameable movement realm. Words like “strong” are place holders for a deeper experience. Naming it tends to bring it into consensus reality. My body is like a safe for keeping that unknown experience. As long as I have the symptom it can bring me back to that experience, further unfolding and deepening its meaningfulness. This is one reason why direct body experience is so important. It brings us back to mystical, spiritual experience that our normal identities tend to change in the course of trying to name it.

Focusing on and unfolding the sentient level gives a sense of connection with the deepest parts of yourself and your eternal nature. Army Mindell once said that loneliness comes from losing contact with the deepest parts of yourself (personal communication, March 29, 2003). Sentience helps us reconnect to our purpose in life.

These three levels of experience are happening simultaneously.

If you think of a situation in terms of only real things you’re missing half the picture. You have to describe things in terms of the dreaming and the ghost-like background things that we are doing and all the parallel worlds. (May 30, 2003 Fundamentals and Applications II: Supervision, PWCP, Portland, OR)²

From the viewpoint of these levels of experience, we can see that healing with the intention of only relieving symptoms is approaching the problem on the consensus reality level. The multi-leveled awareness approach helps us use the “other half” of the picture that occurs in dreaming and sentient experience to unfold our emerging tendencies in parallel worlds. The tendency when attending to NCR experience is to marginalize CR experiences and vice versa. Using a model where both levels are visible is a new approach and requires the development of new skills. The key to the approach is awareness, opening up to experience, and following it in its many levels.

Paradoxically, as I have embraced what I had considered my CR movement yearnings for freedom of movement and connectedness, I have been able to deepen the dreaming and sentient (NCR) parts of my experience. I have found these yearnings were not only CR but part of my deepest dreaming and emerging tendencies as they are reflected in virtually all aspects of my life: my earliest dreams about flying, my symptoms, relationship patterns, accidents and my relationship to the world. Attending to them in movement has helped me make space for this unnameable, non-verbal experience and unfold my connection to the spirit in my everyday life.

Recognizing My Program and Reclaiming My Gifts

Multi-leveled awareness allowed me to value the experiences that interrupted freedom and connectedness in my movement *and* my original yearning for that freedom of movement. This was different from my earlier approach where I actively sought the disturbance, rather than noticing what was happening in the moment. Looking for the disturbance became a program: move, find the movement you didn't intend or the disturbance in the intentional movement, unfold it and find where you could benefit from that energy in your life. This recipe stood between me and the wonder of what I was calling the intended movement, for instance, the satisfaction of feeling grounded and connected—movement which was often as dreamlike as the disturbance. When I recognized that these yearnings were part of my dreaming life as well, it was a relief to not marginalize but embrace these experiences.

I discovered that my yearnings are tendencies for things to happen that are not yet happening, just as the disturbance is a tendency for something to happen that is not yet happening. Attending to these experiences allows you to unfold and live these un-lived parts of yourself. It is like living on the wave of creation. It takes both the ocean and the beach to create a wave, each with its unseen powers. Being too far up on the beach or out too far in the water leads to a sort of deadness in life, while being right in

the creative wave where these forces come together brings us close to a co-creative life. You can relax and ride this wave instead of just walking on the beach or swimming.

I believe this is similar to what Arny Mindell calls the “intentional wave.”

I started thinking of these things, in part, because of the quantum wave function. People say that it can't be measured and you can only talk about this mathematically. Heisenberg said that it's a tendency for things to happen. You can't measure tendencies; it is something that happens before reality. Jung might say, “That sounds like the collective unconscious.” The Australian Aboriginals say that you can kill the kangaroo but not the kangaroo dreaming. It's like the wind—you can't kill the wind or a personal myth. Personal myth is the thing that always typifies you, the basic patterns that typify you over long periods of time. (Lifestyles and Medicine seminar February 23, 2003)³

Am I making the Movement or Is It Making Me?

Now I could embrace what felt most vital to me in movement. At the same time I could use skills from my previous dance world to notice that I wasn't supported in my core and use exercises to discover more support and unfold its meaningfulness. My two worlds were coming together. I now started bringing new awareness to my exercise routine from both worlds. I was starting to live in parallel worlds without marginalizing CR experience for NCR experience. The question, “Am I making the movement or is the movement making me?” is like a koan that lives in my movement. More and more they become the same thing. My intention to follow that intentional wave shifts my approach to life, making it easier to be one with my self and my movement yearnings.

Your long-term movement yearnings, fascinations, and fantasies are one way that your personal myth makes itself known. They show up in your day-to-day movement and are a part of what we would call your “movement profile” in the Laban world. A movement profile is a description of your movement preferences. Many of these daily patterns are not

part of your conscious identity but seem to have a life of their own independent of your identity. These tendencies that are emerging are like the movement making you. In the research I have done, I have found that the patterns found in them have a direct correlation to your childhood dream, which Jung found to be one of the patterns revealing your personal myth (Jung, 1969: 52). As you follow these movement tendencies you get closer to living that myth. You are living closer to a co-creative life.

Part III Exercising in Parallel Worlds

Using Emerging Tendencies to Exercise from the inside out

There are several things that started to make sense in a new way as I followed the emerging tendencies in my movement as I exercised. I found that certain attitudes and tools contributed to the depth of the work. One of the tools that has been very useful to me is a digital voice recorder. As I'm exercising I talk about my experience to my recorder. This not only gives me a journal record of the strange sounds and events that happened, it also helps me bring more awareness to what is happening as it happens. I usually start off by relaxing, getting settled and noticing my attitude to moving that day. When I start to notice the things that are happening in my body I start to record. If I come to my workout with a physical or emotional problem, then I focus on that. As I work I use some tools that help me with my awareness. They include:

- Following the process, not the state.
- Simply moving without naming and understanding what's happening too quickly: behind every name is a process.
- Remembering to bring the sentient experience back to my identity. Leaving sentient experience abstract and unexpressed can be like an addiction, a tunnel to get to an experience without having access to it in my everyday world.
- Following subtle awareness—what's happening besides the intended movement?
- Holding two experiences without having to choose one over the other, letting them float up, one and then the other.

- Noticing resolution. Resolution means when polarities dissolve.
- Keeping unresolved movement in my consciousness but allowing it to go, knowing that it will return.
- Studying anatomy and kinesiology and developing body awareness.

Following the Process not the State

Joe, my partner and I were having dinner one day and I was talking to him about my discoveries. I had been reading *A Woman's Book of Strength* by Karen Andes (1995) and was impressed by her advice that if a person was tired on a particular day that she not push herself, but follow her energy. I was also disturbed by this since it left out the dreaming. He immediately said, "That's following the state, not the process."⁴ That made a lot of sense to me as I had been trying to name some of the differences that I sensed between Process Work and body work and movement work. At first it looks like "following your energy" is following the process, but, are you following a *concept* of an experience you are having? How do you know you are tired? Many experiences could lead to this conclusion: feeling like my eyelids won't stay open; feeling like the energy has drained out of me; feeling heaviness. Calling it tiredness creates a place holder for a lot of different experiences.

In the next few days I had a chance to experiment with this. I got on the treadmill and found myself feeling tired. The tiredness showed up as a heavy feeling in my body. It was almost more than I could do to walk, much less run. I amplified the heaviness and let my weight sink into the rubber mat of the treadmill. It was a relief to let go. Soon I felt an exciting contact with the ground. I felt myself pushing against the Earth with my feet. Energy was coming up my legs and into my spine. I was going faster and pretty soon I was running forward, fully committed to that forwardness. I was going faster and faster... faster than I had ever gone before with far less effort. My legs seemed to know exactly what to do. It was like my body was leading me in that direction, not me. I wasn't fighting gravity but using it to go

in a new and normally uncomfortable direction for me: forward.

If I had just modified my exercise regimen and, following Andes' suggestion, done less, I would have missed this wild trip into forwardness. "Tiredness" was actually the beginning of a continuing unfolding experience.

Behind Every Name Is a Process

Making space for the movement experience without naming and understanding it too quickly helps keep the process flowing. My tiredness experience is a good example of holding off the meaning making so that the experience has a chance to unfold. If I had said "Oh, right, I'm tired because I haven't had a good night's sleep for a week," which was true, this would have created a framework in which my tiredness would have made a lot of sense but the deeper experience would still be unknown. Naming things encapsulates an experience and tends to rigidify it into something known and understood. This can be an important part of unfolding an experience, but remembering that behind every name there is a process and going back to the experience that you are naming helps to keep the process fluid.

That Multi-leveled Thing Goes Both Ways

When we unfold disturbances our awareness originates with a consensus reality model of wellness. For instance in the example above the consensus reality approach would go something like: if I weren't so tired I could have a good workout.

Movement is excellent for getting directly into sentient experience. Many people exercise to get into that "zone" of the movement where you feel that everything works like clockwork and you are in a state of euphoria (the feeling of "connectedness" above). Movement helps complete yearnings such as the urge to fly or to get into altered states. These are often sentient experiences. Sometimes we get into the sentient experience and it's wonderful and fulfilling to simply have it. But when it becomes boring, or there's a feeling that there's "more to it than this," we usually try to find out what it is primarily by naming it. If I say I'm tired, as in my earlier example, I have gone

directly to the CR level and missed the details of the sentient experience and the dreaming. By paying attention to the feeling that I am calling heaviness, I start to open doors between the three levels of experience and work my way back up, bringing the essence of the experience into CR where I have more access to it.

Exercise can be used to help get into states that are then left in the gym or out on the running path. These are states that we usually don't identify with but are a part of us. When we unfold them they often reveal an essential part of our lives that, if brought home from the gym with us, could contribute to our living co-creative lives. For example, my connection to the Earth through my feet allowed me to run in a new way when I felt heavy. If I notice this experience at home as I walk, as I'm talking to someone, I feel that the support of the Earth lets me know when I am following my path. When I can't contact that feeling I slow down and notice what the earth wants me to do.

Example of Merging the Two

In the exercise example below I was on the elliptical trainer for 35 minutes then on the treadmill for 25 minutes. I don't talk all the time but when I do, it's about the experience I was just having. The original transcript is in plain text and my comments after the fact are in italics.

On the elliptical trainer today, I notice something happening in my left knee and my neck. I have two impulses: one is to do something about them, like loosening up my neck, or relieving the pain in my knee, but, I think I'll follow the second impulse and wait, not doing anything and just observing and following the experience.

Here I am making a choice between the impulse to relieve the discomfort of my symptoms or to bring my attention to them and unfold them. There are often a lot of sensations in my body so I have to choose a focus. One of the ways I do that is to see which seems more interesting on that day. This could be something that is pleasant or as in this case, something that's disturbing.

I decided to leave my knee for the moment, and went back and felt what was happening in

my neck. Instead of taking one approach or the other, it helps me to just know the two options are available and notice anything else going on.

This diffuse focus lets me hang out with my body experiences for a while without having to “do” something. It creates an atmosphere of not doing and allowing the experience to lead the way. This helps me focus on the dreaming and the sentient levels since the CR level is more concerned with “doing.”

When I attend to what’s going on in my neck, I notice that aside from the tension there’s something right at my occipital bone (the bone that forms the base of your skull) that is really loose. It’s sort of going from side to side and sort of back.

Here I use my knowledge of anatomy to locate movement that I had not noticed before. The details of the quality (looseness), and where the movement goes in space (side to side but a little back) are important details of the movement that help me discover not only that there is something more than tension, and that it’s not only looseness but has a direction in space too. There are two sensations, tightness and looseness. This gives me a choice to follow one, the other, or both.

I’m enjoying the lightness of the elliptical trainer and I’m just going to hang out with the looseness in my neck and see what happens. I can just enjoy the lightness because I know the tightness is going to come back if it’s important. It’s a persistent signal and there’s no sense in chasing it down if it doesn’t feel like fun.

This attitude of observation, paying attention to all the experiences and letting them all be there relieves me of the pressure to make meaning of my experience.

I’m noticing that my attention, even with the lightness, is going back to my neck. And as I pay attention to the tightness there I notice that it is going down into my chest. I think of the anatomy of that part of the body and remember that when my head feels supported and I feel less stress in my neck, I feel support coming from my pelvis up the inside of my spine, like a central core (along the psoas muscle).

Paying attention to and supporting the experience of tension is somewhat counterintuitive compared

with my old approach to the body, which would want to relieve the tension.

I feel a quality of a center that brings my attention down inside of me. It feels like I am closing in around that center. I’m going to follow that further.

This is a somewhat dreamlike experience. I don’t know of any “center” as an anatomical entity but my feeling is of support by a center inside of my chest. I’m also letting go of my desire for freedom for the moment.

Just letting myself follow the weight into the center around my diaphragm lets something relax in my neck. It brings my weight forward, which is relieving since I usually tend to hold my weight back. It also reminds me of the experience I had when I closed in on a firm place in my chest and found a trusted core (when I described working on my breathing difficulty earlier in this article).

I feel a lot of volume in my body, like there’s a big open but firm space inside of me. I love having this volume. This unusual experience of having this inner volume gives me a sense of stability and inner support.

This experience of inner volume and space, the sense that there is meaningful experience in the distance between the front of my body and the back, was something I first encountered in the Laban work. I am fascinated by a sense of space which affords a sense of solidity and support.

It is interesting that the tension I experienced in my neck is mirrored in the experience of this solidity. Now I might go back and explore the tension to see if there really is a similarity there.

Here I am checking to make sure that I am not following a different experience but that I’ve stayed with the nature of the original tension. I check it out and it’s the same.

I’m going faster than before and I noticed that my neck is tense again. I’m amplifying that tension and there’s a feeling of a “no” like “don’t.” I don’t know what that’s about... let me check it out.

I explore that “no” by feeling where it is in my body. I hold my attention there and spread it into as much of my body as possible.

When I explore that “no” it seems really known and old. It’s like a fundamental no to stepping out into the world with this new-found volume for fear that I might disrupt something or... cause somebody pain or change something that shouldn’t be changed.

There seems to be a polarity developing. One pole is the freedom that was in my neck earlier and another is thinking about other people’s good. It’s an exciting debate, but I know it well. I’m going to try doing something with it in movement.

This debate about being free or taking care not to change, influence, or hurt anyone or anything is not new. I won’t get very far focusing on the debate, which is like a well-known script. I look for a more unfamiliar inroad—the body experience I’m having.

First I realize that I need to understand the “no” better. Just thinking of it as a blanket “no” doesn’t work. I’m going to unfold it a little more in my body. I move with the quality of that “no.” Firm, voluminous, and strong.

I focus on that experience with the intention of finding its sentient root. I am interested in what it is before it got named “no.” Often these experiences are like pieces of nature. I go further to unfold it by speaking from that piece of nature.

The interesting thing about the “no” ...when I really take it over by letting it move... is that it is an experience of being a rock... and still... and immovable... just completely unalterable so that whatever compromise is being expected of me—the answer is just “no.” *If that rock could speak it would say, “I’m not here to change. I’m my own special rock...and it doesn’t get any better than this. Don’t miss the special beauty of this.”*

That somehow makes the other side happy, the side that’s voluminous and free and powerful. It feels supported. It is relieved of being the only one with power.

I move to the treadmill and find that I am able to use this rock-like feeling to help me run better. I go faster and with more ease than usual. I have the feeling that I look like a different kind of runner than I usually am.

As I cool down after my workout, that volume feels like a pillar inside of me. I feel a wonderful sense of depth and presence; an

inner support that I usually don’t have. I am often looking for support from the outside. It is a gift to find it from the inside. This can support me in ways that no one from the outside can.

How do I take this “knowing” out of the gym and remember that that’s “me” as I go out into my day? I will certainly feel it in my neck again and remember that there is a bigger process there. It is a part of the shifting notion of who I am.

Over time this work has continued to grow and develop in me. It led to a shift both in my self-image and in the way I support myself in my body. One final tool, which is perhaps the greatest challenge, is to believe in experiences like these. It is easy to return to CR thinking and to trivialize the sentient experiences you have in your body. Because it is hard to make concrete sense of such experiences, our default opinion of ourselves tends not to include dreamlike and sentient experiences. For me to know, when I have a wild thought, that there’s something in me supporting me, and I don’t have to find an outside authority that stands behind me, is a big and freeing step. This must be why the part of me that wants freedom was happy with the rock-like immobility—that rock-likeness allows it/me to be free!

Conclusion

For as long as I have had this paradigm clash I have suffered from its inconclusiveness. Now I am seeing it as one of the biggest gifts of my life. It has stimulated me to think things through until I was satisfied I was not marginalizing one viewpoint for the other but seeing the wisdom of both. I discovered that not marginalizing either the CR or Dreaming aspect of experience but holding the tension between the two allowed the sentient root to emerge. Making room for both the freedom and the tension in the previous process allowed a deeper experience of each and revealed the dynamics between the two. They no longer are just in opposition to each other.

Hanging in there with this paradigm crunch has broadened my understanding of the Process Work paradigm to include things that I was not able to perceive before. I discovered that experiences that seem to be on opposite sides of a fence are in a complex relationship to each

other, not just opposites. I already knew this intellectually, but it has now taken on new meaning that I could get only from this struggle. My yearning for freedom in my neck was not just a tendency toward superficial healing but an important part of the bigger dynamic of support and freedom. Here Process Work offered an umbrella that helped include all of the experiences and a framework for supporting and valuing them equally. After this I would say that my understanding of both paradigms was too narrow and that's what created the conflict—I was missing the root that united all of the experiences. My gift was being able to look at each as separate entities as a step in discovering the strengths and limitations of each, and then discovering how they can work together. The conflict was a major step in learning and continuing to learn about both paradigms. I now know something of the sentient root of each paradigm. They no longer seem to be on opposite sides from each other; indeed, each is a rich resource in my work.

The learning and tools that I discuss here enrich the movement world. They create a way to embrace and mine the usefulness of those experiences that happen during exercise, or movements that are barely perceptible or seem extraneous. This enriches life by helping us to live co-creatively, closer to the crest of the wave. This in turn holds a promise of influencing the world that each of us lives in. My hope is that you will play with these ideas and discover more that lead to co-creative living.

It is a terrific relief to have written this. It helps my two worlds come together and I thank you for reading it. I would like to thank some of the people who have helped me with this project. Joe Goodbread, my partner who has been there at every stage of the development of this project has contributed with his ideas and support. Arny Mindell for making sense of the world in a way that helps me make sense of mine; Gary Had who helped me with the chaos; Annie Blair, Martha Eddy, Leslie Heizer, Lee Sparks Jones, Katje Wagner, for feedback and reading.

Notes

1. Rudolf Laban (1879-1958) was a dancer and visionary. "...[His] ideas were influenced by the social and cultural changes of the time and the contexts that he worked in. The traditional constraints against showing feeling [at the turn of the century] were being questioned, opening the way for a freeing of the feeling body.

Rudolf Laban believed the best way to advocate this freedom was by mirroring it in dance and the movement arts. Freud's discovery of the psyche, opened a previously closed door...

In Paris and Munich (1900 - 1914) Rudolf Laban acquired his spiritual attitude and unique value regardless of gender, social status or educational standing. He interpreted this as valuing individuals (sic) own choice of movement, and self initiated vocabularies. ...He abandoned the constraints of traditional steps...to reveal a body, freed to find its own rhythms, create its own steps and revel in the medium of space." (http://www.laban.org/laban/past_present_and_future/rudolf_laban.phtml)
2. For more information on these levels of experience see Arny Mindell's *Quantum Mind*, where he introduces these ideas and shows their roots in physics, *Dreaming While Awake*, where he shows their relationship to dreaming, both night time dreams and where dreaming is always present in our experience, and the soon to be published, *The Force of Silence* where he talks about the quantum dimensions of medicine and how they can't be separated from psychology.
3. This quote is from my notes. Seminar facilitated by Amy and Arny Mindell.
4. April 19, 2003 at Sushiville.

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