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Talking to tremors: Somatics in dance, dialogics and silence

ABSTRACT

Talking to tremors is a brief phenomenology – or study of experience. As an author in the field of phenomenology, I have wondered how its insights might be applied to individualized hands-on somatics practices. The following is the result. It draws upon work I did a few years ago with Alice in which she learns to talk to her tremors, making friends with them and moving past fears. She gave me permission to write about this, and is identified anonymously. I explain our work together through notes I took at the time, which I also discussed with Alice. In application of phenomenology, I contextualize our somatic process using Mikhail Bakhtin's dialogics as a recurring conceptual ground bass. In light of Bakhtin's work, the present article explores dialogic, extralinguistic states of silence and utterance as stepping-stones towards healing – also employing the neuroscience of Antonio Damasio and Eugene Gendlin's somatic focusing process – further delineating changes towards feeling better and becoming well. My background as a Feldenkrais and Shin Somatics practitioner aid this study, as also my studies and teaching of dance.

KEYWORDS

silence
somatic experience
therapy
phenomenology
dialogics
extralinguistic

STRUCTURE

I see myself through three lenses in this article: that of dancer-author, phenomenologist and *somatic movement guide* in dialogue with Alice. She in turn is the *primary mover*, author and interpreter of her own therapeutic process and eventually becomes her own teacher. Part 1 builds through Bakhtin's linguistic phenomenology and explains extralinguistic or dialogic aspects of movement through *silence* and *utterance*. Part 2 summarizes and reflects on my work with Alice in light of movement dialogics. The end of the article includes three somatic movement lessons I developed for Alice that readers can do for themselves. In hopes of building a bridge between theory and practice, I insert thumbnail phenomenologies of *silence in movement and dance*, indented and in italics, reminders of the central dialogical theme of the study.

Silence – intelligible sound (a word) – and the pause constitute a special logosphere, a unified and continuous structure, an open (unfinalized) totality.

(Bakhtin 1986: 134)

PART 1: UTTERANCE

Movement is a non-linguistic utterance. It does not speak as words do, and like dance, it cannot be read in the same way that spoken and written language is. Relative to this, dance is special, playful and often urgent utterance, intrinsically before language and characterized by changes inseparable from expressions and emotions. Such affective extralinguistic elements of movement and dance contribute to unique genres of somatic communication. Somatic movement and dance practices are particularly rich in extralinguistic aesthetic and kinaesthetic aspects of utterance, the sphere that falls between linguistic and purely semantic analysis that Mikhail Bakhtin sees has entirely disappeared for science.

'The utterance as a whole', he says, 'is shaped as such by extralinguistic (dialogic) aspects, and it is also related to other utterances. These extralinguistic (dialogic) aspects also pervade the utterance from within'. From his standpoint, 'everything linguistic is only a means to an end' (Bakhtin 1986: 108–09). The primary dialogic aspect I explore in this study is movement as extralinguistic, preverbal *utterance* and, relative to this, the place *silence* plays in healing through somatic methods.

Silence is a quality of stillness in the middle of movement, in the middle of music or sounds of the environment, unfinished time in stillness.

This analysis shows that stillness is bonded to phenomena of movement, silence and timelessness. And in human life, silence and stillness hold a well of emotions from joy to sorrow that can be activated towards healing through dance and movement.

A basic problem in somatics in dance is how to link extralinguistic utterances of movement to linguistic expression, how to bring movement and soma to language in other words, and more specific to somatics perspectives, how to become more receptive to therapeutic potentials of movement utterances themselves.

The ethical concern of somatics in therapeutic modes is how to build a communicative context that will support the mover while respecting a neutral

or objective relationship. Bakhtin's work on utterance and expression respects linguistic context and a wide spectrum of possible genres of communication. As he puts it: 'we speak in diverse genres without suspecting they exist' (1986: 78, 98). The somatic genre I describe here has several layers of utterance all imbued with aesthetic/affective imprints and mindful of ethical distance in therapeutic settings.

Dialogics in somatic dance practices

We all move, and movement is fundamental, but as a phenomenon that ranges from silence to utterance through its reach into expression, dance is more than movement.

In my somatics work with individuals, movement as utterance develops first through the individual client, or *primary mover*. Then the somatic therapist/teacher, *the guide* in our case, responds to, receives and sometimes supports or matches the client's movement. The primary mover initiates the movement in form and expression, and is eventually an author in reflections of insight and change. The underlying place of silence out of which both participants in the dialogic process move, speak and listen, waits upon the unknown. I underscore this aspect of silent waiting, which creates neutral spaces between the mover and the guide, and releases assumptions towards results.

In distilling utterances of movement, however these arise, the guide speaks in a mode of reflection, stating briefly the essence of what she gathers from the movement explorations and what the mover tells her about her immediate experience. The guide's task is to listen actively without exceeding the emergent meaning of the moved and spoken insights of the primary mover. The guide's general task is to make sense of the mover's process as a witness – to be herself in other words – reflecting back, whether in movement or words, as briefly as she can at crucial points to let the mover know how she is assimilating moved and spoken utterances. For me, the entire process is like a dance with rich choreographic challenges and improvisatory elements.

As a guide in such dialogues, I match in my body the movement images, emotions and feelings that arise in the mover while safely remaining outside of them, so that at some time, I can shift from guidance to support. If and when it seems right, our communication is aided through dance. Using dance, both as metaphor and practice, I improvise and sometimes I choreograph. I am conscious of structuring boundaries for our conversation, delimiting small 'chunks' of conversation or movement that keep us focused. Once set in motion as choreography, the unfolding of restorative potentials begins to guide me improvisationally. Some participants are more comfortable thinking of the process as movement, not dance. From the time we begin, I am guided by the moved and spoken utterances of the other. I start where she or he is.

My healing comes through giving myself to the process as a dance, using my hands-on skills choreographically and dancing intuitively, often minimally, as I have learned through many years of dance experiments. I seek a fullness of presence through paying attention to the emergent process as a whole and matching my own intentions of health and wellness as I work. I breathe smoothly, attending to my use of self and self-moving in form and feeling. Not forcing movement, I follow the lines of least resistance into stillness until the utterance of movement seems complete. I clear places for silence in my body's

capaciousness, creating space for greater ease and joy, while attending to any affects that arrive. Moving consciously, like other dancers who think somatically, I become more alive to myself and thus to the other.

Silent insight, righting dances and falling down

Silence can be achieved in the midst of sound, just as stillness can be experienced inside motion. In dancing we encounter a phenomenology of silence – the relationship of stillness to movement, timespace and consciousness.

Encouraging utterance through a silent core, I often relate to individuals through sitting still or in gentle repetitive patterns: rocking back and forth, pushing and pulling, turning and returning movement in waves. Repetition lulls; it fosters forgetting in release of the will while assisting intuition. Stomping and clapping also provide avenues towards insight, probing the resonance of silent rebound and the intrinsic dancer in everyone.

A silent centre is obvious in stasis, but can also be perceived at the top and bottom of rebound and in the mid-line of repetition. Simple movements that return in some way, encourage positive bodily affects in those who give themselves permission to move towards heightened states of silence, either intuitively or through guided movement processes. Such intrinsic uses of dance for pleasure and healing are more fundamental than theatre art. The phenomenon of silence goes to the heart of dance as healing and somatic movement therapy, and the benefits of somatic modalities are available to all through simple guided movement processes, not just those who typically define themselves as dancers.

I understand healing as a process and not an end point. Healing is discernible change or movement of the body towards well-being, a kind of 'righting' dance the body does for us, one we can access, when we pay attention to the insights of silence in consciousness and allow the body to shift towards health, as I discover in this study.

Disturbances might also manifest in silent intervals, interrupting the body's balance, its sense of safety and preservation. Antonio Damasio's neuroscience speaks to the body's propensity towards balance and stability, commonly known as homeostasis. The body has a limited range of possible states, he writes, and for a good reason. It wants to preserve its organism against the assaults of the outside world, which changes dramatically and hourly (Damasio 1999: 142). The body at its most innocent self-sustaining level wants to move away from the imbalance of bad feelings and harmful happenings quite naturally. Of course, there are exceptions to this tendency in cases where people seek self-harm or deliberately sabotage their well-being, but these are exceptions not the rule.

We could even observe that the bodyself is intrinsically 'good' because of its propensity to make things right, and to make them even better when leaning towards joy. Healing is not a one-time occurrence. People commonly heal from illness and accident, and seek emotional healing in the very wish to get better. Damasio's neuroscience takes the natural righting dance of bodily minded states a step further, identifying the propensity of the human organism towards joyful emotions as the stepping-stones of 'virtue' ('The foundations of virtue'; Damasio 2003: 170–75). 'Joyful states', Damasio says, 'signify optimal physiological coordination and smooth running of the operations of life. They

are not only conducive to survival, but also to survival with well-being. States of joy are also defined by a greater ease in the capacity to act' (2003: 137). Joyful states heal and are the basis of feeling good and becoming well, which I add to my definition of healing.

Of course there are cases where, as a matter of consciousness, people cannot give themselves permission to feel good. When something goes wrong, the body knows it, feels it and sets about immediately to make things right, unless intention is directed towards being ill, or for some reason impedes self-healing tendencies of the organism. The harbouring of guilt and negative feelings can interrupt the natural capacity of the body to set itself right – just as the righting reflex that wants to bring the body into an easy upright relationship with gravity can also be over-ridden when we lose balance. Giving attention to imbalance is helpful in somatic education and therapy, as in dancing off-balance, probing the edges of falling, actually falling.

When we fall intentionally in dance, we are over-riding the righting reflex. We prepare for the plunge, and let it happen, moving past the point where we might recover an upright stance. There can be trepidation in the moment of falling, depending on the level of risk, but also thrill and surprise. The entire enterprise of falling – the movement that Heidegger says gives us 'proof of our existential mode of being in the world' ([1928] 1962: Section #176) – is rehearsed for choreographic result or improvisational play in dance. We fall deliberately; directing intentionality along the existential fault, our everyday bodies gloriously awake in release to gravity. Being is a venture in falling that Heidegger borrows from Rilke's poetry, a venture 'flinging beings loose' (1971: 163–86). To practice falling is to venture a bodily becoming, to give up control, and to trust. The many ways of falling consciously undertaken in dancing serve a sense of adventure and renewal. There is a great silence at the heart of falling when the world seems to go away for a few precious seconds. After a fall, we get up, brush ourselves off, rebound and return anew.

Affective silence and somatics in movement

The dancer breathes in the silent air and stillness of her dance, whether performing on stage or in a somatically conceived movement design. This allows her to better attune her body to gravity, to find a friendly relationship to it – in her reaching and falling, turning and crawling. Her movement carries the potential of stillness at its core. Otherwise she would simply spill forward in timespace with no memory of backspace, no trace of the place and moment she just passed through. Stillness proffers the expansive sides, diagonal twists, and volume of her dance, grounding her danced sensations of center, balance and falling.

When we move attention deliberately towards sensations in silence, we have the possibility of feeling ever more clearly what lies within body consciousness, be that a place of confusion not yet defined; or a deep well of unexpressed grief.¹ The silent moments of movement bring us most clearly into an affective world, or felt senses of self in the psychosomatic contents of body consciousness. This is not necessarily the bright surface of conscious thought, but often touches the hidden or 'dark' consciousness acknowledged by Carl Jung and in Buddhist philosophy and Japanese phenomenology of the body.² Our intuitive connection to this shadow is an extralinguistic

1. This is the thesis influencing the somatic psychology and practices of Eugene Gendlin in *Focusing* (1987).
2. The phenomenology of Yuasa Yasuo, based in Buddhist thought with precedents in Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty, posits a bright and dark consciousness. The dark consciousness does not correlate exactly to Jung's collective unconscious, but does approach his views on the intuitive core of consciousness (see Yuasa Yasuo 1987).

source for a potential shift in the dance of healing. It may never come to language, which does not mean it is not real and operative in the somatic life of the body.

It is most fascinating how the aesthetic, affective life of the body can move and change when it is given attention. A morphology of wellness begins in the silent, meditative spaces of dance and movement somatically conceived. The body, when we listen to it in silence, can speak its wordless messages directly in the unmediated play of consciousness.

The well of dance, as not already expressed, is already falling down, rising and attuning to joy and sorrow. Muttering in darkness or light, we hold these possibilities patiently in the morphology of waiting, and in common with the intrinsic dancer in everyone.

Quite often we can excavate these messages and reflect on them in words in the same way we might interpret the meaning of a dance. Meaning in dance is derived first from the body, the whole person in motion and stillness. It ensues from the entire context of the dance, the dancer, the setting and the witness, and is not restricted to a single interpretation. That is what makes dancing and witnessing dances so interesting. We interpret them from our own understanding, much like a Rorschach inkblot; thus, the truth is tested according to what the image evokes in affects, moving along an interactive chain of related dialogics in bodily shifts, as in my following work with Alice.

PART 2: TALKING TO TREMORS

And three lessons to do

Recently in my somatic dance and movement practice, I have been talking to tremors: to fear, confusion, feelings of worthlessness and the dark spots of depression. Such extralinguistic utterances can emerge in dialogical practices that facilitate the use of imagery in somatic situations. As I did with Alice, I often begin a somatic session by asking my client/student if she or he would like to sit in silence and pay attention to whatever image may come to consciousness – a sound or a picture, a colour or smell – a person, taste, feeling or perhaps a movement. In focusing the image, the client/student eventually describes something (anything) that comes to her. This is related to a transpersonal focusing process pioneered by somatic psychologist Eugene Gendlin that has inspired many movement-based somatic practices. For example, Amanda Williamson explores Gendlin's somatic therapeutic process as linguistic and phenomenology in a recent book chapter, 'Falling in love with language' (Williamson, 2018).

Waiting and sensing together

To explain somatic focusing more fully, I shift to examples from class settings where somatics and dance overlap, and the process emulates work with individuals. In my somatic classes and workshops, students work with each other in partners, as I teach them how to focus an image in sitting together, eventually carrying images into dance and hands-on somatic bodywork. In class sharing of somatic experiences, I have heard about beautiful images of birds trapped in the heart that find their way out, and also about hopeless darkness in the same place. Some images point to ethereal sounds coming from

far away, rays of sunshine, stars and clouds moving in heavenly hues or sharp objects that can hurt lurking somewhere in the room.

In my experience, this way of working with imagery can to some extent be understood and shared across cultures, because images have kinaesthetic, dialogical elements that come directly from participants themselves, and their discernable feelings and characteristics are described, interpreted and shared by them. Caribbean students in my somatics workshops imaged tactile-kinaesthetic feelings of burning fire and thorns, animals caught in thickets, figures dancing, rainbows and more. In my Japan workshops, students spoke and danced about profuse visual and nature imagery, images of death and life transitions, some stated in floating tones, others visualized in smoke or with chimes in the distance. Akiko Kishida who teaches somatics workshops in Japan, showed me her students' paintings and danced images of tsunami destruction, and shared paintings of their group dances holding hands in community circles to help rebuild confidence in moving forward together. In London and UK workshops, I taught students from wide and varying backgrounds; their images also ranged widely, from snakes and beautiful swans to grating dreams, noises and nightmares. In India, students imaged doorways, burials, trees, underground rivers and much more.

At some time in imaging processes, I ask students or clients if they can locate the particular image somewhere in the body and if they can describe what it feels like – its somatic, kinaesthetic character, in other words. There are times in somatic focusing with individuals when nothing is stated, but nevertheless a felt sense of peace or crisis permeates the silence. As a guide, I do not expect anything, and I do not desire anything. Rather I wait in stillness and silence, empty of self. I welcome this relief from the burden of self, as I wait to serve the emerging image of the person in front of me, respecting his/her body history and ability to transform through movement, image, expression and dance. Sitting in silence, sets the stage. By now, the reader may have noticed that this kind of sitting has remarkable similarities to meditation.

Silence is the ground that unlocks speech and life's deepest mysteries. Silence is to speech what stillness is to dance. Silence and stillness are both characterized by emptiness, space and waiting. In stillness, silence may be sensed as a timespace interval when the body is pausing or waiting for new movement to form, even as the new course carries the body's memory of the completed one, slipping into the past. The body becomes quiet, not needing anything in the silent dynamic and peaceful resolution of waiting. Any sound (or lack of sound) becomes inseparable from lived time and its spatial character.

From the beginning, my client/student and I become partners, trusting the somatic (felt) terrain to yield. Invariably, she or he expresses a feeling, shape, colour or sound, or perhaps a concern or fear. Sometimes a beautiful panorama unfolds, or my client (and dancing partner) begins to move. At this point, the guide in me emerges and I respect my partner as the primary mover. Some people want to dance, and some do not. If my partner wants to move, we both stay with it, moving together intuitively in any way that comes about between us, also speaking if words come. Or maybe we sit together in silence with just the breath moving between us. Some movers want to stomp, clap, or simply rock in place, but eventually we go back to silence and stillness. We trust that in a quiet interval the body will excavate its troubles and hopes. We wait without expectations and without stress; until the bodily held silence speaks to us

or moves us. As a somatic guide and dancer, I ask the client questions to help focus the image kinaesthetically. 'Does this image have a location somewhere in your body?', 'Can you describe how it feels?'. In other words, I ask them to locate the image in or around the body and to acknowledge its felt characteristics, but people have different ways into these question, and they do not always locate or feel the image in the body. It might just remain 'in the air' or 'in the mind', so to speak. The quest to find the image somewhere is also of interest and becomes additional information to share. These are dialogic processes and somatic ones, with reciprocal utterances at their core. Alice's saw and felt a dark hole in her chest and shoulder. Later she shared with me her painting of the dark spot and how she transformed it through our dances together and in our somatic movement lessons.

Shaking, listening, balancing and standing

'I have trouble loving my father', Alice says, 'I shake. It is not that I think about him much now that he's dead', she observes, 'but his Germanic authority and rigid demands of perfection never leave me'. We continue to wait. 'If I listen to my shaking, I hear that I need to love my father now, but it seems almost impossible'. Alice says she wants to be able to trust her decisions, but lacks confidence. 'I shake so badly sometimes I'm ashamed', she says.

Alice became aware of her tremors at age nine when her mother asked the doctor what to do about them. She does not know when they really began to takeover her awareness and to make her feel so inadequate and guilty. She is in her 40s now and just beginning to talk to her tremor. She now knows how to bracket the tremor – set it aside and distance it from herself enough to acknowledge that the tremor is not who she is, not even a candidate for shame. Is the tremor something or someone other, then? 'Maybe it's a friend', she speculates.

Together we are talking to the tremor. She is calling it: 'tremor as teacher'. In the quiet intervals of not judging the tremor or herself, she lets it move and talk as she listens. Together we reflect on what she hears and the images that arrive, I as a guide, merely doubling the listening process. Then through touch, in matching the tones of the tremor with my hands as nearly as I can, I assist the movement of her breath in hands-on table work. Eventually, I hold the occiput at the base of her head until we both feel stillness and a relaxation of her central nervous system.

In standing, we balance one side of her body with the other, patterning movement symmetrically, or testing asymmetrical edges. With my feet, I plant her feet softly but firmly on the floor for support, as I wait for shifts of tone and tonus to occur in her body, all the time listening in places where the tremor shakes. We walk together in this vulnerable place with a feeling for breath and lightness; then wait for calm. And when it comes, the shifting landscapes of the soma repair us, both of us, in the silence.

The spaces in-between others and ourselves are not dead spaces; they are charged electrically with energy, with embodied distance and magnetic closures that morph through time. Movement creates many tensional varieties and emotional valences of spacetime and silence. When we relax our attention in order to be congruent with a still point – or the chosen space of an extended stillness where we are neither moving nor thinking about moving – we have the possibility of listening to others and ourselves outside of time's momentum, to experience the infinite moment exposed in stillness.

Feeling crushed: Kinaesthetic utterance and phenomenology

Phenomenology is useful only when it produces insight and positive change. When we ask, 'what is this?'. We articulate the basic, simple question of the phenomenological method. 'This' *unknown* is the phenomenon (the thing) we seek to know, and we do not know how it will come to us. Thus, phenomenology in practice is further qualified by the express use of intuition and trust, not assuming anything and getting out of our own way to let the answer arise impromptu. I understand my work with Alice through the lens of phenomenology and more specifically dialogics – as a multifaceted genre of communication that can account for reciprocity of feeling, movement, and spoken dialogue in somatic movement therapy. Dialogics uses language, but at the same time moves beyond it, acknowledging a variety of extralinguistic communications that operate together.

As an aspect of our work, Alice and I developed the dialogical element of kinaesthesia, dwelling in somatic sensations as such. We could also think of these as *somata* or somatic phenomena (a phenomenon is a thing, an appearance or a perception). Eventually, Alice described a range of sensations and emotions. The last session I had with her concerned her feeling that the right side of her body was 'crushing the left', and that the right side lacked feeling.

Of course she was not paralysed. She was functioning okay, even with the erratic coming and going of the tremor, but she was experiencing loss of feeling in places that felt 'dead'. Along with feeling crushed, the shoulder and heart space on the left felt tight and sometimes painful. Alice explained how she lacked security in her life, both financial and personal, that her self-confidence seemed manufactured daily. She was divorced with two children, now grown, and she had worked hard for many years to make ends meet. Since the beginning of our work over several months, she had been experiencing gradual progress and seemed most fascinated with what she called the 'magical' hands-on somatics we undertook together. At the same time she often felt 'raw' through the changes that were occurring. She was practicing the movement explorations I gave her at home, and also creating a space for silent listening in being her own witness and keeping a journal as a means of self-listening and for self-dialogue.

When we talked about her progress as a whole, Alice spoke of how she was changing and of her fears. 'Last week I felt the two sides of my head coming together, almost like two halves of the same thing', she said one day:

My life is being basically 'unearthed', and this is frightening, because I wonder if I will be able to sustain this progress without reverting back to my habitual self. The moments of physical and mental strength I've not had before are exciting to me, but at the same time, I continue to question. I want to base my life on security, even within my struggle for financial resources. I have the feeling that I can shift everything. I'm now beginning to see better how my personal relationships work and my part in them. When you feel a new aliveness in your body, everything changes in how you are programmed to live.

Three lessons to do

After my initial focusing and hands-on work with Alice, I created a sequence of simple interrelated movement lessons for her. She could also repeat these at home. These lessons might be also taught in class settings, and at a pace

that works for the class. They could all be taught in one session, for instance, or integrated with other somatic sessions. They are easy lessons to embody, but the kinaesthetic value develops more deeply with repetition and more time. These lessons are most useful as structures to explore, and they lend themselves to adaptation.

Lesson 1: Starfish, spinal rooting of the head and limbs

I thought it might be valuable to work on security very physically at a certain point with Alice, since she was excavating the issue of security in ‘talking’ to her tremor. I decided to help her find the root of her limbs in her spine. I considered the limbs to be her arms and legs, also the complex relationship of the neck and head, extending this to a starfish image, including the coccyx as a sixth limb – or small tail – capable of extending in the imagination.

I taught Alice how to balance her spine by lying down, vertebrae by vertebrae, along a very firm 3”-thick-styrofoam roller, leaving her head on the floor with the neck gently but noticeably extended. A rolled up towel also works, but the firmness of the roller aids greater change. Some people respond better to softness, however. So I experiment. Some people might need a small towel for support under the head if the head (in hyperextension of the neck) falls back too far. I helped Alice lift one leg after the other, slowly and just a little, while she maintained balance, eventually reaching one hand, then the other, across the body to connect with opposite knees while maintaining balance on the roller. The extension of her neck and head lifted her chest and let her feel how dramatically the arms are rooted in the spine through their connection with the clavicle and thus the sternum. One feels the muscular lifting of the arms in-between the scapulae and behind the heart from this position. In balancing precariously on the roller, the legs are challenged to find their connection to the low back through the iliopsoas and to the breath through the interdigitation of the psoas with the primary breathing diaphragm.

Lesson 2: Steady hands

After this first lesson, I let Alice rest lying down on her back on solid ground while I opened and closed her hand very gently like a flower bud, opening and closing. The large movements of the first lesson initiated a ‘balancing act’, while the comforting articulations of the hand reassured her body, and taught her neuromuscular system that with support, the tremor could subside. This opening and closing of the hand seems simple to the adult, but is by no means easy in the developmental spectrum of movement. It takes the baby a long time to be able to control the hand in finite ways, opening and closing at will, grasping things, maybe a rattle, and holding steadily.

Lesson 3: Magic breath, exhausting exhalation and flooding inhalation

I helped Alice internalize support for the ‘steady hands’ lesson (or choreography) by bringing her attention to the residual effects of the core work we did with the nervous system in balancing on the roller. In the third lesson, I placed a 6”-thick roller horizontally under her pelvis to lift it from the floor, allowing her to rest her body on the floor, sloping the torso diagonally down towards the head from the pelvic lift. (This can also be accomplished with two big towels rolled firmly together.) This required that the feet be planted for

support. From here she played with sending her breath into the abdominal cavity. From this position gravity aids the exhalation (as the diaphragm moves towards the chest and head, now on a down slope), reversing the habitual dynamic of the diaphragm. The exhalation is easy to exhaust completely, so during inhalation, the breath floods in as a response.

We finish through matching stillness

As we finish, we walk together, she finding her natural horizon, and I matching her by finding my horizon in relation to hers. In walking together, matching can be a powerful impetus to double the breath in the security of movement. Of course this is a special kind of walking, fully aware, and full of stillness. I make sure to keep an ease and balance in my walk, so Alice might match these in her walk. We complete our session in standing mediation, giving ourselves a chance to assimilate the three lessons and feel secure as we attend to the ease of the breath moving smoothly on its own without interference of the will. When we meditate in motion, we find stillness there and cultivate a capacity for passing through difficulties with calm.

Tipping a subtle balance to pause and hold a shape, or gathering momentum for a leap, the dancer claims a quiet moving center that goes with her through the air. She can also sit in the middle of stillness, close her eyes and pay attention to the vast inner space of herself. Somatically, she might clear a place for insight (literally 'seeing inside') that she might experience her power to adjust in self-healing directions or understand something about her life that has heretofore escaped her attention. The mysterious as unknown can unexpectedly become known in uncluttered spaces of movement consciousness: This, for the intrinsic dancer in everyone.

Reflections on ideal listening, and becoming your own teacher

As the guide, I am involved in several ways while holding presence for Alice's process. I do not get wrapped up in the tremor, I remain as objective as I can in facilitating the tremulous path of self-healing in another. I differentiate *empathy* as 'following and feeling with' from *sympathy* as 'feeling sorry for or in favor of'. My role is that of a catalyst. I do not interpret Alice's experience as a final authority. Rather, I listen to her interpretations, and I do not directly analyse or advise. I do not judge; rather I listen to the process and guide it dialogically.³ I cannot pretend to be neutral, however, as Bakhtin makes clear in his translinguistic phenomenology. Every genre of speech from literary to everyday language is a living dialogue vested with the individual imprint of the speaker, oriented towards the response of another and positing communication with an ideal listener, someone who can try to understand.

In the latter sense that Bakhtin develops, we model an image in the belief of understanding. The image moves past the immediate encounter, and it might weave back. Through the dialogical interplay of self and other in somatic movement therapy, I sense an amorphous third presence, not necessarily a person, but the inexhaustibility of the not-already-known that lies waiting in our imaged, spoken and danced communication. Some might choose to call this kind of waiting a spiritual sensibility. It occurs to me that I am not only guiding a lesson/session, but that I also invoke guidance. This is a subliminal wish, however, and I do not want to depend on it. It is sufficient that I clear a

3. Not analysing and not judging are communication strategies I learned in seminars with psychologist Selwa Said in Monterey California when I studied 'Effective communication and relationship building' with her in 2001.

place for guidance while calling on my somatic skills and the dancer in me – waiting and listening for the as-yet-unknown to arrive. In one sense it is not mysterious, but rather a composite experience of sharing and trust. We speak to be understood, to hear and to learn.

Alice and I had a few more sessions together, but she was rapidly incorporating movement and stillness techniques along with self-dialogue through journaling to internalize her own support without me. She is not insisting that the tremor leave, she says. She just hopes it will get bored because she is not giving it undue attention, and will go away on its own. When the tremor comes around, she realizes that she can greet it with conversation, not fear. 'I have had such a need to get things right', Alice says. 'It's new to me not to have to work so hard. Now to hold on to this kind of ease!'

As Alice becomes her own teacher, she also activates the ideal listener in herself. She initiates movement and dialogue in the first place, listens in the second, and in the third place, she hears. Hearing is certainly a basic sensing, but it is also a choice to pay attention to the world of sensation dwelling in sound and silence. In the process of simple movement tasks, Alice and I ask what ease feels like, and what it sounds like. We become familiar with the not-already-known feelings and words waiting in stillness. As a guide, I call on my best self in waiting, and I notice that I am better able to assist others dialogically when I can move from a place of silence and non-expectation. In this place I know that I do not know, but I trust that a useful way forward will become known to me as I go forward. Or if I go backwards, I can attune to options opening up from there.

I gave Alice six more written movement lessons to take home. These are all related to walking and to rooting the limbs through the spine; thus, she can continue to practice the lessons we experienced together and add these new ones on her own. These six easy lessons can be found on the Eastwest Somatics website: www.eastwestsomatics.com.

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