17 Calibrating the Body

Embodied Research Strategies for Attuning to Subtle Information

Eline Kieft

Clover Trail, University of Winchester,
Coventry University

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Our hope, says philosopher David Abram, is to reinvigorate the language of the body, learn to let our muscles, sinews, blood, and bones sing again in harmony with the wild chorus of the land, sea, and air—to feel again the pulse of natural kinship. We need to open the vital channels between our words—even our written words—our bodies, and the articulate flesh of the world. We need to feel and respond to the deep intelligence of the matter of the planet and cosmos from which we are born. We need to pay attention to the stirrings of mind in matter, to the symphony of universal meaning—to the deep narrative of matter itself.

(de Quincey, 2002: 104, ital. in original).

CONNECTING WITH THE OTHER-TAN-HUMAN

This chapter proposes ways to sensitise and educate the body to perceive intangible aspects of the natural world. It shows how we can recognise and interact with the deep intelligence and narratives of matter all around us. My journey of understanding the body as an antenna is informed by four strands of study: the general disciplines of consciousness studies and shamanic techniques, and two more specific approaches of *ECOintention* and *Movement Medicine*. Each of these (which are briefly introduced below) have ways of addressing and exploring the intricate connections between matter (particles), energy (waves) and consciousness (information): aspects that feature strongly in the relatively young field of quantum agriculture, or quantum-informed agriculture (Q(I)A), which builds on traditional models of agriculture, including, yet going beyond, matter and particles (soil management, chemical compounds, food production). Waves, in the form of sound and other electromagnetic techniques, for example, are being used for increasing crop production, or managing

disease in cattle. Q(I)A also recognises the information derived through, for example, farmers' intuition, animal communication and nature constellations (Kieft, 2019; Lovel, 2014).

ECOintention offers an approach to monitor and increase the health of trees, gardens and forests. This method was designed by biologist Hans Andeweg and X-ray lab technician Rijk Bols (Andeweg, 2009). Between 2003 and 2005, I learned about such energetic techniques to assess, balance and optimise natural systems.¹ The theoretical framework of this approach is that health consists of a combination of matter (the optimal amount of water, sunlight, balanced animal populations and so on), its energetic frequency (resonance or vitality) and the degree of congruency of a system or how well it is adapted to its circumstances and integrated with its surroundings. *ECOintention* combines working on levels of particles, energy and information. This is done through setting a clear intention,² using pre-defined measurement scales, understanding subtle changes within one's own body and finally communicating them with others. A large part of this method consists of learning to read and interpret one's body's physical responses to the focus of inquiry. The body is the instrument through which information is received. Although personal responses are subjective, i.e. unique to the person, the use of pre-defined measurement scales ensures a calibration of outcomes, so from subjective data the observations become *intersubjective*.

In May 2005, I attended *Soul in Nature*, a 3-week residential and immersive course at Schumacher College, Devon, UK, featuring three well-known teachers. Investigating the connection between mind and matter, one of the teachers, Christian de Quincey, posited consciousness as the missing link, present within every bit of matter beyond even the smallest atom. He argues that matter is tangibly located somewhere in space (particles) and that energy spreads out through space (waves), whereas consciousness, the third phenomenon, is 'the process of matter-energy informing itself' (de Quincey, 2002: 59). His work helped me to understand the connection with nature from a more theoretical angle, using the three main elements of Q(I)A: particles, energy and information.

Teaching on the same course, Jonathan Horwitz introduced me to shamanic techniques to interact with other-than-human-beings³ in the natural world. I have continued to study with him ever since. In an animist view, everything is imbued with an energetic quality, life force or 'spirit essence'.⁴ This includes stones and minerals; plants, trees and animals; natural features such as mountains or oceans; and the four elements of earth, water, fire and air. Through techniques of rhythmic drumming to expand our consciousness, it becomes possible to contact and interact with those qualities. As in *ECOintention*, the underlying aim of shamanic practices is to increase balance within systems, individuals and communities, again, guided by a strong intention (Kieft, 2018, 2020).

Finally, *Movement Medicine*, a contemporary shamanic dance practice, features (mostly) improvised movement as a deeply embodied activity to (re)connect with the world around us. Inspired by spatial practices such as medicine wheels and mandalas as energetic representations of meditative focus, as well as family constellation theory (Cohen, 2006; Whittington, 2016), Movement Medicine facilitates dancing 'with', 'in relation to' and 'as' any type of being imaginable. This can include physical plants and animals, but also natural systems such as rainforests and oceans, as well

¹ *ECOintention* was originally called *ECOtherapy*. Developed in the early 1990s, this method has since been successfully adapted and applied to other systems such as schools, theatres and businesses. See https://www.ecointention.com/index_e.htm. Ubiquity University now offers an MSc degree in ECOIntention, <https://www.ubiquityuniversity.org/courses/msc-master-of-science-in-ecointention/> accessed: March 3rd 2021.

² Setting an intention is done by clarifying the focus of a particular inquiry. This can be compared to picking up the phone and dialling a specific number: who are you going to 'talk' to? Are you 'tuning in' to a tree, a plot of land, a food item? This clarity helps to zoom in on and interpret clues clearly while not being distracted by interference of other information.

³ For a discussion of the term 'other-than-human-beings', see Harvey (2003, 2014). Other disciplines work with related concepts such as archetypes (in psychology), memes as independent and self-replicating units that transmit cultural ideas and behavioural patterns (in cultural studies), and morphic field resonance (in biology). They each address an energetic quality or imprint of concrete and/or intangible phenomena.

⁴ Spirit itself is a difficult concept to define. The original Latin connotation of spirit includes 'breath, life, wind, awe, mystery, and invisibility', and early philosophers such as Plato and Augustine referred to it (Morris, 2006: 15). Horwitz uses a description of spirits as "bundles of the energy of the universe, [that] appear to people in forms that they can recognise" (quote from interview in E. Kieft, 2020).

as archetypal and spirit essences. Such practices enable us to learn from and be inspired by ‘the other’, and also help give them ‘expression’ and ‘agency’ through our physicality (Darling Khan, S. and Darling Khan, Y. A., 2009; Kieft, 2013, 2014, 2017a).

My understanding of the potential of dance and shamanic practice as alternative ways of knowing is informed by these four strands, which are both intellectual and experiential. From a positivist research perspective, this intertwinement of personal and professional understanding may raise some methodological questions. In the arts and humanities however, approaches such as ethnography (Madden, 2017; Pink, 2015), Practice as Research (Nelson, 2013; Spatz, 2015) and Embodied Inquiry (Snowber, 2016; Todres, 2007) recognise that any knowledge produced is always a result of entanglements not only within the research itself, but also between the researcher and her practice. Neither of these can be seen as independent, but rather, they are ‘ontologically and epistemologically bound’ (Naccarato, 2018: 436). Indeed, they emerge and become together, not unlike the aspects of our quantum universe: particles, waves and information. Addressing ways of knowing outside our western models of knowledge creation requires a reassessment of ontology and epistemology, as well as pedagogies for experiential learning and ways to ‘validate’ such intersubjective learning experiences.⁵

This chapter continues with four parts. The first argues that intangible information exists all around us and is accessible by and through the human body. I specifically introduce panpsychism as a cosmology that recognises degrees of consciousness within matter, mostly guided by the work of Christian de Quincey and Rupert Sheldrake. The second examines the possibilities of connecting with that information and consciousness as part of our innate human abilities. Here, I briefly discuss the work of Gregory Bateson, Tim Ingold and David Bohm on the relationship between body and environment. The third describes some ingredients and prerequisites for ontology and epistemology that are supported by (subjective) experience and immersion. Here, I draw on the writings of Les Todres and Christian de Quincey. The final section offers a practical approach for reawakening a multi-levelled literacy that includes body, heart, mind, consciousness, intuition, movement and nature.

INFORMATION EXISTS ALL AROUND US

Questions regarding the nature of reality and how we relate to it feature in most cultures, and there are striking parallels between science and indigenous knowledge. Anthropologist Jeremy Narby (1999 [1995]) describes the overlap between ancient (shamanic) cosmologies and recent discoveries in quantum physics. A wide variety of disciplines, including philosophy, psychology, biology, electromagnetics and quantum physics, address phenomena such as information, consciousness and spirit, and many theories seek to explain deeply intertwined connections within and across the universe. Some examples are Bohm’s implicate order, Laszlo’s Akashic fields, Jung and Pauli’s synchronicity and collective unconscious, Capra’s tao of physics, Sheldrake’s morphic fields, Wilber’s integral theory and Lovelock’s Gaia hypothesis (Ferrer, 2015; Hardy, 2015; Schäfer, 2008).⁶

For example, Rupert Sheldrake proposed a theory of morphic fields that hold information relevant to a specific species or phenomenon. These morphic fields ‘are not confined to the brain, or even to the body, but extend beyond it into the environment, linking the body to the surroundings in which it acts’ (Sheldrake, 1988: 198). Information is a pattern of coherence that exists in form. Trees, for example, hold information about their growth and survival needs, but also about seasonal and weather patterns. With the right access or means, and through various forms of intelligence,⁷

⁵ For further methodological reflections on intersubjectivity, see Kieft (2020).

⁶ In *The Field: A quest for this apparent secret force of the universe*, Lynne McTaggart attempts to unify several of these theories by means of popular science journalism (McTaggart, 2001).

⁷ Intelligence is the degree to which individuals (of all manners of species) make coherent sense of, and apply, the information that they have access to. In terms of human intelligence, Howard Gardner proposed a theory of seven different types of intelligence, including logico-mathematical, linguistic, musical, spatial, bodily kinaesthetic, intrapersonal and interpersonal intelligences (Gardner, 1983). Except for the first two, the other forms allude to a concrete interaction between body and surroundings.

information can be deciphered and contribute to knowledge. That deciphering can happen between species and other natural phenomena, for example when animals anticipate specific natural events before they actually happen. Just as learning to read helps us to decipher the meaning of letters on a page, we can learn to read subtle information in other forms.

Yet, how can we derive information from sources with which we cannot communicate in the traditional (verbal or written) sense? Panpsychism⁸ is an ontological theory that considers everything in the universe as having ‘an interior, subjective reality’ (de Quincey, 2002: 105). Just as animism recognises soul or life force within phenomena, panpsychism speaks of consciousness or mind (Larson, 2014). Such views were described by early western philosophers⁹ but can be traced much further back to pre-philosophical cosmologies. They also still feature in contemporary (animistic and pantheistic) cosmologies that incorporate shamanic techniques (de Quincey, 2002: 105: 110–26).

Referring back to de Quincey’s view of consciousness as the missing link between matter and energy, we can consider consciousness as the functional, mental state of access beyond our bodily boundaries (Van Gulick, 2018), and also as being inherent in other beings and phenomena. This implies that techniques of expanded consciousness can be a way to communicate with other-than-human-beings without necessarily sharing the same (or any) capacity for language.

BROADCASTING BETWEEN BODY AND ENVIRONMENT

Many cultures see body and environment as inseparable, interrelated and continuous. Case studies show that body and self, person and environment and past and present are interconnected (Grau, 2005). Coding and transmitting meaning is a crucial topic within anthropology. This happens both within and outside of the body, and these internal and external pathways are not separate. Indeed, ‘the mental world—the mind—the world of information processing—is not limited by the skin’ (Bateson, 1972: 460). Quantum physicist David Bohm also explored the interconnection of body and environment (Bohm, 1985). His concept of ‘soma significance’ describes how meaning arises both through physical responses (adrenalin flow, increased heart rate and blood pressure, pain and other nervous system responses) and through external sound waves, gestures, textual objects and technology. Indeed, this links up ‘the whole of society in one vast web of soma-significant and signa-somatic activity’ (Bohm, 1985: 78). Our material environment is then a ‘somatic result’ of the (ever-changing) meaning we attribute to objects. Meaning is not static, fixed or complete, but rather a structure that constantly extends and actualises, accommodating flexibly for the movement of ongoing, unfolding meaning (Bohm, 1985: 79–82).

This structure bears strong resemblance with anthropologist Tim Ingold’s ‘meshwork’, a field of relational involvement in the world in which relation does not ‘happen’ between two phenomena, but exists as a ‘trail of movement or growth... *along* which life is lived’ (Ingold, 2011: 69, ital. in original). While relations in a *network* imply two, previously ‘separate’, elements and an existence of some kind prior to integration into the network, in a meshwork ‘things *are* their relations’ (Ingold, 2011: 70, ital. in original), through multiple trails, pathways and interwoven lines. Ingold questions whether ‘what we have been accustomed to calling “the environment” might not be better envisaged as a domain of entanglement. It is within such a tangle of interlaced trails, continually ravelling here and unravelling there, that beings grow or ‘issue forth’ along the lines of their relationships’ (ibid: 71).

Important for this argument, Ingold incorporates animacy into his theory, not as ‘projected *onto* objects’ by human persons, nor as ‘the result of an infusion of spirit into substance, or of agency into materiality, but (...) ontologically prior to their differentiation’ (2011: 68, ital. in original).

⁸ From Greek: ‘*pan* means all, and *psyche* means soul or mind’ (Sheldrake, 2017: 84–85, ital. in original).

⁹ De Quincey refers to Pythagoras’ mathematical-material forms, Plato’s substance-Form and Aristotle’s hylomorphic matter-form, as attempts to understand underlying ‘unlimited’, ‘immortal’ or ‘spark’ essence that shapes a material manifestation of form (de Quincey, 2002: 112, capitalisation in original). Earlier philosophers include Thales, Anaximander and Anaximenes (ibid: 110–111).

In this view, animacy is a given, innate, quality existing ‘as one’ with its object or being. This leads to understanding a lifeworld as an ‘entire field of relations within which beings of all kinds, more or less person-like or thing-like, continually and reciprocally bring one another into existence’ (ibid: 68).

Both Bohm and Ingold underline relationality, fluidity, changeability and the primacy of movement as foundational to our understanding of that which surrounds us. Such understanding challenges the assumptions and procedures of science within the western tradition, which developed on the merits of separation, through distancing researchers and ‘objects’ and aiming for control, predictability and repeatability (Kieft, 2018, see also Ingold, 2011: 75). We will look at this more closely in the next section.

OPENING UP TO DIFFERENT WAYS OF KNOWING AND LEARNING

When we recognise that western ontology, which advocates the separation between body and environment, is no longer tenable, our epistemology or ways of knowing need to change accordingly. ‘Knowing’ is no longer a process that happens separately from the environment, but something that emerges from interconnection. Knowing and being become fused. Our being, or the ‘essence of the knower’, blends ‘with “that being known”’, a process of ‘radical knowing’ that also transforms the knower (de Quincey, 2002: 124).¹⁰ Since, like all matter, our whole body is pervaded by consciousness, de Quincey proposes ‘somatic feeling’ as an alternative epistemology, which can be practised by paying attention to the body ‘as it interacts with the world’ (de Quincey, 2002: 145).

Les Todres, a philosophically oriented psychologist and researcher, also underlines the role of feelings in the process of understanding. Drawing from the work of Dilthey and Heidegger on emotional atmosphere, Todres describes how our (apparently reflective and abstract) understanding is never neutral, but is always preceded by ‘how we are in relation to things in a prereflective and unthematized manner’ (Todres, 2007: 10). Hence, our emotional texture and mood form a background quality that always informs our knowing.

Feeling is determinedly not separate from the rest of our experience, including sensorial information, reason, consciousness and intuition. De Quincey describes intuition as ‘a gift of grace’, coming from ‘somewhere else’ through ‘a different shaft of knowing’ (de Quincey, 2002: 145). This means negotiating the channels that connect us to external, more mystical sources of knowing and not knowing, a state of paradox-consciousness that can be reached, among other things, through silence and meditation. Rudolf Steiner (1861–1925; a mystic, philosopher and scientist who also founded biodynamic farming) considered intuition as a result of the meeting between imagination (from within us) and inspiration (from the outer world and spiritual plane).

These are but a few authors who describe the role of feelings and intuition for accessing other shafts of, or paths to, wisdom. Although this sometimes happens spontaneously, during an experience of ‘flow’ (Csikszentmihalyi, 1975) or peak experience (Maslow, 1994), many spiritual and meditative practices offer structured approaches to increase the possibility of connecting to such shafts of wisdom. Whatever the tradition or background, each practice provides a method or procedure that involves careful preparation, a clearly formulated intention and full focus, a change of time–space perception and often a clear invitation for ‘otherness’ to come through.¹¹ Dance practices worldwide also offer a path to transcend the ordinary and communicate with other dimensions of reality (Hume, 2007: 68, 75).

¹⁰ ‘Radical knowing’ combines (at least) four different approaches to, or gifts of, knowledge. The philosopher’s gift is based in reason and clear thinking; the scientist’s gift in the senses, observation and method; the shaman’s gift in participatory feeling; and the mystic’s gift in direct experience. Simultaneously, they address the levels of mind, body, soul and spirit (de Quincey, 2005: 221–243).

¹¹ In this respect, de Quincey proposes the POR method (Procedure, Observation, Report), for a radical science that can process any type of inquiry, including more subjective insights gained through experiences of meditation or shamanic journeying (de Quincey, 2005: 138, ital. in original).

Whatever the nature of the practice (including transcendental and out-of-body experiences), the body is always the point of departure as well as return and integration after such experiences (Kieft, 2017b). Creating a literacy of body, heart and consciousness therefore seems essential to fine-tune our ‘antennae’ to other sources of information around us. Elsewhere (Kieft, 2018) I address the necessity of moving towards a multi-levelled literacy that includes, yet goes beyond, reason and cognition and addresses the following: (1) embodied approaches to increase perception; (2) abilities to skilfully navigate emotions and feelings; and (3) expanded mental capacities to include imagination and intuition and create space for the soul. These suggestions are not intended to undermine or replace, but rather to *complement* positivist methodologies towards a more inclusive and holistic approach to knowledge. To reach such multi-level literacy requires multi-level learning and pedagogy as well, which I address in the next section.

CALIBRATING THE BODY AS INSTRUMENT: TOWARDS MULTI-LEVELLED LITERACY

So far we have looked at the deep intertwinement and inseparability of mind and body, and the need to widen our epistemology. We saw that perception and insight can arise through different channels. In addition to mental and cognitive abilities (often referred to as ‘intellectual’, left-brain abilities), understanding is cultivated through sensorial body awareness, emotional feeling qualities, and intuitive, meditative and expanded states of consciousness. These different channels mutually affect each other.

This final section offers simple and practical ways to nurture and develop multi-levelled literacy, in order to increase awareness and perception and open ourselves up to alternative avenues of knowing. These practical invitations (in italics, below) emerge from my experience and practice as dancer and dance facilitator. Like a Russian doll, calibrating the body as instrument includes all these different levels: the body is home to the heart and the mind, as well as an anchor within a larger stream of consciousness. As previously discussed, many disciplines offer approaches to deepen these suggestions, including, but not limited to, *ECOintention*, shamanic practice, *Movement Medicine* and meditation.

DEEPER FAMILIARISATION WITH THE BODY

In order to value our body as instrument, we first need to address our relationship with it. This is not always easy. Our body-sense might be compromised through stress, lack of self-confidence, chronic pain, traumatic experience or (mental) illness. However, despite such challenges, our body remains a miracle of intricate connections, balance and perception.

Pause for a moment to consider this. Acknowledge your breathing and the capacity of your lungs to provide you with oxygen. Feel the pulse of your heart, pumping precious lifeblood through all your body. Imagine your organs and digestive system at this very moment being busy extracting nutrients from your food to provide you with energy. Look at your hands, and think of all the amazing tasks your hands can perform. Acknowledge the range of emotions that come with being human. Realise what a unique experience your life is, and what a unique being you are. Keep breathing.

The more familiar we are with the processes and states within the physicality of our body, the more we are able to discern what arises independently. By monitoring subtle states and shifts inside ourselves, we become more adept at noticing changes in the world around us. This will foster interaction with the ‘other-than-human’.

Pay attention to the processes and states of your body. Notice your breathing, and whether it is shallow, deep, high or low in the chest. Is your heart beating slowly, or fast? How are your energy levels right now? Are you awake, energetic, tired? Does this vary during the day, or after meals? How is your digestive system? Your body temperature? Are you more aware of your upper or lower

body? Is something physically uncomfortable distracting you? Do you perceive any tight or sore spots anywhere? Can you describe your current bodily experience with one 'quality adjective' (e.g. relaxed, cold, tingly, taut, soft, foggy and centred – be aware of not yet crossing from physical sensations to emotional qualities, stay with a descriptor rather than an interpretation of it).

It would not be surprising if, during the above exploration, the last invitation was difficult. Concrete physiological feedback of our bodily functions is strongly intertwined with our perception of that feedback. In neuroscience, this phenomenon is called 'interoception' (interior perception). Physical sensations play an important part in our moods, emotions, behaviour and sense of well-being – including gut feelings and heartache (Cameron and Hamilton, 2002; Wiens, 2005). Becoming even more familiar with these interconnections further enables us to discern shifts and fluctuations around us.

Zoom in on one quality from your previous inquiry, and observe any interpretations, judgements, feelings or emotions related to it. You might notice a sense of familiarity and recognition ('I always feel like this after lunch') or a new internal awareness ('wow, I haven't noticed that before'). Observe if it has to do with the state of your body (pleasant or unpleasant), or with what you are doing (engaging or boring). Is it a state you are comfortable with, or want to 'move away from'? Try, however, to accept and receive it as it is, without changing anything. There is no right or wrong. There also does not have to be a concrete outcome. Just try to follow the interrelationships between your physical sensations and your mental and emotional state. You might, for example, perceive coldness in your hands and feet, a slow digestive system and perhaps a lack of concentration or disinterest in what you are doing.¹²

TERRITORY OF THE HEART AND EMOTIONAL LITERACY

I use the term 'emotional literacy' for the ability to navigate feelings and emotions without 'drowning' in them, 'acting them out' or projecting them onto others. It requires skill to hold the wildness and tenderness of our heart without numbing, ignoring or unhelpfully amplifying its voice. Usually, this literacy matures with conscious attention to personal growth and/or spiritual practice. However, there are a few specific ingredients to consider that are largely ignored in western education. Four are briefly explored here.

First of all, emotional literacy includes not only the acceptance of uncertainty and not knowing, but also acknowledging such states and experiences as fertile and creative. Although it takes courage to enter the unknown, this is the place where we expand our knowledge (see also Ellis, 2009; Melrose, 2007). Pedagogically, we learn best when we are slightly, but not too far, out of our comfort zone; otherwise, we are either under- or overstimulated, and neither is conducive to growth and learning.

Secondly, emotional literacy includes recognition of, and fluidity around, ambiguity and paradoxes. We are often taught something is either this or that; it cannot be both. Learning from a quantum landscape, we know that the universe contains particles *and* waves. Can we similarly grow towards and/or inclusivity rather than either/or exclusivity in our emotional landscape?

Thirdly, emotional literacy enhances the ability to deal with apparent failure in case of so-called mistakes. We live in a culture that rewards success and celebrates fast achievers. However, not (yet) knowing something often means that we are learning. Can we accept that making mistakes is a natural part of being human, and treat them with humour and compassion and as part of our learning trajectory?

Finally, emotional literacy acknowledges our inherent vulnerability and ultimate mortality and aims to find our peace with that. How can we integrate inevitable change and death without becoming paralysed with fear? How can this contribute to a positive and conscious use of our life force?

¹² 'Focussing' is a psychotherapeutic process developed by Eugene Gendlin to explore the 'felt sense' of internal knowing, to increase awareness of (often preverbal) responses to life situations (Gendlin, 1978).

At an appropriate time, take a journal and reflect on the themes raised above. For example: How is the balance in your life between change and predictability? Are you comfortable with that, or would you like more of one or the other? How often are you out of your comfort zone? It is important to find out where comfort zone ends and unknown begins for you. Do you feel 'thrown' out of your comfort zone, or do you actively seek to go there by trying new activities?

How is your relationship to the unknown, to not knowing? Do you experience excitement and curiosity, a sense of moving towards it, perhaps a sense of empowerment? Or do you experience antipathy, resistance, fear, a sense of closing down, moving away from? Both are absolutely fine, and this is simply an inquiry into your flexibility to deal with not knowing. This is not intended in any way as a judgement of inflexibility but as a means to find out more about your levels of comfort regarding not knowing, in order to understand more of how you learn and navigate life.

If your feelings regarding the unknown are uncomfortable, reflect on what will help you find courage to go out of your comfort zone in order to learn something new. Set a realistic goal for yourself—for example, try something new once every day/week/month/year (a level that is just out of your comfort zone but not too far that it would be daunting). Ask support from a trusted person to help you accomplish this.

Similarly, reflect on your relationship with the other ingredients of emotional literacy: ambiguity and paradoxes, failure and making mistakes, vulnerability and mortality. Inquire, without judgement, on how it is now, and how you can create more fluidity around this in your own personal circumstances.

CULTIVATING RIGHT-BRAIN ABILITIES AND EXPANDING CONSCIOUSNESS

Artistic and spiritual techniques stimulate and strengthen our connection to our subliminal mind and our ability to perceive extrasensory information. These include visualisation, creative arts, stories, symbols, archetypes, meditation, yoga and dreamwork (see, e.g., Roney-Dougal, 1991: 25–28).¹³ Movement, as we discussed earlier (Bohm, 1985; Ingold, 2011), is primary to our relational understanding of what surrounds us. It also enhances our capacity to perceive and imagine, enables shifts in consciousness and is accessible to everyone, anywhere. We do not need to be trained professionally or otherwise in order to move. Indeed, we are all made of movement. Movement is an act of creating and becoming 'patterns of sensing and responding to other movements' that happen in, around and through us (Lamothe, 2014: 59). It cultivates our ability to perceive things differently, whether through thoughts, feelings or imagination. At the same time, it influences and perhaps even defines our being, including, again, our sensing, feeling and thinking capacities, but also our ways of meaning-making, our (inter)actions and growth. Perhaps especially because movement does not depend on words or images, it allows us to tune into 'the presence, power and reality of what may be' (Lamothe, 2014: 60), and is therefore such a strong route into the other ways of knowing that we discussed in the previous section. How can we further develop movement as a way of knowing?

For this exploration, take 20 minutes when you can work undisturbed in a space of at least 2×2 m² to move freely. Start by searching for lines and angles both in your body and in the space you are in. Gently move your hands, knees, elbows and arms into different positions, into linear and angular shapes. Can you move through the space in lines and angles?

Now explore the shapes of circles and spirals. What circles, curves and spirals can you make with your hands, knees, elbows, arms and whole body? What circles and curves do you observe in the space? Can you move in circles and curves?

In your own timing, switch back and forth between the linear and the circular, between the angular and the spiral. How does it feel to move in these different ways? What associations come up for you while moving? Do you feel more comfortable with one set of movement patterns than with the other?

¹³ There are many online resources that offer practices, activities and techniques to cultivate right-brain abilities. Please feel free to visit my website www.clover-trail.com for inspiration.

*Still moving, distil your experience into three or more keywords for lines and three or more keywords for circles. Let your writing be part of your movement exploration. What have you learned? What has moving with these polarities and shapes taught you? How does it feel to translate your movement experience into written words?*¹⁴

We can explore any type of question in movement. Ingredients and tools of somatic practices can support our inquiry, for example through concepts such as sensory awareness, touch, textures, weight, speed, density, resistance, posture, how we relate to place, space and atmosphere, and pairs of tension/relaxation, unity/diversity and light/dark. This awakens our body awareness as well as tangible, physical connection with the space around us (which includes both material and immaterial aspects).¹⁵

NATURE IMMERSION

Nature offers a space where we can fully be ourselves, and therefore provides an ideal place to practise all the above, especially with regard to cultivating our right-brain abilities and (re)connecting with what surrounds us. Simply being in nature can give us a different sense of perspective. One option is immersion without an ‘agenda’, regarding such time as a creative, meditative space that can resource your body and your imagination. You can, for example, find a ‘power place’ and let the energy of that specific spot nourish and rebalance you so that you return refreshed to your daily life (see, e.g., Lüttichau, 2017: 81–87).

Another option is to prepare a specific question beforehand and regard your time outside as a ‘medicine walk’ or ‘mini vision quest’, asking nature to be your teacher. Open yourself to receive specific answers to your question that can come from, for example, the direction of the wind, the shape of a leaf, the behaviour of an animal, a repetitive number you might see in a cluster of flowers, trees, or times that a specific animal shows itself. Observe the interaction between your body-being and the land around you. Do you see fences or hedges? Are you in the dark or in the light? Do you feel connected or separate? Such observations might all contribute to an answer to your question.

If you know that you have a wonderfully critical left-brain mind, and rightfully take pride in that, try to let go of any specific expectations, and do not go into an immediate mental analysis about how to read, or whether to dismiss, a specific sensation or experience. Taking the first steps of calibrating your body is a process of slowly creating a greater familiarity and intimacy with your instrument, which will increase trust of the things you perceive. You can even take your mind ‘by the hand’ and say ‘please let me have this experience to learn and experience something without analysing or dismissing it right away, and we will look at it critically afterward’.

CLOSING

This chapter addresses ways to attune the body to subtle information around us, which can be applied in the ontological shift from a world view based in matter and particles, to understanding nature also as (electromagnetic) waves and information. As agriculture moves from a ‘traditional’ to a more quantum-informed perspective, different ways emerge to explore the relationship between various aspects within ourselves as human beings, and between human and other-than-human-beings that we work with and/or are entrusted in our care.

I propose that the body is a multi-layered phenomenon, consisting of physical matter (particles), infused with feelings (waves), intuition and consciousness (information). Similar qualities exist externally, and through techniques of clear focus and expanded consciousness, we can connect

¹⁴ This exploration is available as a free online video resource via the National Centre for Research Methods website: https://www.ncrm.ac.uk/resources/online/embodied_methodologies/

¹⁵ The Somatics Toolkit (Kieft et al., 2019) offers another free online resource with audio recordings to explore different ways of moving with questions, emotions and concrete aspects of any research cycle as well: <http://somaticstoolkit.cov-entry.ac.uk>.

to subtle sources of information outside of us. The body can be trained to receive such external information through a concrete intention to enhance literacy across all these different layers. In this chapter, I specifically introduce two methods: the use of movement and nature immersion that can help us to realise our embeddedness in, and inseparable connection with, what surrounds us. Such techniques ultimately enable us to have a more intuitive relationship with animals, farms, gardens and food.

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