

Wise Bodies: Movement Re-education, Subjectivity, and Embodied Discourse

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Abstract

This thesis is a study of the emergence of the concept of body wisdom— the idea that bodies can have an innate knowledge of what is best and healthiest which has been lost but can be restored—in the context of holistic movement re-education techniques including Alexander Technique, Pilates, Feldenkrais, Rolfing, and Body-Mind Centering. Such techniques propose that changes in the body produce changes in mental and emotional states, and are based on the assumption that bodies require retraining to regain a state of naturalness.

The thesis asks how it has become possible to think of bodies as wise and knowing, and how these discourses have been embodied by those who use movement re-education. Through a combination of participant observation, semi-structured interviews with practitioners and pupils of the techniques, and discourse analysis of texts written by their founders, this study will show how a shift has come about within movement re-education, away from ‘body awareness’ as a knowledge of one’s body, toward ‘body wisdom’ as the body’s knowledge of itself. This is exemplified in these techniques’ diverse understandings of the body-mind relationship. Theories of the natural body and the uses to which it is put in relation to body wisdom will also be examined.

Throughout, Foucault’s approach to discourse analysis will be used in tension with Merleau-Ponty’s work on embodiment in order to show that these approaches need not be contradictory and to formulate a theory of embodied discourse as a way of overcoming the dualism between these paradigms. The study thus counters tendencies within social scientific work on the body towards overtheorisation at the expense of empirical research, and towards choosing between embodiment and discourse.

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Chapter 1 Introduction

The expression of a wellmade man appears not only in his face,
It is in his limbs and joints also . . . it is curiously in the joints of
his hips and wrists,
It is in his walk.. the carriage of his neck.. the flex of his waist and
knees Dress does not hide him,
The strong sweet supple quality he has strikes through the cotton
and flannel;
To see him pass conveys as much as the best poem... perhaps
more,
You linger to see his back and the back of his neck and shoulderside.

Walt Whitman, 'I Sing the Body Electric' (1855)

In its own little way, my body was trying to say that you better stop drinking brandy.

The Streets, 'Too Much Brandy' (2002)

This research project is a study of the concept of body wisdom through its manifestations in movement re-education techniques, including the Alexander Technique, Pilates, Rolfing, Feldenkrais, and Body-Mind Centering. These techniques, which I will describe later in this chapter, aim to educate people to use their bodies in more efficient ways, which is expected to have both physical and mental effects. 'Body wisdom' refers to the concept which emerges in the latter three techniques that bodies themselves hold an innate wisdom; that they can 'know' and guide us toward what is healthiest or most true. In this conception, bodies are not simply acted upon by the subject but develop a kind of subjectivity of their own.

Body wisdom, like Western forms of movement re-education, of which those listed above constitute examples, is an idea that has come about within the course of the twentieth century. By tracing these forms of movement re-education from their beginnings in the 1890s (in the case of the Alexander Technique) to more recent forms (such as Body-Mind Centering which developed in the 1960s and 1970s), changes in the perception of the body become apparent. Whereas the Alexander Technique proposes that humanity most needs to develop conscious control over the

self and body, Body-Mind Centering suggests that bodies are comprised of systems which all contain qualities of 'mind', and that knowing is scattered throughout the body.

The quotes above encapsulate this historical shift. In the passage from Whitman's 'I Sing the Body Electric', the body is taken to represent the 'wellmade man' who moves with ease and grace; his 'wellmadeness' is indicated by his comportment. The body described is one which F.M. Alexander, founder of the Alexander Technique, would have appreciated for its carriage and what he termed 'good use of the self'. However, the body as such is demonstrative of the qualities of the subject; the body does not *have* subjectivity, it only represents it. Alexander also believed that the self was represented through the body and should be attended to consciously.

In the second quote, from UK Garage artist The Streets, the body has come to take a role in subjectivity; it 'speaks', not out of conscious direction, but in opposition to it. It is a moralising force, which instinctively 'knows' what is right and healthy ('you better stop drinking brandy'.) It is, in short, a wise body similar to the kind found in Body-Mind Centering. The fact that there is little overlap between the Garage music scene and movement re-education serves only to underscore the point that the idea of a body that knows, a wise body, exists in a range of fields outside this one.

Two linked research questions direct my study. First, how does it become possible to think of bodies as wise and knowing in movement re-education? This is a Foucauldian question about the genealogy of a particular way of understanding bodies and selves. Second, how and in what ways is the discourse of body wisdom embodied by those involved in these techniques? This question is about embodiment, and I have taken Merleau-Ponty (1962) as a guide in researching it. The first question is addressed by historicising the wise body, tracing the coming-together of particular ideas about bodies and selfhood. The second question attends to how discourse is embodied, and how theory and practice relate. I have tried to take embodiment seriously, grounding my study through a cultural phenomenology (Csordas, 1994b) of Alexander Technique in particular. I have examined embodied practices and how practitioners and pupils of movement re-education make sense of them, and the extent to which they employ the discourses of body wisdom. Movement re-educators take their work to be an embodied practice about which little can be known that is not

experienced, so participant observation in movement re-education became a useful way of understanding the work in its own terms. Twenty-eight semi-structured interviews with practitioners and pupils of all five of these techniques deepened and sometimes challenged the insights provided by participant observation and discourse analysis.

The approaches of Foucault and phenomenology are disparate ones and not easily synthesised, and indeed it has not been my intention to synthesise them but to use them in tension. I will demonstrate how this tension can be a productive one for analysis. Crossley (1994; 1996) has argued that Foucault and Merleau-Ponty can be used effectively in conjunction with one another to develop an understanding of subjectivity, an argument I will develop in Chapter Three. However, this study will move beyond his theoretical argument to show that empirically there is much to be gained from studying the body in movement re-education in these contrasting ways. This study therefore makes two important contributions to knowledge: first, it analyses movement re-education and the emergence of the idea of bodywisdom, a topic that has received little scholarly attention, and second, it develops a methodology for analysing movement re-education as embodied discourse, demonstrating empirically what Crossley has proposed theoretically.

However, over the course of my research I have frequently been made aware that many people lack any knowledge of movement re-education and what it does or proposes to do; further, even those who have heard of one or more of the techniques I study do not necessarily have a very clear idea of what is involved in them. The obvious question that then emerges is why a study of movement re-education is necessary or even useful; the fact that something has never been studied before does not give it intrinsic sociological significance. In what follows, I will give a brief history and explanation of the five movement re-education techniques I have studied and discuss why they are worthy of sociological attention. I will then provide a brief outline of how this thesis will develop.

Movement re-education is sometimes called 'somatic education' (Bolster and Dussault, 2001) or bodywork, although the latter includes practices such as massage or osteopathy, in which the client is passively worked upon. In contrast, the

techniques discussed here generally require the active involvement of the pupil or client in a process of education or re-education of the body and movement. The degree of active involvement varies among the movement re-education techniques discussed here; all except Pilates include certain sessions or parts of sessions which involve passive manipulation by a practitioner, but they also involve teaching and learning to move or carry oneself differently. Movement re-education is seen as holistic, affecting both mind and body, although the way the body/mind relationship is conceived differs significantly between techniques. The word 're-education' indicates that something is being relearned and reclaimed; it is not simply a process of teaching the body a new skill, but of restoring it to a state of natural good use which is generally perceived to have been lost through the processes of civilisation. In later techniques, such as Feldenkrais, Rolfing, and Body-Mind Centering, restoration of this good use is thought to return the body to a natural state of wisdom. Movement re-education has traditionally relied on a theory of evolution popular in the first part of the twentieth century and was linked to the eugenics movement, which says that human beings' physical capacities are degenerating while their intellectual capabilities grow. The 'natural savage' is seen to have good physical skills but impoverished mental abilities, while 'civilised Man' is imagined to be physically weak but intellectually strong. This theory has racist implications and has long been rejected in fields such as anthropology, but within movement re-education it has been pervasive, as I shall demonstrate.

The spectre of the 'natural body' haunts any notion of body wisdom. The existence (or not) of a natural body also implicitly underlies the work of many of the theorists I will discuss, including Foucault and Merleau-Ponty. However, my primary interest is not in the ontology of the natural body but in the ethics or politics, in the broad sense of the term, of such a body. That is, the question is not 'is there such a thing as a natural body?' but 'what use is a natural body?' What is a natural body *for*, and what is it used to support or deny? These questions are highly relevant to movement re-education, and analysing them may provide insights for social theory as well.

Movement re-education has been most influential in the performing arts, where actors, dancers, singers and to a lesser extent musicians have adopted it as a way of training the body. Four interviewees had either studied or taught Alexander

Technique at theatre school and indicated that most theatre schools they knew of included some Alexander teaching, and Huxley et al (1995) have described their use of Alexander Technique as a key aspect of dance training in a UK university dance programme. Pilates is common amongst dancers, and is part of training at key contemporary dance schools in London as well as the Royal Ballet School. Other techniques have also been used by performing artists, but perhaps less frequently. Body-Mind Centering, for instance, is almost completely unknown outside the dance community, and is relatively unheard of in the UK in general. Athletes have also sometimes turned to movement re-education; there are, for example, books on running (Balk and Shields, 2000), swimming (Shaw and D'Angour, 2001), and horseback riding with the Alexander Technique (Tottle, 1998). However, of these techniques, only Pilates has become relatively well-known, in part perhaps because it resembles more traditional forms of exercise most closely and because it can be done at home, following books or videos.

The techniques studied here have emerged, as I have said, between the 1890s and 1960s, but there are some common elements in their histories, organised around what I will call a 'founding myth'. Such founding myths contain common elements, such as the struggle of an injured or ill individual to overcome these difficulties through personal exploration, often in opposition to established biomedical beliefs. Coward (1989: 37) suggests that such stories are common in alternative health, drawing either on a key founder with the status of a guru figure, or on roots in ancient 'Eastern' disciplines such as yoga and martial arts. These tendencies are apparent in movement re-education's histories as well, as the following outlines shall show.

F. Mathias Alexander, founder of the Alexander Technique, was born in 1869 in Tasmania. The story told in his most biographical book, *The Use of the Self* (1985 [1932]) is that he was an elocutionist and actor, but began to suffer hoarseness and voice loss during recitations in his early twenties. He consulted a physician, who prescribed rest. He followed these instructions but it failed to make a difference, so he set out to cure himself by studying himself in the mirror while reciting. This led him to discover that he was cutting off his voice by pulling his neck back as he spoke, and from this discovery he began to develop a technique of alignment and 'constructive conscious control' over behaviour (Alexander, 1987[1923]). From

Tasmania, he moved to New Zealand and then to Melbourne, went to London in 1904, and during World War I he established a practice in New York as well, travelling between the two cities (Gelb, 1987: 17). Alexander eventually set up a school to train teachers in his technique on a three-year course in Holland Park, London, where he continued to work until his death in 1955. Lessons in Alexander Technique generally involve activities such as sitting and standing from a chair, with hands-on guidance from an Alexander teacher, and usually end with 'table work', in which the pupil lies on a table and is passively manipulated by the teacher.

Joseph Pilates was born in Germany in 1880 and died in New York in 1967. During his childhood he suffered asthma, rickets, and rheumatic fever. In order to overcome these ailments he began a number of forms of 'physical culture' exercise, including gymnastics and body building (Kelly, 2001), as well as yoga, martial arts and Zen. In 1912 he moved to England where he taught self-defence to English detectives. He was interned during the war at a camp in Lancaster, where he trained other internees. After World War I he returned to Germany, but in 1926 when the German army requested he apply his training for them, he refused and emigrated to the United States, where he set up a studio in New York with his wife, Clara, to teach the practice he termed 'Contrology'. Later this became known as the Pilates method, involving matwork, a set of strengthening exercises performed on the floor and taught in classes, or individual work on 'the machines', which are intended to strengthen and balance the body.

Ida Rolf was born in New York in 1896 and died in 1979. She grew up in the Bronx and in 1916 she graduated from Barnard College, having been given the opportunity study due to a shortage of qualified male technical personnel as a result of the war. She was hired by the Rockefeller Institute, continued to study and received her PhD in biological chemistry from Columbia University's College of Physicians and Surgeons. Throughout the 1920s, she studied and experimented with osteopathy, homeopathy, and yoga, experiments initially brought on by her attempts to cure an illness she developed after being kicked by a horse as a young woman. Gradually, she synthesised a method she called 'Structural Integration', involving a technique like deep massage intended to affect the fascial envelopes around muscles, which she practised on friends, acquaintances, and family members who had been unable to

receive help elsewhere. The method eventually received wider recognition when she demonstrated it at the Esalen Institute (the California home of a wide variety of alternative therapies and self-help practices) in 1968 (Rolf, 1978). It was also at Esalen that her method was nicknamed 'Rolfing'.

Moshe Feldenkrais was born in 1904 in Russia and died in 1984. He went to Palestine at the age of fourteen, studied mathematics, and saved enough money to go to Paris, where he studied engineering and eventually went on to receive a doctorate in physics. While in Paris, he met the creator of Judo and studied for a black belt in the martial art. He suffered a serious knee injury in his early twenties, and used Judo, supplemented by a knowledge of bodily mechanics from his physics background, to effect a cure. After Germany invaded France in World War II, he went to England, where he worked in technical and scientific fields until the end of the war when he eventually returned to Israel/Palestine. Gradually, he became involved in movement re-education and developed a method termed 'Functional Integration', practised in one-to-one lessons involving minor adjustments of a client, who lies on a table, by the practitioner, and 'Awareness Through Movement', practised in groups and aimed at exploring a variety of possible ways of moving. Colloquially these are referred to as the Feldenkrais method. Feldenkrais published a number of books during his lifetime, one of which, *Body and Mature Behavior* (1949) was taken as a serious contribution to the field of psychology and the understanding of motor behaviour.

Finally, Bonnie Bainbridge Cohen was born in 1943 and is still living and working in Massachusetts. She started by teaching dance to children with cerebral palsy when she was sixteen, and later received a degree in occupational therapy from Ohio State University. She went on to study various movement-related techniques including dance, dance therapy, martial arts, voice, yoga, cranio-sacral therapy, Zero Balancing, and Zen Buddhist practice (Cohen, 1991: 172). She founded the School for Body-Mind Centering in 1973, bringing together her movement experience in these areas and combining it with a theory of 'experiential anatomy' and evolutionary movement patterns. Body-Mind Centering can be taught in groups, asking individuals to explore the 'systems' of the body (such as the nervous system, fluid system, or endocrine system), or the evolutionary movement patterns (including, for example, cellular breathing, navel radiation, and homolateral and contralateral crawling, walking and

leaping). It can also be taught individually, where similar patterns are explored, although practitioners may also use gentle manipulation of the client's body.

Despite the individualism of most of the accounts above, these techniques have not emerged in isolation or without input from others. F.M. Alexander, for example, had a number of famous pupils and friends, including Aldous Huxley and George Bernard Shaw¹. American educator and pragmatist John Dewey was also a devoted student, and wrote prefaces to two of Alexander's books. Pilates worked with Martha Graham's dance company as well as ballet choreographer George Ballanchine and his dancers. Ida Rolf worked on Fritz Perls, the founder of Gestalt therapy, at Esalen.

Its association with the performing arts on one hand and alternative health on the other have contributed to movement re-education's relative neglect as a topic of serious study. A few publications have dealt with movement re-education in relation to philosophy and/or dance studies (Fraleigh, 2000; Green, 1999; Hamera, 2001; Maitland, 1995) but these have tended to essentialise and celebrate the work as restoring a true body wisdom or awareness, rather than treating it as a subject worth critical examination. Within the social sciences, only Coward's (1989) critique of the discourses of alternative health takes these techniques into account, although she lumps them together with other bodywork and alternative health practices, thereby losing the specificity of the techniques as a kind of re-education.

Despite this lack of attention, movement re-education has been influential in dance training, where from the emergence of postmodern dance in the 1960s, the work of Alexander, Feldenkrais, and others has been increasingly adopted as a way of exploring 'the experience and "truth" of the body' in movement training (Novack, 1991: 51-2). Among the general public, complementary and alternative medicine has become increasingly popular in the last twenty-five years; Mike Saks' survey (1991) has suggested that one in seven people in the UK now consult complementary or alternative practitioners, and Stillerman (1996) notes that a 1990 study by Harvard

¹ Apparently tired of his friends' devotion to Alexander (Staring, 1997), H.G. Wells satirised him in his book *Apropos of Dolores*, in which a minor character who worked as a healer is said to have 'had quite a lot of distinguished men, artists and writers and that sort of man doing his neck exercises. He taught them to swan... Some of them swan now quite beautifully' (2002 [1938]: 252). He goes on to refer to this man's realisation that the health of body and mind are 'Man's Supreme Inheritance' (254), not coincidentally the title of Alexander's first book.

Medical School indicated one quarter of the American population was using some form of complementary or alternative medicine.² Yet studies in this area have overwhelmingly tried to determine efficacy, and have done so from a biomedical or natural scientific point of view; very few studies have examined its popularity in terms of the ideas it puts forward or the rise of personal responsibility for health as a social phenomenon (Coward, 1989). This study will attempt to redress this imbalance through an analysis of both discourse and embodied practice, on the basis that these may be quite different.

On a theoretical level, movement re-education techniques also provide some useful insights. Social scientists writing about the body have sought to challenge Cartesian dualism and to find new ways of thinking about the relationship between mind and body. Movement re-education does this on a practical level, attempting to overcome traditional dualistic conceptions of the body-mind relationship. Some techniques are more successful at this than others, but in those that are unsuccessful there are also potential lessons for social science. For instance, the theory that the body is culturally inscribed, common in academic work on the body and often attributed to Foucault (1984), is similar to the view of many movement re-educators. These theories imply a pre-social body prior to inscription (Butler, 1990; Grosz, 1994), which is equally problematic in its implications for both. An analysis of movement re-education can provide insights into why this is problematic and how it may be overcome, which may be useful in both arenas.

Finally, studying movement re-education provides an opportunity to 'flesh out' some of the analyses in the field of sociology of the body, which, as Bryan Turner (1996: 31-2) has noted in a new preface to *Body and Society*, have overwhelmingly privileged theory over empirical research. Conducting an empirical study of movement re-education is a corrective to overly theoretical work on the body, which has to a large extent been curiously *disembodied*. I will further demonstrate how a

² While studies of the use of bodywork on its own are unusual, a USA Today reporter claimed in October 2001 that there had been a dramatic increase in people seeking massage and other bodywork in relation to stress relief from terrorism; this was based in part on a study by the American Massage Therapy Association indicating that in 2000, seventeen percent of Americans had been for a massage, compared to only eight percent in 1997 (M. Elias, 2001). The actual link to increased stress from terrorism is tenuous, but does demonstrate that bodywork practitioners are successful at mobilising popular discourses in the service of promoting their work.

theory of embodied discourse can help to overcome the dualistic tendency within much writing on the body to privilege either discourse or embodiment. The implications of a study of movement re-education are thus much wider than movement re-education itself.

Chapter Two provides a historical overview of the emergence of body wisdom to construct a basis for understanding how a 'body that knows' becomes possible to think about. This is accomplished through an examination of writings about dance and physical culture, eugenics, posture, and alternative health, fields with which movement re-education shares broad commonalities. This chapter will contextualise the concept of body wisdom and provide a basis for understanding its emergence in movement re-education.

Chapter Three reviews theoretical literature on discourse and embodiment, through an examination of the work of Merleau-Ponty, Foucault, and their interpreters. In this chapter I will put forward the theoretical basis for the argument that embodiment and discourse need not be mutually exclusive approaches, following Crossley (1994; 1996). Theory and method are not separate in this thesis, as each implies and informs the other, but for the sake of clarity I will begin by setting out the theoretical framework which will then be operationalised in method and practice.

Embodied discourse is central to theoretical and methodological approach this thesis develops. Chapter Four will outline how I have used this concept in relation to studying movement re-education. Specifically, I will discuss my use of Foucault's method of discourse analysis, ethnography as an embodied research method, and the possibilities of interviewing in relation to both embodiment and discourse. I will also address ethical issues the study raises in relation to researching participants' use of racialist and racist models of evolution in interviews. Throughout this and the previous chapters, empirical material will be referred to where it is relevant to the issues raised.

Chapter Five takes the texts of movement re-education's founders as a starting point for analysing the discourse of movement re-education as a technique of ethical self-formation, following Foucault. Certain themes become apparent, particularly in

relation to nature and evolution as 'modes of subjection' (Foucault, 1985) and body wisdom and body awareness as the *telos* behind all these techniques. Chapter Six contrasts with this discursive analysis of movement re-education by providing an embodied account of participant observation in the Alexander Technique, organised around Merleau-Ponty's (1962) discussions of habit, Csordas' (2002) concept of somatic modes of attention, and Bourdieu's (1977) theories of *habitus* and bodily *hexis*.

Chapters 7 and 8 use interview data, as well as recent texts in movement re-education and data from participant observation, to discuss particular themes emerging in this field. In Chapter Seven, the issues around naturalness raised in Chapter Five are revisited, with an accompanying examination of the shift in contemporary movement re-education away from a fixed vertical posture as the ideal. Chapter Eight employs recent social theories involving the somatic, such as Csordas' 'somatic modes of attention' and Nikolas Rose's (2000; 2001) 'somatic individuality', to show how the contrast between embodied and discursive approaches can be productive in analysing the same topic, namely, the rise of the somatic in contemporary society. Through Csordas, we can understand the modes of embodiment and conceptions of the body-mind relationship in movement re-education; through Rose, the discourse of movement re-educators in relation to the eugenic pasts of their founders can be understood as part of the rise of somatic individuality as a new way of understanding the self. This chapter concludes by linking both theories to Turner's (1992) concept of the somatic society.

There are, obviously, other possible stories about body wisdom to be told. One other possibility would be in tracing it through psychological and psychotherapeutic visions of the body, particularly in relation to the role of the nervous system. However, such a project would then take the form of analysing shifts in official discourse, an area that has already had a great deal of attention. I have been much more interested in analysing the marginal commentaries on bodies and health which have traditionally received less consideration, yet have also been influential. This thesis also says little about the interaction between 'Eastern' and 'Western' discourses around the body and the flow of ideas between cultures, brought on by colonialism and Orientalism in the nineteenth century. The importation and adaptation of yoga, Buddhism, and martial

arts to Western European and Anglo-American contexts has certainly been influential for the development of the concept of body wisdom (Novack, 1990). Work in this area is both necessary and important, but it has not been within the scope of my study to take up these issues, and I have consciously chosen to limit my study to the development of Western movement re-education techniques in Western contexts. This is partly due to the lengthy history which Eastern techniques often claim, although Chan (2000) has pointed out that in the case of Judo at least this is somewhat mythical, reconstructed after the fact in order to give it weight as an ancient practice, just as has occurred in movement re-education. Further, although both dance and health-related practices have tended to be dominated by women, issues of gender in relation to movement re-education are addressed here only marginally. This is because movement re-educators do not discuss women in the same terms that they discuss 'savages' and children; here, at least, the long tradition of associating women with nature seems to have largely been broken. Although my study of body wisdom through movement re-education may touch on some of the issues discussed above, they will not form its focus, and would require quite a different study.

Instead, it is my intention to show that studying movement re-education in itself is useful, for the reasons described above. It is not simply an empirical project, but a way of developing the concept of embodied discourse both theoretically and empirically. Although I have mobilised this concept in relation to movement re-education as a case study, it has wider implications for theoretical work on the body. Studying movement re-education, I will argue, provides insights not only into the practices and theories of movement re-education and the context in which they emerged, but also into new possibilities for ways of thinking, researching, and writing about the body in sociology and social theory.

Chapter 2

Toward a Body That Knows: Body Wisdom in Context

Introduction

This chapter will outline key factors that influenced the development of the concept of body wisdom in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. This is not to say that the emergence of body wisdom can be traced to a particular moment in time; indeed, it is impossible to know where the concept of body wisdom, as an aspect of body education or re-education, began. Within disciplines such as yoga, for example, it has a long history (Worthington, 1982). However, the notion that movement re-education in general might have a history has tended to be minimised by founders and practitioners of such disciplines, often for the purposes of universalising these practices and giving them weight and grounding, as I will discuss in Chapter Five. Thus there is no way to construct an exhaustive history of 'body wisdom' in relation to movement training. There are, however, indicative texts and subjects which taken together begin to indicate the assemblage of something like 'body wisdom' in the twentieth century. The purpose of this chapter is to explore these areas in order to ground this study in a socio-historical context. The coming-together of ideas about bodies and health does not follow one linear path, and the chapter is not about searching for the origins of body wisdom as such. It is best understood as a series of histories, all of them partial.

Dance history, as I shall show, provides a way of understanding major trends in movement studies as they relate to the performing arts. I have also drawn on a relatively recent body of literature around movement studies and race to show how physical education was linked with ideas about racial health and hygiene. This is then developed further through a survey of the eugenics movement. In examining developments around physical education, health, and the notion of race, it becomes apparent that the eugenic ideas around degeneration had wide currency. Moreover, as the history of posture campaigns demonstrates, there has long been a theory that how we comport our bodies is indicative of what kinds of people we are. These issues, too, are important in the development of 'body wisdom' and its use in movement re-education.

This chapter concludes with an examination of alternative and complementary health in historical and contemporary contexts. As I have indicated, movement re-education has tended to be categorised as a form of complementary or alternative medicine, although a number of practitioners interviewed tended to distance themselves from this label. I shall discuss arguments for and against this classification, but in any case it is apparent that techniques of movement re-education share certain commonalities with alternative health and therefore some background on it is useful.

Dance

Movement re-education techniques are caught in a nexus between ‘trained’ and ‘natural’ bodies, in as much as they may seek to return their participants to a body which is ‘natural’—meaning flexible, freely moving, healthy and without physical or psychosomatic issues— yet contradictorily, the ‘natural body’ is to be gained through training or re-training the body. A social technology or technique of the self (Foucault, 1985) is required in order to return the body to this ‘natural’ state. The tension in this relationship is one on which dance writing can provide illumination and insight. Western theatre dance, particularly in its modern and postmodern forms, locates itself in this same space between trained and natural bodies. To perform dance requires training, yet there has been a reaction against what has been perceived as the ‘artificial’ and unhealthy training of the ballet dancer’s body. The rebellion against ballet—the primary form of Western theatre dance between the 1600s and early 1900s—began in the work of modern dance pioneers such as Isadora Duncan, Ruth St. Denis, and later Martha Graham. Franko (1995: 5) comments that Duncan criticised ballet, claiming it made poor use of body mechanics and lacked fluidity. Ballet has also been seen as unhealthy and dangerous to the body, particularly the developing bodies of children. In this section I will provide a historical overview of this shift in dance, which is in many respects parallel to the rise of movement re-education techniques.

The relationship between Western theatre dance and movement re-education is more than simply a parallel, however, and there are a number of points at which their recent histories intersect. Contemporary and modern dancers have frequently sought

movement re-education techniques as part of their training, as Bolster and Dussault (2001), Fraleigh (2000) and Green (1999) indicate. Huxley et al (1995) have discussed the use of Alexander Technique as part of a university contemporary dance degree. As early as the 1920s, Martha Graham's company were apparently among the early devotees of Pilates (Siler, 2000: 3).

Dance is obviously not the only field in which movement re-education has been adopted; my research indicated that Alexander Technique was taught in most acting schools in London, and a number of my interviewees were musicians. I shall deal here only with literature on dance, however, on the premise that dance is uniquely placed to comment upon bodily awareness and training. While theatre and music are embodied disciplines, developing skills that are specifically *bodily* is not their sole *raison d'être*, whereas for dancers bodily skill constitutes the central core of their art. Athletic pursuits are perhaps the only area in which the body is equally central, yet rarely are they concerned with working 'organically', 'holistically', or indeed 'naturally' in the way that contemporary dance and movement re-education seek to do.³

Prior to the late 1800s, Western theatre dance was comprised mainly of ballet, a dance form with very formal rules of expression and gesture, and one which required a high degree of training in order to be performed. Around the turn of the century, however, a new form called modern dance emerged, spurred on by such diverse influences as dress reform movements, American vaudeville and minstrel shows, Orientalism, romanticism, and physical training systems such as the work of François Delsarte, which originated in France but gained most of its popularity in America. Modern⁴ dance challenged the balletic ideal: dancer as sylph, ethereal and unattainable (Jowitt, 1988). Isadora Duncan and Ruth St. Denis were two early American modern dancers who are often credited as the primary founders of the discipline. There are many

³ As I noted in the Introduction, movement re-education has sometimes been adopted by athletes as well, however, so athletic endeavours do not preclude this kind of work; it is simply that they are less frequently involved in it.

⁴ The distinctions between modern/contemporary (the terms are often used interchangeably) and New/postmodern (or post-modern, see Banes, 1987) dance are rather complex and I have simplified them for the purposes of this discussion. Modern dance tends to focus on expressive movement and was initially concerned with uncoded gesture, although the work of Martha Graham did develop a very codified dance vocabulary. Postmodern dance rejected this codification and the star image. New Dance is a term which has been used in the UK to refer to postmodern work.

other early modern dancers who deserve recognition for their roles in moving the discipline forward, but my purpose here is to give a sketch of the influences on Duncan and St. Denis only, in order to show how these influenced later generations of modern—and, ultimately, postmodern—dancers. This in turn will demonstrate the concern of these schools of dance with naturalness in movement and gesture, a concern which was not present in ballet.

Isadora Duncan, an American dance artist, became one of the major expressionist dancers of the early twentieth century. Although she claimed to have no formal dance training, there are indications (Jowitt, 1988) that she had some background in ballroom dance (she taught dancing in San Francisco in the 1890s), Swedish gymnastics, and Delsarte's 'system of expression', to which I shall devote further explanation in a moment. Duncan 'believed that the body was the prime reality, the template of life, the source of all knowledge. The body was inseparable from the mind; when she talked about the body, she was talking also about the soul, about the "self"' (Daly, 1995: 4). Her dancing was never strictly about the body. She challenged norms of the day by dancing barefoot, in flowing, Grecian-inspired tunics, and her movements—waltz steps, runs, walks, skips and leaps—were meant to imitate natural phenomena. She also drew very heavily on images of the ancient Greeks, images she gathered from museums and books. She abhorred many forms of social regulation upon women, and insisted on her own right to have children outside of marriage, even—scandalously—dancing while visibly pregnant (Jowitt, 1988: 72). Duncan admired Darwin's theories of evolution and sought to develop naturally evolving gestures and movements in her work. However, as Ann Daly points out

This "Natural" body was an artistic invention as well as a rhetorical strategy—a conceptual cipher for an ideal of harmony that embraced the Greeks and rejected "African savages." "Nature" was Duncan's metaphorical shorthand for a loose package of aesthetic and social ideals: nudity, childhood, the idyllic past, flowing lines, health, nobility, ease, freedom, simplicity, order, and harmony. (1995: 89)

This natural body was 'civilized' rather than 'primitive', and its origins could be traced back to ancient Greece, thus being tied into what are traditionally cited as the beginnings of Western civilisation (1995: 90-1). The idealisation of ancient Greek

culture as an exemplar of the natural is also evident in the writings of Joseph Pilates, as I shall show in Chapter Five.

While Duncan's dance style did not survive as a method, in part due to its lack of a formal movement vocabulary, it did influence the development of modern dance and also ballet, rather ironically given her criticisms of the latter (Jowitt, 1988: 100). The work of Ruth St. Denis, on the other hand, had a much more direct influence on the development of American modern dance. St. Denis and her partner, Ted Shawn, established the Denishawn school and company where they trained later modern dancer/choreographers Martha Graham, and Doris Humphrey and Charles Weidman. St. Denis was also American, and like Duncan had apparently little formal dance training. She was influenced by Delsartism, and her mother was a staunch campaigner in the dress reform movement (Kendall, 1979). St. Denis joined Vaudeville, but her real success came when, inspired by the popularity of Orientalism and romanticised images from India, China, Japan and Egypt, she invented herself as an Indian dancer. She was certainly not the only dancer working with 'Oriental' themes; they had been present in turn of the century ballet (Jowitt, 1988) and were common among other dancers of the period. She was, however, one of the most successful; Kendall suggests that this was due to her emphasis on personality in her dances (1979: 82). Like many other dancers in the Orientalist tradition, St. Denis had never visited 'the Orient'; she had, apparently, been inspired to do these dances by seeing an image of the goddess Isis on a poster advertising Egyptian Deities cigarettes, in a drugstore in Buffalo, New York (Jowitt, 1988: 130). As her biographer Suzanne Shelton notes, the image St. Denis held of the Orient was vague, as it was for most Americans and Europeans who had been so inspired by Eastern ideas and images around that time:

The longitudinal boundaries of this idealized Orient were hazy at best. In the popular imagination the Orient stretched from the Atlantic to the Pacific Oceans, encompassing the Near and Far East from Africa to Japan. Indistinguishable in their exoticism, all oriental cultures were synonymous with sensuality, latent cruelty, and the bizarre. The peoples were "pagan, not Christian; amoral not ethical; lazy rather than labouring; languid and never strenuous." This mythical Orient represented an inversion of American values, but it reflected a central

preoccupation of the America of Robber Barons and great industrial fortunes: the Orient, above all, was a land of barbaric riches. (Shelton, 1981: 90).

St. Denis played on these images of the foreign and the exotic, and continued to choreograph in this style for the Denishawn company. Her Orientalism also had echoes of the 'natural body' about it, although it may be argued that this natural body was intended to be 'exotic', as opposed to the 'civilised' Greek body that Duncan strove to present. Orientalist dances also used bare feet, clothing that suggested sensuality and partial nudity, and contained less formalised movement than Western theatrical dance forms such as ballet. Orientalism was fuelled in part by wide-scale European colonialism of the 1800s, and although 'Orientalist' dances tended to be imagined rather than based on actual dance styles from non-Western cultures, physical practices were among the goods imported from the colonies. Yoga was brought to Britain from India around 1830 and to America around 1893 (Worthington, 1982). In common with Swedish Ling Gymnastics and Delsartism, yoga promoted a view of body and mind as holistically interrelated, and opposed more abstracted forms of physical training which did not take the body-mind relationship into account.

The modern dance tradition was carried on by several of Denishawn's protégées, including Doris Humphrey, Charles Weidman, and Martha Graham. Graham's dances formalised gesture to some extent, in as much as she developed a clearly defined and identifiable 'Graham technique', which is still taught today. This was more 'natural' than ballet in the sense that it relied upon feet that were not turned out, and thus resembled 'natural' movements such as walking. Graham used Greek myths and Jungian psychoanalysis as a choreographic source in her later work. She claimed that her inspiration came 'mostly from the excitement of living. I get it from the diversity of a tree or the ripple of the sea, a bit of poetry, the sighting of a dolphin breaking the still water and moving toward me... anything that quickens you to the instant' (Graham, 1998: 68). Again the reference to nature as a source of inspiration is apparent, although here 'natural bodies' are not human ones, as they were for St. Denis and Duncan. These issues around which bodies are represented as natural is one which will be taken up in more detail in Chapter Five.

Choreographers began to break away from the traditions of American modern dance in the late 1950s, when Merce Cunningham, a former Graham student, rebelled against the expressivity of her choreography and used chance procedures to choreograph his own work. By the early 1970s, however, a new dance form was taking shape: postmodern dance. Banes (1987: xv) notes that the term 'post-modern' initially meant simply that it came after modern dance, and that it in fact aligned itself to (modernist) minimalist sculpture and thus did not necessarily share in the characteristics of 'postmodernism' more broadly. However there are certain elements, such as a lessening of hierarchical relationships (dancer/choreographer and dancer/non-dancer), which do appear distinctly postmodern in the usual academic sense. In common with other postmodern arts, Banes notes, it incorporated 'pastiche, irony, playfulness, historical reference, the use of vernacular materials, the continuity of cultures, an interest in process over product, breakdowns of boundaries between art forms and between art and life, and new relationships between artist and audience' (1987: xv). Postmodern dance was a full-fledged reaction against formalisation of gesture and dance technique. In postmodern dance,

The body itself became the subject of the dance, rather than serving as an instrument for expressive metaphors. An unabashed examination of the body and its functions and powers threaded through the early post-modern dances. One form it took was relaxation, a loosening of the control that has characterized Western dance technique. Choreographers deliberately used untrained performers in their search for the "natural" body. (Banes, 1987: xviii)

One of the leading figures in the postmodern dance movement, Yvonne Rainer, produced a 'No Manifesto' that summed up the aims of the postmodern era in dance:

No to spectacle no to virtuosity no to transformations and magic and make-believe no to the glamour and transcendency of the star image no to the heroic no to the anti-heroic no to trash imagery no to involvement of performer or spectator no to style no to camp no to seduction of spectator by the wiles of the performer no to eccentricity no to moving or being moved. (Rainer, 1998: 35)

In practice what this meant was dance without a teachable and definable technique, as

technique was considered elitist and outside the interests and abilities of everyday people. Any *body* could dance; one no longer had to have a technical background or a 'dancer's body'. What one needed instead was the ability to 'release' the body, and this was where movement re-education techniques became critical. These techniques were to restore the original body of the dancer, the pre-social (in the sense that life experience was seen to have damaged the body and repressed its natural instincts in a myriad of ways) body, which would then be freed to move naturally. A formalised technique would have hindered rather than helped such a process by teaching the body still more unnatural ways of being. Novack's descriptions of late modern and postmodern dance point to the way that 'the natural' became crucial and movement re-education became a key element in obtaining the natural body, emerging in the therapeutic developments of the 1960s, including the work of Feldenkrais and Alexander. 'The qualities of free-flowing movement and focus on the inner experience of moving, so characteristic of social dance, were joined with interest in "natural" movement training, central to studies of body therapies and martial arts' (Novack, 1990: 52).

While the 'natural body' has haunted dance training since the advent of modern dance, it is through postmodern dance (and contemporary articulations of it) that the idea of the natural body is most fully developed. This in turn is where movement re-education intersects with dance most powerfully, becoming a technique and form of training in its own right used by dancers to return to the natural body.

American Delsartism

Delsartism was an important influence on both Isadora Duncan and Ruth St. Denis. Delsarte was a French opera singer who, in the mid-1800s, developed a 'system of expression' which divided things into trinities of the body and of motion, as a way of understanding and codifying gesture and thereby training actors and elocutionists in 'natural' movement. He observed the gestures of 'ordinary people' and established a method of training actors which he believed would appear less false, less concerned with 'taking a pose' than previous methods of training (Shawn, 1963: 11). Gestures were given particular types of significance in his method, yet the associations made with these were considered to be universal and natural; as one of his followers remarked, "The only way Delsarte sought is Nature's way. Man can no more

make natural things than he can *create* truth. He can create unnatural ways and falsehoods, at best he can *discover* Nature's way, and live and express correctly the truth" (in Shawn, 1963: 26).

Delsartism was taken up in a particular way by Americans, through the efforts of Genevieve Stebbins in particular, who blended it with yoga and 'other non-Western disciplines' as well as Swedish Ling gymnastics (Ruyter, 1999: 68). Stebbins' interpretation of Delsartism was particularly influential. Almost all her students were female, and her work fit with a growing trend in the late 1800s and early 1900s toward educating the female body. The idea that women needed exercise was perhaps not new in itself, but it took on a particular force from the late 1800s onward, in line with the advent of physical culture movements more generally. It was, however, tied to dress reform movements, with which it formed a link (Thomas, 1995: 52).

The influence of American Delsartism may be seen on the work of both St. Denis and Duncan. American Delsartism was opposed to the idea of 'meaningless gesture', something which modern dancers had observed, and criticised, in ballet. Gestures in the ballet were thought to demonstrate physical ability only, but to be devoid of psychological or emotional attachment. St. Denis' partner Ted Shawn wrote a key book on the subject of Delsarte, in which he observed that:

Whereas, for some generations previous to 1900, the dancing in the theatre and in the ballet was almost exclusively acrobatic and meaningless, with the advent of Ruth St. Denis and Isadora Duncan, a whole new approach to movement had come into the dance world - that at all times, dance should *express something*. (Shawn, 1963: 10)

As Schmitt (1989) points out, gesture has always had a strong ethical component. He notes that in the long tradition of gestural models in Western culture, gesture is often linked to God and religion (as it was for Delsarte, who was strongly influenced by the ideal of the Holy Trinity and systematically described his work in terms of triads by dividing the body into head, torso and limbs, each corresponding to a particular type of attitude). Further, gesture is regarded as an outward expression of the interior soul,

sealing the body/soul relationship (Schmitt, 1989: 130). Delsarte himself claimed, according to Shawn, that

It is not what we say that persuades, but the manner of saying it. Speech is inferior to gesture because it corresponds to the phenomena of mind. Gesture is the agent of the heart, the persuasive agent... Mind speculates and reckons, while gesture grasps everything by intuition and sentiment, as well as through contemplation. (in Shawn, 1963: 25)

In movement re-education techniques, posture and gesture are also attached to expression of the psyche. This takes the form of an assertion that they can restore naturalness of expression and personality by returning participants to their natural selves. Movement re-education techniques also incorporated the same kinds of elements into their development as modern dance did; Ida Rolf and Joseph Pilates both studied yoga, and there is evidence that F.M. Alexander studied Delsarte's work, and in fact briefly called himself a teacher of the Delsarte system (see Staring, 1996: 50).

As in movement re-education, one can see in Delsartism the seeds of a particular kind of 'body wisdom' emerging, with the emphasis placed on 'nature's way' of performing movements and the body apparently freed from artificial restriction. In the next section, I shall expand on the parallels between the physical culture movement of the late 1800s and early 1900s and movement re-education.

Dance, Race and Physical Culture

This chapter has thus far focussed largely on the American tradition of dance and physical culture, yet there are alternative traditions worth considering. The rise of physical culture in Germany is particularly instructive. The presence of a richly-developed tradition of physical culture (and the eugenic theories of degeneration that attended it) in Germany from the 1870s onward has come in retrospect to seem to some writers to have sown the seeds for fascism—the German theorist Kracauer suggested as early as 1947 that all forms of 'Mass Ornament', by which he meant group gymnastics and body culture displays, contributed to the German people's acceptance of Fascism (in Burt, 1998: 100). The relationship between physical

culture, Fascism, and eugenics, however, is not a simple one. The writings of Toepfer (1997) and Segel (1998) are useful in untangling these relationships in the German context.

German body culture and modern dance paralleled developments in England and America in many ways. Versions of Delsartism caught on through the work of American physician Bess Mensendieck, although her work, and thus Delsarte's, was taken more as inspiration than as prescription (Toepfer, 1997: 45). Various schools of gymnastics also held sway, such as Dalcroze's eurythmics, and in Germany a modern dance tradition evolved which was quite separate from the American one, through Rudolf Laban, Mary Wigman, and Hanya Holm. Laban in particular was critical in the development of mass choreographies because of his work on systematic ways of describing and notating movement, exemplified by the movement choirs he was asked to develop for the 1936 Olympics in Berlin. Manning (1993) notes that Wigman stayed on in Germany throughout the Nazi period, producing dances which adhered to fascist guidelines and aesthetics by glorifying 'the display of beautiful women's bodies', although they also implicitly commented upon the dominant masculine ethos (1993: 4).

The specificity of German body culture is partly made clear in relation to the idea of *Lebensphilosophie* (life-philosophy) which emerged through the work of Nietzsche, among others. 'Life' in German philosophy between the 1880s and 1930s came to represent a desire for authenticity and 'authentic experiences,' as well as 'dynamism, creatively, immediacy, youth... everything traditional was summoned before "the tribunal of life" and examined to see whether it represented authentic life, whether it "served life", in Nietzsche's words, or inhibited and opposed it' (Schnädelbach, 1984: 139). As such, *Lebensphilosophie* was opposed to rationalism and reason, 'compelling it to prove its legitimacy' (1984: 142). The value it put on the irrational has traditionally led *Lebensphilosophie* to be seen as a precursor to National Socialism. As Schnädelbach puts it, 'life-philosophy tendentiously abolished the traditional difference between nature and culture and thus facilitated the success of the general biologism in the theory of culture, which culminated in National Socialist racism' (1984: 149). However, this was not its only application; it also influenced phenomenologists (via Heidegger) who emphasised knowledge as lived experience as

a way of intuiting access to the world, and appeared in the sociology of Max Weber in his discussions of rationality and science. While it influenced the general background against which German body culture, as an expression of 'life' against rationality and tradition, emerged, it should not be interpreted from this that this body culture was inevitably linked to fascism.

Karl Toepfer (1997) suggests that those who embraced National Socialism from traditions of body culture did so for personal reasons and not because their involvement in body culture predisposed them to it (1997: 9). In his work on German body culture between 1910 and 1930, he suggests that while the aims of German body culture were fairly consistent in this period, it began to decline in the 1930s, largely due to theoretical stagnation. There was, in fact, more continuity between Wilhelmine and Weimar Republic body culture than between Weimar and Nazi body cultures (1997: 20). German body culture of the period included a strong nudist movement which assigned deep metaphysical significance to the body; '*Nacktkultur* projected an ambiguous political identity because it treated the body as a double sign: on the one hand, it presented nudity as a return to an eternal primeval; on the other hand, it regarded modern identity as an unprecedented condition of nakedness' (1997: 32). Toepfer points to different ways in which nudity was interpreted: Emile Jacques-Dalcroze, founder of a popular school of rhythmic gymnastics, felt that nudity freed the body from inhibition of movement, while Bess Mensendieck believed it that it was particularly important in 'enhancing a woman's body consciousness' making women's bodies strong, healthy, and beautiful (1997: 39).

There were alternative interpretations which saw nudity as a sign of racial purity. Hans Surén, author of the 'hugely popular' *Der Mensch und die Sonne* (1924) and *Deutsche Gymnastik* (1925) is one example. Surén became a Nazi in the 1930s and changed the first book to fit his new views, but the original edition referred extensively to nudity as a sign of health, strength and beauty as well as liberation from cities, which he felt were damaging. 'The profound freedom offered by the conjunction of nudity, sunlight, and open space depended on the perfection of self-discipline resulting from gymnastic training' (Toepfer, 1997: 34). Surén's second book, which also complained about the disappearance of self-discipline in German culture, 'showed Surén himself, lavishly bronzed and nearly nude (wearing only a tiny

jock strap), before a totally uncontextualized white background' performing a series of exercises (1997: 35).

Toepfer's descriptions of these books should be compared with the work of Joseph Pilates (1998 [1934]; 2000 [1945]), who also put forward similar views, indicating that 'experience has taught us that it is wise to practice very early in life exposing the young child's nude body to the air and sun as much as possible' (1998 [1934]: 46). His 1945 book is also filled with pictures of himself performing the exercises which form the basis of Pilates 'mat work', in which he was bronzed and clad only in his underwear, photographed against an uncontextualised background. Pilates was German and it is possible that he was familiar with Surén's work. These descriptions indicate at least that Pilates' ideas had a history and currency at the time when he was working.

Toepfer argues that

The complex and very seductive body culture that emerged in early-twentieth-century Germany questioned, though it did not entirely dissolve, this tension between innocence and modernity. The relation between innocence and modernity was more complex (and ambiguous) in Germany than elsewhere because of German tendencies to link innocence with conditions of maturity and evolution rather than to a "lost," childlike state of perception. This ambition to present modernity as a condition of innocence depended on the situating of the body within elaborate philosophical frameworks, a persuasive metaphysical rhetoric. (1997: 4)

While German body culture of the first part of the 1900s referred to a 'natural body' (through nudity and exercise), this was not a childlike body, nor was modernity necessarily seen as responsible for the disappearance of this type of body. This is in stark contrast to the work of many eugenicists and others writing in Britain at the same time, as I shall discuss below.

Harold Segel (1998), too, is interested in the relationship between modernism and physical culture, although in a more Anglo-American and also more literary tradition. Contrary to Toepfer, he interprets the rise of what he calls the 'physical imperative' to

the rising distrust of intellectualism around the turn of the century, even within philosophy. He suggests that 'beginning with Nietzsche... philosophical thought became increasingly more oriented toward spontaneity, intuition, and action' (1998: 173). Nietzsche's work was interpreted and applied in a variety of ways, one of which, whether or not it was faithful to his intent, was in eugenics and the politics of race preservation (see also Stone, 2002).

Segel concludes his book by examining, as Toepfer does, the influence of modernism and physical culture on Nazi ideologies, but sees more parallels between them. He points to the presence in Hitler's *Mein Kampf* of physical culture references; '*Mein Kampf* advances the view that many of the social evils from which contemporary German society was suffering were attributable to the imbalance in the educational system between mental instruction and physical culture.... The intelligentsia was weak because it was "degenerate physically," the result not of poverty but of education' (1998: 246) of the intellectual rather than the physical type. Segel concludes that body culture under the Nazis had entirely supplanted mental culture and that this made it easy for Jews, who they associated with intellectualism and physical weakness, to be shunned and ultimately to become the victims of genocide.

However, Segel's argument lacks the complexity of Toepfer's; where Toepfer sees Nazi physical culture as a decisive break with the majority of the physical culture of the Weimar Republic, Segel ignores the specificity of the German condition and assumes that European body culture was almost entirely uniform in the way it was interpreted. There is no doubt that the physical culture of different countries influenced one another; one only needs look at the introduction of Swedish Ling gymnastics to Britain in the 1840s, which Segel himself (1998: 207) mentions. Yet Toepfer makes a case for seeing German body culture as rather separate. His more nuanced account of the development of physical culture in the German context make his conclusions more convincing than Segel's, or those of Burt (1998) on the same topic. There were obviously some reactionary interpreters of German body culture, such as Surén, but there were also those with more radical views. It is therefore not sufficient to suggest that all physical culture was anti-intellectual and that this anti-intellectualism set the stage for Nazism; rather, there were a variety of articulations of physical culture, many of which were in opposition to Nazi beliefs.

This discussion is relevant to movement re-education because as I shall show in Chapter Five, many of the techniques I have researched linked themselves to eugenic ideals. Severing the link between physical culture as a whole and Nazism or Fascism is therefore critical to understanding how a number of movement re-education techniques have dealt with the eugenic aspects of their founders' writings. Movement re-education was certainly part of a larger trend towards the development of physical culture, and physical culture itself was clearly part of the Nazi project. While movement re-educators were not involved in organising mass choreographies, they were involved in promoting physical culture. Chapters 7 and 8 will address how ideas about physical culture and eugenics have shifted in contemporary movement re-education.

What is important to note here is that there is no simple correspondence between physical culture and Nazism or even eugenics, although certainly many aspects of physical culture were incorporated within (and justified through) 'positive eugenics'. As I shall discuss in the next section, the eugenics movement itself was much broader than the use to which it was put in Nazi Germany, although this is of course its most notorious application and also proved to be its demise. Certain aspects of the eugenics movement, which called themselves positive (health promotional) eugenics, persisted in the form of health education and health promotion around what Foucault refers to as a bio-politics of the population (1978: 139). It is important to understand, then, the extent of the eugenics movement and the applications it was given.

Eugenics

Eugenics is of interest in a study of movement re-education because of the use that founders of movement re-education techniques made of eugenic discourses. F.M. Alexander's first book, *Man's Supreme Inheritance* (1910), explicitly described his work's relation to the emerging 'science of race culture' and eugenics, a fact which caused one recent biographer to condemn the Alexander Technique in its entirety as riddled with racism and eugenic thinking (see Staring, 1996; 1997). The claims Alexander makes about eugenics and race culture, and the concern with the degeneration of the human race, are echoed in the works of Joseph Pilates (1934;

1945), Ida Rolf (1977) and Moshe Feldenkrais (1949). These are issues I will examine in detail in Chapter Five.

The eugenics movement, which developed in the late 1800s, was influenced by developments in theories of heredity such as those of Darwin on one hand, and questions about the effects of urban life on the other. Searle (1976: 20) points out that fear of racial degeneration was part of ‘a deep-seated anxiety about whether Britain may not have taken a wholly wrong turning in becoming a predominantly urban, industrial society. Was there not, perhaps, a heavy price to be paid for this abandonment of a way of life more natural, more in tune with the rhythm of the seasons?’

Evidence of degeneration was seen everywhere. Like the larger ‘quest for National Efficiency’ in Britain (Searle, 1971), eugenics was tied to concerns about the inadequacy of the population for military service, as demonstrated by the large numbers of men and boys who volunteered for service in the Boer War and had to be turned away because they were not in adequate physical shape. It was also linked with fears about the apparent decline in birth rates for the upper and middle classes. This gave rise to fears that society was being colonised by the working classes and the poor, who were considered to be a major source of degeneracy: ‘on the (fallacious) assumption that the working classes were made up of people of weak physique and low intelligence, it logically followed that Britain was breeding a race of degenerates’ (Searle, 1971: 61). This was strengthened by the mass of social statistics which began to be collected, making problems such as poverty seem bigger, although there was no previous data with which to compare it (Searle, 1976: 21).

There were two aspects to eugenics, sometimes designated as *positive* and *negative*, because the former was designed to promote the health of the population while the latter intended to eliminate those considered unfit. Eugenics advocates generally did not restrict themselves to one aspect, and while movement re-education (as a form of health promotion) would clearly be allying itself with positive eugenics, both Alexander (1910: 6) and Feldenkrais (1949: 11) made passing comments to indicate their support for eliminating the unfit from the gene pool. Practices that allied themselves with positive eugenics were wide-ranging. Eugenics was ‘part of dozens

of local projects, including better-baby contests, improved parenthood programs, control of race poisons, conservation of resources, women's temperance movements, and even military preparation for war' (Hasian, 1996: 30).

While the term 'eugenics' emerged in the 1880s in the work of Francis Galton, a cousin of Charles Darwin, the eugenics movement itself drew on earlier ideas about evolution. It is important to contrast Darwinian and Lamarckian ideas about heredity in order to understand the foundations upon which eugenics stood. Prior to Darwin's discovery of the inheritance of physical traits, Lamarck suggested that evolutionary change might occur because of the adaptations of particular individuals to their environments. The difference between his work and Darwin's was that Lamarck believed social characteristics could be inherited; to use his example, an early ancestor of the giraffe who stretched to reach the leaves of trees, thereby lengthening its neck very slightly, would transmit this minute lengthening to the next generation, who would stretch their necks slightly again, eventually resulting in the long-necked giraffe familiar to us today (in S. Rose, 1997: 179). Darwin's explanation would have been that those giraffe ancestors born with longer necks would be more likely to survive and reproduce, often with other long-necked giraffe ancestors, leading to the same conclusion.

While Lamarck's theory was ultimately discredited, the idea that social characteristics were hereditary was popular with social commentators of the Victorian era, including Herbert Spencer. Movement re-educators clearly drew upon these ideas when they suggested that their work could improve the gene pool and prevent further degeneration; if one acquired the habit of standing upright, they felt, one would necessarily pass it on to one's children. Stone (2002: 54) notes that at least one prominent eugenicist was 'always an advocate of correct body control' and in the 1930s even gave a lecture on the Alexander Technique, suggesting its applications in staving off racial degeneration.

The idea that bodies were physically degenerating was linked with the idea that upright posture marked one out as physiologically superior, since after Darwin it became possible to claim that uprightness was a defining characteristic in the separation between humans and their closest ancestors, the apes. While eugenics

'hovered recurrently' around the posture campaigns of the first part of the twentieth century, the quest for good posture was wider than this (Yosifon and Stearns, 1998: 1069). In the next section, I will look at how posture came to be seen as a marker not only of social class and status (as in earlier centuries) but of strong genetics and good breeding.

Posture: Moral and Physical Uprightness

Posture is a relatively neglected issue in contemporary social life. While the admonitions of earlier periods that we should 'stand/sit up straight!' are not entirely forgotten, increasingly sedentary lives and working days spent in front of the computer have appeared to make this more difficult. To be sure, comportment itself is not entirely forgotten; it lives in occasional articles and books in the popular press about how to read body language (for example Fast, 1970), and some attention has been given in educational theory to 'kinaesthetic intelligence' as a new type of intellectual competency (Gardner, 1983). However, as Yosifon and Stearns (1998) suggest in their comprehensive survey of the history of posture promotion in America, since the early 1960s posture has ceased to be a systematic concern. Rather, it has been marginalized within both the medical and educational discourses in which it was previously prominent, and is now treated as an occasional, individual problem rather than something warranting broader social attention.

It is not only that posture ceased to be of interest to physicians and physical educators. It has also attracted less interest in the social sciences, despite a long tradition of the analysis of posture and gesture within sociology and anthropology (Polhemus, 1978). Hewes (1957) developed an analysis of posture in cross-cultural contexts, linking posture to culture. In Goffman's work on the *Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (1956) and Elias' writings on *The Civilising Process* (2000 [1978]), posture and comportment underlie their analyses in significant, if not prominent, ways. It is somewhat surprising, given the rich history of studies which draw upon posture and comportment, that contemporary sociology of the body has done little work in this field. Bourdieu's work on hexis and habitus, which I will discuss in the following chapter, is an important contribution in terms of ways of understanding posture and comportment as social, and parts of Foucault's *Discipline and Punish* (1977) address

the comportment and posture of the soldier's body. However, systematic examinations of posture and comportment in socio-historical contexts are relatively rare.

It is through the work of Yosifon and Stearns (1998) and Georges Vigarello (2001; 1989) that I will attempt to construct a history of posture in a Western European and North American context that will provide a basis for understanding the theories behind movement re-education. Vigarello's work on the history of postural education, *Le corps redressé* (2001 [1979]), remains untranslated from the original French, with the exception of one introductory chapter (1989). I draw here on this chapter as well as an unpublished, non-professional translation of a chapter on the transition between 'hygiene' and 'psychology' in posture promotion in the twentieth century. Because the latter chapter is not a formal and published translation, I have included the French text for reference in footnotes below.

Posture from 1600

Vigarello (1989) traces the history of 'upward training of the body' through etiquette manuals and courtesy poems published in the Middle Ages through to the end of the eighteenth century. He argues that during this time, the detailing of bodily comportment took on a particular specificity and exactitude which it had previously lacked. Beginning in the sixteenth century, he argues,

A new court nobility was being established as the world of chivalry faded, and the emergence of a formal etiquette and a courtier class seemed to generate rules of deportment for the body. Whereas until then the straight back never went beyond a mere suggestion, a new awareness of it arose. This does not imply, of course, that the Middle Ages had no concerns about posture. It is simply that they appear generalized and imprecise compared with equivalent texts in later periods.
(Vigarello, 1989: 151)

By the sixteenth century, courtly etiquette manuals had begun to detail particular ways of standing, sitting, and acting which they had not specified before, putting these into language for the first time. In part this was codified in manuals on court dance,

but it also took on a more serious slant, indicating not only moral uprightness or correct social presentation of the self, but also possible medical issues. Health and hygiene began to enter into the discourse about erect posture, and poor posture and comportment were considered to be unhealthy in the long term, particularly in children.

The sixteenth century was also the beginning of corsetry and whalebone stays, particularly in women's dress, which made slouching difficult if not impossible. Yet this, as well as the medical discourse around children's posture, shows the body to be passively rather than actively involved in good comportment. The child's body is moulded by the physician and by its parents:

The rules of physical appearance are directly applied by the physician's hands. Molding is a prerequisite for social recognition. The child enters an environment that appears to need to impress on him very concretely a predetermined model... Straightening the body also means shaping it. Here again the body passively receives the "sign" of uprightness. (Vigarello, 1989: 171)

This moulding is accomplished through physical manipulation and swaddling clothes and other physical devices intended to direct the child's body as one would a young tree. Such moulding of the body fell from favour to some extent in the seventeenth century, when posture began to be controlled more formally and began also to require more active involvement. An emphasis on the moving body, particularly in relation to social dance, appeared as a component of posture. Such movement was simultaneously to be controlled and moderated: 'the teaching of posture had as its goal the control of movement, rather than any benefit from it. It tends to control and contain movement, rather than developing and encouraging it... What prevails is the body's enactment of conventional images' (1989: 181).

Vigarello goes on to note that 'by the 18th century, the moral injunction behind this codification of posture is explicitly prescribed although not explained; court society requires good posture and comportment, lest the bearer be subject to ridicule and shame' (1989: 183). Court dance was similarly codified, for the same purpose and with the same result. As Elias (2000 [1978]) notes, it was critical for

the court society to be able to distinguish itself from the middle classes, and this led to ever more specific codes of conduct.

There is ample evidence to show that...customs, behaviour and fashions from the court were continuously penetrating the upper middle classes, where they were imitated and more or less altered in accordance with the different social situation. They thereby lost, to some extent, their character as a means of distinguishing the upper class. They were somewhat devalued. This compelled those above to further refinement and elaboration of behaviour. And from this mechanism– the development of court customs, their dissemination downwards, their slight social deformation, their devaluation as marks of distinction– the perpetual movement in behaviour patterns through the upper class received part of its momentum. (Elias, 2000: 86)

Elias' writings on the civilising process (2000 [1978]) and court society (1983) provide useful accounts of the development of etiquette and manners in a European context, with specific reference to France and Germany. Posture is relevant to these to the extent that it became part of a broader programme of behaviour control and modification. However, I will not deal with this in any detail here. My purpose in outlining Vigarello's arguments about the development of posture from the 1600s has been to demonstrate the differences between this period and the later period in which movement re-education emerges. Movement re-education itself has not been predominantly related to etiquette, although the moral injunctions associated with commands to stand up straight were persistent; rather it is the medicalisation of posture and its attendant defects that most interest me. In this, Vigarello (2001) and Yosifon and Stearns (1998) are most relevant.

Posture in the Twentieth Century

In a chapter on the shift between a basically 'hygienic' promotion of posture to a justification for good posture in and through psychology, Vigarello (2001) traces the changing discourses around posture and bodily comportment from the early to mid-twentieth centuries. Much of the work he examines here was directed at the bodies of children, and in fact children's bodies were the subjects of most postural concerns in

the twentieth century, as Yosifon and Stearns (1998) confirm. However, the medical and educational aspects of posture prevailed in this period over social concerns. No more was good posture merely a marker of social class; it came instead to indicate health and, under the eugenics movement, good heredity. This had implications for social class but it was not driven by it. Posture in the twentieth century can be said to have made a decisive epistemological shift away from the theory and pedagogy of earlier periods.

This is not to say that eugenics was the only justification for the concern with posture. Degeneration does however figure prominently in the analyses of both Vigarello and Yosifon and Stearns. Vigarello (2001: 180) notes that in the late 1930s, the notion ‘of a progressive degradation returns again to justify and impose re-education, even if the concept of degeneracy as a threatening burden loses frequency in these texts’⁵ around posture promotion. In the early 1900s, classifying children for the purposes of bodily education and re-education was a primary concern.

Yosifon and Stearns (1998) argue that a number of changes occurred in the nineteenth century that transformed the way in which posture was understood. One of these, as mentioned above, was the influence of eugenics and social Darwinism. However, they also point out that the nineteenth century dress reform movement and the increased interest in physical education and exercise for women meant posture could no longer be stiff and formal at all times. This was further compounded by the development of furniture designed for relaxation rather than stiff upright postures. With dress and furniture no longer supporting erect posture, such support had to be internalised.

In the nineteenth century, they claim, medical literature around posture took on particular meaning in relation to ‘race’ and ethnicity.

Doctors and related experts, including the phrenologists, generated a substantial literature from the 1820s onward, picking up middle-class standards while adding

⁵ ‘L’argumentation d’une éventuelle dégradation progressive revient encore pour justifier et imposer la rééducation, même si le concept de dégénérescence, perd un fréquence dans ces textes, comme en charge menaçante’.

health criteria and a belief that common habits demanded redress. Posture became a diagnostic cue betraying a number of illnesses and character defects alike. Well before Charles Darwin, some American scientists applied posture to racial analysis, arguing that Europeans alone had erect spines and straight bones allowing graceful deportment– in contrast to “all the less civilized races of Men.” (Yosifon and Stearns, 1998: 1061)

The issue of good posture was medicalised, and children were the targets of most interventions. Postural defects such as rickets and scoliosis were of particular concern. In analysing public health promotion literature, manuals on child rearing, and physical education texts from these periods, Yosifon and Stearns show how doctors became increasingly concerned with posture as a signifier of health in the late 1800s and early 1900s: ‘Claims of the frequency of spinal defects, though not new, took on novel precision. At least superficially, diagnostic cues became more scientific’ (1998: 1068). Medical reasons almost entirely overtook etiquette as a motivation for good posture, and from the 1890s to the 1950s, medical commentary on this area flourished.

However, by the 1960s, posture dropped out of public discourse. Yosifon and Stearns relate this to a number of developments, including preventative dietary campaigns which largely eliminated rickets and similar conditions. Also, it began to be widely assumed that children’s posture would normalise itself without a great deal of outside intervention. In any case, individual differences in bone structure and body type made it difficult to generalise about what ‘good posture’ might look like.

While doctors had contributed mightily to the posture campaign, the bulk of their efforts had always depended on social support, rather than a vital body of medical research. When posture no longer measured character or social worth, doctors had no reason to claim that a majority of people suffered from posture defects...

Quietly, other prior beliefs, such as the much-trumpeted notion that poor posture forced internal organs to collide and so interfered with somatic efficiency, disappeared as well. (1998: 1089)

The newly developing field of physical education had also contributed

significantly to the promotion of posture as a health issue. Schools both in Europe (Vigarello, 2001) and America (Yosifon and Stearns, 1998) promoted good posture, in many cases photographing children or having them stand in front of mirrors 'as experts assessed their stance' (Yosifon and Stearns, 1998: 1075). Universities, particularly private East Coast ones in the United States, maintained records on the physical health of students, which extended to taking nude photographs of freshmen and sending those considered to be posturally deficient to remedial classes. Vassar College offered a

Fundamentals course, required of all freshmen, strongly emphasizing posture training, with additional special exercises and individual counseling for students identified (through the assessment of the photographs) as having some curvature. The course taught not only general posture but also management of the body in getting out of cars, picking up luggage, and so on. (1998: 1078)

Yosifon and Stearns conclude that by the 1960s, posture had largely disappeared as a topic of concern to doctors or physical educators, to the extent that contemporary orthopaedic practitioners ignore it almost entirely, or at least treat severe postural problems on an individual basis rather than as serious social and educational issues (1998: 1093). On the basis of the textual evidence showing a decline in discussions of posture in medical and educational discourse, they conclude that good posture is no longer an issue. Vigarello (2001) is more specific about what happens to these discourses. He points to the interiorisation of postural norms, where posture became deeply representative of a psychology. In posture pedagogy, concentration and focus became increasingly important: no longer was it sufficient to mimic an external standard, rather, the pedagogy 'sought now to invest posture by "penetrating" it' (2001: 194).⁶ In the middle of the twentieth century, new criteria came about for both teaching and evaluating posture. Vigarello traces this through the work of psychologists and neurologists, whose studies overlapped. The importance of the nervous system in proprioception is key (Vigarello, 2001: 196), as is evidenced by Feldenkrais' (1949) *Body and Mature Behavior*. The development of body awareness becomes

⁶ 'Avec les formules anciennes, le précept avait ses équivalents faits de moulages très matérialisés, il cherche maintenant à investir l'attitude en la <<penetrant>>'.

the critical element, spurred by the adaptation of the notion of 'body image' (Vigarello, 2001: 197).

The work of the performer [subject] no longer consists only of conducting the movements and assuring position... It is still necessary that [the student] be guided now to a continuous attention, directed toward the proprioceptive clues that a given posture is supposed to bring. The exterior forms of the realisation as well as the multiple dimensions predicting their order and guaranteeing their reiteration would be circumscribed. In the attempts for the corrective norms to invest the body of the student, pedagogy has appropriated a psychology. (2001: 201)⁷

Posture also becomes indicative of specific types of psychological issues, as the anatomy of the body is tied ever more precisely to the psyche. This is particularly apparent in Ida Rolf's work, where as I shall show, particular physical weaknesses come to be universally associated with particular deficiencies of the psyche. Rolf's work exemplifies this way of understanding body and posture but it is by no means unique to her; Wilhelm Reich's psychoanalytic approach, which formed the basis of body psychotherapies, shares similar principles, as does Stanley Keleman's 1975 text on bioenergetics, *Your Body Speaks Its Mind*. As Vigarello concludes, 'the norm has found a new terrain: that of a carefully elaborated interiority. In that, it interprets physiology more than uses it' (2001: 202).⁸

Posture concerns do not completely disappear from the 1950s onward; rather, they are tied to work on body image and psychology, an idea I shall develop further in later chapters. There is one final development in the history of posture that is worth noting, which is the move towards a norm that prioritises flexibility over erectness.

⁷ 'Le travail de l'exécutant ne consistera plus seulement à conduire les gestes et à assurer des positions... Encore faut-il que celui-ci se guide maintenant sur une attention continue, tendue vers les indices proprioceptifs qu'une telle attitude est censée porter. Seraient circonscrites, autant les formes extérieures, de la réalisation que les dimensions multiples président à leur commande et garantissant leur réitération. Dans les tentatives pour que la norme des rectitudes investisse le corps de l'élève, la pédagogie s'est appropriée une psychologie'.

⁸ 'Les norms ont trouvé un nouveau terrain: celui d'une intériorité travaillée. En cela elles interprètent la physiologie plus qu'elles ne l'utilisent'.

Flexibility and Posture

Yosifon and Stearns note that as early as the 1930s, stiffness declined as a postural ideal and a more flexible body came to replace it: 'nothing should jolt body or spirit into a lack of flexibility' (1998: 1067). In contemporary movement re-education, too, there has been a shift away from justifications which rely on either eugenic arguments or arguments about the social importance of good posture. One development that sheds light on how contemporary movement re-education justifies its work is detailed in Martin's (1994) work on flexibility and the flexible immune system as a metaphor for social organisation. Martin argues that a shift occurred in health literature around the 1960s, whereby the body's ability to fight disease began to be attached to an 'immune system'. Prior to this, she writes, immunity was largely thought to be a matter of keeping external surfaces as clean as possible, and resistance to infection was not clearly explained. F.M. Alexander, for instance, suggests that inoculation will make our bodies 'become depressed and enervated sterilities, incapable of action on their own account' (1910: xiv). The discovery of the immune system led to a different understanding of the internality of the body; suddenly it was perceived to have an internal system, and the health of these systems depended on their flexibility and adaptability to disease. Martin suggests that this is more than simply a change in medical conceptions of health. She refers to the development of an *immunophilosophy* (1994: 95), and shows how this metaphor of the flexible immune system is applicable in other fields as well. She writes that 'this bundle of ideas about flexibility has become central to a substantial movement in contemporary human resource management, and, through this route, has had an enormous impact on the way in which many manufacturing and service industries are recognizing themselves' (Martin, 1994: 144). She details its use in various corporate environments and suggests that the popularity of forms of exercise that include stretching and flexibility, such as yoga, are part of this development as well (1994: 155). As I shall show, movement re-education, too, emphasises flexibility and adaptability in a world which, it argues, causes us ever greater degrees of stress and tension. Movement re-education techniques, then, are themselves adaptable – they continue to find ways of making themselves relevant even when the mainstream discourses around the importance of good posture in relation to health and heredity that they drew on originally have declined.

Martin's research in this area is also not so far removed from movement re-education, in that the immune system and the idea that our bodies can *learn* to successfully defend themselves against disease is similar to the idea that bodies can *know* things and can be keepers of a kind of pre-linguistic wisdom. Martin includes a chapter on vaccination as a form of 'Educating and Training the Body'. Although this is a much more passive form of 'education' than the techniques studied here, it never the less relies upon a conception of bodies as capable of being educated and is almost certainly linked to a theory of 'body wisdom' where bodies that are educated become bodies that 'know'.

The Healthy Victorian Body

While posture and eugenics were major concerns in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries, their relevance is best understood in relation to a broader issue which arose in Victorian society: that of health. As Haley (1978) demonstrates convincingly, health is something that obsessed Victorian Britain, and Park (1987) suggests that it was a critical force in America as well. Foucault's work on bio-power at the end of the first volume of *History of Sexuality* points to the ways in which a politics of population developed which replaced 'the ancient right to *take* life or *let* live' with the power 'to *foster* life or *disallow* it to the point of death' (1978: 138). In order to manage a population by fostering or disallowing life, however, one needed not only to regulate (by promoting or discouraging) sex and sexuality, but also to promote health more broadly. Foucault suggests that many changes in the politics of health and health promotion came about in the eighteenth century (1980), but it is the changes of the nineteenth century which are most interesting for a study of movement re-education, for the techniques that have persisted all originate from this time.

Haley (1978) shows how an emphasis on physical training emerged in the latter half of the nineteenth century in Europe and America, which can only be understood in light of a perceived relationship between body and mind. The strong body is not an ideal in its own right, but is intertwined with the Victorian ideology of *mens sana in corpore sano*, a sane mind in a healthy body. The intertwining of body and mind is something that comes across strongly in Victorian health literature, and was certainly

evident in non-allopathic medical practices which emerged during this time, such as homeopathy and chiropractic. Yet even allopathic medicine did not make the same kind of clear mind/body distinction which it is today so often accused of perpetuating: 'such diseases as hypochondria, hysteria, dyspepsia, and climacteric disease were not psychosomatic in the modern sense of the word. They were not disorders of the body occasioned by disorders of the mind; they were constitutional complaints with physical and mental causes and symptoms, and they required treatment involving both the mind and the body' (Haley, 1978: 30).

Gilman (1995) shows how in the late nineteenth century, beauty was also associated with health and sanity: representations of the insane must necessarily make them look 'mad' by depicting unusual and uncontrolled gestures and facial expressions, for example, thereby normalising the look of 'madness' so that it was immediately recognisable. The external, physical body represented health, sanity and, implicitly, genetic superiority; Jewish bodies and black bodies were represented in ways that made them appear to be unhealthy and genetically undesirable. The belief in holistic causation and treatment is also apparent in the discourses around posture, where, as Yosifon and Stearns (1998) indicate, posture (measured by the appearance of erectness) is deeply interconnected with character.

Park (1987) points to the way that in the Victorian era science began to support what was already suspected: that the moral and the physical were deeply intertwined and that muscle power could become 'will' power (1987: 15), through new knowledge about the nervous system. William James 'saw life as a process of constant adjustment wherein repeated actions increased the "plasticity of neural matter"... repeated performances made it easier to perform an action on subsequent occasions and required less attention on the part of the individual. Such repetition developed proper "habits"' (1987: 12). While Park observes that physical educators at the time seized this as a way to foster desired behaviour, and such thinking is consistent with Feldenkrais' later work on behaviour and the nervous system (1949), F.M. Alexander reacted against the inculcation of 'habit' in his technique, asserting that physical activity and movement should always be conscious. I will discuss the implications of this view further in Chapter Five.

The Victorian era was also the period that saw the dominance of biomedicine as well as the birth of a number of alternatives. Porter (1988) points out that in the eighteenth century, the lines between 'quackery' and mainstream medicine were harder to draw, and that what would today appear to be alternative medical practices were not classed as such.

In the nineteenth century, many irregular medical movements boldly declared their root-and-branch opposition to the totemic values of high society (seen as productive of disease) and to the corruption of orthodox medicine, and advocated going 'back to Nature'... Eighteenth century quackery colluded, rather than collided, with regular medicine. It did not set itself up as the champion of alternative systems of healing, replete with radical medical ontologies and distinctive therapies. Rather, market-place medicine essentially shared or pirated the ideas and pillaged the practices of the establishment. (Porter, 1988: 14)

It was not until the nineteenth century then that alternative medicine began to emerge as specifically *alternative*. This was no doubt brought about in part because of the regulation and consolidation of biomedical power, which effectively marginalized contenders such as homeopathy. In Britain, the Medical Act of 1858 put power squarely in the hands of orthodox biomedical practitioners by regulating who could be called a doctor and what might be defined as medicine. In response to this, people supported 'heterodox' practices such as homeopathy and hydropathy as reactions against this biomedical monopoly:

Civic authorities in mid-Victorian Manchester, for instance, publicly backed homeopathy not necessarily because they thought it was the most cost-effective medicine or because they liked it personally, but, rather, because its endorsement reinforced *laissez-faire* economics in the face of orthodox medicine's endeavour to secure professional monopoly and to act, as they saw it, in the manner of a trade union. (Cooter, 1988: xi)

'Alternative' came to be defined not so much in terms of an oppositional set of beliefs, but as any practice outside the domain of orthodox medicine. Cooter claims that most practitioners even in these areas still justified their work through the language of science and were 'often anxious to appear more scientifically

conventional than their competitors in orthodox medicine' (1988: 68). In fact this may have been due in part to their shared histories; in America prior to the Civil War, homeopaths were trained in regular medical schools alongside allopathic practitioners, but when allopaths began to push them out they set up their own training colleges whose training was as extensive as that of their competitors (Gevitz, 1988: 158). In any case it is apparent that the histories of alternative health practices are not as 'alternative' as they may first appear.

Alternative Health

While complementary and alternative medicine (CAM), as it is now called, existed in various forms in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the regulation imposed by orthodox or biomedical practitioners and governing bodies in the mid-nineteenth century meant that it had a lower profile throughout much of the twentieth. In the 1960s, however, these practices began to enjoy a renewed popularity. In the final part of this chapter, I will examine contemporary studies of alternative health and its resurgence on the basis that this offers important insights into movement re-education, with which it shares common ground.

As I mentioned in Chapter One, movement re-education techniques are often categorised as forms of complementary or alternative medicine, although in academic research on the subject this is not always clear. Coward (1989) for example, includes Alexander Technique and Rolfing in her study of 'the natural' in alternative health because they share similar ideas to other forms of alternative health. Although she recognises that the jumble of therapies she refers to under the label of alternative health may 'make uncomfortable bedmates', she believes that 'the same impetus underlies the popularity of *all* the alternative therapies' (1989: 5, italics in original). Sharma (1992: 4) on the other hand, excludes Alexander Technique and, by extension, other forms of movement re-education, because they do not purport to cure disease but only to re-educate people to use their bodies more efficiently. For her, the defining characteristics of complementary or alternative medicine are that it claims to be curative, has some body of knowledge or theory about health and illness, and requires some kind of expert intervention on the part of a practitioner (1992: 4).

These are characteristics which movement re-education lacks by virtue of the fact that it does not claim to cure specific illnesses.

I am given more to Sharma's view than to Coward's. While I acknowledge commonality around certain issues of the body and nature, there are valid reasons for studying methods of bodywork or holistic movement re-education as separate from alternative health as a more general category. These reasons involve the central form taken by movement re-education techniques; that their basis is both in *bodily movement* and in *re-education*. In this, they differ from homeopathy or acupuncture, but also from therapies of the body such as biodynamics, which seek to address the psyche specifically through the body. As I shall show in Chapter Eight, practitioners often distance themselves from the labels 'alternative' and 'therapy'. They do not see their work as providing predominantly therapeutic benefits, either on a physical or psychological/emotional level, but rather as providing first and foremost a sound physical basis from which the body can better function. This may in turn lead to better psychic unity and fewer psychological or emotional issues, but it is not the goal.

Nor have they tended to describe their work as alternative, but rather as a form of health promotion or education which is complementary to more traditional forms of health care. Personal responsibility for health and learning are extremely important aspects of these techniques, probably more so than in other alternative and complementary health practices because they are something which is done *by* the client (or pupil), not *to* her or him. The involvement and education of participants is critical; they are not simply treated, but are expected to involve themselves in the work. While practitioners see their work as having health benefits, many express regret that their work is sought only by those with physical complaints, wishing instead that it were seen as a form of education, an ongoing process rather than a therapeutic end in itself.

However, the more general ideas about health, bodies, and nature that are common to alternative health and movement re-education make studies of alternative health instructive. Coward's work, *The Whole Truth* (1989) offers an important analysis of the concept of 'naturalness' as it is used in the alternative health movement. Coward argues that what has occurred with the rise of alternative health practices since the

1960s is nothing less than a fundamental philosophical shift in the ways in which health and the body are viewed. She writes,

I am convinced that these changed views of health are at the spearhead of general changes in ideas about the individual's role in society, ideas which will have enormous consequences for how much an individual feels he or she should change or accept society as it is... the forces which attract many people to alternative therapies go way beyond a discontent with conventional medicine. More often than not individuals are attracted to the new mythology about nature and health which surrounds these practices. (1989: 6)

Coward's arguments in relation to the use of the concept of naturalness in alternative health are strong ones. Her work shows how ideologies of alternative health appeal to a version of nature which is pre-social, opposed to technology and any kind of human intervention. In this vision it is society that is the cause of mental and physical ills, and salvation can only come through reclaiming the natural in ourselves.

There is a strong sense that the body in its original form, or when restored to its original good health, will know instinctively what is right and healthy for it. It is as if the body has become the site of all innocence, which for a while was attributed by religions to the soul of the child. Now it is the body which innocently aspires towards all that is good and wholesome, the body which deeply aspires towards a proper relation with nature. (Coward, 1989: 30)

What she identifies here are many of the characteristics of 'body wisdom': a body that knows, a body that is innocent, a body that seeks health and naturalness. Coward criticises alternative health and its reliance on this vision of the natural for several reasons. First, she claims, it is difficult to prove that modern life is more stressful and more 'unnatural' than life in previous times, given that life expectancy, general health and working conditions are so greatly improved. Second, she notes that there is a link between these ideas and Western consumerist, materialist values; the 'natural self' is also usually a good consuming self, a self that can and should have anything it desires. The desires of this 'natural self' are monetary and not only health-related, and further, its health-related desires are also provided for in a market economy by

alternative practitioners who are usually not covered by public medical insurance. Coward's third criticism, tied to the second, is that alternative health philosophies place the burden of wellness on the shoulders of the individual. If health is a state of mind, and something toward which we should be constantly working and aspiring, then ill-health is seen to be due to the individual's failure to be sufficiently 'in touch' with her- or himself. Likewise, it undermines any desire or responsibility for social change. To be angry at injustice or dissatisfied with one's role is to fail to be 'whole', 'natural' or 'enlightened'.

While these are important points, I would make two general criticisms of the way Coward outlines her project. The first is around its lack of historicity. While she acknowledges that many contemporary alternative health practices and their philosophies originated over a century ago, she dismisses them as having been 'fringe' practices, perceived as quackery. Aside from the discussion presented above through the work of Porter and Cooter, Haley's (1978) research on health in Victorian Britain demonstrates that this is clearly not the case. *Mens sana in corpore sano*, a healthy mind in a sound body, was one of the driving principles in Victorian social philosophy. Coward's attempt to follow Foucault in tracing a history of the present fails in as much as it ignores the earlier histories of alternative medical practices; she traces and speculates on current developments but gives little account of how these practices and beliefs developed. Certainly, as I have shown in the preceding discussion, many of these beliefs are not as recent as she claims.

Second, Coward's work seems to be aimed at an educated but not scholarly audience, and her lack of referencing within the text and her tendency to generalise, exemplified by the breadth of her definition of alternative health, make her argument weaker from an academic point of view. This is unfortunate, given that when her evidence about the use of 'naturalness' in alternative health is suitably specific, it is clear that she has identified a critical (and vastly under-researched) issue. Sharma's (1992) more academic work identifies similar problems around the issue of what is 'natural', but her analysis is employed with more rigour than Coward's.

As I indicated above, Sharma has a clear list of criteria for defining 'complementary medicine.' Like Coward, she discusses a broad assortment of techniques under this

label, but she is much clearer about which techniques are included and why. Although Alexander Technique and other forms of movement re-education are not, her analysis still identifies a number of issues which are relevant to it, particularly regarding the roles and attitudes of practitioners, on which she has done empirical research.

For the purposes of this chapter, Sharma's critique of Coward is the most useful aspect of her analysis to draw upon. Although Sharma is also interested in the issue of how 'naturalness' is used in complementary medicine and how this is incorporated in broader cultural shifts in beliefs about health and healing, as an empirical researcher she is more cautious about generalising. She agrees that most complementary medical techniques share a common set of ideas about what health and healing are, but challenges Coward's assertions that there is a set of belief systems common to all complementary health practitioners and patients:

The idea that the individual can choose to be healthy, that some are ill because at some deeper level of the self they 'need' to be ill, that perfect health is attainable if one but overcomes the obstacles, both in oneself and in one's (increasingly unnatural) environment – these are certainly very common among practitioners of some complementary therapies... But Coward is jumping too far ahead when, without any empirical evidence, she attributes these new cultural definitions of the body and health to all users of complementary medicine... If their own accounts are anything to go by, most patients are simply using complementary medicine as a way of dealing with an intractable condition which orthodox medicine cannot cure to their satisfaction.

(Sharma, 1992: 87)

Although Sharma concludes that Coward is ultimately correct in asserting that the popularity of alternative health has to do with major social changes, she questions the degree to which patients in particular are aware of, and involved in, these changes and the beliefs they entail. Her work demonstrates the importance of an integrated approach which addresses both theory and practice, examining changes in belief systems not only through primarily textual evidence, as Coward does, but through ethnography and interviews with practitioners and patients. I will address these issues in Chapter Four in relation to my own research.

Researchers Schneirov and Geczik (1998) examine alternative health as a technology of the self, following Foucault's work. They too identify a 'natural body' at work in alternative health, which forms a model for the body its participants and practitioners desire. Schneirov and Geczik see the natural body as having three major characteristics in alternative health: it is part of an original structure that is balanced and harmonious; it is an aesthetic source of guidance which can and should be recovered; and it operates apart from human invention and intervention— 'If recovered it provides safety in a technologically driven world that is understood to be increasingly losing contact with it' (1998: 440). Fundamentally, in alternative health, 'The natural body is a perfect body, that exists outside of history and society' (1998: 440). They recognise that this formulation of the body as natural is problematic.

Schneirov and Geczik do use empirical data in the form of interviews with practitioners of alternative health in order to support their analysis. However, in seeing alternative health as a technology of the self they emphasise its aesthetic rather than ethical aspects. This description of alternative health as an aesthetic project does not sufficiently acknowledge that it is an internal regulation, a 'feeling' and not a 'seeing', that is encouraged, at least in the case of movement re-education. The 'natural body' that movement re-education techniques seek is not a body that conforms to external standards of beauty and rightness but a body that 'feels' right and healthy, a body that moves with poise and has freedom of expression. Further, while Schneirov and Geczik's application of Foucault's theories of technologies of the self is useful, they overstate the liberatory and transformational potential of these practices, suggesting that they have 'the potential to connect the demand for recognition in everyday life (recognition of the worth and validity of nonallopathic health practices) with the demand for significant changes in economic and political structures' (1998: 449). By contrast, Coward suggests that alternative health can be seen to be a particularly *apolitical* form of resistance. She argues that it will not lead to social transformation because of its requirement of an acceptance of both self and society as well as its emphasis on consumption and consumerism: there is always some other practice to be pursued and purchased to return us to our 'natural bodies' (1988: 117). It is worth considering the possibility that both of these options are correct: alternative health may indeed lead to significant changes in health practices,

but it may also refocus attention on the individual and attempt to minimise social issues. Health care may become more focused on the individual rather than treating the body as a collection of symptoms, but it is possible that social context of these symptoms will be ignored.

Conclusion

This chapter has traced developments in dance, physical education, posture, eugenics, and alternative health through the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries. While these fields vary widely, they share a central concern with health and the body. All bear a relationship to movement re-education and can thus be used to begin to trace a history of the concept of body wisdom within it.

As I said at the beginning of this chapter, this is not an exhaustive history of body wisdom. Rather, my intention has been to present literature related to the development of a number of parallel trends affecting bodies and body movement, and to show how these may be implicated in the histories of movement re-education techniques and their attendant concerns.

There are three important themes to be traced through these histories in terms of their impact on movement re-education and their relation to body wisdom. The first is the idealisation of the 'natural' body that occurs both in dance and in alternative health. This can be seen in the late 1800s in the work of François Delsarte, and in the early 1900s in the dances of Isadora Duncan. It is the development of postmodern dance in the 1960s and 1970s which ultimately brings a new vision of the dancer's body as non-virtuosic and thus natural, however. This body requires movement re-education to undo more traditional forms of bodily training and thereby free the body to move in apparently more natural ways. Similarly, alternative health had a presence around the turn of the century and then regained popularity in the 1960s and 1970s. While dance and alternative health are obviously very different ways of working with the body, certain common ideals of a natural body are present in both. As I have said earlier, body wisdom requires the conception of a natural body that can be returned to.

The relationship between health, physical training, and eugenics is a second theme that emerges and is necessary to an understanding both of movement re-education and of body wisdom as a whole. As I have shown, many aspects of physical culture and posture modification drew upon theories that the human race was degenerating, which were popular from the late 1800s until as late as the mid-twentieth century. The eugenics movement was a major source and outlet for these theories of degeneration, which were addressed in a variety of ways. However, there was an increasing psychologisation of posture and body movement toward the middle of the century, whereby poor posture was no longer seen as needing correction for eugenic reasons but rather as being directly representative of the psyche. This shift, which can be seen in the work of Rolf and Feldenkrais, is important in the development of a theory of body wisdom because it is here that psychological problems begin to be related directly to the body and its postures.

The third development that has been important is the move toward flexibility of the body and its internal systems, which can be seen in posture, in postmodern dance, and in the bundle of ideas around health and the immune system which Martin (1994) calls immunophilosophy. A wise body is one that is not only natural but also flexible and adaptable; this, and the accompanying shift toward regulating how the body feels inwardly rather than how it appears externally, have been critical in movement re-education.

This chapter has begun to address the aspect of my research question dealing with how it becomes possible to think of bodies as wise and knowing. It has provided a basis for understanding movement re-education in a particular historical context. In the next chapter, I will set out the theoretical framework through which I will address the research question on an empirical level, primarily through the work of Foucault and Merleau-Ponty. The ties between dance and movement re-education will also become evident as I employ dance literature to exemplify the strengths and weaknesses of these theoretical traditions in relation to practices of the moving body.

Chapter 3

Bodies, Nature and Culture

Introduction

This chapter will explore discourse and embodiment as two theoretical tendencies within recent writing on the body. It will discuss the adequacy of each of these and the ways in which they can be used to complement each other. I will argue, following Crossley (1994; 1996) that rather than privileging discourse or embodiment, we need to see both as necessary aspects of a fully formed analysis.

Recent years have seen an exponential growth in publications about the body. Bryan Turner (1996 [1984]) was the first to articulate a 'sociology of the body', although the body had a history in sociology before this field was established, in the work of Douglas (1970), Elias (2000 [1978]), Goffman (1971), and Mauss (1973 [1935]), for example. Williams and Bendelow (1998) have argued that there is also a body to be recovered in classical sociological theory through 'critical re-reading in a new, corporeal light' (1998: 9). For example, Marx's work is implicitly about the labouring body, while much of Weber's work deals with the rationalisation and regulation of bodies. Turner has taken up the latter in his analyses of the body in society (1996; 1992), noting too that there are parallels between Weber's work and Foucault's in terms of the regulation of bodies (Turner, 1992).

Although the body has not been as neglected within sociology as it may initially appear, it is fair to say that Turner's work inaugurated sociology of the body as a subdiscipline, and the recent literature in this field (see for example Falk, 1994; Frank, 1991; 1995; Featherstone, 1991; Shilling, 1993) is testament to this. Thomas (2003) has referred to this as sociology's 'body project'.⁹

However, as Turner himself has noted (1996), sociology of the body has been heavily dominated by theory with little attention given to empirical study. Further, it has tended to overemphasise the representationalist aspects of bodies and to underplay

⁹ In this she follows Shilling (1993).

embodiment and the experience of the lived body (see also Williams and Bendelow, 1998 for a discussion of this). Anne Witz (2000) has also asked 'whose body matters?' in this work, concerned that women are being conflated with the body, undermining feminism at a point when feminist theories of gender have sought to socialise women and their experiences. Sociology of the body is therefore problematic. In essence, it has suffered from being rather too much a study 'of the' body while paying too little attention to how the social is both *bodied* and *embodied*. The term 'body' has had little specificity. As Thomas Csordas notes, in some work it has been used as if it were simply a synonym for self or person.

This tendency carries the dual dangers of dissipating the force of using the body as a methodological starting point, and of objectifying bodies as things devoid of intentionality and intersubjectivity. It thus misses the opportunity to add sentience and sensibility to our notions of self and person, and to insert an added dimension of materiality to our notions of culture and history. (Csordas, 1994a: 4)

The overly theoretical nature of much of sociology's body project has resulted in work that discusses the body yet is itself strangely *disembodied*. In response to this problem, there has been some attempt to reintroduce the lived and experiential body to sociological study (Nettleton and Watson, 1998; Williams and Bendelow, 1998). However, the majority of sociological writing on the body continues to take a largely theoretical approach. Ultimately, too, the approach it takes is of marginal use in understanding embodied practice. Therefore, I have focussed the following discussion around the work of writers who do provide tools for analysing movement re-education as an embodied practice and as a discursive one.

This chapter will attend to the writings of Merleau-Ponty and others on the lived body in a socio-cultural context, and the work of Foucault and his interpreters on technologies of the self, power, and the body. The work of these theorists will reflect both parts of my research question, around how it becomes possible to think of bodies as wise and knowing, and how such discourses are embodied. I draw on feminist uses and critiques of both Foucault and Merleau-Ponty specifically, because it is through feminism that many of the clearest analyses of the uses of, and problems with, the natural body have emerged. I will then take up the issue of how these very different

approaches can be made to work together, and discuss reasons for doing this. The chapter will conclude with an examination of dance theory, which informs my work and which exemplifies the strengths and weaknesses of the theoretical approaches I discuss here in relation to a bodily practice.

Phenomenology and the Lived Body

The work of Maurice Merleau-Ponty is central to many studies of human embodiment (see for example Bigwood, 1991; Csordas, 1994b; Crossley, 2001; Kontos, 2003; Young, 1998). Indeed, his work is unique in the tools it offers social scientists for understanding lived experience and what Nettleton and Watson (1998) refer to as ‘the body in everyday life’. Merleau-Ponty’s major work, *Phenomenology of Perception* (1962) offers an examination of the role of the lived body in perceptual processes. Perception, he argues, is always an embodied experience, and bodies are always in-the-world, never separate from it. *Phenomenology of Perception* criticises the empiricist and intellectualist theories of perception that have traditionally been dominant in psychology and philosophy. Empiricism (through psychology) has abstracted perception from experience by reducing it to a stimulus and response relationship, treating the body as an object, while intellectualism, particularly through Cartesian philosophy, has located perception in a pre-existent consciousness, thus overlooking its contingent nature. He argues that

the image of a constituted world where, with my body, I should be only one object among others, and the idea of an absolute constituting consciousness are only apparently antithetical; they are a dual expression of a universe perfectly explicit in itself. Authentic reflection, instead of turning from one to the other as both true, in the manner of a philosophy of the understanding, rejects them as both false. (1962: 41)

For empiricism, the body is a determinate object, whereas for intellectualism, there is a determinate (mental) subject. Merleau-Ponty seeks to overcome the subject-object distinction. Instead, he proposes that consciousness should be seen as fundamentally embodied; he proposes that it is always ‘being-towards-the-thing through the intermediary of the body’ (1962: 137). Fundamentally, he rejects traditional dualisms of mind-body and nature-culture; for him, consciousness is always embedded in the body, and nature and culture are always intertwined. Having a body is central to our

experience: 'The body is the vehicle of being in the world, and having a body is, for a living creature, to be intervolved in a definite environment' (1962: 82).

Merleau-Ponty also challenges intellectualist theories by acknowledging that bodily knowledge and action is often prereflective. However, this does not mean that it is pre-cultural. His work lends itself to the social sciences because of his awareness that the body is culturally situated, although, as Grosz (1994) notes and as I shall develop below, he was not sufficiently aware of the sexual specificity of its ways of being. He rejects any model of culture as layered on top of an essentially natural body, a model implied by social constructionist accounts of the body as inscribed surface, which I shall discuss below:

It is impossible to superimpose on man a lower layer of behaviour which one chooses to call 'natural', followed by a manufactured cultural or spiritual world. Everything is both manufactured and natural in man, as it were, in the sense that there is not a word, not a form of behaviour which does not owe something to purely biological being—and which at the same time does not elude the simplicity of animal life, and cause forms of vital behaviour to deviate from their pre-ordained direction, through a sort of *leakage* and through a genius for ambiguity which might serve to define man. (1962: 189)

Merleau-Ponty's theory of habit is a good example of his embodied approach to perception. As habit is an important concept in the Alexander Technique and to a lesser extent in other forms of movement re-education, its analysis is particularly relevant to this study, and I will develop this further in Chapter Six. For Merleau-Ponty, the acquisition of habit is not controlled by conscious reflection, nor is it merely a matter of blind physiological response to stimulus. Rather, the psychic and the physiological come together, forming a kind of bodily knowledge: 'If habit is neither a form of knowledge nor an involuntary action, what then is it? It is knowledge in the hands, which is forthcoming only when bodily effort is made, and cannot be formulated in detachment from that effort' (1962: 144). He explains:

it is the body which 'understands' in the acquisition of habit. This way of putting it will appear absurd, if understanding is subsuming a sense-datum under an idea, and if the body is an object. But the phenomenon of habit is just what prompts us to revise our

notion of ‘understand’ and our notion of the body. To understand is to experience the harmony between what we aim at and what is given, between the intention and the performance—and the body is our anchorage in a world. (Merleau-Ponty, 1962: 144)

Once habit has been established, it conditions further responses to similar situations, much in the way of Bourdieu’s *habitus*, discussed below. Merleau-Ponty’s concept of a body which ‘understands’ is somewhat similar to the notion of body wisdom held in later movement re-education techniques such as Feldenkrais and Body-Mind Centering, as I shall detail in Chapters 5 and 6. Although this ‘understanding’ body is a long way from a body which knows innately what is healthy, similar ideas about how knowledge is embodied underlie both. For both, the body is part of subjectivity, not as an object ruled by the mind/self, but as an embodied subject.

In Merleau-Ponty’s work, subjectivity is always intersubjective (Crossley, 1994: 28) in the sense that subjects are always *in* the world, and the world is shared. The subject is thus always culturally situated. Despite this, his work provides little analysis of how social and cultural factors may affect embodiment, and most of his examples are framed in terms of the individual in interaction with objects or himself (*sic*). Therefore, it is useful to examine how others have used Merleau-Ponty’s work in relation to social and cultural issues. Below, I will discuss several feminist interpretations of his work, and then go on to look at the applications made by Csordas (1994a; 1994b; 2002) to the phenomenon of charismatic healing. I will suggest how these more cultural interpretations of Merleau-Ponty’s phenomenology have helped to frame my own research, and the insights they can provide for a study of how movement re-education techniques are embodied.

Feminist Responses to Merleau-Ponty

Feminists have taken up Merleau-Ponty’s work in a variety of ways. Elizabeth Grosz (1994) points to the strength of Merleau-Ponty’s phenomenology in challenging Cartesian dualism.

Rather than valorize one or the other side of a dichotomous pair, rather than affirm their unity and oneness in some kind of global or local holism, (which always entails some

kind of reductionism) or accept the bifurcation and mutually exclusive and exhaustive status of such pairs, Merleau-Ponty's work...attempts to take up and utilize the space in between, the "no-man's land" or gulf separating oppositional terms. This impossible, excluded middle precludes and makes possible the binary terms insofar as it precedes and exceeds them, insofar as it is uncontainable in either term. (Grosz, 1994: 93-4)

Grosz is interested not only in Merleau-Ponty's theories of the body, however, but also in what use feminists can make of him. She argues that he offers three things many feminists can learn from: an acknowledgement that experience is not an unquestionable category of given truth, but is always bound up in social and cultural forces; a model that takes experience seriously, as something to be explained, not explained away; and a location of experience midway between mind and body, meaning that experience is always embodied and corporeally constituted (1994: 94-5). She is, however, highly critical of his writing on sexuality in *Phenomenology of Perception*, where he fails to acknowledge the sexual specificity of his comments. He thereby neglects and is unable to account for sexual difference:

Never once in his writings does he make any suggestion that his formulations may have been derived from the valorization and analysis of the experience of only one kind of subject. The question of what other types of human experience, what other modalities of perception, what other relations, subjects may have with objects is not, cannot be, raised in the terms he develops. (1994: 110)

It is this conclusion that such questions cannot be raised which leads her to doubt his usefulness for feminist analysis. She concludes that feminists must 'seriously question whether phenomenological descriptions are appropriate for women's experience and, if they are not, whether it is desirable that they should be or whether, instead, altogether new and different theoretical terms are necessary' (1994: 111). A brief examination of two feminist theorists who have used Merleau-Ponty will demonstrate that some feminist applications of his work are more problematic than others.

Carol Bigwood (1991) adopts Merleau-Ponty in order to argue for a *re-naturalization* of the body. For Bigwood, re-naturalization is a reaction to overly-cultural

approaches like those of Butler (1999 [1990]), whose work, she claims, 'leaves us with a disembodied body and a free-floating gender artifice in a sea of cultural meaning production' (1991: 59). This 'poststructuralist body' is 'so fluid it can take on almost limitless embodiments. It has no real terrestrial weight' (1991: 59). This not only undermines embodiment, but also reinforces the alienation of human beings from nature and the devaluation of the environment in contemporary culture, she argues. Bigwood's project, then, is to 're-naturalize' the body by working out 'a new "natural-cultural" model of the body that goes beyond both the fixed, biological body and the poststructuralist culturally inscribed body' (1991: 60). While she acknowledges that there is no pure natural body, she is equally critical of the pure cultural body posited by Butler.

While I share many of Bigwood's criticisms of Butler and her model of the body as discursively determined, something I shall take up later in the chapter, the 're-naturalization' Bigwood undertakes is problematic for several reasons. First, to borrow Grosz's (1994) critique discussed above, despite an acknowledgement that Merleau-Ponty's "neutral" human body is prejudiced in favour of the male body (1991: 61), Bigwood in fact uses his work rather uncritically and thus takes on many of his implicitly masculine, universalist ways of describing the lived body. She refers regularly to 'our' (phenomenological, perceptual) bodies. Her examples of 'our' bodies, however, are unique and specific, hardly generalisable, contrary to her claim to 'recover a noncultural non-linguistic body that accompanies and is intertwined with our cultural existence' (1991: 57). They rarely give a sense that she is aware of the cultural aspects of bodily experience at all. In one example, borrowed from Merleau-Ponty, she describes 'attending to the sky', wherein 'my eyes and my whole body slowly yield, relax, enter into a sensuous rhythm of existence that is already there and that is peculiar to the sky in its blue depths... My living situation becomes one of blue' (1991: 62).

While 'sky' is theoretically something all humans share access to, there is no reason to argue that this particular experience of sky-gazing is universal and therefore natural. There are cultural reasons as well as physiological reasons (for example, blindness) which keep humans from experiencing the sky universally in the same way. Even if Bigwood herself is not implying that such an experience of sky-gazing

is shared, she still neglects to acknowledge that her own bodily experience of sky-gazing is also culturally shaped by her perceptions of 'sky' and, presumably, the association of leisure time which may be attached to sky-gazing.

Second, it is important to examine whose interest the 'natural body' serves. In 're-naturalizing' the body in the service of understanding gendered embodiment, as Bigwood does, she risks allying herself with those who have consistently connected women with nature and opposed them to men and culture. Bigwood argues for an anti-essentialist theory of the body that re-values nature and connects it to culture rather than seeing it as ontologically prior. However, in her attempt to value both women and nature she links the two and implicitly opposes them to culture.

Ultimately, her case for a 'natural-cultural' body is not borne out either by her tendency to universalise experience or her final example of 'female bodily wisdom' (1991: 68) exemplified in pregnancy, where, when culture seeks to encourage hiding and repressing the pregnant body,

there is a need to recall the wisdom of the mothering body that has already sided with, and is already sensitively attuned to, a phusical [*sic*, from Greek '*phusis*', translated as nature] current entwining her flesh with that of the unborn before any of her efforts. It is especially in labor that a mother needs to trust the "intelligence" of her "connatural" body. (1991: 68)

The force of Bigwood's argument that the purely cultural body described by Butler needs to be 're-naturalized' and given a counterbalance through phenomenology thus disintegrates into an uncritical celebration of body wisdom which conflates women's experience with their bodies and nature in a way that is both essentialist and unconvincing.

Moreover, I am not persuaded by Bigwood's attempts to write her own (pregnant) body into the text of her article by including reference to her bodily states as she wrote it. When it does not simply distract from the thrust of her argument, this writing-in appears at best artificial, a juxtaposition of the personal and the academic which fails to tell us anything substantial about the former and contributes nothing analytically to the latter. Simply to write about one's body is not sufficient to make

academic work *embodied*. The text about her body receives little discussion in the rest of her article, which serves to isolate it and make it appear out of place. This has the effect of neutralising a potentially strong critique about the lack of a 'body' or embodied voice in much academic writing. Since the academic and the personal do not 'speak' to each other in the article, do not challenge and engage with one another, embodied experience once again appears as something pre-analytical and outside of academic concern.

In this project, I have also used my own body as a research tool in undertaking an ethnography of the Alexander Technique. In Chapter Six, which provides an account of this ethnography, I have therefore written my body/experience into the text by way of example. However, I am conscious that these accounts do not stand alone, and therefore have linked them with my analysis, using them only where they can clearly demonstrate analytical points. As I will discuss in the following chapter, I have also used discourse analysis and qualitative interviewing to round out this study and provide alternative interpretations, rather than assuming my experience to be universalisable.

Iris Marion Young's 'Throwing Like a Girl' is more successful at dealing with the topic of gendered embodiment whilst using a Merleau-Pontian perspective. Young's article argues that there are specifically feminine modes of embodiment, ways of 'throwing like a girl' as well as ways of running, climbing, swinging and hitting like a girl (1998a: 263). These ways of being-in-the-world can be summarised in terms of the fact that 'feminine movement exhibits an *ambiguous transcendence*, an *inhibited intentionality*, and a *discontinuous unity* with its surroundings' (1998a: 264, italics in original).

In her reflections on this article twenty years later, Young is correct to criticise its implicit acceptance of a universal humanist and masculine way of being which seeks only to extend masculine rights to everyone without criticising that definition of rights, and to note that she only emphasises the oppressive aspects of women's embodiment, treating them as victims rather than agents (Young, 1998b: 289). She notes also that there is no singular feminine way of using the body, and that age, for example, affects the cultural conditioning of body use. Like Bigwood, then, the

phenomenological approach has perhaps led her to universalise the bodies about which she speaks.

However unlike Bigwood, Young's model of embodiment at least acknowledges and refers to forms of feminine embodiment which are cultural; further, she avoids falling back on a model of body wisdom that implies a natural way of being that can overcome (cultural) oppression. She thereby exemplifies some of the ways in which phenomenology can account for the cultural, lived, body. In this, her analysis is useful. It is perhaps because both Bigwood and Young are engaged at the level of theory that they have tended to generalise and universalise about the bodies they describe. In the next section, I will discuss the work of Thomas Csordas (1994a; 1994b; 2002) who has read Merleau-Ponty in a way that is both specific and culturally grounded.

Merleau-Ponty and the Lived Body

Merleau-Ponty has also been taken up in potentially useful ways by those working on embodiment from a social scientific perspective. Nick Crossley (1995) suggests that Merleau-Ponty provides tools for the development of a 'carnal sociology' which would counterbalance sociology of the body by analysing the body's lived experience rather than its representation. For Crossley, neither of these approaches is sufficient in itself, but he proposes that it is the analysis of the lived body that has been most neglected. He argues that Merleau-Ponty's work is a key starting point for such an approach. However, his own work has tended to explore Merleau-Ponty's work in a theoretical rather than empirical way. Below, I will discuss his argument that Merleau-Ponty's work should be used in conjunction with more representationalist and constructionist accounts of the body; first, however, I want to examine some empirical work which has used Merleau-Pontian phenomenology.

Thomas Csordas' empirical work on Catholic charismatic healing is particularly strong in its use of Merleau-Ponty's work to understand the experiential aspects of healing. Csordas claims that too many social scientists have proposed a 'black box' model wherein the rituals around healing are analysed without any attention being paid to the experiences of participants (1994b: 3), thus producing little data about how

healing works. In contrast, he proposes an approach which takes participants' embodied experience as central. He does this by paying careful attention to the bodily aspects of experience and the ways in which participants in a particular cultural setting (the prayer groups and church services of the Catholic charismatics) understand and make sense of the practices and experiences associated with that setting. He terms this approach *cultural phenomenology*. He argues that such a method should take into account that although the body can become objectified for us, it is rarely so in daily life; rather, it is important to begin with 'the preobjective and prereflective experience of the body, showing that the process of self-objectification is already cultural prior to the analytic distinction between subject and object' (2002: 59). In order to flesh out the cultural aspect of Merleau-Ponty's writing, Csordas also employs Bourdieu's work, which I shall discuss in more detail below.

For Csordas, a key aspect of Merleau-Ponty's work is his statement that human existence is characterised by indeterminacy and that this is its transcendent characteristic (Merleau-Ponty, 1962: 169). Csordas applies this to an understanding of selfhood and its constitution. He writes:

Self is neither a substance nor entity, but an indeterminate capacity to engage or become oriented in the world, characterized by effort and reflexivity. In this sense self occurs as a conjunction of prereflective bodily experience, culturally constituted world or milieu, and situational specificity or habitus. Self processes are orientational processes in which aspects of the world are thematized, with the result that the self is objectified, most often as a "person" with a cultural identity or set of identities.
(Csordas, 1994b: 5)

With this definition of selfhood, he analyses the experiences of participants in Catholic Charismatic healing in terms of how they are constitutive of self. Csordas' work contributes a key theme for analysis in later chapters through something he terms 'somatic modes of attention'. The article by the same name suggests that there are particular 'culturally elaborated ways of attending to and with one's body in surroundings that include the embodied presence of others' (2002: 244). These somatic modes of attention are culturally constituted rather than biologically given. Examples include athletic rehearsals in the mind, health consciousness and attention

to diet, and dancing. Csordas suggests that understanding and identifying such modes of attention gives new insights into intersubjectivity and embodiment. Clearly, *movement re-education involves somatic modes of attention, and examining what these are and the ways in which they are used provides insight not only into their workings and practices, but also into particular theories of body/mind interaction, as Chapters 5 and 6 shall elaborate.*

Csordas is not the only social scientist to analyse lived experience in a productive way. Pia Kontos (2003), for example, has productively applied Merleau-Ponty's analysis of embodiment and perception to her study of Alzheimer's disease. Her work shows that embodied memory of certain activities may persist long after intellectual capacities deteriorate, which radically challenges traditional conceptions of the disease as resulting in complete loss of self. In a different type of study, ethnomethodologist David Sudnow (1978) shows how improvisation is embodied through the hands of a jazz pianist. These works as well as Csordas' demonstrate that memory and the self are embodied, and that such embodiment can be rendered in academic terms through a close attention to the body's activities. In Chapter Six, I have applied these principles to the fieldwork data I collected on the Alexander Technique.

However, despite its strengths, the phenomenological approach does not account for broader cultural conditions and the discourses which shape embodiment. Further, as Crossley (1994) has noted and as I shall discuss below, Merleau-Ponty's work on its own does not provide a sufficient grounding in the cultural conditions of embodiment, although he acknowledges that these exist. It is for this reason that I have used his work in relation to that of Michel Foucault, whose writing on the body focuses on ways in which it has been culturally shaped. Foucault's bracketing out of the subject in order to understand the cultural and historical conditions of subjectivity thus fills in the space left in Merleau-Ponty's analysis.

Bodies, Power, and Technologies of the Self

Foucault's work has had a major influence on the ways in which the body is perceived in contemporary social thought; it could in fact be argued that it is partially through

Foucault that the 'body project' has taken shape. While Foucault's writings are wide-ranging, there are two aspects of his work that I wish to take up here: the first is his late writing about techniques of the self, and the second is his earlier argument around genealogy and the body. While the later Foucault is extremely useful in terms of an analysis of movement re-education and body wisdom, I shall argue, much care needs to be taken with the model of the body in his earlier work, which appears to entail a body passively inscribed by society and history. This model of the body is problematic because it implies that a pre-social body lurks beneath these inscriptions, waiting to be recovered, as Butler (1999) and Grosz (1994) have noted.

Foucault's later work on the history of sexuality proposes that a history of subjectivity can be undertaken which would analyse the ways human beings act upon themselves and shape themselves in particular ways, and that these ways could be interpreted as ethical practices (Foucault, 1985). Such practices are ethical in the sense that they are 'intentional and voluntary actions by which men not only set themselves rules of conduct, but also seek to transform themselves, to change themselves in their singular being, and to make their life into an *oeuvre* that carries certain aesthetic values and meets certain stylistic criteria' (1985: 10-11). He argues that all such 'techniques of the self' have the following characteristics: an ethical substance or way in which the subject relates to him or herself, modes of subjection or authorities who are appealed to for validation, forms of ethical work or techniques practised, and *telos*, or objectives and aspirations behind these practices (Foucault, 1985: 26-7).

Foucault applies these four characteristics of techniques of the self through his analysis of the role of sexuality in ancient Greece (1985) and Rome (1986). His intention was to continue this type of analysis by applying it to the Christian period, something he began to elaborate in the final chapter of *The Care of the Self* and in later interviews and writings about ethics and the self (1988; 1997). He claims that analysing techniques of the self in terms of these characteristics would show how historical shifts had occurred, in ways that were not immediately apparent from an analysis of the moral codes governing each age:

Some of the prohibitions are much stricter and much more rigorous in Christianity than in the Greek period. But the themes are the same. So I think that the great changes that

occurred between Greek society, Greek ethics, Greek morality, and how the Christians viewed themselves are not in the [moral] code but in what I call the “ethics,” which is the relation to oneself. (Foucault, 1997: 266)

While moral injunctions such as those against sex outside marriage exist in both contexts, the reasoning behind them, and the practices associated with attaining them, can differ substantially. Dean (1994: 197-9) summarises Foucault’s analysis of the characteristics of techniques of the self in relation to sexuality thus: In terms of ethical substance, in Greek and Graeco-Roman ethics it was the ‘use of pleasure’ which was of concern, whereas in Christian ethics the focus was on the flesh as impure and sinful. The mode of subjection of the Greeks related to an aesthetics of existence or creating for oneself a noble or beautiful life, whereas for the Stoics, what was at issue was creating oneself according to universal rational rules. Christian modes of subjection, in turn, involved formulating oneself as submissive to the will of God.

In all cases, ethical work can involve such practices as ‘dialogue, listening, meditation, training of memory, examination of conscience and self-examination, diary and notebook keeping, letter-writing, and the mortification rituals taken up by Christianity including confession, penance, and fasting’ (Dean, 1994: 198). All of these work to shape and form the self, creating a particular kind of ‘self’ in keeping with an ethical project. These practices, too, vary historically. Rose (1990) uses Foucault’s work to show how psychology and therapeutic practices are contemporary forms of ethical work.

In addition to a type of work to be practised, techniques of the self must also have a teleology or *telos*, an end or goal to which they aspire. Within ancient Greek culture, the goal was a moderation in the use of pleasure in one’s behaviour relating to food, sex, or drink, a mastery of the self; for the Stoic philosophers, it became control over oneself as a universal and rational being, in relation to other such beings; and in Christianity it became a form of salvation, which required renouncing the self (Dean, 1994: 198-9). However, ‘none of these possibilities presents a global account of any particular societies or sets of social relations, and all are presupposed by various strategies, agencies, and practices’ (1994: 199).

Dean goes on to suggest that in contemporary society various liberation movements have become the primary form of ethics, and that within this 'contemporary movement of sexual and political liberation' the teleology is 'the goal of ethical self-fulfilment taking the form of an emancipation of the self'. (1994: 198). Similarly, Davidson argues:

Ascetic manuals are one excellent source of self-forming activity, but so too are many nineteenth- and twentieth-century self-help books. And what Foucault calls the Californian cult of the self is almost defined by its elaboration of techniques that permit one to liberate the true self, a necessary step, at least in California, in allowing one to behave ethically. (1986: 229)

Such references to the 'Californian cult of the self' and 'liberation movements' are vague, but apparently refer to what has been called the 'human potential movement' and the broad variety of popular therapeutic and self-help literature that has emerged, which often includes forms of bodywork and body therapies. It is crucial, therefore, to point out that Dean's suggestion that the goal of self-fulfilment in liberation movements is an *emancipation of the self* is misleading, as is Davidson's observation about *liberating the true self*, because the terms 'emancipation' and 'liberation' lead one to think that freedom is the *telos* behind these movements. This point is also unclear in Foucault, who remarks in one interview that *telos* has to do with 'the kind of being to which we aspire when we behave in a moral way... shall we become pure, or immortal, or free, or masters of ourselves, and so on?' (1997: 265). Freedom itself, however, is not the teleology behind this 'cult of the self' because freedom is not a goal *in and of itself*; rather, freedom is but one aspect of a larger project.

Foucault clarifies this point later in the same interview, where he claims that in the 'Californian cult of the self, one is supposed to discover one's true self, to separate it from that which might obscure or alienate it, to decipher its truth thanks to psychological or psychoanalytic science, which is supposed to be able to tell you what your true self is' (1997: 271). It is this emphasis on *truth* rather than *freedom* that is critically important. A 'freedom to be one's true self' or a 'freedom from psychic constraints' is explicitly a freedom which is about obtaining an authentic self, a self which one originally had but from which one has been separated; as Rose writes,

paraphrasing Marx and Rousseau, 'Man, it would appear, is born free but everywhere lives in psychic chains' (1990: 243). Rose, too, discusses therapy as a technology of freedom, a technique which 'obliges us to be free', but he is more precise about the ends of this freedom: it is also a freedom to consume and to interpret the world in terms of consumer choice; we are, then, obliged to be free, and obliged to define our 'true selves' in terms of these choices and freedoms. The project of freedom and truth is in no way separate from broader forms of societal governance:

Certainly the psychotherapeutic solutions to the government of subjectivity are consonant with the political rationales that are in play in the period of 'the crisis of the welfare state'. Their espousal of the morality of freedom, autonomy, and fulfilment provides for the mutual translatability of the languages of psychic health and individual liberty. Their expansion through the market mechanism frees the techniques for self-regulation from systems of bureaucratic surveillance, evaluation, and regulation of personal conduct. (Rose, 1990: 256)

However:

If the new techniques for the care of the self are subjectifying, it is not because experts have colluded in the globalization of political power, seeking to dominate and subjugate the autonomy of the self through the bureaucratic management of life itself. Rather, it is that modern selves have become attached to the project of freedom. (Rose, 1990: 258)

Freedom is inextricably bound to modes of liberal governance and to late capitalism as a whole; as Foucault notes, there has been a shift whereby 'the ancient right to *take* life or *let* live was replaced by a power to *foster* life or *disallow* it to the point of death' (1990: 138). Freedom, in short, is tied to a 'biopolitics' of governing bodies through the promotion of self-governance.

Difficulties and slippages of terminology such as the one I have identified around 'freedom' occur, I would argue, because Foucault's four lines of analysis are not tidy categories; it is sometimes difficult to determine where the ontological 'ethical substance' ends and *telos* begins. Chapter Five applies these lines of analysis to movement re-education, and for my purposes there I have found Hacking's (1986) description of the four aspects of a genealogy of ethics to be the most useful. Ethical

substance he describes as ‘the sheer stuff that you worry about if you are a moral agent. It is the part of ourselves and of our behaviour that is relevant for ethical judgement’ (1986: 237). A mode of subjection is ‘whatever it is that you use to internalise these concerns, and what you take as being the relevant Truth about them—Holy Writ, the voice of a drug, the sanction of reason, political conviction, personal obsession, anything from outside that we take as an authority’ (1986: 237). The third element of ethics, the ethical work, ‘is asceticism because it is cutting off some possible ways to be or to behave, in order to serve some immediate end. This end serves the teleology’ which has to do with the kind of beings we aspire to be (Hacking, 1986: 238).

Written on the Body?

Foucault’s analysis of techniques of the self contrasts somewhat with his earlier analyses of the workings of power in that there is a clearer sense of agency in this late work; in earlier writings, the body appears as something passive, inscribed by history and society. Nowhere is this more clear than in his article, ‘Nietzsche, Genealogy, History’, where he describes genealogy as attached to the body because

It inscribes itself in the nervous system, in temperament, in the digestive apparatus; it appears in faulty respiration, in improper diets ... The body is the inscribed surface of events (traced by language and dissolved by ideas), the locus of a dissociated self (adopting the illusion of a substantial unity), and a volume in perpetual disintegration. Genealogy, as an analysis of descent, is thus situated within the articulation of the body and history. Its task is *to expose a body totally imprinted by history and the process of history’s destruction of the body.* (Foucault, 1984: 82-3, italics mine)

Such a task is important because it acknowledges that *bodies have histories*. It is also misguided because it reads the body as *only* inscribed; the body that is inscribed is passive, without agency. In *Discipline and Punish*, one sees the effect of this model of the body; ‘docile bodies’ are those which ‘may be subjected, used, transformed, and improved’ (Foucault, 1977: 136); through discipline, which is the ‘political anatomy of detail’ (1977: 139). In Foucault’s descriptions of the ideal soldier’s body as ‘something that can be made; out of a formless clay, an inapt body, the machine

required can be constructed' (1977: 135), there is no space for agency or subjectivity. Foucault's interest in the formative power of discourse leads him to bracket out subjectivity on the basis that he must 'reject a priori theories of the subject in order to analyze the relationships that may exist between the constitution of the subject or different forms of the subject and games of truth, practices of power, and so on' (Foucault, 1994: 290). This bracketing leaves him open to charges of essentialism, particularly in his early work, where the 'inscription' model is most evident. While his arguments about 'techniques of the self' imply a bodied self actively involved in shaping and forming this self, the social inscription model hints at a recoverable body beneath the inscriptions of history and culture, a body which could, theoretically at least, be regained. As I shall demonstrate in Chapter Seven, movement re-education holds a parallel view of the body as inscribed but is particularly interested in erasing such inscriptions to recover the 'healthy' natural body beneath them.

This model of the body as inscribed surface is not unique to Foucault, nor is he entirely responsible for its emergence. Margaret McLaren (2002), for example, defends his work against the critiques of Butler (1999), Grosz (1994), McNay (1992) and others by noting that in his later writings his theories of the body are more complex and that in fact his 'complex and elusive model of the body may be best thought of as oscillating among a social inscription model, a model of internalization, and a model of interpretation' (2002: 83). The model of internalisation is evident in *Discipline and Punish*, she argues, where docile bodies are produced through manipulation, shaping, and training of various kinds: here, training does not *inscribe* the body, but is what the body *internalises*. Although manipulation 'conjures up images of a passive body, training and responding rely on some sort of active body, one that is capable of internalisation' (2002: 106). Interpretation, on the other hand, 'corresponds to what Foucault calls the intelligible body... the body as an object of knowledge interpreted through disciplinary discourses, such as biology, physiology, psychiatry, and medicine' (2002: 108). This model of the body is particularly evident, she claims, in *The Birth of the Clinic* and *The History of Sexuality Volume One*, where Foucault pays particular attention to the shaping power of these discourses.

In essence, McLaren demonstrates that criticisms of Foucault's work on the basis of his social inscription model of the body are incomplete and rely too heavily on one

piece of work ('Nietzsche, Genealogy, History') whilst paying insufficient attention to his other writings about the body. It is certainly true that Butler and Grosz, at least, refer primarily to 'Nietzsche, Genealogy, History' in their critiques, at the expense of other writings. As I have shown above, there is evidence that at least in the latter two volumes of *The History of Sexuality*, Foucault employs a more complex theory of the body which, if not resistant, is at least actively engaged with the processes that shape it. However, where McLaren acknowledges that Foucault's model of resistance is not fully developed (2002: 98) she goes on to suggest that it is still prominent in his work and that in fact, contrary to Butler and Grosz's suggestions, there is 'no reason to interpret Foucault's promotion of bodies and pleasures as utopian, relying on some notion of a natural body' (2002: 109). I will demonstrate that quite to the contrary, the model of the body as socially inscribed does indeed imply a natural body, and this natural body has deeply problematic implications for social theory and practice.

One example where the relationship between social inscription and the natural body is made clear is in Pasi Falk's article, 'Written in the Flesh', which describes the body as follows:

The human body and its surface is filled with hieroglyphs telling one of the stories of corporeality in history. Only the raw material, the 'natural' body itself, seen as a whole or a number of parts, seems to be a simple fact—however, not as an organism with a number of specific characteristics but rather as a canvas to be painted or a lump of clay to be moulded. (Falk, 1995: 95)

Falk's explicit reference to the natural body in this is telling: the body has no 'specific characteristics' but is available to be moulded or painted upon— it is a blank slate awaiting inscription. Its surface is then covered with markings which are socio-historical. Williams and Bendelow suggest that such a view underpins an entire tradition of sociology and social anthropology from Marcel Mauss to Mary Douglas: this work privileges symbolism over lived and experiential aspects of the body to the extent that bodies 'appear relatively inert, *tabulae rasae*, upon which society stamps its indelible symbolic imprint' (1998: 28).

The formulation of the body as inscribed surface has been criticised by a number of feminist theorists (Butler, 1999; Grosz, 1994; McNay, 1992). They note that Foucault's work gives no consideration to gender, and assumes that inscription works the same way on every body (Grosz, 1994). The space left open by inscription, the *tabula rasa* beneath, can be co-opted by essentialist discourses about the 'natural' body, as I shall show.

Judith Butler argues that Foucault sees 'history as a relentless writing instrument, and the body as the medium which must be destroyed and transfigured in order for "culture" to emerge' (1999: 166). However, this also indicates that he understands the body to have a materiality prior to culture. This is problematic because, as she argues, the body 'often appears to be a passive medium that is signified by an inscription from a cultural source figured as "external" to that body. Any theory of the culturally constructed body, however, ought to question "the body" as a construct of suspect generality when it is figured as passive and prior to discourse' (1990: 164). Bodies are not simply passive, nor is there a universally generalisable 'body'. Butler's most influential argument has been that discourse, which she understands primarily in terms of speech acts, is performative; it shapes and forms the world/body/subject at the same time as it claims to say something about it. She has been criticised for taking the view that the body is purely cultural, with no 'natural' base or indeed any base at all (see for example Bigwood, 1991). In her later book, *Bodies That Matter*, she attempts to acknowledge that the body does have a materiality without being forced to say what this materiality is:

To "concede" the undeniability of "sex" or its "materiality" is always to concede some version of "sex", some formation of "materiality". Is the discourse in and through which that concession occurs— and, yes, that concession invariably does occur— not itself formative of the very phenomenon that it concedes? To claim that discourse is formative is not to claim that it originates, causes, or exhaustively composes that which it concedes; rather, it is to claim that there is no reference to a pure body which is not at the same time a further formation of that body. (Butler, 1993: 10)

This may be true, but it is at the same time limiting. Understanding the body as constructed simply by discourse (particularly when discourse is understood

mainly as speech) brings us no closer to understanding the subject's embodiment. Nor does this interpretation ultimately overcome the problem of the pre-inscribed body. We are left with a material body about which nothing can be said because any saying is a further cultural formation, surely a view not so different from that of Foucault, who implies rather than explicates the materiality of the body in his inscription model. There is still a categorical remainder and embodiment and materiality remain unaccounted for. It is not that we need to posit a natural body, as Bigwood does, in order to account for them; rather, as the discussions of Csordas' work have shown, it is perfectly possible to discuss the materiality of the body and the conditions of embodiment with a recognition that subjectivity does not always take the same cultural form.

Elizabeth Grosz's (1994) critique of the inscription model is more direct: she is critical of the lack of gender specificity involved in most such accounts. While she believes the inscription model can be useful for feminists as a way of understanding how culture marks the body, she argues that

the specific modes of materiality of the "page"/body must be taken into account: one and the same message, inscribed on a male or a female body, does not always or even usually mean the same thing or result in the same text. The elision of the question of sexual (and racial) specificity of the inscribed surface occurs throughout the history of accounts of the body. (Grosz, 1994: 156)

For Grosz, then, there is a materiality to the body which is crucial to the end result of the process of inscription. Reading the material body as blank is problematic because it elides the specificity of bodies. This is not to say that sex and race are entirely material, but that the neutral, 'natural' body which the inscription model implies is problematic because sex and race *do* mark the body prior to inscription.

The model of the body as inscribed is problematic in terms of an analysis of movement re-education as well. Often within movement re-education the body appears as inscribed by culture and the processes of civilisation, particularly through early upbringing and parental influence. However, movement re-educators then specifically seek out the natural body they understand to be beneath these inscriptions,

suggesting that it can be restored through 're-education'. This notion of a natural, pre-civilised body also gives rise to problematic interpretations which read children and 'savages' as more natural because less inscribed. While Foucault and others using the model of inscription would likely deny the possibility that inscriptions can be erased, the model itself leaves this possibility open because it suggests that some natural body can be recovered. In Chapter Seven, I will explore this problem in relation to movement re-education and the inscription of the body in more detail.

While Lois McNay does not specifically take issue with what the theory of an inscribed body leaves out, she does argue that Foucault's theory of the body in this context demonstrates a unidirectional concept of power which works to discipline bodies and make them docile, excluding both resistance and experience. Therefore she argues that 'whereas feminists have recognised the need to show that women are more than passive victims of domination through the rediscovery and revaluation of their experiences and history, Foucault's understanding of individuals as docile bodies has the effect of pushing women back into this position of passivity and silence' (McNay, 1992: 47). She goes on to contrast this with Foucault's later work on techniques of the self, suggesting that the latter is more useful for feminists because it acknowledges the way social agents actively shape their own lives.

I want to further suggest that in terms of an analysis of movement re-education, Foucault's work on ethics of the self is significantly more appropriate than his analysis of docile bodies and the body as inscribed surface. Movement re-education does not produce docile bodies, particularly in its contemporary formats; rather, it acts both through and upon the body/self to form the self in relation to particular ethical ideals, as Chapter Five demonstrates. Increasingly, there is a shift away from posture as an externally imposed ideal towards an internal regulation which is intended to express and indeed liberate the self from restriction. Moreover, as I shall show in Chapter Seven, there are parallels between the natural body left open by the accounts of the body as inscribed and the natural body which is sometimes thought to be reclaimed in movement re-education. In this latter context, the pre-civilised 'natural' body can have very racist implications as it draws upon particular theories of comparative evolution and degeneration.

Such descriptions of the body as inscribed should be contrasted to Back's (2004) discussion of tattooing, 'Inscriptions of Love'. Tattoos are certainly a clear occasion for the use of the social inscription metaphor; here, the social *literally* inscribes the body. Yet Back goes beyond this type of analysis by considering how emotion is involved in the process of tattooing bodies. He suggests that tattooing is 'a moment when boundaries are breached, involving hurt and healing... This involves perforating the boundary between the internal and external so that the external becomes internal and the internal becomes external' (2004: 29). He also raises questions about how the body becomes a canvas 'on which belonging and structures of feeling are expressed' (2004: 32). Through his ethnography, the analysis of the inscribed (tattooed) body as canvas takes on the phenomenological and experiential/emotional aspects of experience. The tattooed bodies he analyses are both inscribed and agential: he shows how such inscriptions function as 'illocutionary love' (2004: 40), marking love in a literal way both *on* and *through* the body. This is a more productive type of analysis which takes into account both subjectivity and the conditions which shape it.

The Politics of Subjectivity

Merleau-Ponty's phenomenological approach, which, as I have shown, grounds much contemporary work on embodiment, is often measured in stark contrast to Foucault's work, which analyses how the body is bound up in particular discourses. The subject is central to Merleau-Ponty's analysis of perception and embodiment, whereas Foucault sought to bracket out subjectivity in order to understand the conditions that shape it in various ways. Nick Crossley suggests that:

Foucault's archaeological departure from existential-phenomenology (or Merleau-Ponty at least) was not ontological. It was methodological. Displacing the subject in terms of a consideration of rules of formation, at least in the manner that Foucault adopts, amounts to a bracketing of the subject at most. But even this bracketing is not complete. The very notion of rules, as Foucault uses it, presupposes a situated subject and intersubjectivity. (Crossley, 1994: 159)

To Crossley, this is one of the indications that Foucault and Merleau-Ponty were engaged in a similar project: namely, that of analysing subjectivity. He goes on to suggest that 'where Merleau-Ponty hit a dead end, Foucault found a fruitful method of

historical analysis and critique' (1994: 111) in relation to analysing the cultural and historical conditions that shape subjectivity. He suggests, then, that Foucault's work is one possible way of extending Merleau-Ponty's analysis and framing it in a cultural way. This is not to suggest that these two very different positions should be merged, only that it is possible to move between them in discussion in a cogent way (1994: 122).

Crossley goes on to argue that the points of apparent disagreement between Foucault and Merleau-Ponty are not irreconcilable: for instance, while Foucault criticised the humanist values of phenomenology on the basis that it posited a human essence and theory of the 'inner man', Merleau-Ponty's version of phenomenology does not do so (1994: 130). Meanwhile, the connections between the two are significant. Crossley notes that both identify the body as a neglected topic in philosophy and seek to overcome this, both oppose the traditional understanding of the body as 'a closed, object-like, physiological system' and seeks to offer an alternative to this, and both focus on socio-historical conduct and the body as the bearer of these conducts and behaviours (1996: 100). Both accept that the body is both acted and acted upon, although they emphasise different poles of this relation (1996: 106).

Crossley acknowledges a possible objection to this, which is that Foucault seems to see power as mediating the relation between the body and self, which challenges Merleau-Ponty's understanding of the lived/experiential body which has no mediator. For Foucault, the body is invested with power; however, Crossley demonstrates that this translates as saying that the body is trained and that there are power and control at work within this training. Merleau-Ponty agrees that the body is trained, although the disadvantage of his work is that it overemphasises the empowering aspects of this training rather than the controlling ones. However, this can be overcome by putting Merleau-Ponty's work into dialogue with Foucault's. On the other hand, Merleau-Ponty acknowledges the embodied aspects of training, whereas Foucault implies that mastery of activity simply occurs without recourse to the body. Crossley points out that 'To say that 'exercise' and 'gymnastics' are forms of power which invest the body and afford bodily mastery, for example, is clearly to presuppose a body which is capable of the level of co-ordination and control necessary to take on an exercise or gymnastics routine' (1996: 110). Foucault's account, therefore, 'must presuppose

some notion of a body-subject. Without such a notion, his account of investment and mastery would not work' (1996: 110). This is one example of how the analyses of Foucault and Merleau-Ponty enrich each other when they are used in conjunction with one another.

Crossley therefore suggests a pragmatic approach whereby 'if we require an analysis of rules of discursive formation, we will use Foucault's archaeological method; if, in the course of our analysis (or at any other time) we require to understand the follower of those rules then we will introduce the work of Merleau-Ponty. In either case the other will enjoy a background presence' (Crossley, 1994: 169). While his own recent work on the body (Crossley, 2001) has taken him away from such an approach, integrating Bourdieu rather than Foucault with Merleau-Ponty's work, the project he suggests is a promising one.

As I discussed at the beginning of the chapter, most recent attempts to address the body through sociology and cultural studies have tended to focus on what is done to the body and/or how it is inscribed, following Foucault's method (for example Falk, 1994; 1995; Featherstone, 1991; 2000). Other literature has addressed the lived body, often following Merleau-Ponty (Crossley, 2001; Csordas, 1994a/b; 2002; Nettleton and Watson, 1998; Williams and Bendelow, 1998). Few studies, however, have attempted to analyse the body as both discursively constructed and as embodied; popular perception amongst these authors seems to be that such approaches are incommensurable. I want to argue, following Crossley, that they are not. Particularly in regard to Foucault's later work on technologies of the self, which as I pointed out earlier does begin to open a space for the subject as social actor, there is no necessary exclusion of phenomenological accounts. While Foucault does not do this, his work does not write out the possibility that it can be accomplished.

However, while Crossley paves the way for such a study to be done, he provides no empirical evidence that such an approach can work. Like many who write about the body, he has overemphasised theory at the expense of a demonstration through practice. He does discuss the studies of Sandra Lee Bartky (1988) and Iris Marion Young (1998a) on the gendered nature of bodily comportment in order to show how these two studies, the former Foucauldian, the latter Merleau-Pontyan, complement

one another. This does not amount to a study in which both are used, however, and Crossley's recent empirical work on the body (2004) has employed Bourdieu rather than Foucault as a complement to Merleau-Ponty.

My own study, then, will translate theory into practice by applying Crossley's work to the practices of movement re-education. I will demonstrate that Foucault and Merleau-Ponty can, in this case at least, accommodate one another. Like Crossley, my intention is not to merge these two approaches but to use them in tension with one another, as separate aspects which can mutually inform each other and help to develop a theory of how discourse is embodied. However, given that both Crossley and Csordas use Bourdieu rather than Foucault to give Merleau-Ponty's work a cultural dimension, a consideration of Bourdieu is in order to develop my argument that it is Foucault's work that is most useful in analysing movement re-education.

Bourdieu, Habitus and Bodily Hexis

Pierre Bourdieu's work is useful for understanding how bodies are not only marked and inscribed by society, biography, and culture, but also generate these. Bourdieu's theory of the body, articulated in his work on *habitus* and bodily *hexis*, is of a body that could be described as both writing and written upon. In this, he is much stronger than Foucault at accounting for social action. He also refrains from making the body merely a product of language in the way that Judith Butler tends to do, rather, he reverses the relationship, suggesting that '*language is a technique of the body*' (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992: 149, italics in original), a view he shares with Merleau-Ponty.

Bourdieu adopts Marcel Mauss' (1973 [1935]) term *habitus* to refer to:

systems of durable, transposable dispositions, structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures, that is, as principles which generate and organize practices and representations that can be objectively adapted to their outcomes without presupposing a conscious aiming at ends or an express mastery of the operations necessary in order to attain them. (1990: 35)

The *habitus* is shaped by social class and culture but also by biography. It is a largely unconscious system of knowledge carried by social actors about how the world is and how it works. It structures responses to any given situation, predisposing actors to react in certain ways and ultimately circumscribing their lives. While each person's *habitus* is unique, there are 'classes' of *habitus*, and the *habitus* is itself classed (1993: 46). Particular class aspects of the *habitus* (and, one might presume, gender and ethnic aspects, although Bourdieu says little about this,) are passed from generation to generation. Bourdieu writes:

Early experiences have particular weight because the *habitus* tends to ensure its own constancy and its defence against change through the selection it makes within new information by rejecting information capable of calling into question its accumulated information, if exposed to it accidentally or by force, and especially by avoiding exposure to such information. (1990: 61-2)

While the *habitus* reproduces itself, it is also generative, producing situations that seem 'natural'. Further, the *habitus* is bodily, not simply inscribed on the body but also produced *through* the body. The bodily aspects of *habitus* are what he terms *hexis*: which is 'political mythology realized, *em-bodied*, turned into a permanent disposition, a durable way of standing, speaking, walking and thereby of thinking and feeling. The opposition between male and female is realized in posture, in the gestures and movements of the body' (1990: 69-70).

The relationship between ways of thinking and feeling and bodily postures is articulated throughout Bourdieu's work. He writes, for example, that the body 'takes metaphors seriously' (1990: 72), and that thoughts and feelings can be triggered 'by the simple effect of re-placing the body in an overall posture which *recalls* the associated thoughts and feelings, in one of the inductive states of the body which, as actors know, give rise to states of mind' (1990: 69). Further:

The body believes in what it plays at: it weeps if it mimes grief. It does not represent what it performs, it does not memorize the past, it *enacts* the past, bringing it back to life. What is 'learned by the body' is not something that one has, like knowledge that can be brandished, but something that one is. (1990: 73)

This is an important theory in relation to movement re-education, where states of the body are precisely what are worked on, often with the intention that they will give rise to new ways of thinking and feeling. Further, as I shall discuss in Chapter Six, it is clear that they *do* seem to accomplish these things. However, in Bourdieu's work it is not clear whether he envisions the relationship between mental states and physical states to be a precise one-to-one correspondence, where the positioning of bodies in particular ways will elicit the same response in every person, or whether there is cultural, historical, and personal variation. His assertion that no two *habitus* are identical makes it seem improbable that he would believe bodily states to produce identical responses even in two members of the same class or culture, but he does not dissect the relationship he asserts between belief and bodily states: it is unclear, for example, whether he believes such a response to be physiological, cultural, or due to some intervening variable.

Merleau-Ponty's work is significantly more successful at positioning this relationship, because it attends to the specific ways in which bodies are used in particular contexts. Through his work it becomes apparent that the relation between comportment and feeling is habitual and is located within a cultural framework. Through his analysis of the experiences of those who fall down during Charismatic healing, attributed either to 'resting in the Spirit' or to demonic possession, Csordas (1994b) is able to show how states of the body become, because of particular experiences or sensations, pre-reflective states of being. This is a phenomenon I will explore in more detail in Chapter Six.

Bourdieu's theory of the *habitus* has been criticised for being somewhat deterministic, giving insufficient attention to the knowledge agents themselves have about their social worlds (Jenkins, 1992: 97). Crossley suggests that this is a misreading of Bourdieu, and that in fact the circular nature of *habitus* as both structured and structuring structures indicates that there is no 'final instance', determinate or otherwise' in his work (2001: 112). However, he acknowledges that Bourdieu has not fully clarified how *habitus* offers a path between free will and determinism, and that he tends to allow the concept to pre-empt discussion of agency (Crossley, 2001: 115). 'Habits are sedimented effects of action, indeed of repeated actions, and any account

of them therefore presupposes an account of action, such that action cannot be reduced to habit in the manner that Bourdieu sometimes suggests' (2001: 115).

Both Crossley and Csordas incorporate Bourdieu with Merleau-Ponty in their analyses, because his work provides the kind of cultural framework which Merleau-Ponty's phenomenological approach neglects. Further, Merleau-Ponty supplements Bourdieu's work by providing a way of understanding agency and subjectivity. While Bourdieu rejected the phenomenological approach as lacking in reflexivity (1977: 3), the two writers complement each other in their analyses of habit and *habitus* (a term which Merleau-Ponty [1962] also uses), and therefore it is useful to apply them together.

However, for the purposes of my study, Bourdieu's implicit neglect of the subject and subjectivity mean that his work is of limited use. While it may be arguably more problematic to integrate Merleau-Ponty with Foucault than with Bourdieu, given Foucault's total rejection of the subject which Merleau-Ponty takes as central, both Merleau-Ponty and Foucault are dedicated to understanding subjectivity, albeit in very different ways. As Crossley (1995) suggests, they engage with both subjectivity and the body in a complementary manner. On the other hand, the overlapping topics of Bourdieu and Merleau-Ponty's interests are those related to the *habitus* and habit. Therefore, while I do take up Bourdieu's work in Chapter Six in relation to my ethnographic study of the Alexander Technique, he is peripheral rather than pivotal to the study presented here.

Dancing Bodies

Many of the theoretical approaches that inform social theory which I have detailed above have also been applied in the theoretical literature on dance. There is also a small body of literature where social theorists have used dance as a case study (Wolff, 1990; Frank, 1991). Below, I will use dancing bodies as examples of ways of applying social theory to a living, moving bodily practice, as a way of demonstrating in a practical as well as theoretical sense the potential weaknesses and strengths of discourse and text versus embodiment and practice as types of analysis.

Text and Experience in Dance

There are two recent approaches within dance scholarship that mirror the broader attempts to map the body in social and cultural theory which I have described above, approaches which I shall call 'dance as discourse' and 'dance as experience'. Each of these approaches is rather problematic. The first attempts to read dance as a cultural text, and thereby to treat it as a predominantly discursive practice. This approach reads the body and its practices as cultural, but in a limited way: in this context, 'discourse' is used in relation only to text, and the dancer's body is read as if written upon, employing a similar model of inscription to the one described above.

Franko (1993) makes a case for dance as text on the basis that early attempts to annotate choreography were textual and that bodies can be read as discourse in the same way as language because they have meaning, and gesture always refers to something outside itself. He writes that inscription works as a metaphor for dance because 'one can say, without being overly metaphoric, that one of choreography's goals was to *inscribe* dance in theatrical space. The textuality of dance was not limited to figural inscription: textuality encompassed the motion with which an act of inscription is accomplished' (1993: 26). In other works, dance is a discursive act of inscription in itself; the formalisation of dance through choreography makes it a process of textual inscription in space and, presumably, on bodies. Franko is not the only dance theorist to follow this trend. Goellner and Murphy (1995), in their edited collection *Bodies of the Text* which addresses, as its subtitle suggests, 'dance as theory, literature as text', also interpret dance in a textual sense, in this case allying it with literary studies. One might argue, however, that dance is significantly less textual than literature in the sense that it is metaphorically rather than literally a 'text'. Susan Leigh Foster (1996) in her chapter on 'the ballerina's phallic pointe', also treats dance as discursive, attempting to analyse the gendered body in ballet, in very general terms, by reference to psychoanalytic theory. While she continues to work with poststructuralist theories of text and discourse, Foster does note in a 1998 article that text can be problematic as a way of analysing dance because 'the strategy of claiming for dance the status and complexity of a text obscures aspects of dance that are deeply resistant to written description' (1998: 20).

Treating dance as a text does provide a way of acknowledging the cultural specificity of different types of dance, and a way of relating the idea of text to bodily practice. However, there are problems with seeing dancing bodies as texts, as I described above in reference to social inscription. Foster is correct to note that there are experiential and bodily aspects of dance which are not reducible to text. Further, I am concerned that reading dance as text overemphasises the aspects of movement which are representational and places rather too much stress on dance as a *meaning-making* activity at the expense of dance as a *movement-making* activity. Carter (1998: 19) notes that 'in terms of its scholarship, dance has suffered from an assumption, based on contentious notions about the nature of artistic expression, that it is the 'outer' manifestation of 'inner' experience'. This is problematic because it means that dance is seen only as representative of inner psychic states, something which certainly does not fit well with the aims of postmodern dance, for example, as described in Chapter Two.

Jordan and Thomas (1994) show that dance can be analysed from a number of different perspectives, and that approaches such as formalism and semiotics may find very different things in the same dance. By contrasting a formalist reading of two duets with a semiotic analysis of the same works, they show how gender and power in dancing bodies may be perceived very differently. A formalist analysis that examines the movements themselves and how they achieve a particular effect can be compared with a semiotic approach which looks at meanings in the context of the broader dance work. They note that 'individual movements in a dance have no meaning in and of themselves. Rather, meaning is determined by the relationship of the movement to all other aspects that are involved in the dance work' (1994: 6). Both aspects are important to a broader understanding of how the dances work technically and culturally. This leads the authors to conclude that 'a richness emerges when we consider the interplay of both the poetic and semiotic perspectives. So often, work is examined from one or other of these two perspectives, and analysis is only the poorer for this' (1994: 12). Dance needs to be read as more than a textual or semiotic practice which is inscribed on the body if it is to be well interpreted.

The school of theorising against which I contrast the approach to dance as text is that of dance as experience. Focusing on the experiential aspects of dance gives a sense of

the materiality of the dancing body and the embodied experience of dancing, but much of this work invokes experience without any sense of its cultural or historical situatedness. Authors in this tradition tend to wax rhapsodic about the experience of dancing and to search for fundamental truth in that experience, without any sense that this truth might be contingent or historically constituted. Dance writers in this tradition draw on phenomenology (see Sheets-Johnstone, 1979 for an early example of this) but without a sense of the cultural conditions of embodiment; Sondra Fraleigh (1987; 1999; 2000) in fact allies herself not with Merleau-Ponty, as Sheets-Johnstone does, but with Sartre's phenomenology and existentialism which overemphasises the individual at the expense of his or her sociality.

Fraleigh's work offers an attempt to incorporate description into analysis through a phenomenological consideration of dance experience. In so doing, however, the analysis is subsumed in favour of experience, which she takes as a universal. In an article titled 'Consciousness Matters', Fraleigh discusses the use of Feldenkrais work in training her own body and those of her dance students. She begins by proclaiming that she is influenced by phenomenologists 'who are opening up new vistas of organic being, mapping our way back to our body, our body back into the natural world... my work seeks to heal our bodily rupture with nature and revalue the darkness mythically associated with nature and woman but through the voices and workings of dancers' (Fraleigh, 2000: 54-55).

Fraleigh describes a kind of bodily wisdom, but she does so without demonstrating any interest in critically analysing it. As the quote above shows, she aims to overcome the Cartesian body-mind dualism by positing the body as having an essential wisdom or truth. She writes that the 'moving, living body is intelligent, and our thinking arises through material physical sources as surely as it may seem to move beyond them. When we trust our innate intelligence, it speaks... This is furthermore a healing intelligence' (2000: 57). Fraleigh thus inverts Cartesian dualism by championing the body over the mind, but she does not ultimately provide a way of seeing the two as deeply interconnected. Fraleigh chronicles the experience of her students and their discoveries as they study movement re-education, 'healing themselves;' yet nowhere does she interpret these experiences through any kind of socio-cultural lens. Her books *Dance and the Lived Body* (1987) and *Dancing Into*

Darkness (1999) exhibit a similar lack of awareness of socio-cultural influences on the body and experience. The former finishes with a cursory nod toward these: 'As our body bears the tensions and schema of the world (of nature and of human existence), the world is thus inscribed in our dancing' (1987: 252). *Dancing Into Darkness*, which applies her phenomenological approach to her experience of going to Japan and studying a form of contemporary dance called butoh, makes similar generalisations about bodily wisdom and its relation to nature: 'Butoh ... is unashamed of nudity as in premodern (pre-Western) Japan. It consciously tends nature (the nature of the body in this case), subverting the cultural body' (1999: 23). This she contrasts with ballet, where she sees flesh as being denied and subverted, dominated by romantic ideals driven by mind and intellect. Setting up this contrast between butoh and ballet as one of body and mind, Eastern and Western practices has echoes of the very essentialist accounts in movement re-education of exotic cultures that value a natural bodily wisdom from which those in 'Western culture', although it is more 'civilised', have been separated.

Fraleigh's type of 'feel-good' dance phenomenology, wherein the sensing, emotive, and experiencing body is privileged without any deeper socio-cultural analysis, is extremely problematic. Phenomenology should be more than a way of self-indulgently proclaiming our personal experiences to be universal truths. As I have shown above, good culturally grounded phenomenology such as that of Csordas (1994a/b; 2002) can be invaluable in providing a way of understanding and analysing embodied experience. In order to avoid treating embodiment as universal and unproblematic, my analysis in the following chapters will explore it in conjunction with the socio-cultural factors which shape it.

Jill Green is another writer who explores dance through experientially-based study. Unlike Fraleigh, Green makes an attempt to look at 'somatic theory and practice through a socio-cultural lens' to explore how the 'ideal dancer's body' is socially constructed (Green, 1999: 80). To this end Green applies Foucault's work on docile, disciplined bodies (1977), claiming that surveillance is used in contemporary society to produce docile bodies, and that the dance world is a particularly apt example of this. Yet she sees movement re-education (in the form of somatics) as a way of overcoming this discipline, and she chronicles changes in her students' perceptions of

their bodies throughout a term of study as they move from viewing them as objects in need of discipline to perceiving them subjectively. Her intention was to 'provide students with a place where they could reconnect to inner senses and somatic impulses while releasing some of the habitual physical strain required from keeping constant vigilance and surveillance over their bodies' (1999: 91). Although she acknowledges that using these techniques 'outside the recognition of a sociocultural-political context and within an individualistic and micro context alone' (92) may be a problem because they are inseparable from this context, she nevertheless accepts uncritically the idea that bodies can be 'liberated' from habit and from the pressure of the 'ideal body' without realising that the 'natural' or 'somatically in-tune' body is equally an ideal. It may be an ideal driven by internal feeling rather than external appearance, a 'technology of the self' which requires the regulation of internal thoughts and feelings rather than the regulation of external bodily image— but it is no less a regulation for that.

In fact, it may be argued that dance scholarship of the types described above exemplifies the worst of each direction within writing about the body, on one hand, over-identifying with the body as text, and on the other hand, uncritically celebrating lived experience without a sense of cultural situatedness. This is not to say that all dance scholarship is of poor quality, as this is clearly not the case. The work of Cynthia Novack (1990; 1995; and as Cynthia Bull, 1997) and Helen Thomas (1995; 2003) is particularly notable here. Novack's analysis of the contemporary dance form contact improvisation, through the lens of cultural anthropology, provides an analysis that is both culturally and historically situated and takes embodied practice into account. Similarly, Thomas' analysis of Martha Graham's dance *Appalachian Spring* (1995) and case studies of dance in relation to cultural theory (2003) attend to the embodied aspects of dance whilst grounding it in a rigorous sociology. I will return to these in Chapter Seven in relation to how dancers have used movement re-education.

Conclusion

As these studies of dance scholarship have shown, dance cannot be understood exclusively either as text or experience. As in movement re-education, the dancing body is one that both shapes culture and cultural expression and is shaped by it. It is

for this reason that it is useful to study movement re-education in a way that takes into account both discourse and experience.

In doing so, discourse must not be read simply as a practice which turns the body into text, a blank page to be inscribed. The work of Foucault and others who describe the body in this way is inadequate because it leaves open the possibility of a natural body which pre-exists these inscriptions. This undertheorisation of the prediscursive aspects of bodies is precisely where essentialist theories about the body can gain foothold, resulting, as in the case of movement re-education, in racist and sexist interpretations of this natural body as pre-civilised. In contrast to this, Merleau-Ponty's understanding that the prelinguistic, precognitive aspects of the body and experience are never pre-cultural is an important insight for any analysis that seeks to overcome dualisms and essentialisms. By employing both Foucauldian (discursive) and Merleau-Pontyan (phenomenological) approaches to the body and experience, the body's central role in all levels of social life becomes fully apparent. This in turn allows for the fleshing out of analysis and a deeper understanding of bodies as socially and culturally situated. In the next chapter, I will examine how this theoretical framework can be elaborated into a methodology for researching movement re-education as embodied discourse.

Chapter 4

Methodological Considerations: Body Wisdom and Embodied Discourse

Introduction

I have suggested that it is necessary to explore the concept of body wisdom in a way that takes into account both its embodied nature and the discourses which shape and surround it. This chapter will set out the principles through which to develop such a project, paying particular attention to the methodological possibilities and problems inherent in this approach.

As I have stated, this research project is focussed around two linked questions: first, how does it become possible to think of bodies as wise and knowing in movement re-education? Second, how and in what ways is the discourse of body wisdom embodied by participants in this field? Approaches which privilege either discourse or embodiment have tended by default to neglect the other, with the result that, as I showed in the previous chapter, discursive approaches tend to treat the body as passively inscribed by culture whilst embodied approaches tend to privilege lived experience over cultural context. By researching movement re-education and its theories about the body through a methodology of embodied discourse, I hope to show that these two approaches are not mutually exclusive and can inform one another.

This chapter will begin by outlining the way in which I have used discourse analysis to begin analysing movement re-education. It will proceed to deal with the use of ethnography as an embodied research method, and interviewing, which as I shall argue can provide useful insights into both discourse and embodiment. The chapter will conclude with a discussion of ethical issues in relation to my research project.

Embodied Discourse

I use the phrase *embodied discourse* to refer to the ways in which discourse is both bodied, in the sense that it acts on the body as a disciplinary, ethical or productive force (Foucault, 1977; 1985) and embodied, in the sense that it is written through or with the body. By embodiment I refer to the central role which bodies play in social

action and social order (Williams and Bendelow, 1998: 3). By discourse, I refer to 'systems of knowledge and their associated practices' (Seale, 1998: 326), rather than specifically to language. I will elaborate each of these further in the discussion that follows.

Mehta and Bondi (1999) have used the term 'embodied discourse' in relation to their work on gender and fear of violence. For them, it represents a way of integrating poststructuralist theories of gender and subjectivity with recent work on embodiment and experience. This, they argue, 'allows us to consider non-linguistic as well as linguistic forms of knowledge and practice as 'embodied discourse' (1999: 69), recognising practical and precognitive knowledge. In this, their research has a commonality with my own. However, ultimately their work fails to consider non-linguistic forms of knowledge, not because these cannot be represented textually (an issue I will return to below), but because their research method does not allow them to gain any insight into embodiment as a condition *of the body*. The self-administered questionnaires with open-ended questions they employ for their study constitute a particularly disembodied research method, in the sense that the bodily presence of both researchers and participants was almost entirely absent from the data collection. Their results discuss the ways in which discourses about safety and gender are 'embodied' by their participants in as much as they are taken on and reproduced by them, but there is little reference to how participants' bodies are implicated in these discourses. Indeed, there can be no such reference, because the lack of face-to-face contact with participants, or embodied involvement in the research setting, precludes the possibility of any sense of bodies in this context. Their research provides insights into the use of broader societal discourses by individuals and their negotiations with, and reproduction of, these discourses, but it does not provide any insights into embodiment or even practice. While Mehta and Bondi do note the limitations of their research method in providing data on embodiment, they consider this to simply indicate the need for further research through in-depth interviewing rather than a failure to address embodiment at all.

While all research is to a certain degree embodied, in that it involves the efforts of a researcher or researchers who are embodied by their very nature, some research methods allow more access to embodied experience than others. Methods such as

ethnography, which involve the continued bodily presence and self-presentation of the researcher (Coffey, 1999; Csordas, 1994b) involve embodiment significantly more than questionnaires, or most textual and discourse analysis, for example. However, it is not sufficient to say, in relation to the research methods I used, that ethnography adequately reflects embodiment while discourse analysis provides no data on embodiment, and that semi-structured qualitative interviewing, as a practice which involves face-to-face contact and self-presentation for a brief period of time, occupies a space in between. There may be times when discourse analysis focuses on the practices of the body in an embodied way, and equally, ethnography may reflect discourse as much as embodiment (see for example the ethnography of Martin, 1994). Further, although ethnography has increasingly recognised the importance of the body in its production and collection of data, like other methods of social science research, it traditionally ignored the body (Coffey, 1999).

If research is truly to deal with embodiment, then, it must insist on the body as a central rather than peripheral focus. Moreover, it should examine the body's lived experiences and bodily practices and not simply conceive of the body as passively inscribed by discourse. A question which may arise from this is what use discourse analysis is at all in relation to such a study, particularly if, as in Foucault's work, discourse and history appear as a universal writing instrument inscribing the body (Butler, 1999). Yet a study of embodiment in itself would be neither complete nor necessarily very sociological. As Nikolas Rose notes, 'The notion of the human as, at root, embodied is itself part of a certain style of reflection and action upon the human being' (1996: 323n). The conditions which shape embodiment are both social and historical. It is through the productive tension between embodied experience and the socio-historical conditions under which it emerges that we become able to understand both aspects more fully.

In choosing research methods to reflect both embodiment and discourse, I have selected a multi-pronged approach incorporating discourse analysis of written texts, and ethnography, with semi-structured interviews to supplement the particularly individual nature of my participant observation. I see the interviews, therefore, as broadly incorporated into the ethnography rather than as separate from it, for reasons I shall discuss below. In choosing these methods, I was partly inspired by Emily

Martin's (1994) research on the immune system, which takes the form of a multi-site ethnography and includes a discourse analysis of public health literature on the subject that demonstrates shifts which have occurred within it. Although Martin does not address embodiment explicitly, her work does discuss discourses (in the Foucauldian sense) about flexibility and immunity as they operate in a variety of sites and on a variety of levels, from alternative health practitioners to immunologists to workplaces. Her interviews therefore represent discourse on one hand, and the engagement with and bodily uses of discourse on the other. She is also explicit about the relation of her own body/self to her ethnographic work.

Using discourse analysis, ethnography and interviewing together also provides a way of triangulating data, testing its reliability as well as filling in gaps that may occur from one or another method. Discourse analysis and interviewing may or may not deal with about embodied practice, for instance, while certain discourses may simply not arise in embodied practice and may thus be relatively less accessible through ethnography. In part, respondent validation which came about through checking my ethnographic interpretations with my Alexander teacher also contributed to triangulating the data, ensuring at least that I had represented Alexander Technique in a way that was consistent with his interpretations of it. Interviews with other Alexander teachers then provided a fuller sense of how the technique might be interpreted in a variety of contexts and by teachers with different training. Interviews with practitioners proved to be a way of mediating between the embodied data of participant observation and the discursive data provided in the texts of the founders, because issues arising in both could be addressed and a deeper understanding developed.

Discourse and Text

Michel Foucault's work has become increasingly fashionable in the social sciences, and his methodology been put work in a variety of contexts, as I discussed in the previous chapter. Kendall and Wickham, in *Using Foucault's Methods*, (1999) caution that these methods are not 'like those do-it-yourself wall-filler products that promise certain results if you just 'aim and squirt' at whatever you care to pick' (118); rather, they should above all 'disturb the obviousness' of things (1999: 119). In using

Foucauldian discourse analysis to analyse movement re-education, my goal is to 'disturb the obviousness' of the general sense that these techniques overcome regulation of the body, hold no model of an ideal body toward which they work, and restore people to their 'natural' bodies. I seek to show that the natural body is itself a kind of ideal, and that movement re-education constitutes a form of ethical self-formation and regulation, which is a way of working and acting on oneself in keeping with particular goals. I have further sought to uncover some of the 'unpalatable origins and functions' (Kendall and Wickham, 1998: 34) of early movement re-education in its relation to eugenics and racist theories of evolution which, as I shall show, have not entirely disappeared. Discourse analysis provides a basis for understanding movement re-education's formal origins which can then be contrasted with contemporary discourse and practice, demonstrated in ethnographic data and interviews.

'Discourse analysis' as undertaken by Foucault is rather different than many interpretations of the method, such as those of Potter and Wetherell (1987) or van Dijk (1997). While for these writers discourse analysis is predominantly about language, either through written texts or speech, Foucault's definition is broader. Foucault acknowledges this difference himself, commenting:

The question posed by language analysis of some discursive fact or other is always: according to what rules has a particular statement been made, and consequently according to what rules could other similar statements be made? The description of the events of discourse poses quite a different question: how is it that one particular statement appeared rather than another? (Foucault, 1972: 30)

Foucault does not analyse how one statement appears by searching for a discourse's origin; he seeks to avoid the search for origins altogether. He writes that 'discourse must not be referred to as the distant presence of the origin, but treated as and when it occurs' (1972: 28); this is because there is no innate or natural discourse, and no originating point at which discourse emerges fully formed. As I indicated in the previous chapter, Foucault avoids traditional kinds of historical accounts that search for the origins of things as the point where they are most clearly articulated. For Foucault, discourse is often expressed in language, it need not be limited to language.

This is not to say that everything is discourse; Kendall and Wickham give the example that 'bodies are not discourse, they are non-discursive in their materiality. But bodies do not exist and operate in a non-discursive vacuum' (1999: 39). This is similar to the remark by Rose, quoted above, regarding the historical conditions which shape embodiment, pointing to the fact that embodiment is always shaped by discourse.

Perhaps Foucault's best explanation of his use of the term discourse, at least in relation to this research project, is in the first volume of *The History of Sexuality*, where he states:

Indeed, it is in discourse that power and knowledge are joined together. And for this very reason, we must conceive discourse as a series of discontinuous segments whose tactical function is neither uniform nor stable... We must make an allowance for the complex and unstable process whereby discourse can be both an instrument and an effect of power, but also a hindrance, a stumbling block, a point of resistance and a starting point for an opening strategy. Discourse transmits and produces power; it reinforces it, but also undermines and exposes it, renders it fragile and makes it possible to thwart it. (Foucault, 1979: 100-1).

He goes on to acknowledge that 'there can exist different and even contradictory discourses within the same strategy' (1979: 102), something which certainly occurs in contemporary movement re-education in relation to issues such as naturalness and verticality, as the discussion in Chapter Seven shall show. Foucault's sense of discourse, then, is bound up with both power and knowledge, and may cover not only what is said in language but also what it is possible to say and the conditions that make it possible to say it. Foucauldian discourse analysis therefore examines the socio-historical conditions which produce discourse and the ways in which discourse is tied to power and knowledge. It is concerned with discourse's social functions.

I want to suggest, however, that discourse is expressed not only in spoken and written language, but also in physical practice. This is not to make the over-simplistic point that 'body language' exists and is an alternate form of communication, or more particularly a 'true' one, but precisely to problematise 'body language' by de-naturalising it. There are, as Marcel Mauss (1973 [1935]) reminds us, techniques of

the body, ways of using the body which are social and which emerge at particular times in relation to particular norms, goals, and ideals. Techniques of the body are also made possible at particular times and not others, and are therefore also part of discourse. This challenges the commonsensical assumption that there is a 'truth' to the body and that body language represents a speaker's true intentions (Fast, 1970), or that, as dancer Martha Graham put it, 'Movement never lies. It is a barometer telling the state of the soul's weather to all who can read it' (1998: 66-7). Bodies are not only inscribed by discourse, but also embody it.

A distinction is often made between Foucault's archaeological analyses and his genealogical ones; the latter focusing particularly on power and the 'history of the present.' It is the genealogical works, in the three volumes of *The History of Sexuality*, which are most relevant to the purposes of my study. In *The Use of Pleasure*, Foucault outlines the basis of what he calls 'techniques of the self' (1985). In my analysis, I will show how movement re-education can be seen as a technique of the self.

There are aspects of Foucault's work which I have rejected or omitted in this analysis; one is his model of the body as socially inscribed (1984), for reasons discussed in Chapter Three; another is his analysis of docile bodies. Movement re-education does not produce docile bodies in the way that Foucault suggests prisons do in *Discipline and Punish*, rather, it is a self-forming activity undertaken by subjects in keeping with a particular kind of ethics. It is too easy to apply the 'docile bodies' thesis, as Jill Green (1999) has done, to look to traditional forms of dance training and say that they 'discipline' the body in keeping with an external ideal, while movement re-education 'liberates' the body from this regulation. This is not only weak analysis, drawing as it does on the idea that movement re-education and its goals are ahistorical, it also does not 'disturb the obviousness' of commonsense assumptions. I have selectively used Foucault's work to develop the idea that movement re-education is a way of regulating bodies (Turner, 1992) and that it comes about in a particular social and historical context, not restoring us to a universal bodily truth which we once naturally possessed but then lost, but cultivating in us a new way of relating to our bodies and selves.

Foucault's later work also comes closest to opening a space for the subject and thus for providing a link with a study of embodiment. As Mitchell Dean notes, 'while [Foucault's] earlier writings may have given the impression of a kind of denial of interiority of the subject, there is now an explicit theorisation of this 'inside' (1994: 201). Through techniques of the self, individuals are understood to act upon themselves and shape themselves in accordance with certain ethical norms or ideals.

As I discussed in the previous chapter, Foucault argues that techniques of the self have four characteristics, which include an ethical substance, modes of subjection, forms of ethical work, and a *telos* (Foucault, 1985). These characteristics, which Foucault identified in relation to the Ancient Greeks and Romans and their ways of relating to themselves, are also applicable to movement re-education, and Chapter Five uses them to analyse it.

Foucault's discourse analysis was always conducted on written texts, on what he referred to as 'entangled and confused parchments, on documents that have been scratched over and recopied many times' (1984: 76). Such documents were practical manuals rather than official documents; *The Care of the Self* (1986), for example, begins with the analysis of a second-century manual on the interpretation of dreams. In keeping with this, my discourse analysis also uses practical texts, in this case the ones written by the founders of movement re-education. Although discourse is also manifested in interviews and even in ethnographic data, formations of discourse in these contexts may be more spontaneous and more negotiated. I have analysed interview discourse in Chapters 7 and 8; however, it also seemed desirable to compare contemporary discourses to those used by the founders of movement re-education techniques. Doing so gives a sense of how discourses have shifted, and if they have, over the period of time since the establishment of these techniques (up to a century has passed in the case of the Alexander Technique). It is for this reason that I have conducted a discourse analysis on the texts of movement re-education's founders.

Discourse analysis on these texts also establishes 'movement re-education' as a field with some coherence; while there are differences between techniques, particularly in the field of practice and the ways they work with the body, there are also substantial similarities, especially in the way they invoke nature and evolution as modes of

subjection. The founders themselves also act as authorities in these techniques, and are generally greatly admired by contemporary practitioners for their apparent wisdom and insights. There has been a hesitancy to move away from the ideas of the founders which has been particularly strong in Alexander Technique, as demonstrated by Ricki Alexander's account of the difficulties of getting the North American Association of Teachers of the Alexander Technique (NASTAT) to adopt a formal resolution distancing themselves from Alexander's racism (R. Alexander, 2000).

For these reasons, a Foucauldian discourse analysis which examines how movement re-education techniques function as techniques of the self on the basis of the texts written by the techniques' founders provides a number of insights. This is not to say that the discourses of movement re-education are most authentic in the works of the founders, but understanding the founders' theories, intentions, and even sometimes practices provides a good basis for understanding how the techniques function today.

These texts were initially compared and coded according to key discursive themes which emerged, including the prevalence of eugenic and evolutionary discourses, founding myths, physical practices, origin stories about natural bodies and who possessed them, relationships with science and medicine, the relationship between mind, body and emotion, and the place (or lack thereof) of women in these texts. These themes subsequently directed the interview guide, which was developed to determine the extent to which they recurred in discussions with contemporary movement re-educators. Subsequently, it became apparent that the majority of these themes fit within Foucault's framework of analysis for techniques of the self, and they were reworked in order to align them with this. Although the theory of techniques of the self had always appeared relevant in relation to movement re-education, the initial coding and analysis was data-driven rather than theory-driven. This was the first stage of the research and provided significant background knowledge from which to develop an interview guide and begin fieldwork.

Embodiment

Pure discourse analysis would lack 'ecological validity' within the field of movement re-education, because movement re-educators see their work as fundamentally

concerned with embodiment and note that it is impossible to grasp it textually. This has not prevented them from producing a number of texts about their work, ranging from theoretical works integrating phenomenology and Rolfing (Maitland, 1993) to the practical how-to manuals of the Pilates method (for example, Pilates, 2000 [1945]; Kelly, 2001). However, it does mean that in order to be taken seriously by practitioners when doing research on these techniques, one is required to have embodied experience of *doing* them. This is not the only reason for undertaking an embodied study of movement re-education; it also provides a very different sense of the practices the work involves, and is a necessary base for any discussion of discourse because the work is inherently physical in nature.

For Thomas Csordas, writing about embodiment includes acute attention to the ways in which bodies are employed in these experiences. However, as an academic he acknowledges that he is obliged to represent these in a textual form. He argues that this does not in any way diminish them, however, because language is not only about itself but is also a form of behaviour and a medium of intersubjectivity, and can therefore provide access to experience (1994b: xii).

This point is particularly relevant to movement re-education, which, as I have noted, sometimes suggests that its practices cannot be written about because to do so would diminish the embodied experience. One interviewee was particularly concerned that I was conducting interviews because, as he put it, 'this field does not only take place at the language-meaning level but also through touch and perception'. It was the concern with embodied practice which led me to undertake ethnography, but the 'language-meaning level' is ultimately the primary tool of academic research. Thus, Csordas' acknowledgement that language is a form of behaviour is significant. This means that language, too, is an analysable part of embodied experience, an issue I shall develop in relation to interviewing, below.

Traditionally, ethnography has involved anthropologists and sociologists going away to live in and study a culture and produce a classical research monograph which displayed little awareness of the textual strategies of writing and the production of 'self' and 'other.' The publication of Clifford and Marcus' *Writing Culture* (1986) signalled a new direction, and ethnography has increasingly been concerned with

representational strategies and the construction of texts. The postmodern turn in ethnography has also recognised the effect of personal and political positions on research, the need to rethink ways of presenting the 'other' and the extent to which it is possible to do so, which as Wolf (1992: 52) points out have also been key feminist criticisms of ethnography, which were often ignored when made by feminists but have been taken quite seriously when made by postmodernists (1992: 7). What is clear is that ethnography is changing, and the role of the ethnographer in constructing and presenting ethnography is becoming more prominent.

Writing the Body/Self

One such shift has been in the form of increased writing about the body/self in ethnography. Such ethnographic writing from the self is sometimes called *autoethnography*, a term which Deborah Reed-Danahay (1997: 2) writes can signal either self ethnography or autobiographical writing with an ethnographic interest, in either case breaking down the distinction between autobiography and ethnography. Ely et al (1997) for example, observe: 'We shape rather than compile our fieldnotes, and we aren't apologizing any longer for that. But, we are trying to recognize, to value, and to explain how personal views direct our attention' (1997: 17). They suggest that this process is critically important to the development of ethnographies, and that new textual strategies of representation, including drama and 'layered writing' will help us to do this.

However, writing oneself into ethnography is not without problems. Reed-Danahay notes that it is not necessarily more authentic simply because it uses the voice of the insider (1997: 4). Wolf (1992) suggests that experimental textual styles are unlikely to replace realist ethnography in part because of the suspicion that 'this excessive authorial presence just *might* make the text seem a bit self-indulgent' (51). Kleinman concurs:

I expect the qualitative story to tell me about others, not about the author. Yes, we all write about ourselves in whatever we do, but when I read the study I want to learn about a piece of social organization or members of a social category. I want a tale of

the field. If the author is a member of the group, I want her to use herself as data.
(1999: 27)

Writing the body into ethnography has also been a way of writing about the self. For Coffey (1999: 59) notes that 'we concern ourselves with the positioning, visibility and performance of our own embodied self as we undertake participant observation. Moreover, our observations and fieldnotes are often scattered with implicit and explicit references to the body.' She observes that ethnography is always embodied, and discusses issues of self-presentation such as dress and personal appearance as aspects of the embodied ethnographic self. Hastrup (1995) observes that the body has been largely neglected in ethnographic writing, and uses Bourdieu's notion of *habitus* as a way of discussing the 'sedimentation' of embodied experience. Although both Coffey and Halstrup also address writing from and about the self, writing bodies into ethnography is not necessarily self-oriented. For dance ethnographers, the movement of bodies has been the focal point of research.

Sklar (1991) writes that dance ethnography must incorporate both attention to movement and to the meaning of movement; that is, it must include asking dancers about the meaning of the dance for them. 'The dance needed to be approached via a combination of conceptual, kinesthetic, and affective pathways' (Sklar, 1991: 8). She also notes that the ethnographic perspective 'implicates the researcher in the dance event... she is constrained to cast a self-reflexive eye on the assumptions and values—her own cultural tools for understanding—that she brings into fieldwork' (8). Farnell (1999) goes further, suggesting that studying dance and movement ethnographically requires both experience of such movement and attention to meaning. She concludes that

careful observation and personal experience of dancing/moving are necessary, but not sufficient, for understanding human movement practices from an anthropological theory...detailed attention to spoken discourse must enter the research agenda, not because spoken language should act as a model for theories of body movement, but because human beings are language users, and the mind that uses spoken language does not somehow switch off when it comes to moving.
(Farnell, 1999: 147)

Participant Observation

Since movement re-education is a practice of movement, ethnography in this field undoubtedly shares many characteristics with dance ethnography. Ethnography is an ideal research method for studying movement re-education because participant observation is its primary tool and because, as I have said, participation in these techniques is critical to understanding them. My fieldwork involved regular lessons in Alexander Technique and attendance in a body conditioning class for dancers at a local dance training institution. Alexander Technique is taught predominantly on an individual basis, framed in terms of lessons between 'teachers' and 'pupils.'

Introductory sessions are sometimes held in small groups of up to ten, and teachers who worked at theatre schools told me they generally taught group lessons there as well. In the body conditioning class, which I attended for three months, Pilates and yoga were incorporated with Alexander Technique and taught to a group of fifteen to twenty-five students. I also spent a morning at an Alexander teacher training school. Here, too, the technique was taught to a small group of six to ten students, but trainees practised on one another a great deal and also had significant input from the two teachers who led the training. However, the majority of Alexander teachers work one-to-one with pupils.

Alexander lessons tend to last between thirty and forty-five minutes, although one teacher I interviewed was unusual in that he preferred to do much longer sessions of up to two hours at a time. Pupils of Alexander Technique are generally told that a good grasp of the work can be gained in somewhere between ten and thirty lessons. In the early stages, these lessons are taught once or even twice a week, while they later become less frequent. For my fieldwork, I attended weekly Alexander lessons for approximately six months, with a month's break over the Christmas period. After this point my teacher suggested that it was no longer necessary for me to come to lessons each week, and my attendance became increasingly infrequent, tapering first to fortnightly and then monthly lessons for several months, and then becoming even less regular. My final lesson was in April 2003, eighteen months after I began my fieldwork, at which time I had had approximately thirty lessons.

I chose to take Alexander Technique as my primary focus for ethnographic research because I had no prior experience of studying it. As a dancer, I had experienced all the other techniques during or as a supplement to dance training, including undergoing the standard ten sessions of Rolfing, six months of Body-Mind Centering, a Pilates class, and occasional Feldenkrais work. My lack of prior experiential knowledge about Alexander Technique made it easier to begin this research without a preconceived (and therefore potentially undocumentable) sense of what practices and theories the technique involved. My position as a 'marginal native' (Walsh, 1998), inexperienced with regard to Alexander Technique in particular, yet possessing a bodily knowledge through dance and other movement re-education techniques I had studied gave me the kinaesthetic skills to adapt relatively easily to the technique as presented. It should be noted however that kinaesthetic and bodily skills do not necessarily translate into the ability to write about such skill in a convincing manner, and representing bodily movement and action as text can be very problematic. This is partly because it is rarely only one part of the body that is involved in movement, and verbal or written descriptions can often seem insufficiently specific. This is not simply a problem of writing, however; Farnell (1999: 154) has noted that even formal movement notation systems are not always adequate for recording the use of the body because they do not account for the movement between positions. Nonetheless, in Chapter Six I have attempted to present these experiences in an accessible way with detailed descriptions of movement and attention to bodily comportment.

Negotiating access to a site was relatively uncomplicated; I attended an introductory lesson on Alexander Technique given by a teacher at the London Alexander Centre and at the end approached him to explain that I was a researcher interested in taking lessons as part of a study of Alexander Technique and similar work for a PhD in sociology. He readily agreed to take me on as a pupil and said that it would be fine for me to tape record lessons. To my second lesson I brought a formal letter explaining the purpose of my study and what the data would be used for, as well as telling him that he would be anonymised in any reports of the research. Whether I was treated differently in lessons because I was a researcher is another issue; my teacher occasionally mentioned that he gave longer explanations to me because of this. Although the practices employed in these lessons are unlikely to have varied substantially, then, I may have received more 'theory' than other Alexander pupils.

I tape recorded each lesson and produced fieldnotes on the basis of these recordings and notes I had made in my field journal after the session. At the time, I believed the recordings were extremely useful in helping me to reconstruct what had occurred. However, in analysing my fieldnotes, I became aware that contrary to my perceptions at the time, the best notes were the ones in which I did not rely too heavily on the tape recordings I had made in order to remember what had gone on, but reproduced it from memory, because in these accounts the kinaesthetic sense of my own body was most prevalent. In using the tape recorder as a mnemonic device, I tended to concentrate more strongly on what had been said and how language was used in the lessons than on what had been done or what it involved on a kinaesthetic level. This is not to say that memory is a perfect recording instrument; there are inevitably some distortions in remembered lessons. However, it does indicate that sometimes auditory or even visual recordings are not the best way of obtaining a record of corporeal experience. Language may give indications of experience, but in recordings it can be too easy to focus on the former at the latter's expense. I do not wish to essentialise experience, only to take it seriously as a form of data which is critically important in studying movement re-education.

My participant observation is thus fundamentally concerned with my own body and experiences, due to the nature of the environment in which I was conducting ethnography. Although I conducted interviews as a way of broadening my understanding and developing a basis for comparing my own experiences with those of others, in constructing an account of participant observation it is ultimately through my own body/self that I can most coherently present the work; as van Manen (1990: 54) notes with regard to researching lived experience, 'my own life experiences are immediately accessible to me in a way that no one else's are.' In Chapter Six, I provide an account of participant observation in Alexander Technique with examples from my lessons and experience; my body is at the centre of these examples. I take the critiques of self-writing in ethnography which were described above seriously, and in invoking my own experience it is neither my intention to generalise on the basis of my own experience nor to tell a story that is all about myself. However, embodied experience is not only at the heart of movement re-educators' understandings of their own work, it is also fundamentally necessary to *any* understanding of it. As Kleinman

(1999) put it in the quote above, I have used myself as data, in a bodily way. For readers without experience of Alexander Technique, it is only through an account of how its principles are embodied in particular physical practices that the work will make sense or appear coherent. Embodied experiences provide a complementary way of looking at the work which will provide a very different understanding than discourse analysis does, as the contrast of Chapters 5 and 6 will demonstrate.

Coding and analysing fieldnotes from my participant observation was not initially an easy task. As so much of the use we make of our bodies may appear 'natural' and unworthy of study, my fieldnotes initially appeared to me to chronicle nothing but a fairly mundane physical practice, which might have been briefly summarised as 'Sat. Stood. Lay on a table and was adjusted.' It was not until I had finished fieldwork and left these notes unread for several months that, upon returning to them, I began to realise that they constituted a record of a relatively peculiar set of practices. General themes for codes began to present themselves in relation to the principles of Alexander Technique, such as 'non-doing', 'end-gaining and means -whereby', use of the self, and habit. Each of these themes was demonstrated by particular bodily practices. These themes began to take on an analytical force through the comparison of Alexander's emphasis on conscious control and awareness of habitual reactions with Merleau-Ponty's (1962) conception of habit as a kind of somatic knowledge which is preconscious. The fact that both Alexander and Merleau-Ponty discuss habit extensively provided a basis for applying what Csordas has termed a 'cultural phenomenology' (1994b) to a study of Alexander Technique.

Merleau-Ponty's work does not in itself provide a formal analytical framework in the way that Foucault's analysis of techniques of the self does. However, the work of Csordas (2002) provided supplementary tools, through his analysis of 'somatic modes of attention', which allowed the exploration of the generic principles of the technique described above. End-gaining and means-whereby, good use of the self, and non-doing are all aspects of Alexander Technique as a particular somatic mode of attention. Finally, data from my attendance at an Alexander teacher-training programme provided a link to Bourdieu's notion of *habitus* as the object of change in Alexander Technique. After identifying these analytical links between the theoretical literature on embodiment and the embodied experience of participating in Alexander

Technique, a formal coding system emerged which linked accounts of practices with the Alexander principles they were intended to demonstrate. Each of these was coded according to the principle: habit, faulty sensory awareness, perception, inhibition, non-doing, end-gaining, means-whereby, use of the self, conscious control, and finally, implicitly related to conscious control, the role of emotion in the body/mind relationship, which Alexander Technique addresses only indirectly but which nevertheless appeared repeatedly in various ways in my data. Coding and analysing the data, therefore, involved a relatively complex interaction between data and theory, which began from the data, as in 'grounded theory' as described by Strauss and Corbin (1998), but was not entirely driven by it. Existing theory (through Merleau-Ponty and cultural phenomenology) also served to shape and direct the focus of coding by providing an analytical basis on which to understand these practices in relation to habit, *habitus*, and as part of a somatic mode of attention. This is consistent with Coffey and Atkinson's observations that codes may emerge in a variety of ways, from the data, from theoretical frameworks, readings in a general area, or from research questions (1996: 32). All of these informed my data coding.

Interviews

While participant observation can provide extensive data about practices and theories which are not available in non-participant research methods, there are occasions when it is not the most appropriate method of data gathering. For practical reasons, undertaking participant observation in all the movement re-education techniques discussed for this study would not only have been time-consuming but also financially costly. While movement re-education practitioners were generous with their time and attention in providing one or two hours for interviews, most are not in a position to do their work free of charge for the sake of a researcher, and I felt it would be unfair to ask this of them. Using all these methods consecutively could also lead to confused data, or general physical or even emotional changes which could not then be traced to a particular method. Further, undertaking all these methods would simply have produced too much data for this project, leading to difficulties in analysis.

There are also theoretical reasons that participant observation may be usefully supplemented by other forms of analysis. As was exemplified in my experience with

Alexander Technique, certain key issues may not arise in practice but only in the direct questioning which an interview provides. The issue of the 'natural body' and the theories of social evolution behind it simply did not emerge in Alexander lessons. Ida Rolf claimed 'I don't know *why* it works, I only know *that* it works. I invent all these explanatory rationalizations later on' (in Rolf, 1990 [1978]: 27). Theory and practice in movement re-education may be quite different things, with 'explanatory rationalizations' pasted to physical practices which seem to produce positive effects. The experiential way in which most movement re-educators developed their techniques, through work on their own bodies, underscores this point; while Rolf and Feldenkrais, with PhDs in biochemistry and engineering, respectively, used their backgrounds to explain their work scientifically and thus attempt to give it more mainstream biomedical legitimacy, like other movement re-educators they also adopted popular discourses in order to explain and justify their work. Such discourses included eugenics, in F.M. Alexander's case, and flexibility in Bonnie Bainbridge Cohen's.

Theory and practice may sometimes be rather loosely connected in these techniques, and this is an important reason for interviewing practitioners in order to understand their theorisations of their work. However, an embodied sense of practice is always important grounding for these interviews. Becker and Geer (1969) note that participant observation can 'provide us with a yardstick against which to measure the completeness of data gathered in other ways, a model which can serve to let us know what orders of information escape us when we use other methods' (1969: 322). Obviously, the reverse is also true: interviews, for example, can provide a measure of the completeness of observational material, which may ask different kinds of questions.

One of the key things which escapes the interviewer but is accessible to the participant observer, according to Becker and Geer, is change. They write:

it is precisely in discussing changes in themselves and their surroundings that interviewees are least likely or able to give an accurate account of events. Changes in the social environment and in the self inevitably produce transformations of perspective, and it is characteristic of such transformations that the person finds it

difficult or impossible to remember his [*sic*] former actions, outlook, or feelings... Similarly, a person in the midst of such change may find it difficult to describe what is happening, for he has not developed a perspective or concepts which would allow him to think and talk about these things coherently (1969: 331).

Through participant observation, I was able to document changes in my own body/self, but not in others, due to the individual nature of the work. Participants in my study were to some extent able to discuss how their practices had changed over time, but these discussions were relatively impoverished compared to what long-term observation would have provided. Therefore, this study can only reflect on change amongst participants in a relatively limited way. Bodily changes, too, are often among the most subtle and least documentable; as I have noted in Chapter Six, through the course of Alexander lessons the position of my shoulders changed rather dramatically, but I was unable to pinpoint the moments at which the change occurred. In documenting my own experiences with Alexander lessons, however, I have tried to offer a detailed account which might reflect on the experiences of others, through the changes in my own body/self. This is not to say that my experiences are universalisable; clearly they are not. However, if they can provide a clear and detailed account which makes the experience of doing Alexander Technique accessible and understandable to those who have not done it, this can be useful in itself. Through interviews, a broader context for these experiences can be provided.

Conducting Interviews

Interviewing has also often been a part of ethnography; Spradley (1979) discusses the process of ethnographic interviewing in detail. For many ethnographers, interviewing 'informants' is done repeatedly over a period of time, allowing for the development of a rapport and depth of knowledge. This is particularly the case where there is a clearly defined 'field' in which such informants regularly interact and where the ethnographer can encounter them. As Alexander Technique, like most other movement re-education techniques, is taught individually, the 'field' of movement re-educators does not exist as a physical space. Nor was the London Alexander Centre particularly a place to liaise with other pupils; although I was able to interview two other teachers who worked there, no pupils responded to my poster asking for

interviewees and I did not regularly encounter other pupils in that space. I therefore had no contact with potential interviewees other than my Alexander teacher, outside pre-arranged meetings with them. For this reason, it was most useful simply to conduct single semi-structured interviews with a variety of practitioners in an attempt to get a sense of the broader 'field' in which various forms of movement re-education participate.

Participants were reached through an e-mail to the mailing list of the Society of Teachers of the Alexander Technique and the Feldenkrais Guild, posters at Goldsmiths College and a local dance institution, and individual e-mails to practitioners listed on Rolfing and Body-Mind Centering websites, as these practitioners are relatively scarce in the UK. Other potential interviewees were reached through snowball sampling, as pupils of practitioners I had interviewed or contacts of friends or other interviewees who knew I was seeking others to interview. My initial intention was to interview twenty-five practitioners and pupils in a variety of techniques; as it turned out, the majority of interviewees were from Alexander Technique, although I managed to recruit at least three participants with experience in each of the other disciplines. Many participants had experience with more than one technique, but most chose to speak about only one. Twenty-eight interviews were ultimately conducted, including one Alexander Technique pupil who asked to be interviewed by e-mail. The responses I received from this were relatively short and of little use in developing the data, however. More detail about the constitution of the sample is available in Appendix II.

Ursula Sharma notes that with her self-selected sample, 'people motivated to...submit to a fairly lengthy and probing interview would be those whose experience of complementary medicine had been substantial and fairly successful, rather than those whose experience had been cursory or, from their point of view, a waste of time' (1992: 34). Thus, she concludes, we cannot draw any conclusions about efficacy or patient satisfaction from such a group. In the case of my interviews, practitioners of the techniques were the ones most interested in being interviewed and most responsive to my calls for participants. Obviously they have a greater commitment to the work and a professional interest in having it publicised, which several indicated was the reason they had agreed to be interviewed. Indeed, amongst Alexander

teachers particularly, I received so many volunteers that I had to turn some away lest the sample be constituted entirely of Alexander teachers. This does not indicate that pupils and clients of these techniques felt that they were a waste of time, only that they had less interest in spending an hour with an interviewer discussing them. Like Sharma, however, I have avoided drawing any conclusions from this small and statistically unrepresentative sample as to the efficacy of these techniques. For the purposes of this study I have been interested not in whether the techniques ‘work’—the practitioners I interviewed genuinely believe that they do, and this has been to a large extent borne out on a personal level for me during my fieldwork—but in the work they *do*, in relation to shaping the self and formulating different somatic modes of attention.

Nearly all interviews lasted an hour or more; a few even lasted as long as two hours. At the beginning of each interview, I explained to the participant that I was conducting research on ideas about the body and health in relation to a number of movement re-education techniques as part of a PhD in sociology. The wording of the explanation varied according to the participant’s perceived interest in the research and sometimes included the phrase ‘body wisdom’, while at other times not. This proved to be useful as in Alexander Technique I discovered that there was no sense of ‘body wisdom’ and to claim to be looking for it would have been distracting and misleading. I also explained to participants that I had experience with most of these techniques and was taking lessons in Alexander Technique myself, establishing a common background for understanding. Teachers of these techniques therefore treated me as someone with a little understanding and sympathy, but who could not be expected to know very much and was therefore lacking the tacit knowledge they themselves possessed. In this initial statement, I also sought and received explicit permission to tape record the interviews, and explained that participants would be anonymised and any identifying details removed in the final thesis. In the data chapters, each interviewee has been assigned a pseudonym in order to distinguish them from other interviewees and so that their narratives may to some extent be followed, however, I have avoided including background information about participants except in a very general way, lest they be identifiable. The London Alexander Centre, where I

undertook my fieldwork, is also a pseudonym; there are in fact a number of Alexander centres in London, generally named by region.

Interviewing and Embodiment

I have already suggested that interviewing is not simply a way to access discourse, although approaches such as those of Silverman (2000), to analysing interviews as text and discourse may give this impression. In interviewing movement re-educators, bodies were often central not only as topics of discussion, but also in presenting material. Some practitioners demonstrated particular techniques or physical principles, leaving me in the process of transcription to describe in words the practices I remembered from the verbal cues given. When this occurred in interviews, I generally tried to comment on the actions in a way that would provide me with data from which to later reconstruct it. One interviewee, Eva, suggested in a pilot interview that ‘the more “movement people” people are, you know, the more they’ll show you with their body rather than telling you in words... that’s another problem with the whole thing, is you can only say so much, and it comes down to people’s doing’. Again, practice was critical to understanding.

One topic that elicited physical demonstration was the difference in ways of standing and sitting from a chair in Alexander Technique. Two of Alexander’s first pupils, Walter Carrington and Patrick Macdonald, developed somewhat different approaches to the work, mainly regarding the way in which one should stand up from a chair. Their viewpoints have developed into a minor but noticeable split between contemporary Alexander teachers, among those who come from a Carrington lineage and those who have adopted the Macdonald style. One teacher from each tradition spontaneously demonstrated the differences to me, showing me how the leg position differed and how in the Carrington tradition, one tended to bend forward at the hips in order to come to standing. Yet these two teachers also dismissed the differences as unimportant, and the Carrington-trained teacher even quoted an important Macdonald disciple as having said of the bent waist, ‘why go via Brighton if you want to go to London?’ Such physical demonstrations provided me with a context for the way my own Alexander teacher (who was trained in the Macdonald tradition) presented the

work. They could not replace participant observation, but they did provide some basis for comparison.

The issue of physical practices being presented in interviews raises the issue of whether a video camera would have been a more appropriate recording device than a tape recorder in these interviews. In hindsight, it may be that videotape would have provided a clearer record of the bodily self-presentation of participants in interviews. However, within the Alexander lessons themselves, I am doubtful as to whether this would have helped the final accounts of lessons. Too much emphasis can be put on the visual, and the work of Alexander Technique is predominantly about developing the kinaesthetic felt sense.

Interviews were also embodied in the sense that, like fieldwork, they required a certain type of self-presentation and interaction with people who were in a very real sense embodying the techniques they practised. This was particularly the case with Alexander teachers, for whom inhibition of one's initial response to a stimulus (in this case, a question) is a key principle. In several interviews, the pause between question and answer demonstrated the way the work was being employed by these teachers as fully as questions about how they practised it in their daily lives did. I want to suggest, however, that embodiment is not only about attending to the body's observable presence and practices, but also at times about attending to how bodily practice is explained and spoken about. In academic work, as in interviews, bodily practices can only be represented through words. The relative neglect of this kind of representation has made it appear that embodiment has no part in academic discourse or that embodiment is outside of language, but this is not the case. While descriptions of practice will never entirely capture the bodily experience of them, because in the translation to language the inarticulable 'felt sense' of the body may be lost, it is nevertheless useful to attempt to capture these in language, and in so doing take embodiment seriously. Part of the difficulty in writing or speaking about bodily experience, I would argue, comes from the fact that it occurs so infrequently. While asking participants about what they do in a session of movement re-education may not fully represent what they *actually* practice, it is at least a guide toward these practices.

Structure of Interviews

Each interview began with an attempt to develop a narrative history of the participant's involvement in the technique, the length of time and degree of involvement they had, and to establish whether they had experience with other techniques such as the ones studied, or tai chi and other martial arts, yoga, or other forms of bodywork. These questions established a context and background for each participant. I then proceeded to ask questions about what the technique did, in their interpretation, and what benefits this would have. While I had imagined that stated aims might include improved posture or alignment, most responses centred around increased body awareness, an issue I will develop in Chapters 7 and 8.

The Colliers (Collier and Collier, 1986) have shown how photographs may be used in interviews to approach issues which might not otherwise be discussed. In developing an interview guide, I struggled with the issue of how to elicit responses from participants about Alexander's theory of eugenics and how to broach the issue of evolution. The image below (Figure 2.1) provided an opening for this, representing in pictorial form, as one Alexander teacher noted, 'what Alexander says in his books.' This image became an opening for asking about participants' interpretations of it, whether it related to the techniques they were involved with and in what way, if they thought there was such a thing as a natural alignment or posture and what this might be like, whether they felt culture or background might affect a person's alignment, and how it might do this.

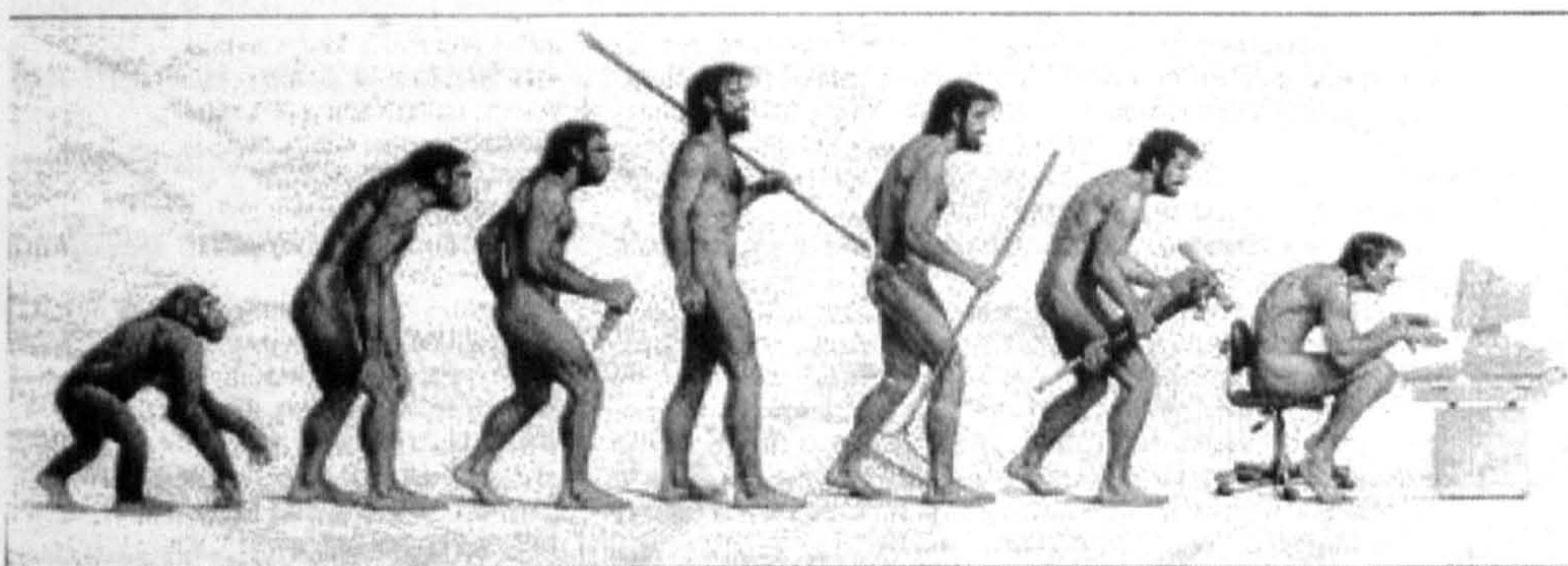


Figure 2. 1: The Evolution and Degeneration of Man, original source unknown, popularly used on Alexander Technique websites and presented in Balk and Shields, 2000: 29.

Questions then proceeded to cover what the interviewee might do in a session of the technique, with emphasis on specific practices, and whether it was seen as holistic and what this might mean. I also enquired about how participants saw their techniques' relationships with alternative and complementary health, science and Western medicine, and what the gender balance was amongst participants in their experiences. Finally, I asked practitioners how their experiences had changed over time, and asked pupils or clients whether the technique had stayed with them and if they still used it, and in what way. A full version of the interview guide is in Appendix I.

These questions can be divided into four main themes. One theme was narrative and aimed at life history in relation to the study of movement re-education, seeking the story of the participant's involvement in the work and the initial reasons that motivated this involvement. Key themes from the work of the founders, including evolution, eugenics, the relationship between nature and culture, and gender were then explored. A third theme involved movement re-education's relationships to other discourses, including alternative health, other forms of movement re-education, science and biomedicine. The final theme addressed practices: what do the techniques aim to do, and how do they do it? What practices are involved? Are they continuous, or do they slip when participants cease to be involved with the work on a regular basis? While the guide was flexible and not all questions were asked in each session, the most likely questions to be omitted were those about the relationship of movement re-education to other discourses, partly because these were often implicitly covered in other responses. In the course of the interviews, I also attempted to add a question about whether and at what point the work became ingrained or internalised, but this was not a successful question, because the nature of the work is that it is ongoing and there is no point (particularly in Alexander Technique which emphasises constant attention to conscious control) when these techniques become completely habitual.

The interview data were analysed using the data analysis software NVivo, which provided the advantage of rapid searching and coding through relatively lengthy passages of text and multiple documents. Fieldnotes from participant observation were not coded using this software due to their relatively unproblematic length in terms of searching and finding key passages, and the fact that the codes used for them

did not significantly overlap with the interview data because of broad differences in this data. Interview data were analysed partly in relation to themes emerging from the discourse analysis, such as naturalness and evolution, which needed further elaboration in the context of contemporary movement re-education practitioners, and issues such as embodied practice which required comparison to the ethnographic data on Alexander Technique. Certain other issues, such as the relationship between movement re-education and alternative health, emerged only in the interviews.

Coffey and Atkinson (1996) note that data are often initially coded according to interview questions, and this was the case with my interviews, particularly on issues such as naturalness, relationship to biomedicine, aims of techniques, benefits of techniques, and practices. Other themes emerged from careful readings of the interviews and from observations made during transcriptions. These included the relevance of posture being organised along the plumb line, the role of the nervous system, and criticisms of modern civilisation and working practices, an issue which generated repeated comment because the image above shows 'man' slumped ultimately in front of the computer. Upon closer analysis, however, this theme merely reflected broader issues about the natural and evolution and was not a point for development in itself. Some of these themes then led to the creation of 'tree nodes' for analysis, which impose a hierarchical structure on the codes so that they can be further broken down and analysed. For example, the code related to 'the natural' was analysed and broken down in terms of specific understandings of the term 'natural', including the natural as original (later more accurately described as 'pre-civilised'); the natural as normal, the natural as unknown, and the natural as ideal. Another tree node involved the practical uses to which movement re-education was put by participants, specifically musicians and dancers. In part, the use made of the themes indicated by these codes, in Chapters 7 and 8, derived from the topics previously addressed in Chapters 5 and 6 through the analysis of fieldnotes and founding texts, which left questions open that needed further exploration in relation to contemporary movement re-education practice. The natural, for instance, proved to be a major issue requiring detailed analysis, but it also linked to the plumb line and the rejection of vertical posture as the goal of movement re-education. The analysis of naturalness also involved coding data which fit with my initial findings (that a sense of the natural as pre-civilised was important to movement re-educators) and that which did not,

from participants who understood the ‘natural body’ to be a normal one, or said that it was not a term they would use in relation to their work. Coding thus took account of divergent interpretations and data which did not fit the initial pattern.

Ethics

My background in dance and prior experience with many of these techniques has shaped and influenced the way I have approached this research and the way I have been understood by my participants. I have never been a ‘neutral observer’ in relation to these techniques, although this need not be problematic in itself; as Bourdieu has observed, ‘If the sociologist manages to produce any truth, he [*sic*] does so not *despite* the interest he has in producing that truth but *because* he has an interest in doing so—which is the exact opposite of the usual somewhat fatuous discourse about “neutrality”’ (1993: 11). However, my acknowledgement of a shared background with many of those involved in movement re-education has led many to assume that we share the same values and beliefs. This has not always been the case; as a sociologist, I have questioned the value of the natural and the status of body wisdom as an innate truth in a way that many movement re-educators would find challenging. Further, I have suggested that some models of evolution used by movement re-educators have racist connotations and should be abandoned, a suggestion which would make some movement re-educators uncomfortable. However, while on the basis of a discourse analysis of texts, it seemed to me that I should position myself against movement re-education, fieldwork and the involvement with real people, many of whom did share similar backgrounds and even occasionally similar discomfort with the racism of the founders, aligned me more strongly with movement re-educators themselves.

Becker (1967) has asked ‘whose side are we on?’ in relation to our research, and this question has returned to me throughout this project. Unprompted, one answer arrived from my Alexander teacher who, upon reading Chapter Six, commented ‘you are on our side! Maybe a bit too much?’ Ethnographers have acknowledged the problem of ‘going native’, over-identifying with the participants in one’s research (see Gubrium and Holstein, 1997: 36). While I have remained committed to challenging certain aspects of the theories many movement re-educators hold, my ethnographic

involvement with it did moderate this desire and make me more conscious of my responsibility to represent my participants fairly.

Judith Stacey (1988) has noted that the deep involvement of ethnographers in their research environments often leads to tensions and thorny ethical issues in relation to what can be said about the people one is researching. Naheed Islam (2000), who researched race amongst a Bangladeshi community in Los Angeles, describes how research can be 'an act of betrayal.' Her status as an insider to this community put her in a position to routinely encounter racist views her participants held about other minority groups. She writes:

The price of my inclusion in the community was to leave racist discourses uncontested. Should I reveal this "dirty laundry" once I had completed my research? By doing so, will I be distancing myself from and claiming to be better than the rest of "my community"? The history and experiences of the Bangladeshi community in the United States are yet undocumented. Should its introduction be "overshadowed" by the racist discourse the community reproduces? How should I represent a marginalized community within and through my work? (2000: 58)

Although my research environment is quite different from hers, I have confronted some similar issues with regard to the representation of movement re-educators. As participants in a complementary health field outside the mainstream and struggling for recognition, movement re-educators are in some senses a marginal group. Several indicated they had agreed to be interviewed in the hope that research such as mine would promote their work. In exposing an underlying racist ideology in the histories and sometimes contemporary discourses of movement re-education, then, I risked damaging their chances of recognition, betraying the hopes they placed in me as a researcher. Further, as a marginal member of their community because of my previous experiences, I was generally treated (and behaved) as sympathetic toward their work. Movement re-education is also virtually undocumented in academia, and it has not been my intention to dismiss or discredit it simply because it stands outside the mainstream. However, the few scholarly attempts to discuss movement re-education (Fraleigh, 2000; Green, 1999; Huxley, 1995) are deeply troubling in their attempts to write it as a discovery of the 'true nature' of the body without a sense of its historicity

or the highly suspect discourses upon which its founders often drew. Ultimately, I have hoped to position myself as sympathetic but critical, increasing recognition of these techniques whilst demonstrating to movement re-educators that the evolutionary theories of their founders had strong racist overtones, and that these are not actually necessary to their work.

For a very few participants, this will be an issue they are already aware of; for others, it may provide a new and useful direction in which to develop their work. However, I accept that for some, the evolutionary theories of the founders are beguiling, and any criticism of the founders themselves will be seen as an attempt to detract from the work (see Holt, 2000 for an example of this). For these participants and others in the movement re-education community, my work may be threatening, even dangerous. Staring (1997), who produced a damning biography of F.M. Alexander, complained that upon publishing an article in a major professional journal for Alexander teachers, he received no comments on his contention that Alexander was a racist who espoused eugenics. Judging from the reactions chronicled in the transcript of a presentation he gave to the American Center for the Alexander Technique (Staring and Bouchard, 2002), many Alexander teachers remain rather hostile to any criticism of Alexander. Such criticisms may also be entirely ignored; it may be that my attempt to provide alternative understandings of these techniques falls, as it were, upon deaf ears. However, as Islam concludes, silences about issues of racism 'subvert an analysis and understanding of how racism operates and how racialized systems of domination and inequality are maintained. Therefore, such silences are a betrayal of antiracist politics' (2000: 59). These issues cannot, therefore, be overlooked.

As I have discussed elsewhere (Tarr, 2004), the impressions of practitioners that I might promote their work were not wrong; after presentations, people sometimes approached me, not to ask for clarification on a point I had made, but to inquire as to where they could find an Alexander teacher to work with. This even occurred when I had been critical of Alexander Technique. Even amongst academics, it seemed, my work might have a promotional rather than critical function for movement re-education.

The issue of ethics is not simply one of taking sides, but also of how to respond when confronted with racism. Back (2002), in his account about researching white nationalists, demonstrates how being open about one's political commitments with respondents who hold very different commitments can produce useful dialogue. He also notes that there can be a degree of identification with respondents whose backgrounds are similar but whose views one may abhor, and that this can cause discomfort and disorientation, which can in fact be a useful starting point for conducting an ethnography of whiteness such as the one he undertook. Becker (2000) comments that the tension between whether to confront participants and respondents and speak out against racism when it appears, thus clearing one's moral conscience, or on the other hand to be silent in the face of racism in order to gather data upon it, thus fulfilling the requirements of social scientific research, cannot be resolved. Hammersley (1992) also indicates that exploitation and ethics in the research process are a matter of context.

There were five instances in interviews where respondents indicated they held implicitly racist models of evolution, and in only two of these was this racist view of 'others' as savage and less evolved fully articulated. My response to these remarks was always to keep quiet, making noncommittal noises to encourage the interviewee to continue speaking. This was less a considered reaction than an instinctual one, strengthened by the fact that the views expressed were unlikely to have been seen as racist by their purveyors. Judging from the Alexander Technique journal *Direction's* 'multicultural' issue (2000), many Alexander teachers are entirely unaware that the models of evolution upon which Alexander relied are at least half a century out of date and are today readily acknowledged in other circles to be racist. While it is important to bring this to their attention, suggesting this to individuals in interview settings would likely have brought the interviews to an abrupt close. In this case, I felt that developing a broader picture of the ways in which this model of evolution was mobilised by contemporary practitioners in order to analyse and critique it, offering this analysis back to them, was more important than confronting individual practitioners to tell them their views invoked racist models of the 'natural savage.' To this end, it is my intention to publish summaries about my research in a format which

is accessible and available to those involved in movement re-education in addition to publishing more academic works on the topic ¹⁰.

Conclusion

Throughout this chapter, I have tried to show how a theory of embodied discourse may be developed through the contrast of data about discourses with data about embodiment. It is through researching embodiment that we can understand what occurs in movement re-education and how it accomplishes its aims, or tries to do so. In analysing discourse, the broader socio-cultural forces which shape movement re-education and the way it explains and justifies itself become apparent. I have suggested that neither of these would be sufficient in isolation, and it is only through developing an analysis that contrasts these two approaches that we get a full sense of what movement re-education does and is about.

I have argued that while analysing texts can be an appropriate way of gaining information about discourses, knowledge of embodiment is best gained through embodied experience, which a research method such as participant observation can provide. I have further argued that interviews can provide some information about both embodiment and discourse, depending on the kinds of questions that are asked. Finally, I have suggested that ethical concerns differ between text-based discourse analysis and research methods that involve live human participants, and obviously our responsibilities to texts are not the same as our responsibilities to people.

Researching embodied discourse in this way requires attention to both embodied and discursive data, and the interplay between them. It does not simplify either, nor hold that they can be elided, that discourse and embodiment are the same. To the contrary, there are often marked differences between discourses and embodied practice. I will demonstrate this in the following two chapters on the basis of a discourse analysis of the writings of these techniques' founders and ethnographic data on studying Alexander Technique.

¹⁰ This practice was pioneered by feminist researchers, and includes Coward's (1989) text on alternative health, discussed in the previous chapter, which seems to be a contribution in this vein.

Chapter 5

Movement Re-education as Ethical Self-Formation: A Discourse Analysis

Introduction

As I suggested in Chapters 3 and 4, Foucault's analysis of 'techniques of the self' (1985; 1986) can be productively applied to movement re-education. In this chapter, I will show how such an analysis can be undertaken. In doing so, I will demonstrate that the aspects of techniques of the self used by Foucault in his work on sexuality in ancient Greece and Rome, which, as I described in Chapter Three, include ethical substance, modes of subjection, ethical practices, and *telo s*, are equally relevant to movement re-education. The purpose of this chapter is ultimately to show how movement re-education functions as a type of ethical self-formation, fashioning the self in particular ways. Through this analysis, the development of a theory of body wisdom in movement re-education will be traced.

The chapter draws upon the writings of the founders of the movement re-education techniques studied here, as set out in Chapter One: Alexander's books *Man's Supreme Inheritance* (1910); *Constructive Conscious Control of the Individual* (1987 [1923]); *The Use of the Self* (1985 [1932]); and *The Universal Constant in Living* (2000 [1941]); Pilates' *Your Health* (1998 [1934]) and *Return to Life Through Contrology* (2000 [1945]), Feldenkrais' *Body and Mature Behavior* (1949); *Body Awareness as Healing Therapy* (1993 [1977]), and the introduction to *The Elusive Obvious* (in Johnson, 1995); Rolf's *Rolfing: The Integration of Human Structures* (1977) and *Rolfing and Physical Reality* (1990 [1978]), and Bonnie Bainbridge Cohen's *Sensing, Feeling, and Action* (1993). While I have occasionally used texts on these techniques which are written by others to illuminate particular points, or for more contemporary interpretations, I have made no systematic attempt to study this literature. This is not because I believe the founders are the only authentic interpreters of the techniques, but because I am interested the broader socio-historical context, and the majority of secondary literature available is published too recently to give a sense how the techniques originally explained themselves. A sense of the 'official' discourse surrounding the techniques is also useful. Reading these texts is often an important part of becoming a teacher of one of these techniques, and most interviewees who

were teachers indicated a strong familiarity with them. A third, pragmatic, reason for focussing on the texts of the founders is the limitation of space, as discourse analysis is only one component of my research project.

This chapter will build on the histories set out in Chapter Two, where I discussed aspects of body wisdom in relation to dance and physical culture, posture, eugenics, and alternative health. Parallels with these fields will be apparent in the ways in which these techniques approach the relation between the body and nature and rely upon particular theories of degeneration. Later techniques such as Feldenkrais and Rolfing move toward psychologising bodily comportment, as Vigarello (2001) suggested in relation to postural pedagogy in the mid-twentieth century. Parallels are also apparent between Body-Mind Centering's focus on adaptability and body systems, and Martin's (1994) work on the flexible immune system.

To demonstrate the differences between the five forms of movement re-education studied here, I will begin by outlining their practices and how these become a form of ethical work on the self. It is in these predominantly physical practices that the techniques are most different from one another. For example, in Alexander Technique, the work involves standing in front of a mirror, sitting, walking, and doing 'table work' with the guidance of a teacher, whereas in Pilates, it is a series of set exercises on mats or machines. In Rolfing, on the other hand, it is a set of ten or more lessons with a 'Rolfer' who does something similar to deep massage, intended to stretch muscular fascia. The forms of ethical work Foucault identifies, including self-evaluation through writing and confession, are nowhere to be found. This is not to indicate that the physical work done in movement re-education lacks an ethical, self-forming component, for as I stated earlier, the techniques rely upon a conception of body and mind as inextricably linked. Further, movement re-education is a kind of work aimed at self-knowledge, and 'knowing oneself' is a maxim that appears repeatedly in these texts. As such it is a kind of ethical quest.

The holism that makes these physical practices into ethical work is a key component of their ethical substance. The ethical substance involved in movement re-education is the comportment of the body, although only in so far as the maxim *mens sana in corpore sano*, translated as 'a sane mind in a healthy body' or 'a sound mind in a

sound body' is upheld. In other words, it is only because mind and body are perceived as intimately connected that movement re-education can work with the body as an ethical substance. In fact, in the work of Alexander (1910; 1985 [1923]; 1932; 2000 [1941]) and Pilates (1998 [1934]; 1945), the word 'body' is generally avoided. Alexander preferred to refer to the 'use of the self' (1985 [1932]), and more recently, Cohen has suggested the term 'body/mind' (1993: 1) to indicate that the two are inseparable. Throughout this text I have used 'body/self' to indicate that the self being written about is an embodied one.

The mode of subjection and relevant truth of all these techniques is ultimately nature, particularly in relation to evolution. Evolution is taken as a self-evident truth, but it is also given a moral weight, and this weight is associated with its naturalness, which is idealised as pure and uncorrupted. However, this very appeal to 'naturalness' calls the natural into question, implying that nature can be interfered with, and is not a given but something to be worked upon. In Alexander Technique, Pilates, and Rolfing, authority is also drawn from the eugenics movement and early to mid-twentieth century theories of racial degeneration. This also appears as a minor theme in Feldenkrais but is eliminated entirely in Body-Mind Centering, which relies instead on evolution and nature as authorities. Founders of these techniques themselves also become modes of subjection, authorities whose interpretations are given particular weight because they appear to have independently discovered certain universal bodily truths.

The *telos* of movement re-education techniques is body awareness, which in later techniques develops into body wisdom. Developing an awareness of body/self in the former case, or a body that is itself aware in the latter, is seen as promoting health and well-being. However, this takes different forms. In Alexander Technique, body/self awareness is developed through conscious control of the self, whereas in Feldenkrais, Rolfing, and Body-Mind Centering, the education of the nervous system (and in the latter case, other systems of the body) overtakes the need to make awareness permanently conscious. While some notion of a natural body underlies all these techniques, what the natural body is and does varies between them.

This chapter will not only develop a genealogy of movement re-education as a particular kind of ethical self-formation, but will also show how various shifts have occurred, shifts which indicate social and historical influences on the developments of these techniques which are not simply a function of the biographies of their founders. These biographies are certainly relevant to the practices of movement re-education, as discussed in Chapter One, but this chapter will be particularly concerned to relate movement re-education to its socio-historical context, developed in Chapter Two.

Physical Practices as Ethical Work: Holism and Knowing Oneself

The physical practices involved in movement re-education form the ethical work undertaken, in the sense that these practices shape the *selves* of clients or pupils and not simply their bodies. However, the nature of these practices is difficult to glean from reading the founder's texts on the subject. Alexander's *The Use of the Self* (1932) and Feldenkrais' *Body Awareness as Healing Therapy* (1993 [1977]) give case studies of clients, as does Cohen's book *Sensing Feeling and Action* (1993). Pilates' second book, *Return to Life through Contrology*, is unusual in that it contains how-to instructions for all thirty-four of his mat exercises, and is made more unusual by the fact the photographs which accompany them are of Pilates himself at the age of sixty, performing these exercises in his underwear. Elsewhere, Rolf and her writing assistant Rosemary Feitis comment that they have avoided giving 'hints to those who would enjoy a little home experimentation' because

The technique of Structural Integration is powerful, and the resultant changes are far-reaching. As practitioners, we do not aim for change alone; we wish to induce change toward balance. Change without balance can be destructive. Experience has taught us that recognition of balance and understanding its many ramifications are subtle arts and long-term disciplines. Balance in the body does not reveal itself to the dilettante; it is a matter of intuition, experience, knowledge, and study. (1977: 11-12)

This is echoed by Alexander, (1987 [1923]: 77), who also notes the difficulty of expressing these practices in words, and suggests that sometimes the aid of a teacher is necessary:

Some... have rated me quite severely because, as they put it, they are not able to teach themselves from what I have written in all my books. Yet they must be well aware that,

in spite of all the textbooks on the subjects, many people are unable to teach themselves to drive a car, play golf, ski, or even to master such comparatively simple subjects as geography, history and arithmetic, without the aid of a teacher. (1985 [1932]: 17)

As a result of this lack of textual evidence about physical practices, this section will summarise what little is written about each practice, and will then go on to examine the ethical injunction ‘know oneself’ in the context of movement re-education, as a key aspect of what these practices seek to develop. More detailed descriptions of the contemporary practices of Alexander Technique and Pilates will be put forward in Chapter Six.

Alexander’s writings make it clear that the development of ‘conscious control’ over psycho-physical functions is a key aspect of the ethical work to be done. The practical intentions of Alexander Technique are the development of conscious control, which is formed by ‘inhibiting’ the initial response to performing an action, and giving considered attention to how to do it with proper ‘Use’ of the self. Alexander developed this into a five step process which he outlines as: 1) inhibiting the initial urge to act, 2) projecting the best directions for how to do so, 3) continuing to project them until he believed he was sufficiently ready to do so in practice, 4) while still doing this, reconsidering whether he still wanted to act, and from there making a new decision, 5) either to do so, to change and perform another action, or to discontinue the action completely (Alexander, 1985: 36).

A 1919 article in *Atlantic Monthly* described early lessons with F.M. Alexander as follows:

You are first shown your general incompetence to disassociate and control your movements; then you are given certain fundamental orders in regard to the relaxing of the neck, the position of the head, the lengthening of the body and broadening of the back... Mr Alexander then proceeds literally to remodel the patient, first sitting and then in a standing posture. He devotes his chief attention to the neck, lower thorax, and abdomen, but sees to it that one’s legs are properly relaxed. By pressing, pushing, pulling, stretching, and readjusting— all quite gently and persuasively— he brings you back into shape, rising now and then to take a look at you from a distance, as a sculptor might view the progress of his work. (Robinson, 1919: 7)

Pilates' practical work is very different from Alexander's method. The Pilates method may be learned as a set of matwork exercises or through work on strengthening machines, which he discovered, apparently, when building similar makeshift equipment from springs and beds whilst working as a hospital orderly with non-ambulatory patients during the latter part of World War I (Siler, 2000: 2). His matwork exercises, of which there are thirty-four, are most commonly practised by students of Pilates because they can be learned in larger classes, whereas the use of the machines requires individual supervision. As I mentioned earlier, Pilates sets out these thirty-four exercises in his book *Return to Life Through Contrology* (2000 [1945]). The exercises are carried out on the floor, and target the abdominal muscles and spine. Breath is used as a guide, with certain movements performed on an inhalation, and others on an exhalation. The book sets out these exercises in steps, with four photographs accompanying each exercise to guide the reader through the process. Many contemporary Pilates books use a similar format, although it should be noted that they often modify these exercises somewhat for beginners, or show varying levels of difficulty, something Pilates does not do (see Siler, 2000; Kelly, 2001, among others). This is indicative of a relaxation in the bodily movement involved in Pilates and also suggests his own work has been reinterpreted for a contemporary context¹¹, as I will discuss in the next chapters.

As indicated in the quote above, Rolf's writings give little indication of what is involved in the practice of Structural Integration, or Rolfing, as it is commonly called. Rolfing is unique in the sphere of movement re-education techniques (although not among bodywork techniques more generally, which often include massage-based therapies) in that it involves a great deal of hands-on manipulation of muscles and joints by the Rolfer. Rolf believed that the myofascia — fibres which join muscle to bone— develop tensions and get 'stuck', leading to muscles with persistent knots or stiffness. Her goal was to improve the tone of the fascia, which would then release the muscles and improve the body's ability to hold itself well. She describes Rolfers

¹¹ Pilates method has also had the most difficulty with establishing heirs to the tradition, and there was a court case in 2000 over the trademarking of the name Pilates, in which it was ruled that it referred to a form of exercise and could not be owned. See www.pilates-cancel.com for a more detailed account of this.

as removing pins from clothing (Rolf, 1990 [1978]: 194), indicating that once the 'pins' (blocks in the fascia) are removed, the body will 'hang' normally. This is achieved by what she refers to as 'processing'. Rolf never describes this process itself, although it is clear that it consists of ten basic sessions of hands-on bodywork, with careful examination of posture and photographs taken before and after the ten sessions. Many of these photos are printed in *Rolfing: The Integration of Human Structures* (1977).

According to the website of the Rolf Institute (www.rolf.org), one of the major sites for training in Rolfing, the 'ten series' can be divided into three units, all of which work with soft tissue in an unspecified way which clearly involves hands-on manipulation. The first three 'sleeve' sessions loosen and balance outer layers of connective tissue or fascia, working on the ribs, lower leg and foot, hamstrings and side of the body, and are followed by four 'core' sessions which work on deep postural support and 'inner' layers of the fascia, with attention on the inner leg, pelvic floor and abdomen, hips, spine, head and neck. Three final 'integrative' sessions address middle layers of the fascia and might focus on the upper body and lower body, movements in major joints, and ways of sitting (www.rolf.org/about/faq/q4.html).

For Rolf, '*Structure is behavior*' (1977:31). In other words, 'behavior is expressed through the musculoskeletal system. All function is an expression of structure and form and correlates directly with material structure. A man crying the blues is in reality bewailing his structural limitations and failures' (1977: 17). She continues poetically: 'As fascial tone improves, individual muscles glide over one another and the flesh— no longer "too, too solid"— reminds the searching fingers of layers of silk that glide on one another with a suggestion of opulence' (1977: 35).

Feldenkrais claims to have no set physical programme, but invents practices as he goes along. In *Body Awareness as Healing Therapy: The Case of Nora*, he describes one particular case of a woman who had suffered a stroke, whom he helped using methods which varied from physical manipulation to exercises involving focussing the eyes on a straw held between the teeth, to improve vision. According to his follower Mia Segal, his methods tended to involve physical manipulation, as well as a

variety of 'devices and positions', including beds, chairs, rollers, sitting, and kneeling (in Hanna, 1995: 116). Feldenkrais attempted to make changes to the way people used their bodies through mild physical manipulation and direction in physical activities, with a focus on creating an awareness of physicality. His technique is taught either through one-to-one lessons, called Functional Integration, which involve work on a table, or in larger classes labelled Awareness Through Movement.

The practice of Body-Mind Centering involves 'identifying, articulating, differentiating, and integrating the various tissues within the body, discovering the qualities they contribute to one's movement, how they have evolved in one's development process, and the role they play in the expression of mind' (Cohen, 1993: 1). Alignment itself is not the purpose, Cohen claims, but rather a 'continual dialogue between awareness and action' (1). Practically, this is accomplished in group or individual sessions which move participants through various 'stages of evolution' including cellular breathing, navel radiation (where limbs are perceived as extending from the navel or centre as they do for a starfish), and homolateral and contralateral push/reach patterns. Imagery is important, sessions may also work through the 'systems' of the body: the skeletal system, ligamentous system, muscular system, organs system, endocrine system, nervous system, fluid system, fascial system, fat, and skin (1993: 2-4). Each of these 'systems' is associated with particular emotional and physical qualities; for example, because the organs carry the functions vital for survival, they provide us with a sense of volume, full-bodiedness, and authenticity, and are the natural habitats of our emotions and memories of reactions to our personal histories (1993: 3). Moving from the organ system would then have a particular 'full-bodied' style that would be different to movement initiated from the nervous system, for example. Particular kinds of movement are related to these various systems, and a weakness in embodying or practising a particular kind of movement indicates a weakness in the physical and/or emotional area related to that system or that part of the system. The goal of BMC work is to open up new possibilities for expression.

Cohen claims

I think the problem is that we see the imbalance as a weakness when actually it's a strength. What we are strong in we do all the time, so that we over-fatigue that system. In doing this kind of work we don't all end up being equal in every system; we each end up being, how do you say, more fully ourselves. (1993: 12)

This desire for a balance in bodily systems is interesting in a socio-historical context in relation to the idea of flexibility in systems discussed by Martin (1994). Cohen's conception of this balance as bringing us to a state in which we are 'more fully ourselves' is also significant because it emphasises the contradiction underlying movement re-education techniques, namely that we require *training* to become 'more fully ourselves;' more 'natural' and authentic.

Despite some similarities with the physical culture movement described in Chapter Two, most of the movement re-educators discussed here disliked traditional physical education and sought to distance themselves from it. Rolf writes disdainfully of the muscle-bound body: 'A more experienced critic recognizes this type as rigid, limited in outlook, preoccupied with himself and his physical beauty, lacking in perception and sensitivity, and, even more damning, unable to do a really good day's work in either a mental or physical field' (Rolf, 1977: 24). Feldenkrais noted that 'Activity strictly localised to a small number of motor cells will produce inhibitory phenomena and finally loss of reactivity' (1949: 30). This is similar to Cohen's comment about over-fatiguing particular systems, which creates imbalances. As early as 1910, Alexander argued that physical culture exercises were not desirable because they did not help muscles regain their 'natural function' and led to strife within the self (1910: 15). Pilates appears to have been alone in his support for physical culture, if only his own brand of it (1998 [1934]: 11). Photographs of movement re-educators confirm that he was also alone in sporting the very muscular and toned body derided by Rolf above. While Pilates preferred to think of his work as a comprehensive system of health promotion, the exercises he sets out in *Return to Life Through Contrology* focus much more on strength training than the work of any of the other movement re-educators discussed here.

The physical practices of movement re-education do ethical work in so far as they are tied to holistic conceptions of the self or the body/mind relationship. It is because they influence *behaviour*, in the words of Rolf and Feldenkrais, that they do more than physically shape bodies but also shape selves. Part of this shaping of the self involves *knowing oneself*, something Foucault (1988) calls the 'Delphic maxim'

because it was used in consulting the Greek oracle. Discussing how *knowing oneself* has overtaken another Greek principle, the *care of the self*, he comments:

Without doubt, our philosophical tradition has overemphasized the latter [know yourself] and forgotten the former [take care of yourself.] The Delphic principle was not an abstract one concerning life; it was technical advice, a rule to be observed for the consultation of the oracle... In Greek and Roman texts, the injunction of having to know oneself was always associated with the other principle of care of the self, and it was that need to care for oneself that brought the Delphic maxim into operation. (Foucault, 1997: 226)

There are a number of specific references to the maxim of knowing oneself in the writings of the movement re-educators. Pilates decries the state of present civilisation based on its lack of knowledge of the self. ‘Millions upon millions live from the cradle to the grave without really knowing themselves and without really knowing what it is all about. If they are familiar with the Greek adage, “know thyself”, it is not practically applied to themselves’ (Pilates, 1998 [1934]: 27).

Cohen phrases it differently, although she too sees self-knowledge as the key to enlightenment. She writes that ‘it seems that any technique or philosophy ultimately comes back to the axiom: Know thyself. We all come to a common ground, whatever our path, if we follow it far enough’. (Cohen, 1993: 11)

Alexander has a slightly different interpretation:

“Man, know thyself” is an old axiom, but in my opinion the more fundamental one is “Man, know thy needs.” Of course, it may be contended that he who knows himself knows his needs, and that to know one’s needs implies knowing oneself, but the contention does not apply to that great majority of human beings whose sensory appreciation is unreliable. (Alexander, 1987 [1923]: 150)

Feldenkrais and Rolf are less direct about the importance of knowing oneself, but their writings too indicate the need for self-awareness. Rolf explains how her book will help people to gain knowledge about the body/self and its function, claiming in

Rolfing: The Integration of Human Structures that ‘the purpose of this book is to unveil, for those who wish to see, the pattern underlying the random human body, to help them understand that the random body is deviant, how it became aberrated, and why more joyous function can result from more appropriate form’ (1977: 16).

Feldenkrais argues that we seem to know so much but are unable to apply it (1949: 10) and that this is due to ignorance and abstractions that are ‘generalised and temporarily exaggerated... We know, in fact, very little about what life is, what is important and what is not’ (1949: 12).

However, what does it mean to *know oneself* in the context of movement re-education techniques? What kind of self is to be known, and what benefits will self-knowledge bring? In order to understand these elements, other aspects of movement re-education need to be examined. In the next section, I will discuss the body/self as a substance to be worked upon in movement re-education, and further develop the theory that holism is required in order for movement re-education to be a form of ethical self-formation.

Ethical Substance: Body/Self and *Mens Sana In Corpore Sano*

Movement re-education treats the body as an ethical substance to be worked upon. However, the body that is worked upon is what we might term a ‘body/self’ in the sense that it is integrally bound up with the mind and psyche, although in different ways for different techniques. While for Alexander, working in the early 1900s, ‘constructive conscious control’ of the self and body at all times seemed desirable, for Rolf, Feldenkrais, and Cohen who were writing from the 1950s onward, the nervous system and the cultivation of a muscular memory took over the need for conscious awareness.

As I showed in Chapter Two, Vigarello (2001) argues that postural concerns became attached to a psychology of the body by the middle of the twentieth century, and this is clear in these latter forms of movement re-education. Rolf, for example, admires psychosomatics as an area where holism or ‘monism’, as she calls it, has its modern incarnation (1977: 21), and Feldenkrais (1949) refers to Pavlov’s work in behaviourism repeatedly, supporting his theories of conditioning the nervous system. He does, however, qualify that Pavlov’s research cannot be extended from animals to

humans easily 'because the nervous system of man is, in respect of learning, a more perfect and more varied instrument' (Feldenkrais, 1949: 42). In his first book, Alexander refers to psychology as a science from which 'we hope so much', but which is 'still in its infancy' and so cannot provide the answers he seeks (1910: 29). However, it was specifically through the body (and thus the self) that movement re-educators sought to change the psyche.

Rolf, for example, suggests that many patients of psychotherapy have basically physical problems. She outlines the case of 'Johnny', a hypothetical boy who roller-skates down the stairs and falls, breaking no bones but twisting his pelvis. As doctors cannot locate a problem physiologically, they call the problem psychosomatic and Johnny is sent to a therapist: 'The psychiatrist will call him insecure, and that's precisely what he is. For when your two legs are not properly under your body, you are insecure, and you'll act like it and feel like it' (1977: 23).

Feldenkrais too is relatively behaviourist in his orientation:

With a proper technique it is possible to analyse a personality solely by a study of his muscular behaviour, in the same way, and with the same results as by an analysis of his mental processes alone... By dropping the arbitrary assumption that mental processes alone are sufficient to give a full account of the personality, and by taking somatic processes into account, many difficulties are removed. (Feldenkrais, 1949: 35)

However, it is not my intention to provide an exhaustive history of movement re-education's relationship to psychology, despite its recurrence as a marginal theme in these discourses. I seek to avoid psychologising the techniques themselves, which are not 'body therapies' in the way of bioenergetics or biodynamics. I refer to psychology here to demonstrate the differences between techniques in the conception of the mind-body relationship.

Movement re-educators oppose Cartesian dualism, albeit with different ideas of how the mind-body relationship should be reconceived. All, however, are convinced that this relationship is lacking in contemporary Western societies. Rolf laments:

What, then, has become of the elegant wholeness of monism, originated by the Aryans and stated in its most superficial terms by the Romans: as “a sound mind in a sound body”? The true dimension and harmony of monism, as well as its apparent boundaries, can be explored as the more orderly physical body offered by Structural Integration emerges. (Rolf, 1977: 287)

Rolf attributes *mens sana in corpore sano* to a vague Indo-European ‘Aryan’ group. She attempts here to indicate that monism or holism is an ancient wisdom which has been lost and could be regained, much like body wisdom itself. She further suggests that relinquishing monism has caused us to forfeit responsibility for our actions. Her conception of personal responsibility for health does suggest a link with Coward’s (1989) concerns that such theories fit into neo-liberal governance strategies which increasingly shift responsibility to the individual and ignore the broader social causes of poor health, as I discussed in Chapter Two.

Monistic ideas have come to the forefront repeatedly in many cultures, but invariably have receded again in deference to dualistic concepts of body and soul. Since it locates the origin of the problem outside its victim, the logic of dualism is much simpler and more appealing, in that it implies diminished personal responsibility. In dualistic thinking, the ills and accidents of our bodies may be blamed on circumstance, on a god (vengeful or otherwise), or at least on a *deus ex machina* (colds are the result of germs). Monism permits us no such escape; here, the cause of the problem lies within the problem itself. (Rolf, 1977: 23)

Holism in regard to *mens sana in corpore sano* is a theme in the writings of the other movement re-educators as well. Pilates appeals to the authority of the ancients by claiming that ‘Many in the ancient world wisely adopted as their own the Latin motto, *mens sana in corpore sano*’ (Pilates, 2000 [1945]: 63), and Alexander writes: ‘In the mind of man lies the secret of his ability to resist, to conquer and finally to govern the circumstances of his life, and only by the discovery of that secret will he ever be able to realize completely the perfect condition of *mens sana in corpore sano*’ (Alexander, 1910: 11).

Cohen conceptualises the body-mind relationship thus:

There is something in nature that forms patterns. We, as part of nature, also form patterns. The mind is like the wind and the body like the sand; if you want to know how the wind is blowing, you can look at the sand. Our body moves as our mind moves. The qualities of any movement are a manifestation of how mind is expressing itself through the body at that moment. (Cohen, 1993:1)

Despite the appeal by writers such as Rolf, Alexander and Pilates to the wisdom and authority of the ancient world, something which Rolf argues has ‘come to the forefront repeatedly’ and then been lost, there is no clear point at which holism disappeared in Western culture. Haley’s (1978) work, as I mentioned above, can provide a context for the discussions of *mens sana in corpore sano* in Pilates’ and Alexander’s writings. Well before the Victorian era, too, John Locke’s *Some Thoughts Concerning Education* began with the following passage:

A Sound mind in a sound Body, is a short, but full Description of a happy State in this World. He that has these two, has little more to wish for; and he that wants either of them, will be but little the better for anything else. Men’s Happiness or Misery is most part of their own making. He, whose Mind directs not wisely, will never take the right Way; and he, whose Body is crazy and feeble, will never be able to advance in it. (Locke, 1898 [1692]: 1)

However, while all the movement re-education techniques discussed here have some vision of holism and the body/mind relationship, the relationship does differ, particularly in relation to the degree of conscious control required. While Pilates makes mention of conscious control (1998 [1934]: 20), he says little about what it would involve. The physical practices of Pilates do however require mental application because of the focus on timing in relation to the inhalation and exhalation of breath. It is not clear in Pilates’ writings whether he intended that this should always be at the forefront of consciousness. It is however a somewhat different application of the idea of conscious control from Alexander, for whom it was so central that his second book was titled *Constructive Conscious Control of the Individual*. For Alexander, everyday movements must always be conscious. His image of evolution, which I shall discuss in the next section, is one in which there was

a prehistoric 'Man'¹² who had instincts which suited his needs and were adapted to his environment. However, Man's consciousness developed out of step with his environment, which became increasingly complex. Accordingly, Alexander feels that people must be taught how to apply their conscious awareness to the use of themselves in order for psycho-physical unity to truly be obtained and to prevent degeneration of the human race (Alexander, 1987 [1923]). Thus, he feels that all movement of the body should be a result of the series of conscious choices described above.

Rolf, as I have already said, is convinced that bodily structure leads to behaviour. Feldenkrais, also referring to behaviour rather than consciousness, seeks to work on developing *maturity* and *mature behaviour* in his method. He also reacts against Alexander's theory of conscious control, stating that its constant maintenance is abnormal (1949: 126). Rolf conceives of the body/self as something that can learn proper alignment through manipulation of the muscular fascia, and as I have said, is the least movement-oriented of the five. Feldenkrais' emphasis on the nervous system in his writings also emphasises his belief that the body can be educated without making conscious awareness a permanent facet of existence. While Cohen mentions the nervous system, she also moves beyond it by envisioning the body as made up of a variety of systems, all of which are capable of learning and expressing qualities of 'mind'.

In the next three chapters, I will explore the implications these theories have for the practices of movement re-education. What is important for my discussion here is to note that for these latter three movement re-educators, the body is not something to be consciously controlled, but something which it is itself expected to learn and to know. While all five movement re-education techniques are united in working on the body/self as an ethical substance through a theory of holism, their visions of the body/mind relationship differ markedly. This can be traced to the rise of psychology in posture and movement education, as I discussed in Chapter Two through the work of Vigarello (2001). As the body is psychologised, it becomes representative *in itself* of particular states of mind and ways of thinking or feeling. This relationship is in no

¹² Throughout I have used 'Man' and 'his' in a manner consistent with that of the founders themselves, rather than attempting to make them gender-neutral.

way metaphorical; for Rolf, Feldenkrais, and Cohen, the body is quite literally what its shape represents. The seat of the soul, as Rolf suggests (1977), is physiological.

However, the reasons for movement re-education's desire to re-educate the body/self are not clear simply from an analysis of how the mind/body relationship is conceived. In the next section, I will address the types of authority which are appealed to by the founders of movement re-education to give their practices weight.

Nature and Evolution as Modes of Subjection

Techniques of the self require an authority to give them truth-value. Foucault calls this the *mode of subjection*. There are several modes of subjection at work within movement re-education techniques: the appeal to nature, the role of evolution, and to a lesser extent the place of the founders themselves as authorities. Together, these modes of subjection support the 'truth' of the need for re-education of the body/self. Against the background of the discussions of the natural body and eugenics in Chapter Two, I will show how movement re-educators have drawn on these concepts to support their work.

Movement 're-education' implies a re-learning, and the claims that these techniques can restore the body to some way of being in which we are 'more fully ourselves' (Cohen, 1993) indicates that an origin story is at work in these discourses, where something that was once possessed has been lost. Alexander, for example, makes it very clear that his goal is *re-education*, and that his technique is helping to reinstate something:

Re-education means a gradual restoration of something that has been previously experienced, something which we have been educated in, but for some reason have lost, as for instance when a person whose use of self has been gradually interfered with over a period of years manifests, as time goes on, more and more harmful effects of this interference with his general use and functioning. *Re-education is not a process of adding something, but of restoring something.* It was to meet the need of restoring actual conditions of use and functioning which had been previously experienced and afterwards lost that my technique for the re-education of the use of the self was evolved. (Alexander, 2000 [1941]: 144-5, italics in original)

Underlying the idea of re-education in the founders' writings is a theory of the natural body. This natural body relies heavily upon a conception of nature and society as separable, with socialisation processes layered on top of an essentially natural body. Yet as I argued in Chapter One, it is important to look at the kinds of arguments being made around the natural body and the characteristics attributed to it. The examples of apparently 'natural' bodies which are used as examples by the founders of movement re-education are thus instructive.

These examples can be divided into four general categories, which I have termed 'beasts, babes, savages, and Greeks'. As these terms indicate, they include a) animals in the wild that have not been corrupted by civilisation, b) very young children who are as yet unformed by society, c) 'savages' or 'primitive' people at a lower level of evolution than 'Western man', and, less frequently, d) the Ancient Greeks, who are seen to represent a pinnacle of civilisation. Below, I shall examine each of these examples in detail and show how they contribute to a theory of a natural, pre-civilised body which is at work in movement re-education.

Beasts, Babes, Savages, Greeks

Movement re-education's founders frequently appeal to animal behaviour as an example of how humans should live. Pilates in particular admired animals' freedom of movement, claiming that they display 'perfection of physical form, strength, grace, agility, endurance, health and longevity' (1934: 30), despite, or perhaps because of, the fact that they do not do 'exercise' in the way that humans do. He felt that this was due to instinct: 'Is it not true that animals in their natural state and in their natural habitat exercise naturally as a matter of course? Do animals understand natural laws and govern themselves accordingly? The answer is "yes" because instinct unerringly guides all living creatures including man himself' (Pilates, 1998 [1934]: 30). Further, he suggests, animal mothers are also guided by this 'unerring instinct' and treat their babies much better and more naturally than do human mothers (31). Cohen also looks to animals for models of the natural, but in her work they embody developmental movement patterns. For example, she refers to amoebas, which exemplify 'cellular breathing', the most basic form of movement; starfish, which demonstrate 'navel

radiation;’ and frogs, which show homologous movement (moving both arms or both legs together). In her work, attempting to embody the qualities of animals by imagining oneself as that animal can help participants understand these developmental movement patterns. Cohen is also interested in the evolutionary complexity of these animals, and the movement patterns with which they are associated, in relation to human movement patterns. She makes a link between a foetus and an amoeba, who do ‘cellular breathing’, while a very young baby may only reach with its arms and legs, like a starfish, with limb movement organised around a central ‘navel’.

On the relation between humans and animals, Feldenkrais comments that ‘at birth the differences of response of the human child are on the whole comparable with those of other animals. Gradually differentiation takes place even in what seem to be quite similar conditions’ (1949:1). In all of these models of animals as examples of the natural, they are seen to be so because they are outside civilisation and society. However, some animals have been adopted by humans for domestic use, which raises questions about their naturalness. Some contemporary Alexander Technique teachers have raised the issue of giving lessons to domesticated animals: in an online article, Alexander teacher Robert Rickover claims ‘I have given what I consider a very good lesson to a frightened puppy and I’ve done some work with domestic cats. I once tried to help a cow lengthen and widen but she immediately sat down, nearly crushing my legs’ (Rickover, 2002). There is however a general sense amongst movement re-education’s founders that animals have natural bodies, and that these possess qualities which are desirable in humans. Below, I shall discuss how and why these qualities are sought.

Babies and small children are also perceived to be models of the natural body. Cohen’s *Sensing, Feeling and Action*, which has many images of nature in the form of trees and lightning storms, also includes drawings and photographs of babies, on whom she does something called ‘patterning’ (as opposed to the ‘re-patterning’ work done on adults in which they explore unfamiliar movement patterns). She even claims to be able to work with a foetus *in utero* by getting a pregnant woman to ‘initiate movement from the womb’ (1993: 12). Her work on babies indicates a belief that difficulties with ‘natural’ movement patterns can arise at any time, although the

images in *Sensing, Feeling and Action* are primarily of babies with good body use, as a demonstration of what such movements 'should' look like.

Alexander (1910: 102-4) and Pilates (1934: 27-31) also discuss children's inclinations with regard to food and behaviour to demonstrate their naturalness. Pilates writes with regard to the most desirable sitting position, 'it is suggested that one look around and watch the position that children naturally assume when they are left alone. Does one naturally assume uncomfortable positions? Assuredly not' (1934: 35). It is worth noting that he also identifies this squatting position as 'savage'.

Children are contrasted with those who apparently corrupt their natural state: their mothers. Alexander writes of 'unthinking mothers' who teach their children to eat by sweetening milk, thereby making their children slaves to the sense of taste and instating the development of bad habits. 'Women are not trained for the sphere of motherhood, do not give these matters the thought and attention they deserve, and hence they do not understand the most elementary principles concerning the future welfare of their offspring in such matters as feeding and sense guidance' (1910: 104).

Pilates is equally critical of mothers, again comparing them unfavourably with animals. Animal mothers, he claims, encourage their offspring to play and force the lazy ones to move, which is necessary for their health. On the other hand, among humans

The fond mothers literally stuff their offsprings' stomachs with food to overflowing capacity, and then "pack" their tender bodies in bandages after first (wholly unintentionally and solely through ignorance or misinformation on the subject) cruelly locking the joints of their hips and knees. In order to pacify their resulting crying protests against this rather inhuman treatment, the mother next proceeds to rock the child to sleep. Is it a natural sleep they thus get? No, the little innocents are either nauseated or half unconscious or both when they finally fall asleep from mere exhaustion. (1998 [1934]: 31)

Both Rolf and Feldenkrais also suggest that children have natural bodies, although their theories tend to focus on psychology and habit. Children may exhibit better

form and function, but this is because they have not yet developed the psycho-physical hang-ups which adults exhibit. Parental influence is again crucial; Rolf (1977) shows numerous photographs of similar physical structure and deficiency in parent and child, and Feldenkrais points out that 'We cannot ignore the fact that some adult guides our early steps. We are dependent on the adult for longer than any animal and more absolutely so. Dependence is the main weapon or instrument of teaching' (1949: 150).

Unlike classical dualistic distinctions that associated women with nature, both Pilates and Alexander see women as permeated by civilisation, lacking the skills to 'naturally' know what is good for their children. Rolf and Feldenkrais have somewhat different concerns about the nature of women, and each devotes a chapter to the study of women's sexual difficulties with the assertion that they can help them overcome frigidity and similar problems. They write little about women's roles as mothers and their references to the influences of parenting are less gendered. What is critical here, however, is the assumption that women are not natural, whereas children are. In Chapter Seven I will show through an analysis of interview data that models of children as natural are still in common use among contemporary movement re-educators. That chapter will also explore some of the difficulties with viewing children as natural.

A third model of the natural in these texts, although one used only by Pilates and Alexander, is that of the 'savage'. For them, the term refers to people of non-Western cultures, but it is not necessarily clear, for example, whether they consider people from 'the Orient' to be savage or whether this is mainly a designation referring to tribal peoples from Africa. From their writings it appears that savages are, at least, people who lack traditional Western practices of civilisation.

According to both writers, savages are more physically able: 'What the savage lacks in mental development, the civilized man lacks in physical development...Relatively speaking, the savage is physically on a par with the beasts, while civilized man is below par, physically, but exceedingly above par, mentally' (Pilates, 1998 [1934]: 25). Alexander (1987 [1923]: 5) has a similar discussion of how people are improperly physically adapted to contemporary society, while for 'savage man',

instinct was sufficient. Rousseau's image of the 'Noble Savage' is relevant here: the savage is someone idealised because unlike Westerners, 'he' is still in touch with natural instincts and behaviours. Jahoda (1999: 49) points out that this was common to Enlightenment thinkers until the latter part of the eighteenth century, and that some held up 'savage' society as a model against which to judge the corruption of 'civilised' society. Further, he shows, images of the savage as incompletely developed and child-like persisted into mid-twentieth century psychology. This stance was predominantly abandoned as a reaction against Nazi race doctrines of the Second World War (1999: 240). The theory that Western civilisation and industrialisation have brought about the degeneration of humanity in physical terms is one that I will develop below.

The savage was often compared to both children and apes, making the continuity between these models of the natural body apparent. Pilates, however, idealised the society of the ancient Greeks as a time when intellectual and physical life were perfectly balanced. While other movement re-educators made reference to the Greeks only in relation to the motto *mens sana in corpore sano*, as discussed previously, for Pilates classical Greece was the ultimate embodiment of this.

The ancient Greeks understood the importance of "balance of body and mind"... They fully understood that the nearer one's physique approached the state of physical perfection, the nearer one's mind approached the state of mental perfection...the Greeks religiously practised what they preached, as witness the marvellous state of their achieved physical perfection as reflected in their wonderful statues' (Pilates, 1998 [1934]: 37).

The possibility that these Greek statues were artistic representations rather than reflections of common bodies does not enter into Pilates' discussion. Pilates shares this interest in the Greeks with others involved in physical training, such as dancer Isadora Duncan, whose work I discussed in Chapter Two. Whereas Daly (1995: 89) argues that Duncan rejected 'savages' in favour of Greeks, Pilates used both models of the natural in his work. The Greeks, however, were admired for both intellectual and physical abilities, whereas Pilates believed that savages possessed only physical prowess. Pilates' glorification of the Greeks suggests a belief that civilisation has

since degenerated. While Alexander, Rolf, and Feldenkrais do not look to Greek culture as a pinnacle of civilisation, they do share Pilates' concern with degeneration. The discourse of degeneration draws on eugenical concerns and particular beliefs about evolution, as I discussed in Chapter Two. These beliefs form the basis of the theory of nature and evolution acting as the mode of subjection that underlies the belief that certain bodies are more natural than others.

Evolved Bodies

The ways in which discourses of evolution and nature are mobilised to give authority to the practices of movement re-education have shifted over time, yet they are still as much a part of Body-Mind Centering in the 1990s as they were of the Alexander Technique in the early part of the century. Below, I will show how different movement re-educators have used these discourses to position their work.

However, it must be made clear that the appeal to nature as an authority is not simply a condemnation of industrial civilisation and desire to revert to an apparently simpler way of life. Although Pilates scorns cities (2000 [1945]: 52) and idealises a time when 'man lived mostly outdoors with little shelter from the elements.... he had to be physically fit to survive and be able to successfully withstand the daily strains and stresses imposed upon him' (2000: 51), he is unique in this. Alexander stresses that going 'back to nature' is not desirable (1987 [1923]), and Feldenkrais argues that it is wrong to suggest that the complexity of modern life is unnatural: 'in what sense is this complexity a human creation? Thinking is assuredly a natural and properly human function. We cannot stop ourselves from thinking any more than from breathing' (1949: 9).

Alexander further suggests that nature itself cannot be relied upon to guide the way to good alignment and use of the self. He suggest that there is no reason 'why Nature *should* prevent us from going wrong, seeing that in the process of the creature's development in civilization even the simplest fundamentals of nature have been ignored' (Alexander, 1987 [1923]: 24). The relationship to nature, then, must be actively developed.

For the founders of these movement re-education techniques, evolution is a critical part of the human the relationship to nature. Evolution guides the process by which humans have become distinguishable from apes, and the perfectly upright human body takes on a mythical quality of being most perfectly evolved. Further, the discourses of evolution draw heavily on theories of eugenics, although they are not inseparable. Cohen, who does not use eugenic theories, continues to use the discourse of evolution in her work. The concern which early movement re-educators had with eugenics was quite in keeping with the broad popularity of such issues in the first part of the twentieth century, which I discussed in Chapter Two. The theory that civilisation is degenerating and that there is a natural course of evolution that has been lost was a key component of the eugenics movement.

If movement re-education is intended to reverse degeneration simply by re-training our bodies to move differently, it should, theoretically, be open to everyone.

Therefore, within the framework of eugenics movement re-education may be seen as a potentially egalitarian solution to the problem of the 'degeneration of the species' outlined by the eugenicists. There are problems with this, however. Lessons in movement re-education have never been within everyone's financial reach.

Alexander Technique lessons cost about four guineas in the early 1900s (Staring, 1996: 82), and lessons today can cost between twenty and fifty pounds, depending on the teacher, with other techniques similarly priced. Rolf acknowledged that the financial cost of her work might be a barrier: 'We do admit that total attainment of this goal is probably not feasible for the average individual. It involves too much time and, therefore, is too costly' (1977: 209). In his early work, Alexander suggests that the poor are responsible for their own poverty and apparent degeneracy because they 'do not really want to be cured' (1910: 88).

Alexander is the most explicitly eugenic of the movement re-educators discussed here. His 1910 *Man's Supreme Inheritance* was, he later writes, the cornerstone of his thinking in the later *Constructive Conscious Control of the Individual* and *The Use of the Self*. Thus, although these latter two books never explicitly mention eugenics or 'race culture', it is apparent that they still work similar premises; in *The Use of the Self* Alexander writes that 'unsatisfactory reactions manifest themselves as symptoms of defect, of so-called "mental" or "moral" failing, disorder and disease, and their

presence may therefore be taken as an indication of the presence of wrong use and functioning throughout the organism' (1985 [1932]: 44-5). The first several chapters of *Constructive Conscious Control of the Individual* (1987 [1923]) outline the contemporary degeneration of humanity and how evolution has brought us to this stage. *Man's Supreme Inheritance* is more direct. In his statement of the purposes of the Alexander Technique he writes:

I do not propose in this place, for many reasons, to consider my own methods in any other connexion but that of their application to physical defects, to the eradication of diseases, distortions, and lack of control, and progressively, to the science of race-culture and the improvement of the physique of the generations to come. (1910: 54)

Race-culture here is a synonym for eugenics:

"What of the children?" Are you content to rob them of their inheritance, as, perhaps, you were robbed by your parents? Are you willing to send them out into the world ill-equipped; dependent on precepts and incipient habits; unable to control their own desires, and already well on the way to physical degeneration? Happily, I believe that the means of stirring the inert is being provided. The question of Eugenics— or the science of race culture— is being debated by earnest men and women; and the whole problem of contemporary physical degeneration is one which looms ever larger in the public mind (1910: 96-97).

The chapter following the above quotation is titled 'Race Culture and the Training of the Children'. Another indication of Alexander's support for eugenics is a footnote in the first pages that details his views on the regulation of marriages:

The attraction which a certain type of woman has for a certain type of man, and *vice versa* is, in my opinion, a fundamental law, and any attempt to regulate it would be harmful to the race. This, however, is no argument against the regulation or prevention of marriages between the physically and mentally unfit. (1910: 6n)

Feldenkrais holds similar views on the desirability of certain eugenic measures, although he rejects the idea that humanity is degenerating as 'nothing more than an admission of ignorance of how to bring about the desired changes in our mind that will satisfy our urge for happiness' (Feldenkrais, 1949: 10). He writes:

The number of those unfit to live at large in modern society is certainly greater than in primitive societies. The reason for this is not that the number of idiots or otherwise degenerate offspring per thousand births of *normal parentage* is now greater than before, but because we preserve piously everything that is born. We could, and some nations do, take measures to prevent the unfit from reproducing; we do not know of any means of preventing normal parents from giving birth to degenerates. There is little evidence that the genetic inheritance of healthy human stock is deteriorated (Feldenkrais, 1949: 11, italics in original).

He further suggests that such 'idiots' 'breed more extensively than average' (1949: 12), which is another reason for eliminating them from the gene pool. His later work makes little mention of these issues, and even acknowledges that

evolution is a good guide to historic development, but a poor one for prediction.... The real difficulty in finding working theories for action in evolution is the tremendous amount of time that must elapse before you can make even the simplest prediction. You can never tell who, or what, is the fittest for survival before survival takes place' (Feldenkrais, 1977: 18)

Pilates does not use the word 'degeneration' either, but makes it clear that he believes it is occurring:

ARE we treading a downward path? No, we are not "treading" the downward path— rather we are "rac ing" helter -skelter downward. We are slipping down a path that will lead to the ultimate destruction of the human race, so far as ever realizing the desirable goal of "Balance of Body and Mind" is concerned (Pilates, 1998 [1934]: 23, capitals in original.)

Rolf, too, invokes evolution as a process with higher goals and condemns what she calls 'random' bodies (those that have not been 'processed', or undergone Rolfing treatment) as 'less human' and ape-like. She writes:

In the ape-man (and in random bodies), the spine is placed like a slightly leaning, off-balance tent pole... During the long evolution of the human body, from the

semierect stance of the ape to the potentially light, erect balance possible in the structure of modern Homo sapiens, the spine has undergone many functional experiments. Obviously it is structurally more efficient to have the tent pole vertical, and man's evolution has moved in this direction. Most random bodies are still to be found at some point along the road from the ape-man to the truly erect human. (Rolf, 1977: 182)

She also compares humans to plants, which do not grow properly without light or the 'opportunity for upright stance;' humans, she says, become less human when deprived of these things (1977: 287). Social Darwinist tendencies are evident too in her view that 'evolution is matter moving toward more effective order' (Rolf, 1977: 285). She suggests that evolution is not an 'unconscious group process' but rather is 'the result of individual action, susceptible to conscious direction' to encourage 'desirable order in an individual' (1977: 290).

Rosemary Feitis' description of Rolf's goals and desires in formulating Rolwing are telling: '[Ida Rolf] was not interested in curing symptoms, she was after bigger game. She wanted nothing less than to create new, better human beings (in Rolf, 1990 [1978]: 14). In light of the previous discussion, it is difficult not to read Rolf's desire to 'create new, better human beings' as eugenic.

In addition to re-education of adult bodies, movement re-educators put particular stress on the importance of properly educating children so they would not go astray. Both Pilates and Alexander devoted chapters in their first books (1998 [1934] and 1910 respectively) to the role of educating children. Rolf and Feldenkrais similarly concurred on the importance of children's education. Feldenkrais in particular had ideas on how movement evolves naturally in children. From raising the head and hyperextensions of the limbs, 'sitting up, twisting of the body, crawling, then walking and finally, unsupported standing are learned. Running and jumping follow normally' (1949: 113).

As mentioned above, Bonnie Bainbridge Cohen takes a particular interest in the training of babies. Unlike earlier movement re-educators, she does not discuss the heredity of bad posture or movement habits, yet she refers to a natural evolutionary

pattern of development and implies that where the stages of this pattern are not followed, problems will result. A chart in Hartley's *Wisdom of the Body Moving* (1995) is instructive as it lists the 'developmental patterns' in the order in which they should occur in humans: cellular breathing, navel radiation, mouthing, pre-spinal, spinal push from head, push from the tail, spinal reach and pull from head, spinal reach and pull from tail, homologous push from upper extremities, homologous push from lower extremities, homologous reach and pull from upper extremities, the same from lower extremities, homolateral push from upper extremities, and lower, and finally, the contralateral reach and pull from both upper and lower extremities.

These patterns are associated with particular stages of development and types of animal movement; cellular breathing with the ovum and one-celled organisms, navel radiation *in utero* and in starfish, the homologous push occurring from birth to five months in humans, and visible in amphibians as well as rabbits, kangaroos, and mammals when running at a great speed. The contralateral reach and pull, 'cross-crawling' on hands and knees, or walking and running with the opposite arm as leg forward, is exhibited by many apes when walking, and begins in humans from seven months to one year of age (Hartley, 1995: 84-85). Although Cohen would avoid the suggestion that certain movement patterns are more highly evolved because she wishes to explore them all, there is a definite implication that this latter contralateral walking pattern is most highly developed because it is the last stage to be reached.

Cohen exhibits little awareness that such movement patterns may be culturally influenced, and Hartley in fact writes that 'the natural order of the unfolding of the sequence of patterns appears to be universal' (1995: 86). However, in a 1951 study Margaret Mead compared the movement patterns of Balinese infants with those of American infants and wrote:

Where the American children go from frogging to creeping on all fours, then to standing and walking, with squatting coming after standing, the Balinese children, who do much less creeping (and spend most of the period when American children are moving actively about either sitting or being carried) combine frogging... creeping...and all-fours behaviours...simultaneously in a flexible, interchangeable state, from which they go from sitting to squatting to standing. (Mead in Polhemus, 1978: 39)

The holistic nature of Body-Mind Centering dictates that ‘our body moves as our mind moves’, and further, that this relates to the efficiency with which we accomplish our intentions (Cohen, 1993: 1). Cohen suggests that individuals should experience all the movement patterns she has observed and that if one is missed— if, for example, a child should go from creeping to walking without an intermediary crawling stage—problems will later result. Cohen’s ethnocentrism with regard to the evolution of movement patterns is problematic. While she goes further toward valuing a variety of ways of moving than the other founders, she still works with a model of nature and evolution which implicitly regulates ‘right’ and ‘wrong’ ways of moving. The emphasis on individual ways of feeling and the exploration of movement patterns make it an internal regulation, but as I suggested in Chapter Three, this does not make it any less a form of discipline. Rather, it distinguishes Body-Mind Centering as truly a ‘technique of the self’ where discipline comes from within, rather than without.

It is apparent that movement re-education techniques use ideas around evolution and eugenics as modes of subjection. They promise a greater degree of humanness and stronger genetic inheritance to those willing and able to pursue them. These discourses around evolution and eugenics rely on a particular theory of the natural world as an authority that dictates how we live our lives. Movement re-educators also extrapolate from the scientific theory of evolution to an ethical injunction: evolution shapes our lives, *and yet* the civilising process has taken us away from nature, therefore *we ought* to find ways of regaining our rightful evolutionary heritage. In contemporary movement re-education, as I shall show in Chapter Seven, evolution continues to play a role, although it the body it most admires is usually that of the child rather than the ‘savage’. Children are the ‘natural savages’ of contemporary movement re-education because they are seen to be pre-civilised. Further, the original model of the ‘savage’ has not died out entirely. However, there is another mode of subjection or authority at work in movement re-education too: the founders themselves. In the next section I will show how the founders of these techniques seek to give themselves the authority to make potential interpretations as to the will of nature or evolution.

The Founding Myths

'Founding myths', or stories about how the techniques themselves began, are important parts of the authority of movement re-education and the founders' claims to knowledge. These stories may be told by the founders themselves, or may be passed down as colloquial knowledge, given as brief background in secondary, 'how-to' texts, their original source somewhat obscure (See for example Gelb, 1987; Siler, 2000; Hartley, 1995). A typical founding myth follows a recognisable format:

As a child or young adult, X had health difficulties (including asthma, rickets, hoarseness, or a knee injury). Receiving no useful advice from the medical profession, s/he began an exploration of other possible solutions to the problem. Drawing on an academic background, (physics, biology, occupational therapy) and/or studies of Eastern bodywork practices (judo, yoga, Zen Buddhism and meditation), he/she developed [insert founder's surname here] method/technique. Having great personal success with this method of training, s/he began to treat others. Eventually the technique was so successful that s/he opened a training school (usually in America or England) in order to pass on the teachings.

These founding myths lend a powerful sense of truth to these techniques; they speak of a strong, independent figure, failed by modern medicine, whose brilliance in self-experimentation and whose internal knowledge of his or her own body leads him or her to develop a technique to restore health. Coward also notes the importance of the founder and the founding myth in alternative health:

For those therapies which do not come from the 'ancient' East, there is a slightly different version of the attempt to claim a heritage...there is a push to establish the therapy as deriving from a founding master, usually in the previous century. These founding figures then acquire the same sort of status as the guru of oriental religions, the status of one who understands and interprets natural truths (Coward, 1989:36).

There are certainly elements of the founding myths of the techniques studied here which fit Coward's description. I use the term 'myth' in this context not because I

believe these elements of the founder's story are necessarily untrue, but because these stories have come to take on a legendary quality, particularly in the discourses of second or third-generation practitioners of the techniques.

It should be noted that the prevalence of founding myths is not limited to movement re-education techniques such as the ones I am discussing here. Within modern dance there was also a tendency, for example by Ruth St. Denis and Martha Graham whom I discussed in Chapter Two, to legitimate their techniques by breaking with Western traditions and declaring themselves new and revolutionary, whilst linking with ancient and 'Eastern' traditions, styles, and knowledges. Movement re-educators had two strategies for asserting the uniqueness of their methods: one was to ignore other similar work in the field, and another was to trace their roots in older, 'Eastern' practices such as Judo and yoga.

The founding myth of Alexander Technique is a good example of the former. The story passed down in the Alexander folklore, as outlined by Alexander in his third book, *The Use of the Self*, tells of his losing his voice in his career as an elocutionist. His doctor prescribed a rest cure, but Alexander found this largely unsuccessful and, since the doctor had no other suggestions, he set out to fix the problem himself. With the aid of mirrors he discovered that he was drawing his head back and stiffening his neck as he spoke, depressing his larynx and 'gasping' for breath. Gradually, he learned to 'inhibit' this reaction, which he called 'wrong Use' of himself, through 'conscious control' and reasoned direction (Alexander, 1985 [1932]: 17-45; Gelb, 1987: 11-13). This discovery took Alexander several years of intensive observation and hard work on himself, but was completed without input from others.

Jeroen Staring, a Dutch anthropologist who produced a two-volume biography of Alexander's life and work, casts doubt on Alexander's founding myth. He suggests that Alexander in fact borrowed many ideas which he failed to credit. For example, he demonstrates that Alexander was aware of the work of François Delsarte, discussed in Chapter Two, on the basis that 'Alexander's professional letterhead at that time [the late 1800s] stated in the left upper corner that Alexander taught *'The Famous Delsarte System as applied to Dramatic Expression, Deportment, Gesture and Vocalisation'* (quoted in Staring, 1996: 50). Alexander also referred to

Delsartism in a newspaper article of 1902 (Staring, 1996: 211). Staring also points to textual similarities between Alexander's early work and ideas and the exercises of other singing teachers and physical culture experts of his time. His research suggests that far from developing his technique in isolation, Alexander knew a great deal about the work of others and used this in developing his own technique.

Pilates is also vague about the origins of his technique and seeks to naturalise them, although he does this by making reference to 'Eastern' techniques as well. His comments on other physical culture programmes are limited to his statement that he has 'the only course in the world that teaches physical education on a corrective basis and brings the results I claim for it' (Pilates, 1998 [1934]: 63). In *Return to Life Through Contrology* (2000 [1945]) he does give a brief background of his studies of the Chinese martial art Cong Fou (Kung Fu). This book also appeals to 'Eastern' cultural wisdom through romanticised explanations of health care in India and physical culture training in Ancient Greece and Rome, which he considered to be far superior to anything being practised in the twentieth century.

Others also acknowledged an 'Eastern' influence: Moshe Feldenkrais writes about his Judo training in the introduction to *The Elusive Obvious* (Feldenkrais, 1995: 138) in addition to his academic background in engineering and physics. Ida Rolf refers to her training in yoga, but it is her writing assistant Feitis who explains that throughout the 1920s Rolf belonged to a group that practised yoga, and that when she first started working with clients, she used yoga with them (1990[1978]: 7-8). She later decided that yoga was not sufficient: 'Although probably the best of the "exercise" systems, yoga as taught today does not go far enough. The body organized through yoga achieves joint mobility but does not consciously recognize and seek out the gravity field as its basic supportive factor' (Rolf, 1977: 289).

Bonnie Bainbridge Cohen has also acknowledged influences from Zen meditation, martial arts, and yoga, among other techniques including voice work, dance, and bodywork (1993: 172). While Cohen openly admits to training in these fields, the book jacket of Linda Hartley's *Wisdom of the Body Moving* (1995) claims that 'devoting thirty-five years to a systematic investigation of the relations between bodily experience and the anatomical maps of science, Bainbridge Cohen

independently discovered many of the principles that underlie Feldenkrais work, cranial osteopathy, Rolfing, dance therapy, and Zero Balancing' (1995, italics mine). This statement establishes Body-Mind Centering as part of a larger tradition of bodywork and movement re-education, but it also serves to mark Cohen as a 'founder' of a unique method whose 'independent discoveries' led to the realisation of what appear to be universal bodily truths. This has the effect of naturalising styles of bodily use and movement which have in fact been learned, whether through direct personal experience or through cultural saturation.

Rolf and Feldenkrais acknowledge one another's work, and in fact praise it. Feldenkrais' comments about Rolfing are used as promotional material on the book jacket of *Rolfing and Physical Reality* (1990 [1978]), and Rolf referred to Feldenkrais' books favourably, particularly *Body and Mature Behavior*. There is also evidence that both of them knew of the Alexander Technique. Rolf's assistant Feitis says that Rolf worked briefly with an Alexander Teacher in Massachusetts (1990 [1978]: 11). One of the principal heirs to the Feldenkrais method, Mia Segal, remembers that he met Alexander when he lived in the UK: 'Moshe used to say that Alexander had the best hands he had ever felt. If I remember correctly, Moshe showed him *Body and Mature Behavior*, and Alexander said, "Actually, you copied it from my book!" This, I suppose, ended the relationship' (Segal in Hanna, 1995: 114).

The ways in which movement re-education's founders are presented discursively as having invented new disciplines, which in some cases build on 'Eastern' techniques of the body, indicates a mode of subjection at work wherein certain bodily principles are considered to be universally true. These are not simply at the level of physiology, but also imply a fundamental 'wisdom of the body'. This serves to naturalise movement re-education by suggesting that its principles are *out there*, waiting to be discovered, and also establishes movement re-educators as authoritative guides to the world of body wisdom, able to interpret this truth of the body and to lead others. 'Eastern' disciplines with longer histories are drawn upon to naturalise them, positing these bodily techniques as universal, not only because they are cross-cultural but also because they emerge in cultures assumed to be more in touch with 'nature'. This further serves to obscure the status of movement re-education as a cultural practice.

Telos: Body/Self Awareness

As the previous discussion has demonstrated, movement re-education techniques seek to re-establish humanity's place in an evolutionary framework these founders claim has been lost. Ideas about nature and evolution are integral to this; as Linda Hartley claims, 'Body-Mind Centering is essentially about following the courses of nature' (1995:xvii). The *telos* or goal of all these techniques is the restoration of a proper bodily relationship to nature and evolution, through the cultivation of body awareness or body wisdom. However, this does not indicate a desire to return to pre-civilised times or societies, as this would be a reversion to a lower level of evolution. Instead, it is about claiming a rightful heritage of 'true humanness' by developing good comportment and erect posture (Rolf, 1977).

All movement re-education techniques aim for the development of body awareness, which these founders suggest will restore humanity to a better relationship with nature and evolution. However, there is a significant difference between body awareness and body wisdom. As the discussion of physical practices indicated, there are a variety of ways in which body awareness can be cultivated, and the mind-body relationship is very different between Alexander Technique and Pilates, which emphasise conscious control, and Feldenkrais, Rolfing, and Body-Mind Centering, which assume that the body itself can 'know'. In the first relationship, mind is seen as directing action, while in the second, the body is directly representative of mind. This parallels the developments in postural pedagogy traced in the previous chapter, which showed how the body became intertwined with psychology in the mid-twentieth century, around the time when Feldenkrais and Rolf were developing their work. A further distinction can be made between these methods and Body-Mind Centering, in which the body *is* the mind, rather than simply being representative of it.

Therefore, while for some movement re-education techniques the *telos* behind the work is the attainment of body wisdom, for others it is not. For Alexander Technique and the Pilates method, at least in the forms outlined by their founders, developing a body that would know innately what was healthy is not a goal. Rather, an awareness of the body is to be cultivated through the application of conscious control.

Alexander clearly believed that this was the next stage of human evolution, where the

consciousness that civilisation had helped to develop would be applied to the use of the body, thereby reversing the degeneration he saw occurring. This in turn would bring about improved health. For Rolf, Feldenkrais, and Cohen, awareness of the body can be cultivated without consistent conscious control. This is particularly evident in Rolfing, where the body is passively worked on and is expected to learn new ways of holding itself through this physical manipulation alone, although as I shall discuss in Chapter Eight, this has changed somewhat with the recent development of Rolfing movement education as a discipline. The role of the nervous system is crucial in learning new ways of being, and in Cohen's work, many other 'systems' of the body are employed as well. Once learned, the new neural pathways which direct the movement need not be maintained consciously. The body can simply 'know'. In Body-Mind Centering, this receives a further articulation as the body is divided into systems, each of which has a 'mind' of its own. The mind of the fluid system, for instance, is one of liquidity, flow, and transformation, while the mind of the muscular system is one of vitality, power, resistance and resolution (Cohen, 1993: 3).

In body wisdom, the body literally takes on traditionally metaphorical qualities. It comes to have a subjectivity of its own: Rolf says that walking is 'shouting the news' about the hips and pelvis (1977: 62), and refers to a stable and balanced foot as 'competent'. Cohen's lengthy passages about the emotional lives of the bodily systems and organs also take metaphorical associations, such as the heart and love, and apply them quite literally. A photograph of a young girl in a dress holding something between her hands is captioned: 'Notice the soft, central feeling of her pancreas radiating inward evenly through all her limbs, expressing a quality of "sweetness"' (1993: 48). Here, the literal function of the pancreas (processing sugar and 'sweetness') is applied to the comportment of the girl's body: for Cohen, the girl appears 'sweet' because her pancreas is radiating energy inward, not because she is young and positioned in such a way that she appears demure, fitting cultural stereotypes about little girls as 'sweet'.

It is worth contrasting this formulation of body wisdom with a version discussed in Wilfred Barlow's influential book on the Alexander Technique published in 1973, *The Alexander Principle*. Barlow was among the first teachers to train with

Alexander, and was also married to his niece. I will discuss proximity to the founder as a criterion for determining authenticity in Chapter Six; what is important here is to note that Barlow speaks with authority because of this. He argues against a certain formulation of ‘body wisdom’ articulated in Walter B. Cannon’s *The Wisdom of the Body* (1939), which he sees as a ‘legacy of the last century, with its accent on the God-given perfection of the human frame’ (Barlow, 1973: 30). Cannon’s version of body wisdom is somewhat different to the one discussed here, but Barlow’s criticisms are still relevant. Cannon ‘suggested that there are certain balanced states of the body which are natural and normal and to which, in its wisdom, the body will return after disturbance and stress’, the body could be restored through medical treatment and care ‘until a more normal resting balance can be maintained—with or without drugs’ (Barlow, 1973: 31). Barlow suggests that this is not true, and that ‘Increasing dependence on therapeutic drugs...is proof that most people’s body wisdom has gone astray’ (31). The body wisdom addressed in my research is a rather different formulation, which would disavow any association with medication as a way to maintain a balanced body. The wise body Barlow describes is not a body that ‘knows’ in the way described by Feldenkrais, Rolf, and Cohen.

Barlow claims ultimately that the body is ‘stupid’ because it seeks

such and such a familiar sense of muscular equilibrium, such and such a state of mental calm, and if its easiest ways of getting them don’t work, it bodes around with its other systems or muscles to knock something together which will do, until finally, it runs out of alternatives and begins to seize up. (Barlow, 1975 [1973]: 78).

In Alexander terms, according to Barlow, the body is ‘end-gaining’, seeking a particular balance through whatever means will work, rather than considering the ‘means-whereby’ it performs actions. In the Alexander Technique, this latter is the domain of conscious awareness and is a reason it should be cultivated. Alexander distanced his work from the view that results could be obtained by conditioning the nervous system, as Rolf and Feldenkrais believed. He wrote:

The possibility of reconditioning opens up the way to an unlimited development of control, but not simply a control which results from a fixed conditioning, as in the case of the dog reacting to a prearranged and regularly repeated stimulus along the lines

contrived by Pavlov. For, as John Dewey puts it, “the latter, as usually understood, renders an individual a passive puppet to be played upon by external manipulations.” (Alexander, 2000 [1941]: 74)

Thus while Alexander seeks to cultivate body/self awareness, the *telos* which guides him is not body wisdom. The awareness his technique cultivates is still situated within a particular discourse around nature and evolution common to other techniques, but does not share in the goal of obtaining a wise body. *Telos*, the ultimate goal of movement re-education, differs between techniques, although they share a goal of regaining a place within a natural evolutionary framework. Whether this is through cultivating body awareness or body wisdom, however, varies.

Conclusion

In Foucauldian genealogical terms, there is a discrete break between Alexander’s formulation of ‘conscious control’ and Cohen’s articulation of ‘body wisdom’. While both share certain ideas about the natural body and evolution, it would be incorrect to say that there is a continuum between them and that Cohen’s theories are simply further developments of Alexander’s ideas. Rather, Alexander actively sought to distance himself from the work on the conditioning of the nervous system and the psychology of the body, which both Feldenkrais and Rolf drew upon.

Through the analysis above I have shown how movement re-education functions as a technique of the self, shaping selves as well as bodies in particular ways and for particular ends. The physical practices of movement re-education form the basis of the ethical work on the self, because the ethical substance of the self that is worked upon is based on a conception of holism, often articulated as *mens sana in corpore sano*, a sane mind in a healthy body. Work on the body is therefore work on the mind and the self. However, this takes different forms depending on the technique: for Alexander and to a lesser extent for Pilates, conscious control over the body/self is important, and therefore it is consciousness and the mind that is dominant. For Feldenkrais, Rolf and Cohen, the body comes to be representative of certain states of mind which can be affected through work on the body with minimal recourse to conscious control. Also, for Cohen, bodily states literally *are* states of mind.

Movement re-education appeals to certain authorities for weight and guidance, which Foucault calls the modes of subjection. Authority is established through reference to a natural body and the process of evolution. Examples of certain types of natural bodies appear repeatedly: animals, babies and young children, 'savage' peoples, and occasionally the ancient Greeks. These examples rely upon a theory of civilisation and society as something layered on top of an essentially natural core body/self, and as something which has been lost but could be restored. Chapter Seven will examine the contemporary models of the natural body that are used by movement re-educators, and how the previous discourse, much of which appears racist and eugenic by today's standards, is negotiated.

The founders of movement re-education also play a role as a mode of subjection, through founding myths in which they appear to have independently discovered pre-existing natural principles about bodies and selves. Nature and evolution as modes of subjection also support the ultimate *telos* of movement re-education, which is the restoration of a particular relationship to nature and evolutionary order. In the case of Rolfing, Feldenkrais, and Body-Mind Centering, it is clear that body wisdom is also a part of the *telos*, although this is not the case for Alexander or Pilates.

This chapter has examined the shifts in movement re-education's discourse through a framework of techniques of the self, in order to show how body wisdom has come to be a guiding principle in more recent forms of contemporary movement re-education. In the next three chapters, I will examine how these techniques are embodied by contemporary practitioners of movement re-education, to give a clearer sense of how the discourses described above have been embodied and what happens to them when they are applied in practical contexts.

Chapter 6

Doing and Non-Doing: Habit, *Habitus*, and Change in Alexander Technique

Alexander's work was and is concerned with the intimate management of our moment-to-moment perceptions of ourselves.

(Wilfred Barlow in Alexander, 1985 [1932]: 9)

Introduction

As I discussed in Chapter Three, habit is a key aspect of Merleau-Ponty's phenomenological analyses. For Merleau-Ponty, habit is a prereflective but not precultural knowledge of the world. This knowledge is literally *in the body*. There is a certain resemblance between Merleau-Ponty's articulation of his phenomenological project and the ways in which movement re-education works on the body, particularly in relation to habit and perception. Both of these are key themes in Alexander Technique as well, and thus a phenomenological analysis of the Alexander Technique seems a particularly appropriate way to study it as an embodied practice, as the terms of analysis are not unfamiliar to the topic under investigation.

However, there is not a perfect fit between Merleau-Ponty and Alexander's use of these terms, and the theories they hold about the body/self or body/subject are quite different. As I noted in the previous chapter, both Alexander and Pilates held the view that consciousness directs the body. Merleau-Ponty, on the other hand, would reject such theories on the basis that they form an artificial distinction between body and mind, perpetuating the dualism he sought to overcome. Yet Alexander Technique does not suggest that the body *is* always consciously directed by the mind; rather, it only suggests that it *should* be. This is its ethical component, as elaborated in my analysis in Chapter Five. Ultimately, this disjuncture in ways of seeing the body does not affect the extent to which Merleau-Ponty's analysis can be applied to movement re-education, but rather provides tools for interpreting the perspectives taken on the body/mind relationship in movement re-education.

This chapter approaches movement re-education from the perspective of embodied practice, analysing it phenomenologically. It draws upon ethnographic data about

learning to do the Alexander Technique, which, as shall be explained, is equally a process of learning *not* to 'do'. As I discussed in Chapter Four, in presenting ethnographic data, I have given first-person descriptions of activities and practices carried out in my Alexander lessons, using these to demonstrate how particular principles of the technique are embodied and how embodiment interacts with and can be illuminated by theory. My purpose in doing so is not to imply that my experiences are generalisable, but rather to give specific case examples to illustrate my argument.

My analysis will be undertaken using Merleau-Ponty's (1962) work on embodiment in relation to perception and habit, which was examined in Chapter Three. I will also employ Csordas' (2002) concept of somatic modes of attention to show how the Alexander Technique is a way of attending to the body/self that brings about a particular kind of bodily awareness. Finally, the chapter concludes with a discussion of Alexander teacher training in relation to the *habitus* and bodily *hexis*, demonstrating how Alexander Technique seeks to transform *habitus* but battles against its durability.

Setting

There is nothing to distinguish the London Alexander Centre, where I undertook my fieldwork, from the outside; its tenancy in an old Victorian building is marked only by the words 'Alexander Technique' on the buzzer in front of heavy wooden doors. Inside, a narrow hallway connects the rooms it occupies on the ground floor, with no main reception area. There are several teaching rooms, all of which contain one or two chairs, usually wooden, and a long padded table at waist height, designed for lying down upon. These rooms also tend to hold books and old issues of magazines, and one has a saddle for horseback riding, a frequent application of the Technique. The rooms are large enough to walk around in, as lessons sometimes require this.

A variety of images are hung on the walls of the teaching rooms. In some there are artistic prints or photographs, while one has photos of F.M. Alexander and a list of some of the main points he emphasised in his teaching, around habit and sensory awareness. On another wall is a print of 'Animals in Motion', showing various mammals walking and running. Its presence implies that animals are models of a

desirable, probably 'natural' body, as I discussed in the previous chapter. What is not on the walls is perhaps just as interesting: there are no anatomical images or models in the main treatment rooms, and Alexander Technique makes little use of specific anatomical knowledge in its teaching. This probably reflects Alexander's own lack of anatomical background, but also differentiates the technique from Rolfing or Body-Mind Centering, in which anatomical images play a role. The lack of such images among Alexander teachers was confirmed in the majority of teaching venues I visited as part of my interviews. My Alexander teacher informed me that in his training course, he had spent three hours a week for one term learning about muscles 'to get a sense of how they look, not as academic anatomy lessons' and on four occasions during my course of lessons, he referred to anatomical images or principles in order to explain particular points. However, it was clear that anatomy did not play a major role in the understanding of the Technique.

The Alexander Centre has several directors, and a number of teachers maintain an association with it, giving them the opportunity to book the teaching rooms for lessons when they wish. Doors separate the main teaching area from the complementary therapy centre across the hallway, although sometimes its rooms are also used. While there is a relationship between the two centres, this is not because Alexander Technique sees itself as closely linked to complementary therapies. Indeed, one of the directors suggested to me that the complementary therapy centre had come to be there largely by accident and that it was hoped it would one day be replaced with a 'serious' psychotherapy practice. This indicates a hesitancy to be associated with complementary and alternative health, practices which may be interpreted as somewhat esoteric. It also suggests that psychotherapy is seen by this director as a complement to Alexander Technique, perhaps because it deals with the emotional and psychological issues that work with the body often brings up. Other Alexander teachers also expressed reticence about being associated with complementary and alternative health, although pupils of the technique were less likely to see this divide, as I shall discuss in Chapter Eight.

Taking Lessons

There is a recognisable pattern to Alexander lessons, apparent not only in my ethnographic experience of the technique but also in the accounts of activities given in my interviews with teachers. Lessons tend to start with work on a chair or in front of the mirror and finish with fifteen or twenty minutes of 'table work', where, in contrast to other parts of the lesson, the pupil is mainly passive and simply allows him or herself to be worked upon and adjusted by the teacher. Often, pupils are encouraged to compare themselves in the mirror before and after the lesson, noting any changes that have taken place. This indicates that the visual element has significance, and that changes are not simply internal but are expected to be observable.

My first Alexander session was an introductory workshop lasting two hours. Although four students had been expected, only one other woman showed up. The teacher, a man who appeared to be in his mid-thirties, began with the story of how the Technique started: Alexander was an actor from Tasmania who lost his voice during a performance. On the advice of his doctor, he rested his voice for three weeks, but although his next performance began well, ultimately his voice deteriorated. His doctor once again advised rest, but Alexander realised that he would have to work out the problem on his own. He spent two years observing himself in mirrors and realised that the relationship between the positions of his head, neck and back was important, and if there was tension anywhere or if this relationship was disturbed, it affected his recitation. This story strongly resembles the one told by Alexander himself (1985 [1932]), and is an example of the 'founding myth' I discussed in the previous chapter. The story of Alexander's founding of the technique is one that most of the pupils I interviewed were familiar with, indicating its widespread use by teachers of the Technique. Thus Alexander continues to act as a mode of subjection or authority in contemporary Alexander Technique environments.

Following this explanation, the workshop consisted of a series of activities and games used to demonstrate how our bodily perceptions affected our ways of using our bodies, and teach us to inhibit our initial reactions to stimuli. The first such activity involved throwing a ball from person to person. First the ball was simply tossed, then an extra stage was added where we pointed to the person who was to catch the ball to

give them the opportunity to prepare. In the last stage, we were instructed to tell the person to 'stop' on some occasions as we were throwing, so that they would let it fall to the ground rather than catching it. In doing this, we were told, we were playing with Alexander's principle of inhibiting habitual reactions to make ourselves consciously aware of the process of catching.

The next stage of the workshop involved a demonstration of the mind/body relationship in Alexander Technique. I sat across from the other pupil, and she held one hand out in front of her and was asked to concentrate on allowing it to move only to the right. I was asked to try to move her arm in each direction, demonstrating how much easier it was to move her arm to the right than to the left, although all she had done was shift her focus. Then our Alexander teacher demonstrated the same process using sight. If the pupil focussed her eyes in one direction, her head turned much more easily in that direction. This also occurred even if she was only thinking of focussing in that direction, and the teacher could guess which direction she had chosen even if he was not told. The process was then reversed, and I was given the opportunity to try this focussing activity, with similar results. This activity demonstrated the ways in which our bodies responded to the direction of our minds.

Following this, we were asked to each stand in front of a mirror, while the teacher adjusted our 'head-neck-back relationship', a term which was used a great deal. It refers to Alexander's idea that there is a particular alignment of the head, neck and back that is ideal, and that if this is interfered with, it will cause problems such as the loss of voice he himself had experienced. This is also called the 'primary control', and there is a belief that if this is in order, the rest of the body/self will fall into place. A good head-neck-back relationship involves a long neck, with a head which is directed to go forward and up, as if reaching over something held under the chin. The directions 'allow the head to go forward and up' were repeated many times in Alexander lessons. Directions to 'drop' the chest, knees, and hips often accompanied it. In attempting to reproduce these directions with the guidance of the Alexander teacher, I found my spine getting very straight, and my neck felt as if it were lengthening. Once in this position, we were asked to shift our weight from foot to foot, slowly, to get a feeling of all our weight being on one side of the body. Our

teacher explained that this would give us a fuller sense of the weight of our bodies, which was often not felt when muscles were tense.

There was a short tea break, and the remainder of the lesson was then spent doing work with chairs and the table. Initially, the other pupil was asked to observe me as I sat down and stood up from a wooden chair several times in succession. I observed that I used my hands to push off from the chair, and she noticed that my head went unnecessarily far forward as I went to stand. The teacher then led me through the process slowly, focussing again on the head-neck-back relationship and on allowing my knees to go forward slowly as the focal point of the movement. This felt quite different and much more difficult. The other student then went through the same process.

As mentioned above, table work (sometimes known as the 'table turn') is a common way for Alexander lessons to end. Lying on a table gives the pupil the opportunity to experience a changed vertical alignment without working against gravity. It is also relaxing because there is little for the pupil to 'do:' most of the work is done by the Alexander teacher, who adjusts the body. As one teacher, Annette, noted in an interview: 'I think the table work has been developed hugely since Alexander's time. People enjoy that. Both teachers and students quite like just... I can see it in their eyes, they come in and I'll start working with them and I'll see their eyes just looking at that table'.

In the introductory session, our heights were measured against the wall before and after table work. At the end of the workshop it became apparent that each of us stood about a centimetre taller. We lay on flat surfaces with books of varying heights beneath our heads, as the teacher gradually guided and manipulated us with his hands until we were well aligned. Alexander teachers do not believe it is possible for the spine to be perfectly straight, because the neck is always slightly forward of the rest of the body, although it is desirable that this protrusion be lessened. In table work, the neck is therefore supported with books at the base of the skull. The height of the books is important; too many or too few at the neck will contract, throwing the head-neck-back relationship out of alignment.

We lay in semi-supine position, on our backs with our knees bent. Throughout the workshop prior to this exercise, I had noticed tension between my shoulder blades when letting my neck go 'forward and up'. This was alleviated somewhat if I tried to bring my sternum backward, but still noticeable, until I lay down on the floor. In this position, our elbows were moved a distance away from our bodies, and our whole backs were arranged so that they would touch the floor. Lying with the knees bent removes the curve of the lower back, making this flat spine easier. The teacher manipulated our legs and hip joints, first stretching out one leg at a time and pulling on it and then bending it back at the joint, then placing it back in its original knees-bent position, and reaching under our backs to lift our hips from the back of the pelvis and pull them up and out, flattening them toward the floor. To stand up, I was directed to come forward with the top of my head leading until I reached a sitting position, and then rise from there.

While Alexander lessons do not always contain all of these elements, many of them played a recurring role, as I shall discuss below. Also, many of the themes raised in this workshop, such as the role of perception in the body/mind relationship and the principle of inhibiting habitual responses, are significant currents in the Alexander Technique, which can be productively analysed in relation to Merleau-Ponty's discussions on habit.

Habit

Merleau-Ponty suggests that the acquisition of habit is always 'the motor grasping of a motor significance' (1962: 143). In contrast to accounts of perception and habit that suggest that these are developed by the mind, Merleau-Ponty posits that habit is bodily. He writes that 'if I am ordered to touch my ear or my knee, I move my hand to my ear or my knee by the shortest route, without having to think of the initial position of my hand, or that of my ear, or the path between them' (1962:144). Habit is thus neither conscious nor driven by intellectualisation and thought.

In Alexander Technique, too, habits of the self are bodily and are addressed through the medium of the body. They are 'psycho-physical', in Alexander's words, a term which sits well with Merleau-Ponty's observation that being-in-the-world, as a

preobjective understanding, demonstrates the unity of the psychic and the physiological (1962: 80). Merleau-Ponty also claims that 'relationships between my decision and my body are, in movement, magic ones' (1962: 94). By this he means that what occurs between decision and action is neither a conscious process nor simply a physiological response to stimulus, but a body consciousness which reacts at the same time that it decides. There is no two-step process at work here in which the subject decides and the body responds; rather, the body-subject both decides and reacts through habit in a non-hierarchical and non-dualistic way. Merleau-Ponty notes that the body comes to have a knowledge of typing, for example, which is literally *in the hands*, and that through habit the bodily schema can incorporate extensions which are not physically attached, such as being able to judge the height of a feather in a hat when getting into a car, or becoming so accustomed to driving that it feels as if a car is an extension of oneself: 'To get used to a hat, a car or a stick is to be transplanted into them, or conversely, to incorporate them into the bulk of our own body. Habit expresses our power of dilating our being-in-the-world, or changing our existence by appropriating fresh instruments' (1962: 143).

For Merleau-Ponty, habit is morally neutral, and serves as a demonstration that knowledge can be bodily and not simply conscious. There are no ethical injunctions associated with this. As elaborated in Chapter Five, however, F.M. Alexander saw habit as negative, and developed a particular type of ethical argument about overcoming it. He believed humanity was degenerating, and that habitual action should be made conscious in order to take humanity out of the realm of instinct and allow it to reach what he considered to be its full potential. For Alexander, the body cannot 'know': although he is interested in psychophysical unity, his conception of it is very different from that of Merleau-Ponty in that a conscious awareness takes priority. Alexander had a five-step process for taking any action, which involved inhibiting one's reactions, re-evaluating one's decision to react in a particular manner, and making fresh choices as to whether to continue with the initial intention or to change and react in a different way. Several key concepts arise in his work in relation to habit: the theory that humanity in its present state exhibits faulty sensory awareness, the need to cultivate a different kind of perception to overcome this, and the importance of inhibiting initial responses to stimulus in order to react more appropriately, in a way which is 'from the self', as I shall describe in a moment.

However, habit can never be entirely overcome, as I shall discuss in the concluding sections of this chapter, and Alexander teachers acknowledge this.

A terminological note is important here: Alexander uses the term 'self' to refer to the psycho-physical unity he describes. Alexander lessons seek to develop good 'use' of the self, by which is meant a good head-neck-back relationship and the appropriate alignment of the limbs in relation to this. In fact, as I shall develop below, the use of the term 'self' to refer to such an alignment gives the sense that the self is resident primarily in the head-neck-back relationship.

Faulty Sensory Awareness

Faulty sensory awareness is a key concept in Alexander's elaboration of his technique. He believed that there was no reason that people should know their use of themselves was wrong, and that in fact when they came upon good use for the first time, it would feel wrong precisely because it differed from what went before. While as I have shown, some notion of a natural body as desirable and achievable through re-education is apparent throughout Alexander's work, there is no body/self which 'naturally' senses when it encounters good or bad use. It is only through the process of re-education that the body can come to know what good use of the self is like.

Work on the self should not, then, appear easy or natural, and if it does it is likely to be symptomatic of poor use of the self. While this principle became apparent through my fieldwork, the term 'faulty sensory awareness' as such was rarely used. However, one recurrent theme in my fieldnotes which demonstrates the principle of faulty sensory awareness is that of tension. Unnecessary tension held in the muscles is seen to interfere with good use of the self by producing movement that is inefficient, and tension causes much of the back and neck pain which often leads people to the Alexander Technique. The purpose of the Technique in this case is to re-educate bodies to move without the tension that has become habitual to them.

In my first full Alexander Technique lesson following the introductory workshop described above, I noted in my field journal that I could not hold my pen with the degree of tension I had become accustomed to, and thus that writing was difficult.

The lesson left me feeling larger and heavier than when I had come in. This sense of heaviness is important, and when in one lesson I noted that my limbs felt heavy my Alexander teacher responded 'That's good, because that's the weight you have'. He noted that muscles which are tense are felt less than those which are not, and that a full sense of the weight of the body is only available when habitual tension is released. In the process of learning Alexander Technique, then, there are moments when the body feels heavy, because a proper sensory awareness of the weight of the body is being restored. In the first lesson, this was explained through a demonstration related to dance; my Alexander teacher studied tango, and demonstrated that a sense of the weight of the legs made turning easier than it was if the body was pulled up stiffly and held with tension. Much contemporary dance, it should be noted, also works with this sense of the weightedness of the body, and movements are organised around a theory that when gravity is defied, as in jumping or reaching, the body will then be pulled down toward the floor with greater force. Thus there is significantly more use of the floor in contemporary dance than in ballet, in which the emphasis on verticality and upwardness means that muscles are pulled up and tensed, so that the ballet dancer seems to defy gravity.

Feeling the weight of the body and the muscles, then, is taken by Alexander Technique teachers as a sign that good sensory awareness is being restored. Yet tension is also necessary in order for the Technique to be taught successfully. On two occasions, my Alexander teacher noted that my habitual tensions were useful because they gave us something to work from: in his words, I had 'Lots of difficult, funny movements which you can observe'. The most difficult pupils, he commented, were the ones with no tension whatsoever, who appeared consistently 'collapsed' or 'relaxed'. These pupils presented no immediate problems or 'funny movements' which could be pointed out, yet this did not apparently mean that they exhibited good use of the self. When I enquired as to how he dealt with these pupils, my teacher said that he had to induce tension in them artificially by encouraging them to stand in a particular way to give them something to work from. He felt that it was difficult to 'teach them to support themselves if they have no desire to support themselves'.

The release of tension is not itself the goal of this work, then. Rather, it is the awareness of tension and the degrees of tension necessary to perform particular movements. In one of my early lessons my Alexander teacher commented that 'It's a sixth sense... to sense the tension in the muscles and the pressure in the joints. This technique I presume is encouraging people to develop this kinaesthetic sense more'. Developing a bodily awareness, a 'sixth sense' of perception, allows people to overcome the faulty sensory awareness with which they are generally perceived to operate. It is this increased perception which builds a new awareness of the body/self in keeping with the goals of the Alexander Technique.

Perception

Merleau-Ponty writes that 'the theory of the bodily schema is, implicitly, a theory of perception' (1962: 206). As I have just noted, perception is also a key aspect of the Alexander Technique as well. Although perception can be observed in the entire body through the development of kinaesthetic awareness, in my fieldwork this was particularly noticeable in relation to vision.

By the third lesson, my Alexander teacher had begun to work on my eyes. He encouraged me not to look at him while he was making adjustments to my body or speaking to me. The latter was particularly difficult, as it contradicted years of cultural training to make eye contact in conversation. However, he insisted that when my eyes followed him, my head-neck-back relationship was sure to be disturbed. Instead, he encouraged me to develop my peripheral or 'panoramic' vision, observing him while keeping my eyes focussed forward. 'Instead of observing by looking, by lengthening and keeping the central core [of the head-neck-back relationship] we observe more'.

This was explained not only as a process of improving one's observational skills, but also of becoming less involved with, or caught up in, what one observed. In developing panoramic vision, 'we somehow acknowledge [what is going on] but try not to judge'. In doing so, my Alexander teacher suggested, we see things 'from ourselves', without the mind or emotions taking over. In order to develop this kind of vision, I was directed to maintain my head-neck-back relationship without tensing

up these muscles, while thinking about shifting my vision from the surface to the back of the eyeball, and then to the back of the skull. As my teacher demonstrated in the first lesson with the exercise in thinking about a particular direction, such 'thinking about' can dramatically affect resulting action. In this case, vision of course does not literally begin to originate in the back of the skull, but the perception of where vision occurs is shifted, with a resulting change in the relationship of the head and neck.

When vision is perceived to come from the front of the eye, one's head is often poked slightly forward in order to follow what is going on in one's surroundings. By shifting this perception backward, the head-neck-back relationship remains in good alignment and more awareness is developed of what is happening at the periphery of the visual field.

One exercise used in lessons to develop this included turning my head slowly to the left and then to the right several times, while getting my eyes to 'move like a camera' without catching sight of any particular object as my head turned. Then, with my head facing forward, I was directed to move my eyes in a circle, looking up, to the right, down, to the left, and up again, reaching them as far as they could go. I noticed pain in my eyes during this latter exercise and my teacher commented that this was due to the fact that I rarely used them in this way. In the head-turning exercise, it was difficult not to let my eyes 'catch' on anything as they moved; this made me aware of the ways in which my vision is usually object-focussed. By drawing attention to what Barlow, in the quote which began this chapter, calls the 'intimate management of our moment-to-moment perceptions of ourselves', Alexander Technique broadens awareness about how one uses one's body, in concrete and detailed ways.

As the exercise of trying to perceive vision as stemming from the back of the head indicates, however, the acute body awareness cultivated through the Technique is not always about the literal 'truth' of anatomy but about extending perceptual awareness or developing a particular alignment. In a perceptual exercise not related to vision, I was asked to think of moving my joints from a point several inches below the joint itself. This gives the impression of extension and changes the ways in which arms and legs are moved; arms seem longer and further away from the body, for example. Again, the purpose is the promotion of straighter alignment and less tension. Yet there is also a sense of not 'getting caught up in' the movement, both literally and

figuratively. Literally, the joints are not 'caught' and the arms are not held close to the body, so more release can happen; figuratively, less involvement of the self is needed in what is occurring.

This action around perception affects the body and psyche together, although it is directed by a conscious awareness. This consciousness is never physically located, and raises a question as to whether the body can be 'conscious'. Alexander in fact posits that consciousness *is* the self, but since the self is a psycho-physical unity, he is not thereby suggesting that consciousness is a mental substance separate from the physical substance. Body can conceivably be part of consciousness, and Alexander's work may develop consciousness *in* the body as well as awareness *of* the body. This is a point to which I shall return below.

Inhibition

While I have examined Alexander's concepts of faulty sensory awareness and perception, I have as yet said little about how one shifts from one to the other. This is achieved through what Alexander terms 'inhibition'. While inhibition has come to have negative implications associated with a person unable to 'let go' and appearing reserved or even unhappy, in Alexander's work it has no such connotation. Inhibition is the middle step between reacting habitually and making choices about one's actions: in between these steps, one inhibits one's habitual responses (or tensions), stops, and consciously reconsiders one's decisions.

The process of inhibition leaves many pupils feeling and appearing rather stiff. On several occasions toward the end of a lesson my Alexander teacher observed that my movement appeared robotic, as I consciously worked through what I had been learning. He commented that this stage was very common to those learning the Technique. Indeed, one interviewee who had lived with Alexander teacher trainees and attended parties with their classmates noted that such parties tended to be very slow because so much energy went into inhibition, which 'became very awkward for somebody who wasn't actually familiar with it, because in conversation as well, they wouldn't feel uncomfortable not reacting... there would be these pauses in conversation which certainly in an English-speaking culture are very uncomfortable'.

However, she observed that this seemed to decrease as their study progressed and the work became integrated into their bodily *habitus*.

Inhibition refers not only to inhibiting one's initial reactions, but also one's reactions to correction. From the first lesson, my teacher made it clear that when he adjusted me, I was to inhibit my reaction to respond. He said 'Just observe. You don't have to go with me. My hands are just here to give you a sense of weight'. My background as a dancer made this particularly difficult: in dance training, I had learned to anticipate the corrections my teachers would make and respond to verbal feedback before they felt it necessary to make physical adjustments themselves. In order to incorporate the Alexander work, then, I had to learn to stop and be still when adjustments were made, rather than to anticipate them and try to contribute by moving my neck or shoulders, for example, into what I thought was a more appropriate alignment. Because I was considered to have 'faulty sensory awareness', such adjustments on my part were likely to take me further from the desired alignment, causing more work for my teacher. By inserting this step of stopping or inhibiting my reaction to these adjustments, I could then 'choose' to react differently or simply to allow the adjustment to occur without reacting at all. On other occasions, I was asked to move my arm or leg 'as if it didn't belong to you'. This cultivated disinterest in what might be going on around me or with my limbs was intended to encourage me again to maintain a good head-neck-back relationship and stay within my 'self'.

This mode of inhibition has other personal applications. For instance, my teacher explained that he was very fond of Pringles crisps, and that eating one established a habit which might be difficult to break. The question, then, was whether he really wanted to eat the whole packet, which would be quite unhealthy. One possibility was to put the packet away out of sight, but with another stimulus, such as a chair, this might not be possible. 'We don't have choices about our environment', he argued, 'for example, the climate' or the fact that in daily life we might be invited to sit in chairs, tempting us to collapse our necks and sit with poor alignment. Returning to the example of the crisps, he suggested that with Alexander Technique he could choose to eat a third of the packet and then reconsider his decision, to stop and ask himself whether he really needed the rest of the packet or whether eating had simply

become a habit. In doing so, he would stop 'reacting' and make his decision conscious.

Clearly this is quite a different conception of the mind/body relationship to the one put forward in body wisdom: here, the body does not know when it has had enough, nor is it innately averse to crisps, which in other forms of alternative and complementary health, it would 'know' to be unhealthy. There is no wise body to be restored in Alexander Technique, merely instinct to be controlled and re-educated.¹³

As the foregoing discussion has shown, disturbances of the head-neck-back relationship in particular are considered to take one away from one's 'self'. It is as if the self comes to reside in these body parts and the relationship between them. Inhibition is conscious, but it is not simply an inhibition applied by a disembodied (mental) consciousness onto a prereflective body. The body/self is involved in this conscious control, if only in one primary relationship. Is it possible then to speak of the development of a 'body consciousness?' Does the act of inhibition acquire, with practice, the status of a consciousness of the body?

Merleau-Ponty's discussions of bodily knowing tend to demonstrate awareness and knowledge at a prereflective level, whereas Alexander Technique's concept of inhibition is by definition a conscious and reflected process. However, Alexander Technique claims to be holistic, involving both mind and body. This is obviously true at one level inasmuch as the Technique cultivates mental, conscious awareness of the body and its actions, but this still presupposes a dualistic split between mind and body where one is controlled by the other. Whether the body can be said to be part of this conscious awareness however is still at issue. In the next section, through an examination of Alexander Technique as one of what Csordas (2002) has called 'somatic modes of attention', I will analyse the ways in which consciousness and the mind/body relationship are invoked.

¹³ As I shall argue in Chapter Seven, this is not to say that there is no body believed to be restored, only that the restored body is never 'wise'.

Somatic Modes of Attention

As I described in Chapter Three, Thomas Csordas develops Merleau-Ponty's work on attention, perception and the body into a theory of 'somatic modes of attention' which are 'culturally elaborated ways of attending to and with one's body in surroundings that include the embodied presence of others' (2002: 244). Clearly, Alexander Technique lessons fit this definition, being a method of attending both to and with bodies, in an environment which includes the embodied presence of at least one teacher. There are several key concepts in the technique which form its modes of attention to the body: these include 'doing and non-doing', 'means-whereby' as versus 'end-gaining', and its development of what it terms 'good use of the self'. I shall discuss each of these as aspects of somatic modes of attention.

Doing and Non-Doing

As my discussion of inhibition has shown, Alexander Technique is as much about not doing particular things as it is about doing them. Thus the process of learning the Technique involves learning not to do what is habitual but also not to 'do' at all, but rather to inhibit any reaction. 'Doing' the Alexander Technique is thus just as much a process of learning 'not to do'.¹⁴

For example, in one lesson, my teacher worked on my shoulders with the stated intention of helping me to 'differentiate them', because some of the very tense muscles were not necessary for supporting the head. As he moved my shoulders with his hands, sometimes rubbing them, sometimes gently adjusting one bit or another, he told me that 'Your job at the moment is not to direct. That's very different than doing nothing. You have to understand what you've done to yourself by reacting [in this way]'. He suggested that this might sound judgemental, but that it was important as well for pupils of the technique to understand that it was not simply about developing straight but static postures, but about movement and awareness. I was not to 'direct' myself in any particular way, but to 'not direct', becoming aware of and inhibiting any reaction I had to stiffen my shoulders and change their position.

¹⁴ *Not to 'Do'* is also the title of a book on the Alexander Technique by Fiona Mackenzie Robb, an account of her lessons in the technique, published in 1999.

On other occasions, I was encouraged to develop a principle of disinterest in what was going on around me, whether it be the adjustments he was making to me during table work or the ‘stimulus’ provided by the back of a chair which I was to put my hands on without grabbing, by directing my arms and shoulders. However, this lack of interest is not a lack of attention. It is a deliberate and cultivated disinterest aimed to keep reaction and habit from interfering with the ‘self’ and misaligning the head-neck-back relationship.

Non-doing then is still a somatic mode of attention: attention is paid to and with the body by inhibiting reaction and habit. As non-doing is attentive, it is also active. It is, as the quote above indicates, ‘very different than doing nothing’. It is a particular kind of work on and through the body/self to promote good alignment. As Alexander wrote, ‘to “try and get it right” by direct “doing” is to try and reproduce what is known, and cannot lead to the “right”, the as yet “unknown” (1985 [1932]: 20).

In non-doing, reactions which are perceived to interfere with the ‘self’ (through the head-neck-back relationship) are inhibited, which is then thought to ‘allow the right thing to do itself’. It is here that the idea of the aspect of re-education begins to make itself apparent: by non-doing, aspects of the self in its proper alignment assert themselves. Alexander’s ‘self’ is in no way preconscious; he speaks of freeing humanity from ‘the domination of instinctive habit and the slavery of the associated automatic manner of reaction’ (1985 [1932]: 20). What the work seeks to cultivate is a perpetual conscious awareness.

End-Gaining and Means-Whereby

In everyday action, Alexander felt that most people’s use of self was what he called ‘end-gaining’. End-gaining refers to seeking out an aim or objective without considering the process by which it is to be obtained. Careful consideration of the process, on the other hand, he refers to as the ‘means-whereby’. One of the key aims of the Alexander Technique, then, is to develop an awareness of the means-whereby actions are carried out. It is a privileging of process over result, and as my Alexander teacher noted, this is considered to be something of a challenge to the values of

contemporary consumerist societies, although this is not a theory that is significantly developed in the work.

In some lessons, when my Alexander teacher felt that he had pushed too hard, he commented that he himself was end-gaining by trying to get me to reach a desired level of awareness. Rather contrary to Alexander, he suggested that end-gaining was not necessarily bad, because 'we are always end-gaining. The question is how much'. Again, awareness of process is critical.

In one lesson, he demonstrated the principle of means-whereby with an exercise where the first finger of each hand drew a circle, each in opposite directions. With elbows bent and extended and these fingers facing each other, he asked me to draw opposite circles with each finger so that they would end up back at the top of the circle at the same time. This exercise in hand coordination was too difficult, and I was unable to reproduce what he had demonstrated. Instead, therefore, he broke the exercise down to demonstrate the means-whereby it could be achieved. By splitting the circle into quadrants and taking the exercise slowly, with an awareness of where the fingers should be after drawing each quadrant, it became easier to reproduce. If the fingers start at the top of the circle, they should meet each other at both the top and bottom points. At each side, they should be directly opposite one another. This could then be sped up or broken down further. My Alexander teacher explained that the process did not have to be examined more carefully if the results seemed acceptable; 'if you're getting what you want it's fine for the time being'. However, like any action, it might later require further refining. This points to the ongoing nature of the work.

Good Use of the Self

If Alexander Technique is 'end-gaining' in any way, the end it seeks is what Alexander referred to throughout his work as 'good use of the self'. This relates to the proper alignment of the head-neck-back relationship, which, by virtue of being regarded as the 'primary control', will bring the rest of the body/self into good alignment as well. However, Alexander teachers are particularly interested in the

means-whereby good use of the self is achieved. This is because such use is an ongoing process and not a state to be definitively reached.

Throughout the first ten lessons in particular, I noticed a number of gradual changes occurring. In the first full lesson after the introductory workshop, I noted in my field journal that I left feeling wider, and as if there were lead weights in each of my limbs. By the second lesson, however, I felt less wide and less realigned, yet my teacher noted that my alignment was better already and that I was arching my mid-back less. During the third lesson, I was beginning to notice it was becoming easier to stand up straight, and by the fourth lesson felt as if my body had changed so significantly that I began to wonder whether I made many of these changes subconsciously on my way to the lessons, in preparation. The standard exercise of sitting and standing from a chair, trying to maintain a good head-neck-back relationship as I did so, seemed easier, and I found that I was seated further back on the chair when I sat, which my teacher described as a better position.

Despite seeming easier, the work also became more tiring. After the sixth, seventh, and eighth lessons, I found myself going home to sleep, and my teacher explained that 'This is very tiring work. It is tiring because it is very new, new things to do and the system of the body changes when we accept new things'. Muscles often hurt the day after a lesson as well, especially thigh muscles if we had done a lot of sitting and standing work with the chair. My teacher told me that this was very normal and that he also sometimes experienced it after a lesson with another teacher.

As lessons progressed, I needed fewer books to support my head during table work, indicating changes in how I carried my head and neck, and that I was on some level applying the oft-repeated directions to 'allow the head to go forward and up'. I also noticed a significant change in my shoulders, which became less rounded and sloped. Often, however, these changes seemed to take me by surprise, and I could not fully chronicle their development. There was no steady process through which I noticed the alignment of my shoulders shifting; rather, one morning I looked in the mirror and noticed that a change I had for years been attempting to effect (realigning my shoulders) was something I was now doing, and that doing it seemed effortless.

Bodily knowledge is so often unconscious knowledge, and the issue that arises in the above discussion is how quickly conscious awareness becomes unconscious. While there were moments when I became abruptly aware that something I had been doing was now changing, the process was often so subtle that I seemed to miss it, despite trying to constantly attend to and document this process through my fieldnotes.

Bodily habits, once they become habitual, cease to be conscious. In Feldenkrais work and Rolfing, particularly, this is not seen as problematic, because it is the nervous system which 'learns' new ways of moving or aligning the body, and this is understood to be a natural process. In Alexander Technique, however, conscious control is always desirable. Since there is no fixed end point when the work is over and good use of the self is obtained, it is usually ongoing. Conscious control and the awareness of the body become part of one's *habitus*, as I shall elaborate below.

It is not that activities do not eventually become habitual in Alexander Technique, but that there is a constant drive to have conscious awareness of them. Where Alexander Technique differs from other forms of movement re-education is not in habit but in the desire for conscious control. The nervous system is not perceived to take over the work fully; the knowledge and learning of the body is considered to be largely engaging and lacking in the awareness needed to consider the means-whereby (Barlow, 1973). This is not to say that in other movement re-education techniques the work done is not ongoing, only that there is little emphasis on conscious control; in fact, as I discussed in the previous chapter, Feldenkrais considered it to be unnecessary (1949). The 'means-whereby' the work is accomplished, then, takes on a very different character. This is evident in reference to the body conditioning class I attended as part of my fieldwork.

Despite taking Alexander Technique as one of its influences, this body conditioning class, part of a dance training programme, did not emphasise conscious control and means-whereby in the ways I have described above. Although the tutor had trained as an Alexander teacher, she was also certified to teach the Pilates method and Astanga yoga, and these styles were dominant in the class. Further, like many dance classes I have attended, the class mixed techniques and styles without any explicit statement about what source they were derived from.

Although there were variations between weeks, the class tended to begin with a standing warm-up, involving circling the arms in large figures of eight and turning the upper body from side to side, then adding the feet, with the foot just lifting off the floor every time the body turned to one side or the other. This was followed by a figure of eight with the ribcage, with the arms loosely crossed over the chest in a kind of 'mummy' position. These exercises were said to be good not only for warming up the body, but also for loosening tension. The latter was reported to make people cough because it moved the lungs, and was therefore beneficial for people who smoked or had breathing difficulties. These exercises were also supposed to warm up the shoulders and relax them, as well as releasing tension in the diaphragm and ribcage.

The classes usually continued with rounds of a routine called 'sun salutation' which is standard in yoga classes, which was repeated many times, and developed participants' aerobic fitness because of the speed at which it was performed and the extensive use of the arms to support weight. After this and other yoga exercises which included handstands and headstands, the focus turned to strength training and mats were brought out for Pilates matwork. One typical exercise included what were called 'leg scissors', involving rolling the head and neck up slightly with the feet flat on the floor and knees bent, then extending one foot, pulling the other toward the chest with the arms holding onto the ankle and knee, then changing this so the other foot was extended. The exercise was performed in sets of ten, fifteen, then twenty, with a rest and roll down so the spine was flat on the floor in between. Another exercise involved 'rolling like a ball', curling up with head toward knees and arms under the knees, and rolling backward and forward along the spine. On only one occasion did the class use an exercise from Alexander Technique, by concluding with a variation of table work at the end in which participants worked in pairs with one person lying on the floor, while the other was led through the process of adjusting the neck, head, and arms of the person lying down.

In Pilates, work is timed in relation to breath, with certain movements performed on the inhalation and others on the exhalation. This is a feature it shares with yoga, and is the primary way in which the mind is used in this work. As may become apparent from the description above, the principles of conscious control emphasised in

Alexander Technique were not developed in this class. We were sometimes asked to consider the 'means-whereby' activities happened in relation to breath and how they might be made easier, but little attention was paid to alignment in the exercises themselves. The class setting, with a large number of students, also makes it difficult for the tutor to pay attention to the means-whereby students are accomplishing exercises, and it is often left to the student to determine whether good or bad use is occurring. On several occasions, I developed a very stiff neck after the class from rolling my head up and holding it unsupported during the Pilates legwork. Clearly I was not using my head very well in this exercise, given the pain and tension it caused. However, there was little time to receive correction, and eventually I resorted to supporting the back of my head with my arms in order to relieve the problem.

Although breathwork involves conscious control as one aspect of the body-mind relationship, there was little work on perception and no effort at inhibition made in this body conditioning class. Consciousness was less critical to this work than it was in Alexander Technique, and it is conceivable that the coordination required by timing the breathwork and the movement could also become habitual. What this class demonstrates is the very different ways in which the body-mind relationship may be conceptualised in various forms of movement re-education.

The qualities described above—non-doing, means-whereby, and use of the self, through inhibition of reactions and habitual responses—are the characteristics of Alexander Technique as a somatic mode of attention. However, while all somatic modes of attention require awareness of the embodied self, it is not the case that they all require the kind of conscious awareness developed in the Alexander Technique, as my discussion of the body-conditioning class has shown. Further, in many of the somatic modes of attention mentioned by Csordas, such as athletics or dieting (2002: 245), the emphasis is largely on what Alexander Technique would call 'end-gaining'. As Csordas notes, following Marcel Mauss, 'there is what we are calling a somatic mode of attention associated with the acquisition of any technique of the body, but [that] this mode of attention recedes into the horizon once the technique is mastered' (245).

By examining what is involved in a particular somatic mode of attention, the processes by which it works also become evident. For Csordas' studies of religious healing, this is an important challenge to traditional accounts of the subject which presume a 'black box' model, in which nothing is said about the process and practices of healing from participants' perspectives and therefore nothing can be understood about how healing works. Through the discussion above, the psycho-physical practices I have described in relation to the Alexander Technique give a sense of how it works and how it achieves the aim of 'good use of the self': through practices of conscious control and inhibition, and a focus on maintaining a good head-neck-back relationship.

Above, I raised the issue of whether the body could itself be made conscious through the process of inhibition, a question with significant implications for Alexander Technique's claim to be holistic. If conscious control is exercised by the mind over a passive body, then although the Technique incorporates both body and mind, it does not challenge dualism's usual assertion of mental supremacy, nor overcome the body/mind distinction. Yet what is apparent in these discussions about non-doing, means-whereby, and use of the self is that the assertion that it is the 'self' which is worked on in an attempt to do away with dualism. Further, as the importance of the head-neck-back relationship in 'primary control' shows, the self is firmly located in the body, through consciousness, and is not separate from it. The technique clearly privileges conscious awareness and control over body 'knowing' and wisdom, yet this consciousness is a hallmark of the 'self' which is firmly bound up in the body.

Examining the somatic modes of attention involved in the Alexander Technique is, appropriately, a way of examining the 'means-whereby' it obtains its goals rather than the ends it seeks through *telos*, which I elaborated in the previous chapter. What the discussions both here and in the previous chapter make clear is that Alexander Technique is a culturally constituted and elaborated way of changing the self, with a set of practices associated with particular principles through which the technique is articulated. These practices seek to change not only the habits of an individual, but also his or her *habitus*, resulting in more significant cultural changes.

Habitus

As I discussed in Chapter Three, Bourdieu's theory of *habitus* provides a way of accounting for the unconscious reproduction of social structures and conditions through the embodied dispositions of actors. What Alexander Technique seeks ultimately to change is not simply bad habitual use of the self, but *habitus*. However, for Bourdieu, as I have said, the *habitus* is largely unconscious, whereas in Alexander Technique, the new *habitus* is explicitly guided by conscious control. This is a tension, but not an insurmountable one: as I have said, actions repeated in the Alexander Technique also become habitual, and the emphasis on constant attention and awareness to these habits does not in the last instance stop them from becoming integrated into the *habitus* in an unconscious way. However, the new *habitus* cultivated through Alexander Technique certainly differs from the old one inasmuch as it is dominated by conscious awareness rather than unconscious behaviour. Through developing awareness of the body/self and inhibiting initial reactions (the old *habitus*), choices of behaviour are widened, bringing about the opportunity for individuals to react in new ways. Bourdieu, too, notes that in certain situations and amongst certain groups of people, *habitus* may sometimes be a matter of conscious maintenance:

it is likely that those who are 'in their right place' in the social world can abandon or entrust themselves more, and more completely, to their dispositions (this is the 'ease' of the well-born) than those who occupy awkward positions, such as the *parvenus* and the *déclassés*, and the latter are more likely to bring to consciousness that which, for others, is taken for granted, because they are forced to keep watch on themselves and consciously correct the 'first movements' of a *habitus* that generates inappropriate or misplaced behaviours. (2000: 163)

To a certain extent this holds true for those involved in the Alexander Technique, who must keep watch on themselves and consciously inhibit *all* first movements, appropriate or not. In so doing, they are ultimately concerned with providing participants with choice rather than simply teaching them to stand up straight, as I shall discuss in the following chapter.

Bourdieu claims that *habitus* is largely durable, although he qualifies that it is not fate: 'Being the product of history, it is an *open system of dispositions* that is constantly subjected to experiences, and therefore constantly affected by them in a way that either reinforces or modifies its structures. It is durable but not eternal!' (1993: 133, italics in original.) He later suggests that *habitus* is constantly being revised, although never radically, because this process of revision always works on the premises of the previously established state (2000: 161). However, in Alexander Technique the processes of inhibition and conscious control, of ceasing to do what was done before and then consciously intervening in the action one was planning to do, may be a more radical revision of the *habitus* than Bourdieu imagined possible, given that such a state of inhibition and conscious awareness is intended to be perpetual.

In much of his work, Bourdieu's analysis of *habitus* is somewhat schematic, and he tends to highlight its reproductive and productive capacities rather than its adaptive ones. More recently however, in a discussion about bodily knowledge in *Pascalian Meditations*, he makes it clear that *habitus* is not always perfectly adapted and that the body itself learns. He rightly notes that this is quite different than intellectual learning; pointing to situations 'where one understands with an intellectual understanding the movement to make or not to make, without being able actually to do what one has understood, for lack of comprehension through the body' (2000: 144). An important part of the *habitus*, then, is its ability to learn.

Csordas and Merleau-Ponty also offer useful tools for understanding how the *habitus* adapts, and put a somewhat greater emphasis on social actors' lived experience and embodiment. As Csordas notes, '*Although the habitus bears some of the schematism of a fixed text, it can be transcended in embodied existence*' (2002: 258, italics in original). My analysis of Alexander Technique in relation to the *habitus* will therefore draw on their work as an accompaniment to Bourdieu's.

Up to this point, I have analysed the practices of the technique which disrupt or transcend the *habitus*. Here, I will examine not only instances of disruption and transcendence, but also instances of construction of a new *habitus*. Although Bourdieu is right to suggest that a new *habitus* is always constructed from the

premises of the old one, as I discussed above, by attempting specifically to inhibit the old premises Alexander Technique makes a particularly radical attempt to overcome these.

Emotion and the Body/Self

As Bourdieu points out, (1990: 69-70) ways of standing and sitting are also ways of thinking and feeling. Alexander Technique is not simply about re-educating the body, but about changing ways of being-in-the-world. It is here that the technique begins to shift not only ways of using and perceiving the body, but also the feelings and thoughts associated with this way of being. Again, careful attention to the practices it employs can help to understand the process by which a new *habitus* is constructed.

Throughout my fieldwork, my Alexander teacher indicated that I might find the work I was doing emotional, suggesting at one point that I might 'feel offended' as he adjusted my shoulder, and at another that changes to the head-neck-back relationship cause many people to suffer pains or start to cry. He felt that this was 'quite awful to see' but 'part of the process'. I also heard stories from interviewees about the dramatic emotional changes that might occur while studying the technique: two teachers even knew of cases where it had led to divorce because as one teacher, William, put it, 'How would you like to be married to a man who thought, you know, that this was *the* way forward?'

It is interesting to note, however, that few interviewees spoke about their own emotional reactions to work done in this or other techniques, and I did not press this issue, feeling that it might be rather intrusive or steer the discussion in psychological directions which were neither my strength nor my primary interest. While many Alexander teachers acknowledged that the work could be difficult and reported stories of how it had been so for others, only one, a teacher-trainee who had recently started full-time study of the technique, discussed how it was difficult for her personally. This may be partly related to the observation of Becker and Geer (1969: 331) that people can rarely adequately account for how they have changed, but it also suggests that much of movement re-education sidesteps addressing emotion directly. As I shall discuss in Chapter Eight, it is only in Rolfing that emotion is a key focus of the work; as one participant put it, in Alexander Technique, 'there isn't really a side that would

address all the kind of psychological changes that happen... so you'd be left... things would change with you but the psychological effects of that change you would have to go somewhere else to deal with'.

However, despite warnings about the emotional and psychological changes which might occur as I took Alexander lessons, none of the work I did seemed to bring on any emotional responses or dramatic life-changing experiences. It was not until I spent a morning at a training school for Alexander teachers that I understood how the technique could elicit these types of reactions.

Alexander teachers train for three hours per day, five days per week for thirty weeks over three years, and therefore the time they devote to study is comparable to studying for a degree at most universities. This is a more time-intensive programme and long-term commitment than is required by other movement re-education techniques, although these also tend to take three years: for example, the Rolf Institute and Feldenkrais Guild indicate that they require about eight weeks per year of full-time study, and the School for Body-Mind Centering requires seven weeks training each year. Pilates training is not centralised, but programmes generally take less than a year to complete, and one interviewee reported his training took twelve days, with an additional fifty supervised hours.

It is also important to note that Alexander Technique training programmes are based on experience and not classroom learning. The training school I attended was held in the living room of a private home. The room contained two long mirrors for pupils to observe themselves in, a table for table work, and a model of a skeleton. A circle of chairs was arranged so that each trainee, of whom there were six present, had a place to sit. The teacher-trainees spent the first part of the morning practicing sitting down on the chairs and standing up again, slowly and with meticulous attention to movement and alignment. Sometimes they stood behind the chairs and put their hands on them. The two experienced teachers who ran the school circulated between the trainees, guiding them and assisting the process for somewhere between five and fifteen minutes each. Trainees were of mixed levels of experience, and those who were in their final year of study occasionally worked on one another. At the encouragement of one of the teachers, two of them approached me and asked if they

could work on me, to which I agreed. They guided me in sitting and standing from the chair, an activity I had been trying to reproduce myself as the other trainees were doing it. Although I had been attending weekly lessons for six months at this point, I was still relatively inexperienced in the technique, and since they usually practised on other trainees, I was something of a challenge. They seemed frustrated by my inability to respond to the guidance they gave, and I in turn felt frustrated by their hesitancy in directing me and the weakness of their hands as they made adjustments, which I found confusing.

This experience was cut short by the announcement of a tea break, held around the kitchen table, where two trainees read introductory statements they had been assigned to write explaining what the technique was about, and a discussion followed. I was told that most of the time, the tea break was used for reading and discussing passages of Alexander's books. Following the tea break, the group returned to the circle of chairs, working on one another in groups of two or three, taking each other through the process of standing, sitting and walking. Several students took turns working on me, and one of the teachers assisted them. I was struck by the strength of the direction he was able to convey through relatively minor hands-on adjustments, particularly in comparison to the students, whose adjustments tended to be hesitant and their touch rather light. Finally, one student in his final year did table work with me. This was quite similar to the work done by my own Alexander teacher, except that the trainee spent a great deal of time adjusting my arms and working on my hands, making them lie flat on the table.

The group broke up at noon, after three hours of training. Sitting in a coffee shop near the tube station, writing my fieldnotes, I observed that I felt extremely straight in a way that was quite unfamiliar, and that this was associated with feelings of discomfort and irritability, and a lingering sense that something of my personality had been neutralised or stripped away. The extensive, slow work of the training school, which was much longer than any of my lessons, had a significant impact on my bodily comportment which took the rest of the day to lose, despite my making an effort to return to a posture that felt more 'normal'.

Theories of the *habitus* are useful in making sense of this experience: Bourdieu suggests that the physical aspects of *habitus*, exemplified in the bodily *hexis*, are literally what one *is*. If this is the case, it is not surprising that shifts in ways of comportment should be accompanied by feelings of discomfort similar to those I experienced. Indeed, of my interviewees, it was the trainee who had most recently started the work who was clearest in expressing the difficulties she had in learning it. She described how tired she had been during her first term of study, and how now, in her second term, she sometimes felt weaker than she had when she began, as muscles and patterns of tension shifted. She also mentioned that the adjustments she received were not always comfortable, and that sometimes ‘this thing called gentle manipulation gets intrusive, it invades on your old patterns and it’s quite difficult to have anyone moving you around in that way, and putting you into a new place’. These experiences suggest that it is particularly at the beginning of such work that change and discomfort is noticed, while as immersion in Alexander Technique (or any other method of changing the *habitus*) progresses, it becomes more comfortable as this work itself develops into a new *habitus*.

Bourdieu intimates that there is a relationship between existential conditions and the body, where to be put in a bodily position conjures up the state associated with that position. Merleau-Ponty provides some clarification of this when he writes of sleep:

I call up the visitation of sleep by imitating the breathing and posture of the sleeper... There is a moment when sleep ‘comes’, settling on this imitation of itself which I have been offering to it, and I succeed in becoming what I was trying to be: an unseeing and almost unthinking mass, riveted to a point in space and in the world henceforth only through the anonymous alertness of the senses. (Merleau-Ponty, 1962: 163)

Thus, by behaving as if one is asleep, or, in the case of the Alexander trainee, by taking on the posture of an Alexander teacher, one eventually becomes that which one was trying to be. Yet this becoming through bodily comportment is both cultural and habitual: whether or not it is consciously considered, it draws upon a base of cultural knowledge and the understanding that habitual behaviour brings about similar results each time it is performed. As Bourdieu writes of the waiter:

His body, which contains a history, *espouses* his job, in other words a history, a tradition, which he has never seen except incarnated in bodies, or more precisely, in the uniforms inhabited by a certain habitus that are called waiters. This does not mean he has learned to be a waiter by imitating waiters, constituted as explicit models. He enters into the character of the waiter not as an actor playing a part, but rather as a child imitates his father and, without even needing to 'pretend', adopts a way of using the mouth when talking or of swinging his shoulders when walking which seems to him constitutive of the social being of the accomplished adult. (2000: 154)

Alexander Technique seeks to overcome habit, and in so doing, it obviously exemplifies a much more conscious process than sleep or even than becoming a waiter. However, it is also obviously cultural, circumscribed by particular behaviours and activities that form something called 'the Alexander Technique'. Further, even the process of applying conscious control to habit by inhibiting reactions and trying 'not to do' does eventually form habits, which are in turn subjected to conscious scrutiny. Through the performance of these activities, one comes to develop a state of being-in-the-world which is that of an Alexander pupil, or, in training programmes, that of a teacher.

Alexander Technique is transmitted from teacher to pupil through the hands, and the awareness developed by teachers is, as Merleau-Ponty explains, 'knowledge in the hands' (1962: 144). Yet this knowledge is not localised only in the hands, but pervades the teacher's self, which must be constantly maintained in a particular way, with good primary control and head-neck-back relationship, in order to transmit the work.

Amongst Alexander teachers, proximity to Alexander himself is often charted and taken as a mark of skill. The first generation teachers who trained with Alexander are highly sought after and command particular respect because of their relation to the founder. To an outsider, this sounds like rather absurd idolatry. Yet when knowledge is understood to pass through the hands and to be gained not through abstract learning but through experience, this respect begins to make more sense. Through contact with those who experienced the founder's direction 'first-hand', one literally comes

closer to Alexander himself. However, this still understands the technique as most authentic in the hands of its founder. While this desire to hold on to the founder is common to many forms of movement re-education, as the next chapters shall show, there are significant differences between movement re-education as it was initially conceived and as it is practised today.

Conclusion

The work of Alexander Technique is never-ending, yet lessons in the technique generally draw to a close at some point. As I have said, most teachers believe a good grasp of the work can be obtained in thirty lessons or fewer. The pupil of the technique can then go about daily life with an awareness of the basic principles of the technique, and has at this point developed new patterns of movement and alignment which are more comfortable than those previously experienced. For the pupil who wishes to continue lessons or develop a very deep understanding of the technique, however, it is often thought useful to undergo Alexander teacher training.

Four of the Alexander teachers and trainees I interviewed indicated that they had registered for teacher training not because they expected to make it their primary profession, but because it seemed the best way to fully embody the work. Two interviewees in particular, both violin and viola players who had experienced debilitating upper body pain while playing their instruments, felt that Alexander teacher training was the only way to develop a strong enough sense of the work to enable them to continue to play their instruments. While both took on a few Alexander pupils, neither expected this to be a full-time profession, seeing it instead as assisting their musical careers. They described the substantial changes that the Technique had enabled them to make by radically altering the way they used their bodies/selves during performance. Even after many years, the work still sometimes seemed difficult. For one of these teachers, who was fifty when she began Alexander lessons, ten years before our interview, the years of habitually poor use continually caught up with her:

Saskia: I'm making a cello for my youngest daughter. And this is really heavy work, you know. First of all, how am I going to do it, how am I using myself? And suddenly I will realise, what am I doing? And I think oh, stop, do it again. And this will stay

with me [all] my life. I can't do prophylactic thinking which should be with me all day, but it's with me all my life. I am that person and for fifty years I've done it, so fifty years is hard to change.

Alexander Technique is truly a 'technique of the self' in that the work it does is all-encompassing and continuous. While some of what is learned becomes habitual, it will never be entirely so, and the principles of inhibition and non-doing keep the work from ever becoming unconscious. The technique is also a cultural way of attending to and with the body, or as Csordas has called it, a 'somatic mode of attention'. It seeks to alter the *habitus* through conscious awareness of the way the self acts, and brings about change by re-educating the body/self. This is developed through the bodily learning of new ways of being-in-the-world.

This chapter has also addressed the body-mind relationship in Alexander Technique in relation to its claim to holism. The technique is certainly holistic if this simply refers to the involvement of both body and mind. However, it also claims to surmount the problem of mind-body dualism, and in this it has some, but not total, success. The 'self' for Alexander is a psycho-physical unity, which both consciously directs and is directed. The emphasis placed on cultivating conscious control implies that the mind is dominant over an essentially passive body. Further, the ongoing nature of the work means that there is no body which is restored to a state of knowing or wisdom from which it will at some point be able to direct itself; there is always a struggle to gain conscious mastery. As such, the technique merely repeats traditional dualistic theories of mental dominance over the body.

However, this analysis assumes that consciousness is a mental phenomenon and not a bodily one; by using the terms 'mind' and 'body' it also reinscribes the dualist distinction. As I have shown through my discussion of the technique in relation to *habitus*, we should take Alexander's claim to work on the 'self' seriously. States of the body often *are* states of the mind, which draw on habitual and cultural knowledge of what it is to feel a particular way or be a particular kind of person in order to perpetuate themselves. 'Self' in the Alexander Technique is clearly located in the body and is not a separate mental phenomenon; references to the primary control of the head-neck-back relationship as a state of being 'in the self' demonstrate this.

Through conscious control, the act of inhibition can come to take on the status of an embodied consciousness; not a consciousness of what the body is doing, but a consciousness which is *in* the body. Therefore, while Alexander denigrates the type of bodily knowledge Merleau-Ponty identifies in his discussion of habit, he does acknowledge the body's role in consciousness in a way that does not marginalise it. In this, Alexander Technique has the possibility of being more holistic than other forms of movement re-education, whose assertion and privileging of 'body wisdom' can tend to oppose the body/self to a separate mind/self, thereby marginalising the latter and idealising the former as the 'true' self. While Alexander Technique clearly does not subscribe to a theory of body wisdom, through a phenomenological analysis of the technique as embodied practice, it becomes apparent that it may provide a challenge to mind/body dualism.

Within this analysis, some of the issues raised in Chapter Five are peripherally apparent, such as the image of 'Animals in Motion' indicating a model of the natural body. However, the discourses of movement re-education's founders are for the most part markedly absent in this analysis. This is because for the most part, they simply did not arise in participant observation in Alexander Technique. For this reason, it is useful to turn to interview data to examine these issues in a contemporary context. This also indicates a limitation of participant observation as a form of analysis which interviewing helps to correct. In the next chapter, then, I will return to the issue of the natural body which underlies much of my analysis in Chapter Five.

Chapter 7

The Natural and the Vertical

Introduction

In the process of transcribing interviews, I began to experience pain and aching in my wrists and forearms which did not go away. Fearing that I was beginning to develop a repetitive strain injury, and being immersed in the accounts of participants with similar injuries who had been helped by Alexander Technique, I booked a lesson with my Alexander teacher and went out to buy myself an ergonomic keyboard. Arriving at my lesson with the keyboard, I asked my teacher to help me find ways of typing which would cause less stress on my arms and hands. Putting the keyboard on the table at the height of a desk and setting a chair in front of it, he asked me to sit down as I would in front of the computer. I sat, making an effort to sit very straight, although I rarely did this at home. To my surprise, my teacher pointed out that this position was not comfortable for a long period of time, and showed me that he preferred to sit in what could only be called a slumped position, with his mid-back resting on the back of the chair and his hips forward. Rather than sitting upright, he encouraged me to lean back. By focussing my attention on letting the chair take my weight at the point where my back rested on it, I found my head and neck were less tense, and that no tension was transferred to my arms.

That Alexander Technique might encourage me not to perpetually sit upright was something of a revelation, which occurred only toward the end of my fieldwork and after I had done a number of interviews with Alexander teachers, acutely conscious of adopting a very upright posture which I thought would impress them favourably. Often, I noticed they appeared more relaxed than I was, but I was unable to pinpoint what made them so. In fact, as I came to realise, the interviewees who demonstrated the most erect posture were the ones who were in or had recently completed training, or who were pupils and clients rather than practitioners.

In part, my illusion that movement re-education was primarily concerned with erect posture derived from my readings of the texts analysed in Chapter Five. These texts give the impression that erectness is a natural human inheritance, and if Ida Rolf (1977) is to be believed, that it is in fact the defining characteristic of fully evolved

humanity. However, I gradually became aware of divergences between my interview data and these texts. There was little talk of verticality and erectness in these interviews, and although some of the models of the natural body described in Chapter Five persisted, the issue of naturalness was one that provoked debate or at least uncertainty among some participants. This also indicates an important reason for doing interviews rather than relying solely on discourse analysis; discourses are always negotiated according to particular contexts.

In this chapter, I will analyse the types of bodies described and presented in movement re-education in terms of naturalness and verticality. Drawing on data from interviews, movement re-education texts, and fieldwork, the chapter will examine where and how shifts have occurred in the way ideal kinds of bodies are described and presented. The chapter will return to the issue of the natural body, raised in Chapter Five, in a contemporary context. It will also raise questions to do with verticality and the shift away from the visual in movement re-education, toward what can be felt internally but not seen externally. This latter point will be elaborated in relation to dance practices which have used movement re-education as part of training. Throughout, I will attend not only to the discourses about bodies, but also the bodily and embodied aspects of naturalness and verticality. In concluding, I will link these issues back to the discussion of body wisdom and show that although a wise body is not necessarily a vertical body, it is usually perceived to be a natural one.

Natural Bodies

Chapter Five detailed the models of natural bodies presented by movement re-education's founders, categorised as 'beasts, babes, savages, and Greeks'. Common to all these models of the natural body is an understanding of the natural as pre-civilised, as something that comes before, and stands outside of, culture and society. As was discussed, these models of the natural body often have racist (and sometimes sexist) implications and are based on nineteenth and early twentieth century models of civilisation as having only one possible evolutionary path.

In my Alexander lessons there was no mention of a natural body, although as I pointed out, images on the wall such as the one of animals in motion did imply use of

such a model by at least some teachers at the London Alexander Centre. 'Natural', however, was not a word used in relation to the work, nor were Alexander's theories about children and 'savages' having natural bodies referred to. Sometimes cultural comparisons were drawn between ways of sitting and standing in the environments where my Alexander teacher had worked, but he did not use these to make judgements about some cultures being more natural than others.

This was not the case amongst all Alexander teachers, however. In all twenty-eight of my interviews¹⁵, I asked participants whether they thought there was such a thing as a natural body, what this might look or feel like, who if anyone might possess it, and why this was so. In so doing, four categories of responses became distinguishable. The majority of participants still held some theory of the natural body as pre-civilised, possessed by children and, in some cases, 'savages.' Other respondents said that the natural was a state of ideal performance, that it was the body most people had prior to re-education, or that they knew nothing about the 'natural body' and that it was a phrase they would not use in relation to their work. Below, I will explore these understandings and their implications.

Conceptions of Naturalness

In their responses, four participants indicated an understanding of naturalness as the 'normal' state of the body, in the sense of the body prior to re-education; three indicated that the natural was an unknown or unattainable state, and six suggested that naturalness was an ideal state, dependent on the individual. This latter conception has certain parallels with the model of the natural as pre-civilised, and for some participants, it overlapped with it.

Participants who understood naturalness as normal tended to think of movement re-education as something additional, indeed, almost unnatural. As with the conception of the natural as pre-civilised, this theory suggests that a natural body is something that has not been interfered with. However, where the natural is seen as normal, there is no state of grace to be recovered and no body to be restored. Rather, the natural

¹⁵ This question was asked of each interviewee, however, while the respondent who answered by e-mail indicated 'yes' in response to the question about whether he believed there was such a thing as a natural body, he gave no indications of what he thought this might be like, and therefore has been excluded from the numbers below.

body is one that would benefit from improvement. One Rolfer responded to my questioning by replying that he had never considered whether there was such a thing as a natural alignment for the body, and that he would not use such a concept in his work. He then went on to suggest:

James: I would say a natural alignment would be what Ida Rolf would call a random body, which has not been Rolfed ...Rolfing is something that adds something that is not natural. Well, it is natural, because human beings are doing it to human beings. So it's something that's been created by people to give to people to help them. And there's nothing wrong with that. But it's not natural in the sense that if you just went through life without having it, you wouldn't be as balanced in your body... I don't think we should mourn the loss of this natural alignment. I mean when does it start to go? Probably as soon as we get upright. Even as we're starting to grow into the alignment, we're picking the knocks up and getting the bangs that are going to actually take away from that as we get into adulthood.

For James, Rolfing is natural inasmuch as human beings do it—that is, it is not *unnatural*, but is normal. Although there is a suggestion in this account that children may possess a natural alignment, this is perceived to be fleeting, and its dissolution natural. This does not imply that the natural way is desirable. One interviewee explained that every body was natural because:

Vivien: It's what it needs to be because of the circumstances, because of how it's experienced the world or how... Because of certain influences, be that illnesses or accidents or things that were supported, things that were suppressed, you know. Or just developed the way they need to be. Not to say that it's the ideal way.

For these participants, there is no glorification of the natural body: it is an average body, probably in need of movement re-education. In models of the natural as normal, the conventions of seeing bodies as pure in some pre-social or pre-civilised form, as corrupted by civilisation, are overthrown. This was not a very common type of response to questions about naturalness, but it was nevertheless an undercurrent. Movement re-education in this formulation adds something rather than restoring a previous (now lost) state of grace.

Three participants refused to use the word 'natural' in relation to movement re-education or felt that it was not applicable. For these participants, naturalness was clearly not part of the goal of their work, and there was no natural body they were hoping to restore. As practitioners of Rolfing, Feldenkrais, and Alexander Technique, they did not see their work as re-establishing contact with a natural body. As one participant put it:

Beth: Um... What do we mean by natural? I mean a natural way of being, what is natural? I mean I kind of look developmentally, when I'm doing the lessons or when I'm working with people I kind of think how could it be easier... how... natural. This is a big...

Jen: it's a strange word

Beth: It is a strange word and yeah, what do you mean by that in a way, because I think it [only] works so much for me. It also kind of invokes a bit of a right and a wrong. What's... I think there's an organic way of moving. That's the word that immediately comes to mind, maybe. But natural, mm. I don't know.

Another participant thought that some alignments were more 'authentic' than others, but was hesitant to consider them more natural (Scott). A third held the position that 'there is no such thing as a natural body, or that we shouldn't look for one, but that there is a dynamic body, which is contextual' (Oliver). Cultural and historical context, he felt, shape any 'natural' body so that it is never in isolation. This is reminiscent of Mary Douglas' analysis of the body as natural symbol, where she comments that there is a

natural tendency to express situations of a certain kind in an appropriate bodily style. In so far as it is unconscious, in so far as it is obeyed universally in all cultures, the tendency is natural. It is generated in response to a perceived social situation, but the latter must always come clothed in its local history and culture. Therefore, the natural expression is culturally determined. (1970: 97)

The natural body is therefore always contextual. Two key points emerge from the reflections of these participants. One is Beth's suggestion that the 'natural' invokes a right and wrong; therefore, it is good to be 'natural' and bad to be 'unnatural'. She is therefore closer to seeing the natural as 'ideal' than as 'normal'. However, she rejects both of these categorisations not only on the basis that they invoke a right and wrong

which she wishes to avoid, but because she is unsure what the natural might be. So, too, did the others. In part, this may reflect uncertainty in the way the term natural has been used: as I have indicated, it can imply a normal state or a pre-civilised state and these are very different. However, Oliver implies a more fundamental problem. His comment suggests that the natural body may be so intertwined with context that it is not identifiable as a separate element. In this there are shades of the contemporary social and cultural theory discussed in Chapter Three, through Butler, Foucault, and even Merleau-Ponty who reject this category as an isolatable condition.

This is not to say that movement re-educators are fully-fledged social theorists, only that the ideas put forward in theory may not be so distant from practical application as might be initially assumed. In any case, three participants do not indicate a large proportion of my sample considering these issues, and so I will not dwell on this point. It is worth noting, however, that several participants did have a high degree of reflexive awareness about the use of the term 'natural' in relation to movement re-education. This indicates that the natural is not necessarily critical to movement re-education or even to a theory of body wisdom.

Other participants saw naturalness as an ideal state, believing that some alignments were more natural than others, but that this was individually variable. Six participants gave responses of this kind. For Carrie, a Feldenkrais practitioner, what could be considered a natural alignment varied for structural reasons between individuals, but could be identified on the basis of freedom of movement: 'if they can do what they want to do happily and without injury, and it's free movement and they make it progress if they want to, then that's— they're probably achieving their perfect alignment for themselves'.

Carrie conflates natural, ideal, and perfect in this assessment, but suggests that it is freedom from pain or restriction which makes an alignment natural. There is no visual element attached to the natural; that is, there is no way of identifying a natural alignment on the basis of a particular look, contrary to the movement re-educators who assumed that verticality was the most natural state for the body to be in. Katja, a dancer who studied Pilates, was similarly able to explain the natural in terms of what it would feel like rather than what it would look like. This is a particularly significant

shift in relation to dance training, where feedback from mirrors has always been important:

Katja: It would feel like I'm standing on my feet, my weight slightly at the front, my tailbone dropped and my back lifting up, having the freedom of the head, my shoulders coming down and my scapula being just down and kind of relaxed, giving me a space in front to breathe. And there's that relaxation on the whole of the body.... So that's what I call natural.

A dancing body has always been a trained body, but postmodern and new dance have increasingly sought to undo formal dance training, returning to the 'natural' body, often through movement re-education. This puts the dancer's body in a peculiar relation to the natural—being 'trained' for 'naturalness'. However, the idea that kinaesthetic skill comes naturally to some people is a common one, and athletes are sometimes described as being 'natural' at a particular sport. For one Alexander teacher, the natural alignment of the body was only occasionally attained, although some individuals were more likely to achieve it than others:

Jen: So do you think that there is such a thing as a natural alignment of the body?

Robert: [pause] For the individual. There is, it's never going to be, I mean you might actually hit 100%. You know when you've hit 100%, it feels fantastic, great. And it might be in a lesson, it might not be in a lesson, it might be while you're playing tennis. But it's fleeting. Because we're enormously complex, and we can't help it... the average animal, I mean there are some horses that are fantastic, but they don't win every race. And there are some horses that are never going to win a race. It's the same for human beings.

Burt (1998) and Gilman (2004) have each written about naturalness in relation to dancers and athletes. Burt points out that dancer Josephine Baker's skills were labelled 'natural', because she was black and therefore, in the 1920s when she danced, was associated with the primitive (1998: 59). Gilman argues that amongst athletes, there is never any such thing as a natural body, because all sport involves a kind of training. This links with Mauss' (1973 [1935]) observation that there are techniques of the body associated with swimming and walking as well. Indeed, as Gilman points

out, the 'natural' athlete's body, exemplified by baseball player Lou Gehrig, may be at the root of ill-health (a lean, athletic body is often associated with ALS, known colloquially as 'Lou Gehrig's Disease'.) Even bodies that appear genetically predisposed to athleticism may not in fact be healthy.

Conceptions of the natural body as ideal are also sometimes elided with the natural as pre-civilised, as they have a certain continuity. Seeing some bodies as more natural than others immediately begs the question of whose body can be natural. Participants who gave responses that indicated that a natural body was an ideal to strive for often also saw it as existing amongst the pre-civilised, namely children or 'tribespeople'. In the case of one Alexander teacher, certain athletes demonstrated natural good use of themselves, but some did so because of training:

Saskia: there are only a very very few people, and I'm thinking of musicians as well, and I'm thinking of Mohammed Ali, or Steffi Graf, they have a very natural use of themselves, everything is right. But I'm sure, I think Mohammed Ali has it by himself, I'm sure Steffi Graf had just a good teacher.

Given the remainder of Saskia's remarks about the natural as pre-civilised 'savage', detailed below, it is probably not coincidental that Graf, who is white, is interpreted as having had good teaching while Ali, who is not, came by his skills 'naturally'. Therefore the conception of the natural as ideal, where naturalness is an individual achievement or an individual best, is not always exempt from the racist implications of the natural as pre-civilised; it can in fact be linked to them.

The natural as ideal presents certain paradoxes which are partially resolved by recourse to a theory of the natural as pre-civilised. In interpreting naturalness as a state outside culture, the reasons that certain individuals and bodies are marked as more natural than others becomes clear. It is in any case strange to say that trained bodies, such as those of athletes and dancers, exhibit characteristics of being natural. They may make particular activities *appear* natural or effortless, but it is always an ease cultivated through training the body. This is the case even when training takes the form of re-educating or 'un-training' the body, as with dancers who use movement re-education to reclaim the natural body.

The Natural as Pre-Civilised

It would be misleading to conclude from the examples above that the natural body so admired by Alexander, Pilates, Rolf, Feldenkrais and Cohen has ceased to be relevant or does not translate into the practices or understandings of participants in these techniques. Fourteen of twenty-seven respondents who addressed this issue, slightly more than half, gave responses to the question of the natural body which indicated a continuity with the views of the founders, falling into the general category of 'natural as pre-civilised'. Two other respondents indicated views consistent with this theory elsewhere in their discussions, although their response to direct questioning about the natural body fell into one of the categories above, again suggesting an uncertainty about what 'natural' meant.

'Beasts, babes, savages, and Greeks' were not necessarily the models used by contemporary movement re-educators, however. Amongst all interviewees there was only one case where animals were held up as models of naturalness to be emulated, and no instances of reference to the ancient Greeks. Both of these appear to have fallen into disuse. There were five general accounts of the natural body as lost which did not specifically refer to children or 'savages' but still posited that the development of civilisation had led to the denigration of the body and any awareness of its workings. For one participant, movement re-education was 'a bit like stripping the house down to its original features, and then you see the house for what it is... it's how your body's meant to function as opposed to the various emotional tics that we might put onto it because stress that is actually mental comes out through the body (Mark). These accounts implied the pre-civilised body without making explicit reference to anyone or anything perceived to still possess it.

Most frequently among participants who understood natural as pre-civilised, children were idealised as pre-civilised, natural bodies with innately good use of the body/self. Eight responses fit into this category. Michael's response is typical of these:

Michael: The technique is a kind of re-education, so the implication there is that we have this in us, we have this co-ordination in us. And of course you see it in kids, in very young children, that they have amazing posture and balance and with every

movement the head leads and the body follows and all the things you learn in the Alexander Technique. It's quite frustrating to see that the little toddler has all that and more, and can squat for ages, or sit comfortably in any position with the spine really straight and the head sitting lightly on top of the spine and so on. So I think it's in us all to have that, it's like we have to peel away the layers of more problematic stuff that we've put on top of that for whatever reasons. You know, through imitation, stress, illness, whatever it might be.

It is clear that for Michael, young children possess good body use which is covered by layers of 'more problematic stuff'. His narrative does not specify precisely where these problems come from or at what point they begin. Other participants suggested a variety of reasons for this, including social conditioning, imitation of parents and older children, emotional or physical abuse, and schooling. As one Pilates teacher explained:

Laila: I would say that you start to lose your natural body awareness and your natural physicality and your joy of movement and your joy of being yourself and within your body when you go to school. That's my interpretation. I mean if you look at kids when they are playing, and I don't know whether there is so much difference between kids in big cities and in the countryside, there might be, I don't know. But I mean if you look at kids, they are so sensitive and they are moving constantly, and they are... it's just so great to look at them.

That children use their bodies well naturally is taken by these participants as fact. Yet this is perhaps peculiar given the particular medical and educational attention that has historically been given to children's posture. As both Yosifon and Stearns (1998) and Vigarello (1989; 2001) point out, most posture campaigns were addressed specifically at children's bodies as sites of danger and weakness; children were seen as requiring moulding. Although this does not necessarily mean that posture campaigners saw children's earliest attempts to sit and stand straight as faulty, it does imply that children do not 'naturally' know how to use themselves. The argument is made more problematic in Bonnie Bainbridge Cohen's extensive work with children: on one hand, she and other Body-Mind Centering practitioners use children as the model of evolution and naturalness, yet on the other hand, the 'patterning' work which is

addressed to them implies that they need guidance in attaining naturalness. It is complicated still further by the fact that children learn sitting and walking with the guidance of their parents, who are at the same time demonstrating (according to these theories) poor posture. Why then should children's alignment be remarkable when the alignment of those from whom they learn, and who apparently later corrupt their body use, is poor? In other words, how is this apparent perfection produced from an obviously imperfect model? This is an inconsistency in these discourses around children as exemplars of the natural. There are other problems with this notion as well, which I shall attend to below.

Notions of the 'savage' were evident in five responses to the question, suggesting it has not entirely disappeared. In two of these cases, participants also referred to children, indicating a continuity between child and 'savage'. In three interviews, broad references were made to 'tribespeople' and 'hunter-gatherers' as presenting examples of healthy use of the body/self because they lived in societies where daily physical activity was still a fundamental part of life. There was a further implication that this was a more 'natural' way of living and consequently a healthier one, and that Western societies had developed 'too fast' for their own good. However, in these three cases the 'savage' remained a vague and ethereal figure, not overtly associated with any particular culture or group. In two cases, however, who was 'savage' was made clear:

Saskia: development has gone so fast that we can't trust our instincts anymore. I think we can't trust our instincts. As children, when we're young and we're kept to doing the natural thing, then yes we can, and when we see natural movements as children, when we send our children, I don't know where. Look, if you think of black people, beautiful, wherever, in Africa, wherever, still in America. And then they come to a different way of life, and you see their body change and I see now black people in Brixton, the youngsters, you know also, they have lost their beauty. How they're standing, hanging around, doing this, so they have totally lost their beauty. Their natural beauty.

Reut: Well there's always examples of people or cultures that have good use, but they're very few and far between, mainly people who live really away from Western life, more tribal sort of life, maybe Southern America, maybe some African tribes,

maybe, I don't know, remote Chinese, Japanese ones. So I don't think it's a rule, but in a very general way you can see better use there, on the whole. And that's because they still have to survive. So I think that way yes, but I don't think it's a racial thing, because if you take the same people starting their education in a more Western way you can see them develop the habits that everyone else will have in this society.

Maybe it's the price of advance, whatever.

This final comment about 'the price of advance' underscores what these discourses suggest—that there is an evolutionary scale against which cultures and individuals can be measured, and that some are more developed than others. Body use in each of these cases is 'not racial' but cultural, not genetic but learned—yet there is an explicit equation between non-Western, non-white 'others' and good body use. This physical prowess is implicitly contrasted to the apparently lower social and intellectual development of the 'savage', reinforcing the scientific racism of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, a racism displayed in the works of Alexander and Pilates.

This is not to say that all contemporary movement re-educators accept the outdated theories of the founders, and as the preceding discussion has demonstrated, some take very different views, refiguring or rejecting 'naturalness' as an ideal toward which they strive. One Alexander teacher was particularly clear in his opposition to Alexander's theories:

Dilip: I think [Alexander] sort of seemed to imply that we had much freer lives before, and that it was just technological change or living in the twentieth century or whatever that's caused these problems... I think that's just, you know, not believable in a way. Evolution happens over millions of years, or hundreds of thousands of years, not over a century or something like that. At least where human beings are concerned. And I think often one of the other things that people go on about is that, native people being freer or totally in balance or something like that and I don't agree with that either, because I've lived in other cultures, I was brought up in Kenya, I think it's a myth to believe everybody else is fine and it's just Western man that's decadent and fallen down and all that.

Dilip uses personal experience to refute Alexander's evolutionary theory, and although he is not a lone voice in this sense, moving beyond Alexander's ideas has been extremely difficult for many movement re-education practitioners.

Race, Childhood, and Representation

As the previous discussions indicate, it is difficult for some movement re-educators to separate themselves from the work of their founders, resulting from the persistence of the 'founding myth' and the awe in which many practitioners hold these founders. Racist and racialist discourses persist not only in the minds of some of movement re-education's practitioners, but also in contemporary texts published on these techniques. Wilfred Barlow, apparently aware that Alexander's views were out of date, indicates that his teacher was 'plunged straight into [the] evolutionary argument' of Darwin and Huxley and was 'inevitably caught up with the notion of a basic perfection which is lost by a combination of environmental stress and personal stupidity' (1973: 33). Barlow suggests that we no longer understand humanity to have only one possible correct way of standing. Further, he writes, 'We have no "true nature", beset with "ugly contradictions". To know and to be what we "truly" are, we have to *find out* what we are; and we have to construct what we are to be' (1973: 34). Alexander Technique, therefore, is about personal evolution, not social evolution; moreover, it is about personal (not natural) selection of a way of being. Yet this relatively progressive argument about the lack of a 'true nature' to be sought through the Alexander Technique is undermined by the use on the same page of one of the very evolutionary images he appears to be resisting (shown in Figure 7.2 below).

Moreover, Barlow's revision of Alexander's faulty evolutionary and historical argument is overlooked entirely by some later writers, such as Balk and Shields (2000) in *The Art of Running With the Alexander Technique*. They write:

People from less industrialised nations seem to suffer less interference with the natural use of themselves than we do in the west. For example, physiologists have found that a Kenyan woman uses no more effort—that is, oxygen consumption—walking up a hill with a 10kg jug of water balanced on her head than you or I without one. And, as far as I know, they haven't yet figured out why. It is probably because Kenyan women already possess excellent balance and co-

ordination. You don't see Kenyan men walking around with jugs balanced on their heads, but you certainly see enough of them in the winners' rostrum at races. (Balk and Shields, 2000: 25).

This passage follows an illustration which is captioned 'small children usually demonstrate excellent 'primary control of use'' (2000: 23). Similar comments run throughout the book, with a series of references to Kenyans and children as examples of people with natural good poise. Balk and Shields are not alone in this; St. Louis (2003) notes the same tendency among many sports scientists keen to link athletic ability with 'race' as a genetic endowment. In one telling comparison, Balk and Shields write that 'We can observe the effects of a well-organized primary control in young children, great athletes (Muhammad Ali, Carl Lewis) and performers (Fred Astaire, Margot Fonteyn), and in many tribesmen and women' (2000: 74). In this brief summary, both the models of the natural as pre-civilised and the natural as ideal are present. Athletes (black) and performers (white) are also invoked. However, most notable is how once again, and not accidentally, the savage-child relationship is resurrected.

Michael Gelb, too, in a key contemporary text on the Alexander Technique, refers to the natural good use of 'animals, infants, and a few outstanding adults' (1987: 44), many of whom are athletes. Yet he also describes Alexander's theory that unreliable sensory appreciation is the result of civilisation moving too fast for instinctual responses to keep up (1987: 60-61). Elsewhere, he tells the reader that 'Failure to adopt the upright posture represents a failure to explore our potential to be fully human' (46).

That Alexander's evolutionary theories and racism are replicated in contemporary Alexander Technique is given further support by the issue on multiculturalism in Alexander Technique's *Direction* journal. Despite raising questions about the cultural assumptions implicit in Alexander Technique and the technique's relations with some

racist comments in Alexander's first book¹⁶, the journal issue ultimately reproduces the very cultural and racial biases it seeks to challenge.

One Alexander teacher discusses the 1994 meeting of the North American Society of Teachers of the Alexander Technique where a resolution was put forward denouncing the racism of Alexander's first book and distancing contemporary practice of the technique from it. This particular teacher expresses her dismay at the way the resolution was changed to remove any direct reference to Alexander's racism. She comments that 'it is a white-skin privilege not to deal with race... I contend that we can no longer afford the privilege of not dealing with it' (R. Alexander, 2000: 6). Another teacher writes of her experiences of teaching in Ecuador, feeling that the technique 'offered a source of salvation, functioning as a somatic oasis' yet worrying that 'it, too, was an import that was another form of homogenisation' (Batson, 2000: 10). She acknowledges a need for thinking beyond the vertical axis Alexander emphasised in relation to posture and being aware of the cultural biases implicit in the work. Among those who teach Alexander Technique in non-English speaking cultures, translation is often an issue. As Alexander teacher Robin Gilmore summarises, 'Language plays a key role in learning, and the idiosyncrasies of a particular language may at times influence movement and behaviour. When presenting the Alexander Technique in a bicultural setting, the translator's understanding of the work on an experiential level plays a key role' (2000: 19).

Despite this growing awareness of cross-cultural issues in teaching Alexander Technique and despite seeking to distance the technique from some of Alexander's more racist statements, however, no acknowledgement is given to the broader issue of Alexander's racist ideas about nature and evolution. The journal's interview with an Alexander teacher called Hella Linkmeyer makes this abundantly clear. Linkmeyer made several visits to the !Kung people living in the Kalahari Desert in Namibia, and makes it evident that she believes them to have natural good use. She describes them as 'using themselves in a harmonious, complete way, using their whole self... in a way that we as Alexander Teachers think is the optimum. I guess in the evolution of

¹⁶ These comments, which proclaim the savagery, cowardice, and low intellectual development of the African-American population in particular, appear to have been specially developed for the 1918 American publication of *Man's Supreme Inheritance*.

mankind, this is where we come from at one stage, living in a hunter and gatherer society' (Linkmeyer 2000: 16). She goes on to claim:

I would say that they used themselves in a more holistic way. We have lost it to a certain degree and need to relearn it consciously. The Bushmen have got it naturally, subconsciously....The Bushmen don't need any technique because they still have their natural coordination. In our acculturation we seem to lose it somewhere along the line, as we as Alexander teachers know'. (2000: 17)

Despite admiring their apparently natural good use in a kind of invocation of Rousseau's 'noble savage', she and the interviewer each state that we cannot turn back and live as hunter-gatherers. Reversion to what is seen as an earlier type is out of the question. It is clear from these comments that Alexander's theories of evolution are still in use amongst some Alexander teachers, even in environments such as a journal issue on multiculturalism, where it might be expected that they would be more fully considered and re-evaluated.

Melanie Wiber's analysis of the images used in illustrations of human evolution notes that in paleoanthropology, the !Kung are frequently used as examples of earlier ways of life, because they are one of the last remaining hunter-gatherer societies. She states that this inevitably has ethnocentric and racist consequences because in comparison to 'us', who no longer live in this way, the !Kung appear 'primitive time capsules lacking the progress that the rest of the world enjoys. Thus, their unique history, their colonial past, their relationship with neighbouring peoples are all ignored as significant factors in the !Kung present-day lifestyle' (1998: 110).

In this light, the concluding remarks of the journal's multicultural issue, made by Alexander teacher Michael Holt, appear to have entirely missed the point. Holt suggests that it is time 'to let sleeping dogmas lie and desist from further post-mortem character assassination simply because [Alexander] failed to keep a private opinion to himself' (2000: 34). He regards Alexander's racism as entirely separate from the Technique itself, when the preceding articles make it clear that it is not. As Holt himself points out, many historical figures have held racial prejudices which have not ultimately discredited their ideas. At issue is not Alexander's personal opinion, but its

influence on the technique he developed, and whether his racist models of evolution persist. The discussion above has shown that in many cases they do.

Alexander teachers are not unique in this. Participants with involvement in Rolfing were among the most reflexive practitioners I interviewed about their discipline, as well as its relation to issues of culture and racism. However, in a recent book on anatomy for bodyworkers, Rolfer Thomas Myers uses an image of a boy named 'Reginald' who received treatment from Ida Rolf, with the comment that 'One person, viewing only the first two pictures, said, 'You took away his naturalness and gave him a weedy-white-boy posture! What good is that?'' (Myers, 2001: 262). This remark passes without explanation from Myers. Another illustration of the nerves and arteries in the head including facial features suggests that the viewer 'might see it as a Nilo-Hamitic¹⁷ person, for instance, but it is, in fact, an infant' (2001: 24). Both these examples indicate a persistence of the notion of a 'savage' whose body is both natural and child-like.



Figure 7.1: Reginald, in Myers, 2001: 262.

The issues of race and evolution are not central to movement re-education, but they hover recurrently in the background. Individual practitioners may not make reference to these issues, and may even be aware that they are problematic in relation to the work, as some of their discussions indicate. However, contemporary movement re-education texts appear in some cases to reproduce the theories of their founders entirely uncritically, as do some practitioners. Further, the shift from savage to child

¹⁷ North African

as the primary model of the natural body is not necessarily more enlightened. Rather, there is a long tradition of equating children with savages and vice versa, a tradition that serves to devalue both. Both are part of a broader discourse which views certain bodies as more natural than others. As Wiber notes:

The !Kung San remain locked, along with women, juveniles and chimpanzees, into a category of more “natural” things, a category of things whose essential characteristics make them less subject to cultural control and thus a category marked as symbolic of the ascendancy of culture through their implicit contrast to the Euro-american, white male. (1998: 112)

It is worth noting that in my interviews, in no instances were women explicitly posited as more natural than men, even in response to questions about the gender balance in movement re-education and the reasons for it. Most but not all participants suggested that movement re-education techniques tend to attract more women than men, but the reasons given for this were rarely tied to women’s biology or nature. A number of participants also commented on the increasing number of men training to be movement re-educators and attending sessions of these techniques. Amongst those who gave reasons why they thought women might be more involved in this work than men, responses tended to fall into two categories: either women traditionally had been less involved in the workforce and more able to undertake training in this kind of work, perhaps as a second household income, or women were more comfortable with and attracted to healing and body work than men. The latter category included three female participants who suggested that women were innately closer to their bodies, more sensitive, or more instinctively given to healing and helping roles. Even amongst these participants, two of three commented that they ‘hated to use the cliché’ or that it ‘may sound sexist’. Other participants who took the view that women were more drawn to healing and bodywork interpreted this as the result of cultural factors rather than natural inclination. Nor do women appear as models of the natural in texts on movement re-education, even the ones written by the founders, where, as I discussed in Chapter Five, they have tended to be seen as ignorant corrupters of children or possessors of a sexuality in need of discipline.

However, 'babes, and savages' have indeed persisted as models of the natural; Wiber's analysis later notes that the male body represented in Greek statues has also been idealised and translated into illustrations of the highest pinnacle on the evolutionary ladder. Thus many of the models of the natural body that appeared in the work of movement re-education's founders appear also in later contexts and are mirrored in popular science discourses.

Gustav Jahoda (1999) writes extensively about the history of equating savages and children, a trend which emerged in the mid-nineteenth century and lasted into the twentieth, beginning amongst colonial administrators and developing a scientific justification through the theories of social evolutionists such as Herbert Spencer, and continuing in the work of child psychologists. Jahoda notes that the parallels between savages and children tended to fluctuate between seeing them as the source of original sin, in need of discipline, and interpretations that they were the source of all that was innocent and pure. Dependency, weak personality, insufficient emotional control, and the lack of intelligence or morality were all characteristics commonly attributed to both children and savages, he observes.

In movement re-education, it is clearly the conception of child and savage as pure and innocent which predominates over any theory of original sin. While this attribution of purity and innocence to both may indicate a nostalgic desire for a lost state of being in which things were somehow easier and less complex, it does not indicate a wish to return to this state. Nor does it suggest that children and 'savages' (for which in contemporary discussions we may read 'tribespeople' or 'hunter-gatherers'), are highly valued. This is, at the very least, a rather patronising admiration for an evolutionary past which predominantly white, Western, adults imagine they have grown beyond.

As Jahoda and Wiber both suggest, contemporary anthropological theory has made it evident that the notions of social evolution whereby there is one evolutionary path which all societies will inevitably follow is clearly incorrect. Understanding other cultures as primitive and childlike has definite racist overtones. Equally, however, understanding children as natural and 'savage' is being problematised in education and the sociology of childhood, where development stage theory is increasingly seen

as outdated and inadequate. Gaile Sloane Cannella (1997), in *Deconstructing Early Childhood*, argues that the model of child development that sees children as going through particular stages at particular points, put forward by Jean Piaget, for example, contains many false assumptions. These include a model of human progress which is linear and universal; the privileging of logical thought as the highest stage of development, the categorisation of children as backward and the establishment of a standard of normalcy where those who do not fit are marked as deficient; and the placement of younger human beings at the lowest level of the hierarchy, where they are seen as inferior to adults (1997: 63-4).

Chris Jenks (1996) notes that

In the same way that the 'savage' served as the anthropologist's referent for humankind's elementary forms of organization and primitive classifications, thus providing a speculative sense of the primal condition of human being within the socio-cultural process, so also the child is taken to display for adults their own state of once untutored difference, but in a more collapsed form: a spectrum reduced from 'human history' to one of generations. (1996: 5)

This can be clearly seen in Body-Mind Centering, in which the seemingly-certain developmental movement patterns of babies mirror the apparent evolutionary stages of humanity as reflected in animals. Jenks also questions the developmental stage theory, noting that it is based on a sense of temporality that interprets children as deficient if they do not reach particular points of development at the time set out by the stage theorists. There is certainly the implication in Body-Mind Centering that a child who does not go through the developmental stages Cohen identifies will be unbalanced both physically and emotionally, as discussed in Chapter Five.

There is, then, no innocent equation between child and savage, and no understanding of other cultures or ages as pre-civilised which is not problematic. The use of children as contemporary models of the natural as pre-civilised evokes the same kinds of false developmental assumptions as earlier theories of the savage did, and the history of comparing children and savages indicates that the transition from one to the other is not accidental. Rather, the child now stands in place of the savage in many,

but not all, cases where a theory of an earlier innocent, primitive stage is seen as desirable.

The notion of an inevitable progression between developmental or evolutionary stages is one to which I will return, in relation to the vertical body seen in illustrations of evolution and used in Alexander Technique particularly. However, one further issue with the model of the natural as pre-civilised needs to be addressed: this is the notion that there is a natural body which pre-exists its social inscription.

Inscribing and Erasing the Social

As I noted in Chapter Three, following Butler (1999) and Grosz (1994), there are problems with any understanding of the body as having a natural, universal base upon which society and culture are inscribed. While Foucault and others who have suggested the model of the body as inscribed surface would be unlikely to believe reversion to the pre-inscribed body was desirable or even possible, there is a certain continuity between their views and those of the movement re-educators who see the natural as pre-civilised. For them, movement re-education techniques function as a kind of universal eraser, re-educating or even *un-educating* the body with its wrong habits of use to return it to a more natural state.

Those who hold this view and who see regaining the natural body as plausible and desirable would probably not employ the inscription metaphor directly. Yet it is clear in their understandings of how the natural body has been lost that the inscription metaphor is readily applicable. Schooling, imitation, and stress, for instance, are all ways in which society shapes and 'writes upon' the natural body. The inscription metaphor is particularly appropriate here, because movement re-education implies that with time, these writings can be removed, erased, sanded away. They are durable but not necessarily permanent. While society itself can never be eliminated, if one learns to respond from one's 'natural body/self', society will do significantly less damage.

This view is peculiar, not least because as other movement re-educators noted, their work is itself social. The idea that a social technique could restore a natural body

stretches the meanings of both 'social' and 'natural'. While such techniques are not invasive in the way that biomedical treatments such as medication and surgery are, learning how and when to touch a client/pupil is something that takes extensive training, as I discussed in Chapter Six. When practitioners speak of them as natural, or as restoring a natural body, they draw on the notion that contemporary society has had damaging physical consequences, something which was a central tenet of the eugenics platform many of the techniques' founders supported. It is a critique of modernity which invokes a mythical state of premodernity as a lost idyll. This notion relies in turn on marking some bodies as more natural, less civilised, than others—and a discourse of the 'noble savage' is intrinsic to it.

Interpreting the body as socially inscribed but essentially natural, where the natural is seen as desirable and restorable, seems inevitably tied to the racism, eugenics, and social Darwinism of the first part of the twentieth century, which many of movement re-education's founders subscribed to. However, as the discussion above has indicated, this understanding of the natural is not itself essential to movement re-education, and it is perfectly possible to see these techniques as useful and beneficial without believing they restore something natural. It becomes apparent through a comparison between the discourses of movement re-educators and their practices that a theory of the natural body is not required in order to justify the work. In this sense, practice turns back on theory and offers a critique of it.

Jahoda and Wiber have both noted a persistence of racist theories of cultural evolution in popular culture. Where Jahoda concludes that they have largely been pushed out of the public domain and exist mainly at 'subterranean levels' (1999: 248), Wiber's studies of popular science illustrations and interviews with students about how they interpret them have shown that these interpretations persist even in introductory academic textbooks. There is not, therefore, any cause for saying that movement re-educators 'should know better' than to use them, and in any case this would be an unproductive line of argument. However, it would seem desirable, at least from the point of view of social inclusion, that contemporary movement re-education move away from using the natural as a way of promoting their work. Whether such a shift would be too radical a revision for many movement re-educators is an open question, and one which there is not space to address here.

In conclusion, then, as much as the social inscription model is inadequate in social and cultural theory because it leaves open an untheorised, presumably 'natural' essence, it is similarly unhelpful in movement re-education. The difference between the two is significant: movement re-education *does* theorise the 'natural essence' of the body, and does so in ethnocentric and racist ways. Social theorists who use the inscription model would doubtless seek to distance themselves from such interpretations. However, the uses to which this undertheorised 'natural' body can be put are deeply problematic. While they do not inevitably result from any theory of the body as socially inscribed, they do at least linger as a possibility. For this reason, any theory of the body as inscribed needs to be treated with caution. As I noted in Chapter Three, my own use of Foucault has appropriated his analysis of techniques of the self rather than that of the body as inscribed surface precisely because of this problem.

Vertical Bodies

As I stated at the beginning of the chapter, there has historically been a strong link in movement re-education between the natural body and the vertical body. Rolf (1977) claimed that the failure to stand upright was a failure to reach full human evolutionary potential, and as I pointed out in the discussion above, Gelb (1987: 46) seconds this opinion. Such a view is based on an understanding of upright stance as *the* distinguishing feature between ape and human, and in fact there is some anthropological evidence that bipedalism was one of the first transitions made by human ancestors. Wiber (1998: 33) points out that the transformation to bipedalism appears to have occurred more than four million years ago, with other changes such as increased body and brain size and tool use lagging significantly behind. This does not in itself indicate that bipedalism, and with it, erect posture, are the defining characteristics of humanity, but it seems to have been interpreted in this manner by some movement re-educators. It was assumed that a vertical stance was the most natural position for the human spine, and the more vertical the spine was, the better and more natural it was. Slight scoliosis or lordosis was not seen to be within the normal realm of postural deviation, but as a problem which kept the bearer from embodying his or her full humanity.

In essence, the vertical is an embodiment of the natural as pre-civilised, and it is not surprising that those participants who rejected this theory of the natural also rejected verticality as the goal of their work. As I noted in Chapter Two, vertical posture has historically been taken as a sign of moral uprightness and was an ideal of the Victorian era. It persisted into the mid-twentieth century, when it was replaced by an internality and psychologisation of the body.

Alexander, Pilates, Rolf, and Feldenkrais (although the latter in early work only) all saw the vertical body as the goal toward which they aimed. This body was organised around a plumb line falling through the back of the ear, shoulder, hip, and anklebone. To embody the work, one was generally expected to strive toward the plumb line, although it might be acknowledged that not all would meet this ideal. Nevertheless, the illustrations used by these and other authors in movement re-education paint a clear picture of what was desirable. Alexander Technique books and websites, for example, often show the image of the evolution and degeneration of Man pictured in Chapter Four. This image plays upon well-known illustrations of 'the evolution of Man' from ape to human, adding a second stage, where 'Man' develops increasingly more sophisticated tools which take him further away from the vertical ideal which he upholds in the middle of the picture. He is, it appears, most evolved prior to discovering the rake, the power drill, and the computer.

Wiber comments on the image of masculinity and whiteness presented in typical evolution of Man illustrations. She notes that verticality is a key aspect of this:

Beginning at the point at which *Australopithecus* is portrayed, and intensified at the representation of the *Homo* line, we usually see heads held more erect and rather rigidly on top of the shoulders as opposed to hanging ahead of them. The shoulders are laid back (as opposed to hunched forward) and increasingly well-muscled. The back grows ever more flat, the stomach ever more lean, and the thighs and buttocks ever more muscular and powerful looking as the hominid family evolves. Despite the striding action of the figures, their posture is rigidly upright; usually the stepping action of the right leg modestly hides the male genitals. (1998: 84)

She observes also that the message these images portray is that ‘modern “fully evolved” man is Caucasian’ (1998: 113). These images of a single line of progress are dramatically oversimplified representations of what anthropologists and archaeologists now believe about human evolution. Aside from this, however, they clearly reproduce gendered and racial stereotypes—the images often become lighter in skin tone as they move from left to right across the page. They also produce certain understandings about the shape of the ‘ideal’ or ‘fully evolved’ human body.

Wilfred Barlow (1973) presents the following image in his discussion of Alexander’s work:

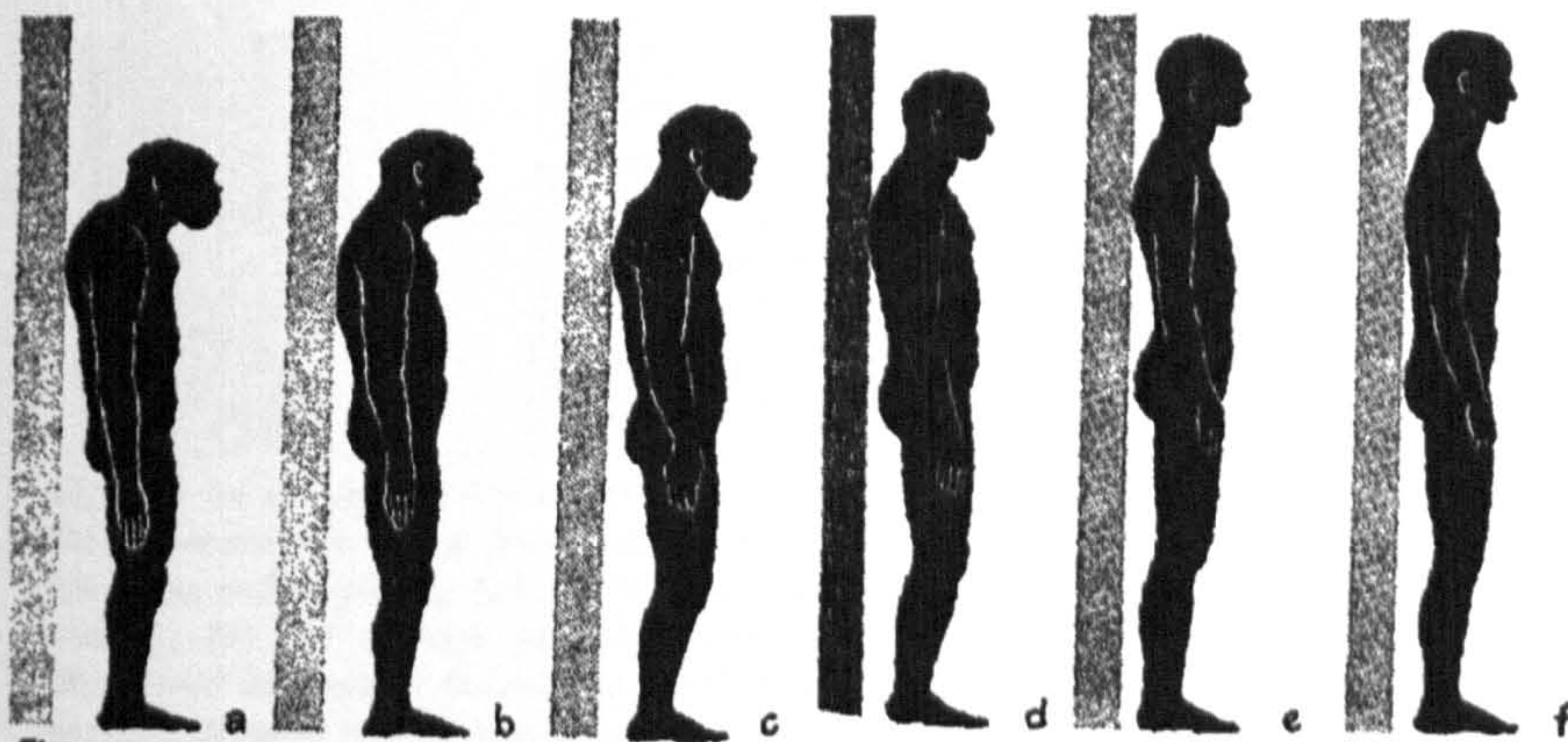


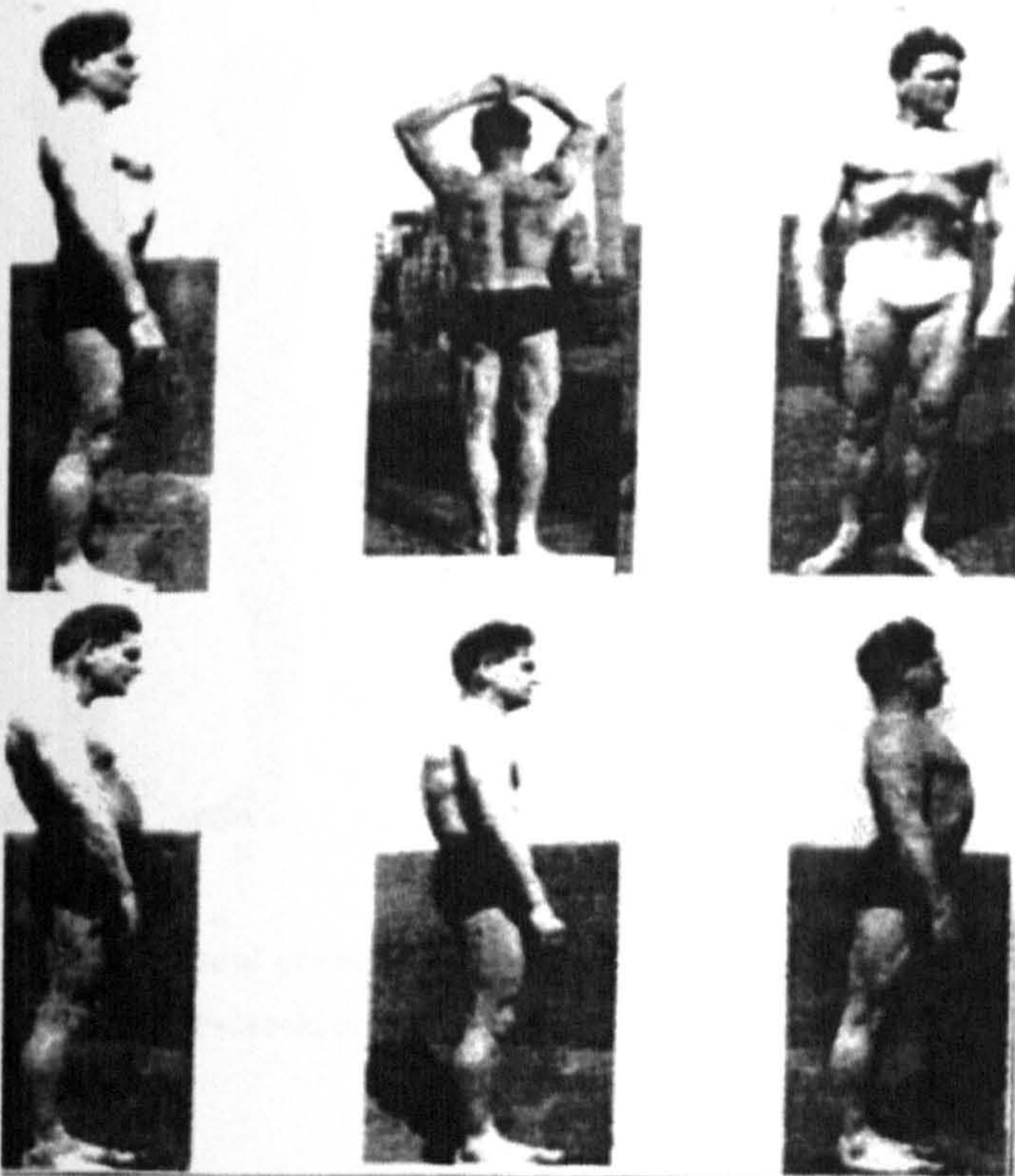
Figure 4

Figure 7.2: Evolution from Proconsul Man to ‘Alexander Man’ (in Barlow, 1973: 345).

He suggests that Figure f in the illustration is ‘Alexander Man’, the most fully evolved human. Earlier postures are clearly apelike. While movement re-educators outside of Alexander Technique have not generally made use of ‘evolution of Man’ images¹⁸, they do present the vertical as desirable through other illustrations.

Following are some examples from Pilates, Rolf, and Feldenkrais:

¹⁸ It should also be noted that Alexander did not employ any of these images in his own books; they only appear in the work of later interpreters.



Here we see the correct and incorrect way to stand. Note the posture in each. On top we see three poses, front, side and back. Note the perfect body. Below we have the author posing first, in (A) the Macfadden Hollow Back incorrect posture; (B) the average incorrect posture of an athlete who is broad-shouldered and muscle-bound; (C) the usual position of ninety-five percent of persons, showing protruded stomach (and double curvature of the spine in both lumbar region and the neck).

Figure 7.3: Joseph Pilates demonstrating the correct way to stand (in Pilates, 1998 [1934]: 17).

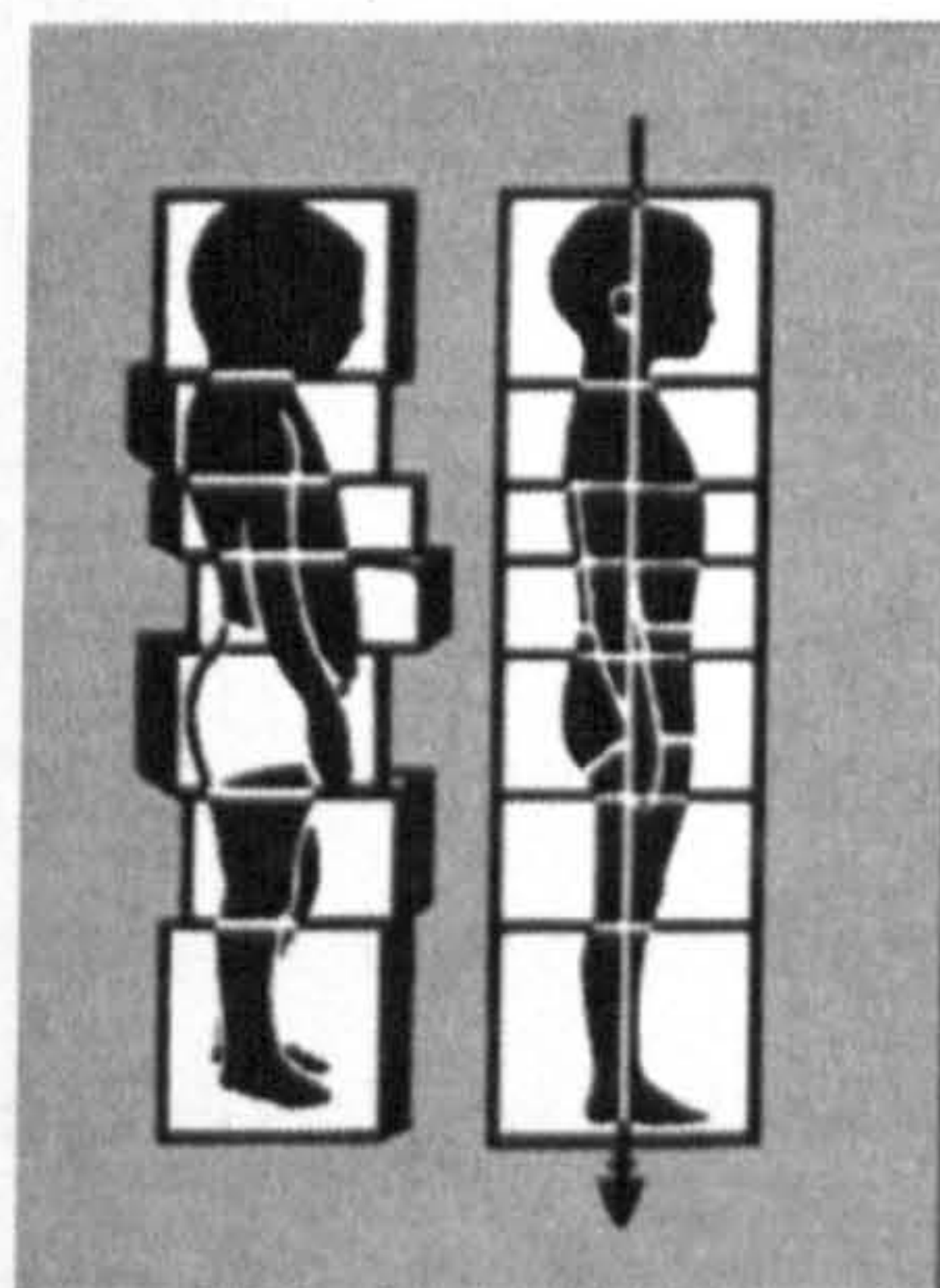


Figure 7.4: Registered trademark of Rolwing, (cover image of *Rolwing and Physical Reality*, Rolf, 1990).

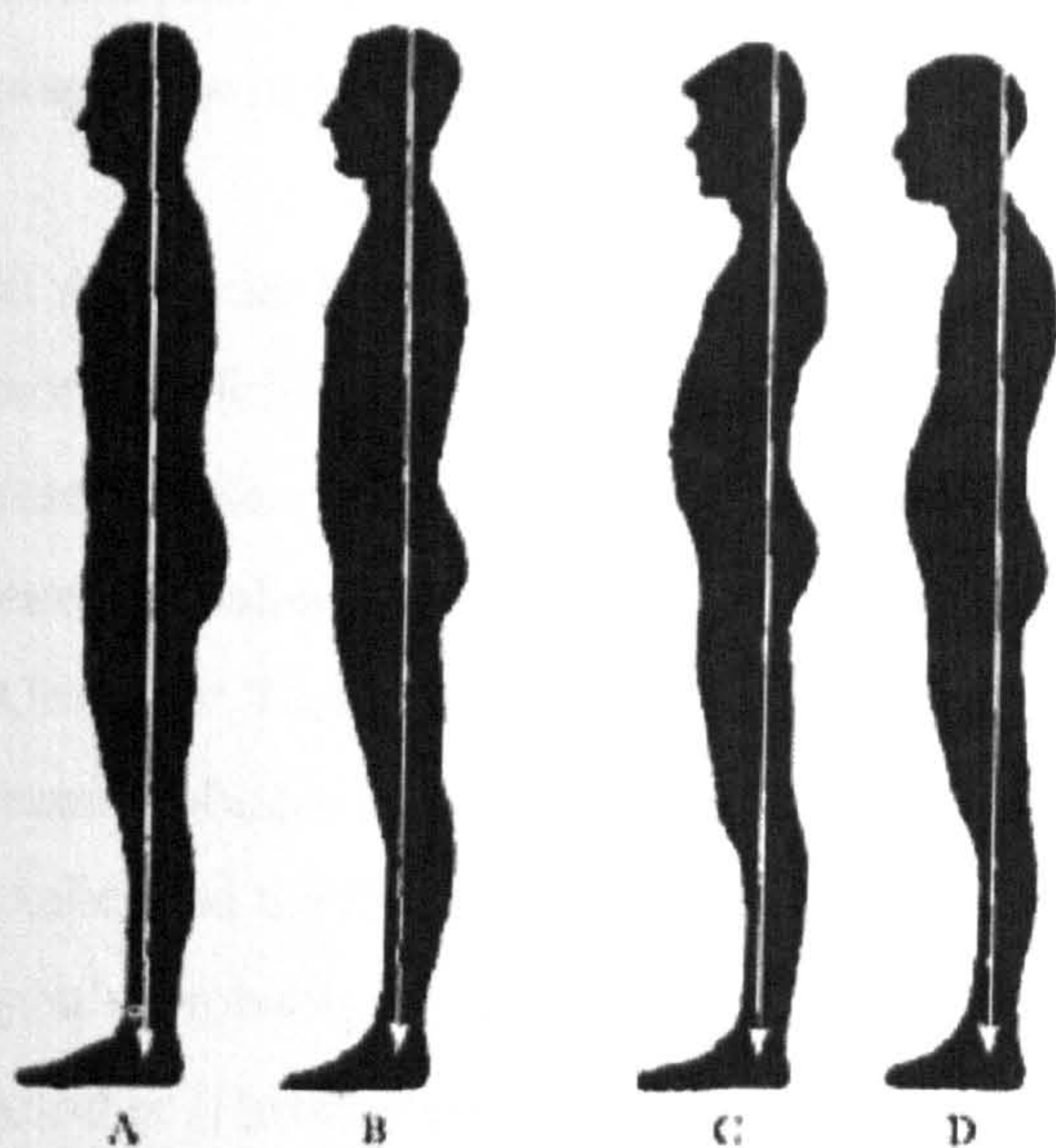


Figure 7.5: Postural gradation chart, adapted from the Harvard University Chart, with vertical lines drawn by Feldenkrais (in Feldenkrais, 1949: 104).

Rolf's extensive use of before and after photographs, such as the one of Reginald, above, further reinforces that what she is aiming for is vertical posture organised along a plumb line. Feldenkrais' posture gradation chart indicates a desire to classify and codify posture; it is notable that he turned away from this, and his 1977 book *Body Awareness as Healing Therapy* shifts the emphasis toward perception and awareness rather than an externally measurable verticality. This reflects a more general trend in movement re-education—the increasing tendency to look at awareness, rather than the plumb line, as the goal of the work.

Beyond the Plumb Line

Amongst contemporary movement re-educators, there has been a shift away from the vertical as an ideal. This is apparent particularly in Feldenkrais and Body-Mind Centering, as well as amongst the Rolfers I interviewed, although Rolfing as a practice has certainly traditionally valued the vertical. All practitioners and pupils, when asked to describe the goal of movement re-education, talked about it in terms of developing awareness rather than restoring a postural plumb line, although this ideal was more evident among some participants than others. Specifically, pupils of

techniques tended to see posture as something that should be vertical, whereas practitioners were less likely to subscribe to this view.

In Alexander lessons, the exercises—standing and sitting from a chair, doing table work, walking—generally focus on preparing the spine for verticality. This is less the case for other techniques, as I shall show in Chapter Eight. Further, not all Alexander teachers believe that the plumb line is the most desirable alignment. Although Alexander Technique practitioners have used images of verticality as ideal even in recent publications (Balk and Shields, 2000) two teachers interviewed directly challenged the idea that there was a universal ideal posture. One commented that ‘you’d probably break someone’s joints trying to align them like that’ (Dilip). Another (Hiroshi) claimed that he had an impression of the ideal shape, but that it was very changeable. On one hand, he said, exaggerated curvature of the spine was a clear indication of bad use of the self, but on the other hand, if the spine were too straight and tightly held this also qualified as bad use.

Hiroshi: I think posture is not a good word. We call it poise. So it’s very dynamic, it’s not just one posture which is creating a good use, it’s, you know, maybe poise should be flexible as well. As I explained with the monkey position, we have to be ready to move, ready to do things. I think readiness is all.

Of all interviewees, those involved in Rolfing happened to be most reflexive about their practice in relation to both naturalness and verticality. For instance, without prompting on the topic, one Rolfer directly identified Rolf’s view that uprightness is a sign of higher human evolution, and explicitly rejected it. He felt that for some practitioners, the plumb line had become a religion, and this was something he sought to avoid:

James: I don’t really get on this thought about the line being as kind of a religion or whatnot. To me it’s all about getting the best potential out of someone, and that potential can come in a lot of different forms. And I don’t think we should take it and say the more upright you are, the better a human being you are. That seems like rubbish, really. That’s rubbish. But definitely in terms of structure we’re looking for this [upright man in Figure 2.1] because this guy is much better... evolved... around,

evolved around gravity. I'll go for that one, but not better evolved in the human race, no.

For another Rolfer, the most important aspect of his work was helping people to 'broaden their potentiality for movement':

Oliver: And that growth in perception and kinaesthetic sense would be of great benefit from them because they can choose to slouch at the computer for five minutes but they can also choose to come up in a way that's effortless. So broadening potentiality is a new way of talking about line. Which puts line in movement rather than line in statue, because statues don't go anywhere, but people do.

What this passage recognises specifically is that there are many occasions when the human body is not upright, and is certainly not static. The work becomes about choice rather than establishing the vertical body. For another practitioner, this equated to a greater degree of authenticity:

Carol: I remember working with these dance therapists from Russia who thought that one had to always be open as a therapist. And one of the main things I wanted to get across to them was that that was a ludicrous notion, that the body is meant to contort itself in a million different ways, and if you don't feel open, to make yourself be open is a lie. And that it was much more important for you to be authentic in where you are in your body than to adopt some sort of ideal.

Encouraging people to express themselves through their bodies in a way that is 'authentic' and expressive of the way they feel is a clear example of the triumph of 'body wisdom' over verticality as a regulator of posture. As Carol also noted, she too is working within a kind of ideal, although she generally does not think of it as an ideal: the new ethical work to be done requires the body to express the self, rather than change it. In part, this is an expansion of acceptable ways of standing. Verticality has implications for visuality as well. What is being privileged in authenticity is not primarily the visual. Although we 'read' people's bodies in daily life in an attempt to determine whether they mean what they say, and numerous

articles about body language in the popular press give us advice on how to do this, 'authenticity' is not as instantly observable as verticality. The prevalence of these popular texts underscores precisely this problem; if body language were easily visually accessible, we would not need such manuals to tell us how to read it. In addition, authenticity for movement re-educators may be determined through kinaesthetic senses rather than through sight, meaning that 'authenticity'—and with it, the 'wise body' it connotes—are experientially rather than visually accessible.

The Vertical and the Visual

Verticality is a visible characteristic of the body; when movement re-education shifts toward cultivating bodily awareness, this is also a shift away from vision as the organising sense. As I have noted above, this is fundamentally a shift away from seeing verticality as an exemplification of 'true humanness'. This is evident, for example, in Cohen's (1993) images of people 'expressing organ patterns'. Each photo comes with a caption describing how the energy of that person is manifesting at that particular time. In image 7.6 below, neither of the men pictured is fully vertical, but Cohen's interest is not directly in how they deviate from the plumb line. Instead, she focuses on the energy that she interprets as coming from their organs and what this indicates. The man on the left, for instance, has energy 'emanating outward from his lungs, and inward through his heart', whereas the man on the right has energy 'emanating outward from his heart and inward through his lungs' (1993: 42).

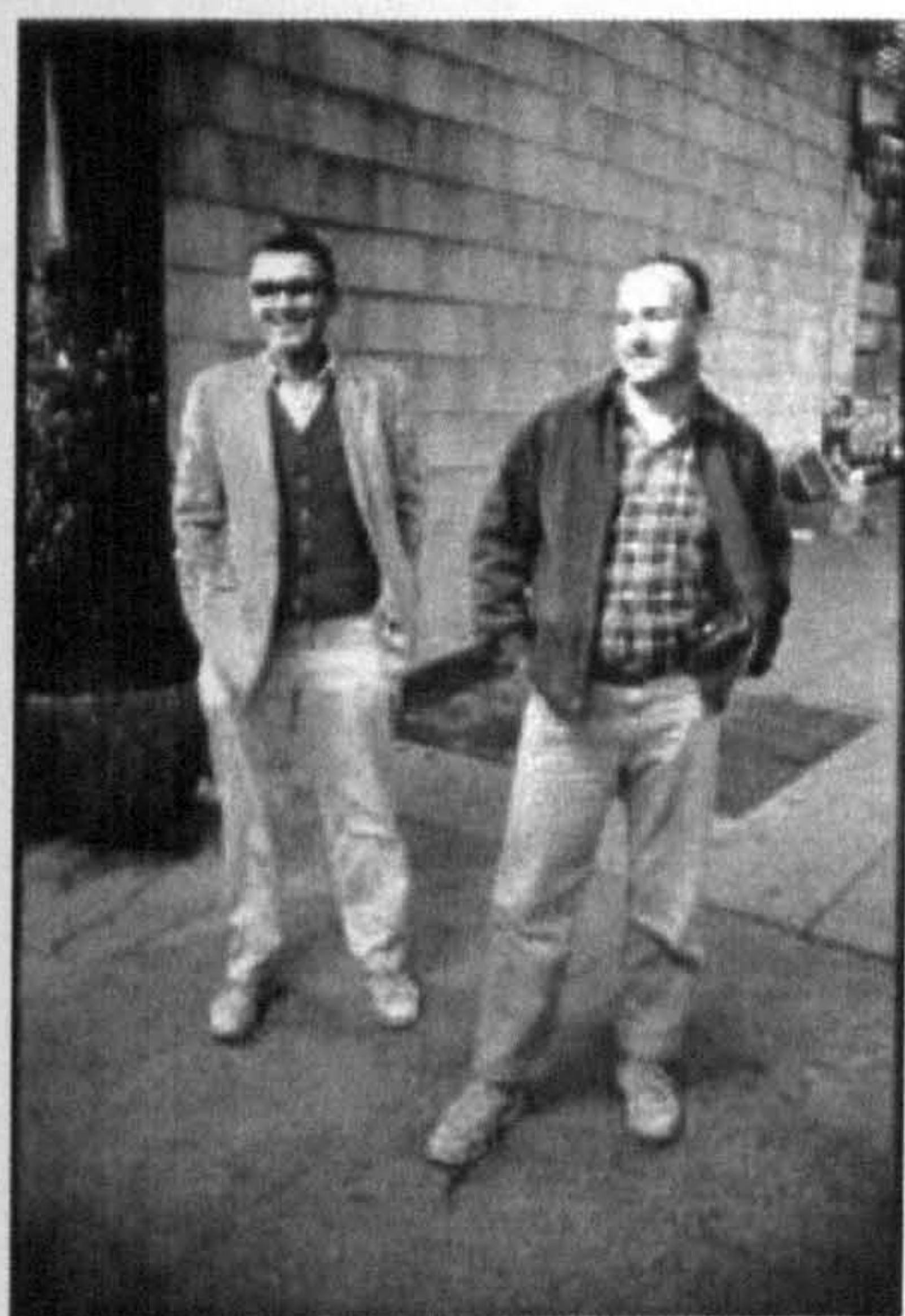


Figure 7.6: 'Heart and Lungs' in Cohen, 1993: 42.

What is immediately striking about such images and their captions is that despite the fact that the fact that they are visual, photographic, representations, the interpretations given to them are not visually apparent. In order to understand them, Cohen suggests that the reader 'simply be present with each photo and resonate with the person revealed at that particular moment in time' (1993: 40). One can then either kinaesthetically identify with the person in the photograph by placing oneself in the same position and noting the organs 'activated' by this process, or one can use the visual clues Cohen provides to identify the expression of that person, then 'embody those organs yourself and see if you end up in the same or a similar mind state' (40). How one would determine this is not made apparent. It is very clear that such images are a move away from both the vertical and the visual, privileging embodied sense and bodily awareness (through a particular understanding of the body and its systems) rather than information visually given. The cultural context of such images (the particularly masculine poses adopted by these figures) goes without comment; Cohen's interest is not in reading 'body language' as social but in reading physiology as the biological truth about individuals, an issue I will develop in relation to Rose's (2000; 2001) theory of the 'somatic individual' in the following chapter.

This shift away from the visual is particularly relevant to dance. Cynthia Bull (1997) has written that ballet privileges the visual and 'while attending to the feel and the flow of movement, emphasizes sight at the primary process of artistic conception, perception, and kinesthetic awareness' (1997: 272). She argues that the lines of the body become paramount. By contrast, the contemporary dance form contact improvisation privileges touch, leaving the spectator to 'identify with the sensual, proprioceptive experiences of the dancers' (1997: 277).

This difference is significant. Moreover, ballet is generally tied to the rise of modernity and the verticality of the spine, as I discussed in relation to posture in Chapter Two, with the torso relatively fixed and little movement occurring in the ribs or hips. Deviations from the vertical tend to take place in the legs or arms, although the upper back may sometimes tilt back to open the chest. The emphasis on verticality is also tied to the historical period in which ballet emerged as a dance form. New and postmodern dance forms, however, like contact improvisation, make much

greater use of the floor and of spinal contractions—in short, their work is not concerned with the vertical.

Novack (1990; 1995) has noted the increased use of movement re-education techniques by dancers, as have Bolster and Dussault (2001). Amongst seven interviewees who were dancers, a number of uses for the techniques they had studied were listed, including warming up, choreography, injury treatment and prevention, and greater general body awareness. In this, it was the awareness of the body in space, not the establishment of the vertical, that was most desirable. One Feldenkrais teacher with a dance background, who also had significant experience with Alexander Technique, commented that there was ‘this huge potential in Feldenkrais for dancers, which is kind of different to the Alexander work. Because of this three-dimensionality in space’ (Beth). Another Feldenkrais practitioner described her work with a contemporary dance company, and how much of the material she taught was adapted into choreography.

Bolster and Dussault, dance educators writing on the ‘wisdom of the senses’, discuss proprioception and interoception as the senses which ‘monitor and guide our bodies from within’ (2001: 92). Proprioception ‘allows me to organise my body in relation to gravity and monitor the shape or positioning of my movement through time’ whereas interoception relies on sensory receptors located throughout the body; ‘while most of this input takes place outside of my conscious awareness, it leads me to recognise when I am hungry, thirsty, sick, injured’ (2001: 93). They see proprioception and interoception as part of the kinaesthetic sense they seek to develop, which complements the privileging of visuality and will thereby ‘transform some of the detrimental dance practices, such as: imitating external models instead of knowing one’s own body, contorting the body into imposed ideals or aesthetics, and denying injury and pain’ (2001: 91).

However, it is worth asking what happens to dance as a performing art when there is a shift toward kinaesthetic felt sense rather than the visuality of performance. What is the audience’s involvement? To what extent can it engage with what occurs? For some audience members who are accustomed to being passive viewers of dance, new dance choreographies based on the principles of dancers’ kinaesthetic awareness may

seem inaccessible. As Bull points out, the audience is invited to share the bodily experiences of the contact improvisers, to empathise through their own bodies rather than admiring the spectacle of dancing bodies. It requires the audience, if they are to engage at all, to do so in quite a different way.

This can be challenging for audience members who are unused to having to engage with dance on this level. Even Sondra Fraleigh notes that ‘antiexpressive art risks being intensely private. By definition, denial dance must deny the audience, and Rainer’s manifesto [‘No Manifesto’ quoted in Chapter Two] indicates the truth of this. But we might well bear in mind the importance of the artist’s implicit incorporation of the other’ (Fraleigh, 1987: 127). It may also be beyond the reach of some audience members—as I have argued, bodily knowing is *not* intrinsically accessible to everyone, but is a culturally-shaped and acquired technique. Where dancers and choreographers overlook this, they risk isolating large segments of the potential audience.

The vertical and the visual have been linked in dance practice and movement re-education, and the shift away from both in new and postmodern dance and in recent movement re-education forms such as Body-Mind Centering and later Feldenkrais work has significant implications. It is here that the development of body wisdom, through knowing one’s body and working from the kinaesthetic felt sense, finds its fullest expression. When awareness and authenticity are emphasised over verticality as a goal of movement re-education, the body comes to have an internality that it was not initially seen to possess. Where the felt sense of the body is privileged over visuality, the focus moves inwards away from external representation. However, such internality is often naturalised, when in fact this way of seeing the body has emerged in quite specific historical and cultural conditions. Seeking bodies that are ‘wise’, ‘aware’, or ‘authentic’ is also a technique of the self, and continues to be a way of regulating bodies, even if (as in the case of dancers who may be less likely to injure themselves by pushing beyond their limits) it is a healthier one.

Conclusion

As I argued in the introduction to this thesis, it is useful to examine not whether the natural body objectively exists, but what use has been made of it. From the discussion above, it becomes apparent that within movement re-education, there is no reference back to a natural body which does not implicitly or explicitly rely on outdated theories of evolution and racist and racialist discourses. However, where a number of practitioners use movement re-education without the sense that their work is re-educating the body toward naturalness, it is equally apparent that such discourses are not necessary to the practice of movement re-education. In short, the justifications and explanations originally given to the work are not necessary for its continuation.

The natural and the vertical have different relationships to body wisdom. As movement re-education has moved beyond the plumb line as a measure of ideal alignment, verticality as a goal of the work has receded, but naturalness has not. In dance, for instance, 'natural bodies' began to be desirable in dance forms that did not emphasise verticality. A natural body can be determined through kinaesthetic senses, rather than objective appearance. The vertical body is not usually a wise body, because it is concerned with the look and not the feel of the body. The wise body may (and generally will) determine verticality to be its most natural alignment, but it also accepts deviations from this.

However, the wise body *is* usually conceived to be a natural body, because its knowledge is innate, and it is seen as the result of reclaiming a natural state. Wise bodies are generally understood to be restored to nature. The relationship between naturalness and verticality is then severed, and with it, some, but not all, aspects of the evolutionary theory movement re-education has relied upon. Even if vertical posture is no longer understood as the most human characteristic, however, the theory of children and 'savages' as pre-civilised models of the natural body, once lost but reclaimable through movement re-education, has persisted. Although practitioners seem to be increasingly identifying this heritage of ideas as problematic, it seems the natural is still an important part of the work of movement re-education.

The awkward relation between theory and practice in movement re-education becomes apparent here, however, because the discourses of some movement re-educators indicate the absence of the view that the natural is an ideal, pre-civilised state to be regained, while others see this as pivotal. In the next chapter, this relationship between theory and practice will be explored through a discussion of the rise of the somatic in relation to the embodied practices and discourses of movement re-education.

Chapter 8

Movement Re-education and Somatic Subjectivity

Introduction

In the mid-1970s, Feldenkrais practitioner Thomas Hanna developed a new practice which he called somatic education. He defined somatics as 'the body perceived from within by first-person perception' (1995: 341). The magazine/journal *Somatics*, which he subsequently established, has included work on Feldenkrais, Rolfing, and Alexander Technique, among others. For some practitioners, the term 'somatic education' has come to be broadly inclusive of any practices which integrate mind and body in bodywork or movement education (see for example Bolster and Dussault, 2001). The term 'somatic' is developing wide currency within this field.

'Somatic' is also a term increasingly used by social scientists to explain features of contemporary social life that are related to the body, albeit without quite the same meaning as Hanna's. For Thomas Csordas (2002), 'somatic modes of attention' are ways of attending to and with one's body; for Nikolas Rose (Novas and Rose, 2000; Rose, 2001), 'somatic individuality' is related to the way in which the construction of truth has become increasingly centred around the body; and Bryan Turner (1992) has argued that the regulation of bodies has become central to the structure of what he calls a 'somatic society', represented through concerns such as

The feminist movement, pensioners' lobbies, AIDS campaigns, pro- and anti- abortion cases, fertility and infertility programmes, institutions to store human organs, safe-sex campaigns, global sporting spectaculars, movements for preventative medicine, campaigns to control global tourist pornography, and various aspects of the Green Movement (1992: 13).

This chapter will link movement re-education to these theories of somatic modes of attention and individuality, working from the embodied practices identified by Csordas to the discourses observed by Rose. I will show how by contrasting their very different analyses, we receive deeper insights into the rise of the somatic in contemporary culture. While Turner does not provide a broader framework for identifying and analysing the somatic society as such, I will conclude with a brief

discussion of how movement re-education fits into the somatic society. This chapter thus draws upon the theme of ethical self-formation (through the emergence of somatic individuality) discussed in Chapter Five, and that of embodied practice (through a return to the issue of somatic modes of attention) covered in Chapter Six. Unlike these chapters, it draws upon interview data to examine contemporary issues and practices in movement re-education. Interviews, as I have argued in Chapter Four, not only provide data on discourse but can also give insights into embodiment and the practice of movement re-education, through detailed descriptions of these practices.

Somatic Awareness and Attention

In Chapter Six, I discussed non-doing, means-whereby, and use of the self as key principles of Alexander Technique which fit into Csordas' (2002) theory of 'somatic modes of attention' as ways of attending to and with the body. This theory bears revisiting in relation to the interview data, in order to examine how other techniques attend to the body/self.

Participants were asked what they saw as the aims or goals of the technique(s) they were involved with. As the discussion in the previous chapter about the move beyond the plumb line would indicate, only one practitioner raised the issue of body alignment as a goal, and it was clear that he did not see this as the only benefit of his technique (Rolfing). The goals of the techniques were a point where the interview data converged: virtually all participants spoke about increased somatic and bodily awareness as the primary aim of their work. We can say, then, that all movement re-education is a somatic mode of attention, and that it aims to cultivate bodily awareness.

This awareness took different forms in different techniques, however. In Feldenkrais and Body-Mind Centering, the emphasis was on exploration, which was expected to lead to body awareness as an effect. In Alexander Technique and Pilates, on the other hand, body awareness was a much more direct goal, in part due to the emphasis on conscious control, discussed earlier. In this section, I will compare the practices discussed by participants with the goals they described, examining the mind/body

relationship and manner of attending to the body/self in each. Alexander Technique was discussed extensively in Chapter Six, so I will not repeat those arguments here, but will conclude with a discussion of how it compares with the techniques discussed below.

Pilates

Pilates is perhaps the discipline which has changed most since its founder developed it. As Joseph Pilates did not set up a specific teacher training programme, a number of variations have emerged and there has been some contestation over whose lineage is most authentic. Pilates teachers and students I interviewed were more likely than those in other techniques to adopt more than one method of movement re-education or to use them interchangeably. The flexibility of the Pilates work and its ability to absorb other disciplines (often, as one educator noted, without acknowledging their source) has perhaps contributed somewhat to its popularity as a method, although its reputation for flattening the abdomen and making the body appear lean is another likely factor. It is certainly significantly better known and more popular than any of the other methods of movement re-education discussed here.¹⁹

Six interviewees had significant experience with Pilates, and of these three were qualified as teachers, although only one used it as her primary method. Three interviewees came specifically to discuss Pilates, while others were more interested in other techniques. All three Pilates students were also dancers, and had generally used it as part of their dance training. Those who were still using Pilates said that its goals included increased body awareness, using minimal effort to perform exercises, building flexibility and strength together, bringing attention to the muscles, and an internalised sense of one's own body. One practitioner who used both Pilates and Feldenkrais said that the Pilates helped her tell if one muscle group was particularly dominant in a client. Another practitioner, who took up Pilates to be able to give his

¹⁹ The popularity of any method of movement re-education is extremely difficult to measure, but for example, the search engine Google produces over two million hits worldwide for Pilates, as opposed to roughly half that for Alexander Technique, slightly over 200 000 for Feldenkrais, 100 000 for Rolfing, and just over 12 000 for Body-Mind Centering. The overrepresentation of Pilates may be partly due to the fact that it consists of specific exercises which can be done at home with the help of books or videos and DVDs. Many of Feldenkrais' original Awareness Through Movement lessons were also recorded and could be distributed in this way, but his work has not reached the wide audience of Pilates.

Rolfing clients activities to take away and work on, felt that while Pilates looked for alignment, it was focussed less on process than on product.

Pilates practitioners often spoke about being aware of *parts* or particular muscles of the body, and 'body awareness' seemed to refer to the awareness of segments of the body rather than an overall sense of alignment or 'good use'. This awareness was internal rather than conforming to an external ideal. The practitioners interviewed were certainly not working explicitly toward flat stomachs or lean physiques as a primary goal, although they acknowledged that this might be the case for some non-dancers who attended their classes. The Rolfer who had trained in Pilates, for instance, suggested that too much attention was paid to finding one correct way of doing the work: 'the people that I came into contact with in Pilates focussed on getting the Pilates right. Getting the abdominal engagement, getting the pelvic floor engagement, getting the feeling of the scapulae going down the back. And to me that gets very boring after a while' (James).

There is more focus on the musculature in Pilates, and this and its ability to be taught in group classes make it more similar to traditional forms of exercise than other movement re-education techniques. Two practitioners specifically acknowledged that for some people, Pilates might be simply another form of exercise. A dancer who had used the Pilates machines extensively while injured felt that her dance background made her more aware of what Pilates was about, whereas Katja noted:

I was watching some of the people who just come to the studio from outside, and they're not dancing. And there is a difference there, it's a different body experience...when you see someone who's not so used to doing their body they might just do the exercises that the Pilates instructor gave them, but they might forget about the posture.

One Pilates instructor who used other practices extensively in her teaching felt that the 'classical repertoire', the set of thirty-four original exercises devised by Pilates, was more challenging to teach because if it was presented incorrectly, the mind-body connection might be lost:

Laila: I guess for me in terms of teaching it's also a matter of speaking, and the language, because when you are teaching classical repertoire, and it's quite... you need to know where to cue the movement and the breathing and you need to know how the movement goes and flows, and then you are able to keep it interesting. Otherwise for me it becomes exercising.

Descriptions of what was involved in doing Pilates varied. One movement educator who had studied Pilates extensively in the 1970s said that at that point, it involved flattening the spine and sucking in the abdomen, lengthening the back of the neck, and strengthening the inner thighs by squeezing the legs together. Very little breathing work was incorporated (Carol). She also noted the influence of other techniques, such as Feldenkrais and Bartineff fundamentals (which in turn is partially influenced by the work of Rudolf Laban), on contemporary Pilates, perhaps bringing about some of the attention to breathwork which now exists in the discipline, as I discussed in Chapter Six. This educator felt that amongst many students she taught, there was a split between upper and lower body to which their Pilates training contributed. The two halves of the body did not seem to work synchronously.

Laila, who had been teaching Pilates for a year at the time I interviewed her, described her classes as follows:

I sort of find I don't have any sort of form. Sometimes we might start from the floor, sometimes we might start from standing. My Pilates isn't actually pure Pilates. In this term we did quite a lot of developmental movement, the Body-Mind Centering things. We were crawling on the floor doing these body connections like navel radiation and homolateral, contralateral connections. Because I think it's quite nice to introduce principles from different techniques and then melt those together. In my classes I think in first term we have done many things, we have done Astanga yoga... And then well, the basic traditional matwork and then partner exercises, different things with the partner like handstands with a partner, relaxation with a partner, stretching with a partner.

This description underplays the traditional Pilates content of her classes, emphasising Carol's point that the discipline draws from many other fields as well. Laila taught both in a health club and in a dance studio, and said that how she presented the work

differed between those environments. Laila was a dancer herself and tried to involve movement in her classes wherever possible, feeling that too much attention was sometimes given to stabilizing activities in Pilates classes. She claimed that the Pilates method was constantly changing, with new principles such as awareness, relaxation, and stamina being added to the original principles, which were 'breathing, concentration, alignment, precision, centring, and the floor and the freedom of the movement'.

Both Katja and Emily, who had taken Pilates as part of their dance training, noted how much touch influenced their learning. Katja felt that the Pilates gave her more feedback than dance training, particularly because dance teachers were cautious about physically correcting her, whereas in Pilates this was not the case: 'I'm helped out, I'm concretely touched, I'm told what to do and where to think and where my hips should be and I'm corrected much more than in dance'. This assisted her in aligning her body. Emily felt that the fact that Pilates takes place on the floor or on machines, disrupting normal upright posture, made it easier to focus on specific muscle groups and train them more 'finely'. Although she had been confused by Pilates when she started learning it, after six weeks she found it became easier because she was able to tell when she had it correct. When I pressed her as to how she knew when the work was correct, Emily elaborated:

I think part of it would be through correction and through the instructions, from being physically held or shown. I mean partly you've been watching someone, and I was already quite used to being able to copy someone physically...I find when I first started Pilates, if my teacher came and actually touched my hamstring, say, it was much easier to connect with it, if someone was actually physically touching it. If they say contract the part that I'm touching, you can do that much more easily than if they just say abstractly contract your hamstring. You don't know if it's right or not. And then I think it's the muscle memory, it's the experience of remembering when it was right and being able to repeat it. If you repeat the exercise five times that day and then the next day, I think you gradually, it comes to a point where you can feel that it's right, because now, I've done it so many times before and I can feel when it's wrong because it doesn't feel the same.

Pilates thus becomes part of the bodily *hexis* through repeated practice. The somatic mode of attention involved in Pilates involves focussing on particular muscle groups or parts of the body, aligning them in very specific ways with a definite sense of 'right' and 'wrong' positioning. While the method may lead to emotional experiences (Laila, for instance, discussed how her training brought about the release of both tension and tears, as well as dramatically changing her body), these are not the focus of the work. The mind-body relationship is cultivated through attendance to breath, musculature, and alignment, but not for example to a specific 'head-neck-back relationship' as in Alexander or to organs or other 'systems' of the body as in Body-Mind Centering. Pilates has also changed over time, becoming increasingly concerned with release and awareness of how one's body is feeling rather than pushing one to get through the movement at all costs. The emphasis on musculature means it develops strength, although it does so not through short concentric muscle contractions but through lifting, lengthening, and stretching, meaning it also develops flexibility. Practitioners of other disciplines of movement re-education however tended to be sceptical, seeing it not as education or re-education but as tending toward repetition without awareness of the whole body, a tendency which concerned some practitioners as well.

Feldenkrais

Three participants used Feldenkrais as their primary method of movement re-education. Two of these were practitioners, and one was a student who had done Awareness Through Movement work sporadically for three years, about twelve years prior to the interview. She became involved with it because a friend was undergoing training as a Feldenkrais practitioner and because she had suffered severe pain in her back, which had been significantly helped by the work. In addition to group classes, she also worked through tapes of Feldenkrais lessons, narrated by Feldenkrais himself, on her own, although even this was something she had not done for four or five years.

These three participants listed the aims of Feldenkrais work as exploring one's own relationship to one's body and the environment, becoming aware of one's body and finding 'new, more efficient ways of moving' (Carrie), keeping body and mind

healthy and muscles aligned by learning to observe minute movements in oneself (Dorothy), moving with greater ease and comfort and extending the range and possibilities for movement (Beth). Carrie and Beth, the two Feldenkrais practitioners, also explicitly described the work as emotional and life-changing, perhaps because of their more intensive involvement with it. As Beth expressed it, 'I think when you really engage with this work deeply, it asks you to look at all parts of yourself. And not just how I move myself but how do I organise myself emotionally and in all these different ways'. For Dorothy, the work was very tiring, which she suggested was one reason she no longer did it: 'I just found it hard sometimes to bring that much attention to bear on that sort of detail. Sometimes that's a really hard thing to do....And I suppose the whole idea is that if you do it enough your body starts to do it all without you consciously having to tell it to, or train it to. I'm not sure I ever got to that stage'.

As described in Chapter Five, Feldenkrais consists of group lessons called 'Awareness Through Movement' and individual lessons, referred to as 'Functional Integration'. Carrie explained that her group sessions involved mainly floor work, with rolling, and exploring ways of getting up from the floor. She said that no physical cues were given as to how movement should be accomplished, so that pupils could 'find their own pattern of movement which is intrinsic for their own nervous system, their own sense of movement'.

Dorothy explained that the lessons she remembered most clearly were those that involved lying on the floor, because this was most relaxing for her back, although some lessons incorporated standing and walking, attending to the feet and thinking about where and in what way they made contact with the floor.

The kinds of things I remember are lying on my back with my knees up, and making a sort of movement with one knee, letting that knee fall to the side really really slowly and letting the knee kind of go at its own pace and really notice whether you were forcing it down or whether it was just, you were just allowing it to move on its own. And then you'd be asked to make a slight movement of your hip and then observe how that movement was moving down to your legs. So you'd move your other knee and let the other knee fall. So very slow, sometimes small movements. And there's a lot of, I

remember being asked to sort of observe how my body was feeling before I started, and you tend to do things on one side and then on another. So you'd be asked to do something on one side and then you'd be asked how that side felt now, in relation to how it had felt before you did the movement, and how it felt in comparison to the other side.

The floor also figured prominently in Beth's account of a lesson she had recently given. She liked to begin with a 'test movement' which pupils could do at the beginning and end of the lesson to give them a concrete point of comparison. This might for example involve sitting on a chair, noting how one was sitting and how that felt, and then looking down between the legs and then out onto the horizon.

Variations of this might then be explored, with the emphasis on how it felt to do each variation— for example, rolling the pelvis while looking down, or trying to move only the head and eyes while doing it. After this exploration, students were moved to the floor, where they were encouraged to note their contact with it:

what does the space under their back feel like, you know, so this whole process of checking in with yourself. The lessons usually begin lying on the floor, and that's this point to really feel yourself, are both my shoulders on the floor, a scan. They then do lots of, I invite people to do lots of different movements. Okay, can you bend your knees, interlace your fingers behind your head, and then lift your head a few times. What does it feel like. And there are a number of variations that we then go through. We do that for thirty-five to forty minutes. We then come back to sitting, to where we were, and go back to that [test] movement. And people felt different, they feel certain differences.

While beginning Feldenkrais practitioners can only teach Awareness Through Movement, once they have completed the training programme they may progress to doing individual sessions called Functional Integration. Somewhat like table work in Alexander Technique, Functional Integration takes place on specially-built tables, with minor adjustments made to the pupil's body. Carrie described these sessions as being in one sense very passive for the person being worked upon, although she felt that emotionally and intellectually much might still be happening for them. In contrast to Awareness Through Movement sessions, little is said, and communication

is primarily non-verbal, taking place through the hands. As in Alexander Technique, the hands of the practitioner must be skilled in order to transmit the work.

Carrie: So you may hold their head, hold their shoulder. You may be trying to give them a sense of what relationship there is between those two things by sort of taking their weight, say they're very very stiff up here, you might kind of hold their scapula, hold their neck a bit, and almost with your hands you're saying can you feel what you're doing here, can you feel how you don't need to work this, but in a very very subtle, non-verbal way... Basically you're trying to sense their nervous system and how their mind and their emotion and everything works together. And you can feel that when you're touching them and moving them and stuff, you get a sense of that.

In contrast to table work in Alexander Technique, the focus is not necessarily on the head-neck-back relationship, and more attention may be paid to the lower half of the body. The interest in the nervous system and stated attention to the emotional aspects also differentiate it. I attended one Functional Integration session with Beth in order to better understand the work. While adjustments in Alexander Technique are rarely large ones, Functional Integration seemed to make even more minute adjustments. Without being asked to think consciously about particular parts of my body, my awareness drifted somewhat, but at the end of the lesson I walked out feeling my centre of gravity had shifted to a point significantly lower in my body. I found myself quite literally walking differently, with more bend in my knees. My upper back did not feel as elongated as it generally did after an Alexander lesson, but my lower body felt much changed.

Alexander Technique does little with the floor, using mainly tables and chairs as props for the work, which tends to emphasise the straightness cultivated through the work. More attention is paid to flexion and horizontality in Feldenkrais work. The work also differs from Pilates, which, although it uses the floor, does so with a series of exercises in which there is a specific right and wrong way to perform them. In Feldenkrais, the emphasis is on attaining greater body awareness through exploration.

Rolfing

Rolfing is often presented as the most radical of these techniques, in the sense that there are a set number of sessions to be completed (although clients sometimes return for 'tune-up' sessions after the initial ten), and significant, demonstrable change is promised following them. While Rolfing was initially mostly 'table work', more recently Rolfing movement training, which requires extra study, has developed to add another dimension to the work. This movement re-education component is sometimes compared to Awareness Through Movement lessons, and indeed Meyers (2001) includes one of Feldenkrais' lessons in his Rolfing book, *Anatomy Trains*.

Like all techniques, Rolfing is more effective for some than others; while Alexander teacher Michael had one session and found it 'like a deeper version of massage' which 'freed stuff up a lot temporarily', Carol, a movement educator with extensive experience in a variety of techniques, said that Rolfing had given her better results than anything else. Having finished ten sessions plus three extra 'tune-up' sessions, she remarked:

I'm hoping to go back every six weeks, because I became, well, addicted to it is a bit strong, but I'm desperate to feel it in my feet, on a regular basis. Desperate, you know, like where you can almost taste it, you just want to have that feeling again, just the way everything feels all the way up. And it's the only place I can get it. Nothing ever makes my feet feel like that. I've worked them myself in the bathtub, you know, with warm water and really spending time on them, and it doesn't even maintain in a way what he's done, what it feels like from him.

One Rolfer, James, was the only practitioner to mention alignment as a goal of his work. However, he also qualified that the ten series of Rolfing sessions had been noted to lead to emotional changes, and commented, 'I suppose this is what I'm more interested in than just alignment, because in taking someone through Rolfing you see them change in alignment, but you know you're giving them something which is a lot bigger than just that'. Oliver described his work as 'broadening potentiality', which had to do with both movement and perception, as well as something he linked with Feldenkrais and Body-Mind Centering: 'that we're trying to get a person's nervous system to move to an ever more resilient place'. This involved taking clients out of

the physiological and emotional patterns most comfortable to them, and getting them to try out unfamiliar ones.

Neither Rolfer clearly described the process of Rolfing itself, a commonality with Ida Rolf, whose books also avoided any description of the physical work of Rolfing. They did however describe some of the kinds of things they might do in a lesson. Oliver, for example, explained his work as involving both listening and talking, particularly in early sessions:

I'm sort of dancing around and seeing okay, do we need to go to the table now because this person, or do we need to look at how they stand and bend, or have them look in the mirror, or do we need to go right away and talk about their posture? Where is their shoulder girdle? There's so many different ways of approaching... because of the nature of the Rolfing touch and the nature of the systemic support you're giving a person, very often, eighty plus percent of the time you begin to experience discharge in the sessions, you know, a little bit of trauma discharge, that's a whole topic which has to do with the resiliency of the nervous system... So often the middle sessions, four and five, sometimes session seven, a big part of them have to do with supporting and helping a person discharge trauma in a way that isn't actually reinforcing the trauma but helping them to come to a quieter place in their nervous system.

One of the differences between Rolfing and other types of movement re-education, particularly Alexander Technique and Pilates, is the emotional component. While in the latter techniques, it is acknowledged that emotions may arise, they tend to be left to one side and are not the central focus of the work. This is part of the shift in posture toward the psychologisation of the body, mentioned earlier. The nervous system, too, takes a much more central role. Yet how Rolfing releases emotions is somewhat vague. James described two theories as to how Rolfing works. In work on the myofascia of the muscles, some Rolfers suggest that the myofascial tissue changes from a hard gelatinous state to a more liquid state with the application of friction, heat, or pressure. He explained that there were a number of key points in the body, such as behind the head of the fibula or the greater trochanter, where Rolfers could reach to affect the many muscles connected to them. 'If you go in there and if there's stickage in the tissue, if it's a bit gluey, you have a window where you can go in and

unglue it by applying friction, and then the gunk will kind of become less resistant and more integrated into the muscles that connect to it'. A second theory, which he saw as related, involved the nervous system:

So you do all these manipulations in a Rolfing session, someone gets up and walks out of the session and the nervous system is feeling the body in a different way, proprioceptively. So you can feel, oh yeah, I've got a bit of freedom and my foot's better on the ground now, or my shoulder feels further back, further forward, and the nervous system is saying to itself, oh, this actually feels more efficient. So I think I'll take this now. I think I'll take this one, and I won't go back to the bad habit.

However, James stated that he felt that without working on the tissue directly in the way that Rolfing does, the nervous system would be less likely to adapt. He further emphasised that the adaptation process did not need to be conscious. Although he sometimes advised clients to attend to particular parts of the body or particular aspects of their alignment, he felt that 'even if the client was not open to that, the system would work on an unconscious or subconscious level, or subliminal level. It feels things without having to think about it'.

This nervous system which 'feels things without having to think about it' is precisely where body wisdom makes itself evident: the body (via the nervous system) 'knows', and 'says to itself' that certain alignments feel more efficient. It adapts to these because it has been re-educated, and knows that they are better. It is perceived as seeking good alignment and efficiency. The fact that this apparently happens without conscious awareness indicates a kind of second subjectivity emerging, in which the nervous system takes on selfhood. 'Body awareness' in the context of Rolfing does not necessarily mean being aware of one's body; rather, it means that one's body is itself becoming aware. There is not even necessarily a somatic mode of attention associated with being Rolfed, although there certainly is one involved in being a Rolfer. However, the client of Rolfing can in fact be relatively closed to any suggestion of change or greater awareness—the nervous system apparently knows better.

Body-Mind Centering

The nervous system in both Rolfing and Feldenkrais plays a key role in the development of body wisdom and awareness. In Body-Mind Centering, however, the nervous system is just one in a number of systems whose development is critical to the awareness and wisdom of the body. Awareness resides in a number of systems, each of which has a 'mind' of its own. As one practitioner explained, 'the work talks about every part of the tissue having a mind quality in the first place, so that we are not actually creatures that are governed by our nervous system or by our brain. The brain is only referred to as an organ as well, and no one system has superiority over all the other systems' (Vivien).

Body-Mind Centering is not extensively practised in the UK, and again I was only able to find two practitioners to interview. Where it is known at all, it is within the dance community, and both practitioners were also dancers. One other interviewee, Carol, had experience with the technique and in fact taught another method called Bartineff Fundamentals, upon which some of BMC's developmental movement principles are based. The reasons for its lack of prominence here are likely to do with geography—it originated in America—and its being a relatively new discipline compared to the others, although one practitioner also suggested that people tended to suspect the work of being self-indulgent, a wariness she attributed to the British national character of being 'formal and practical' and less interested in exploring feelings.

Like Feldenkrais, Body-Mind Centering aims for awareness through exploration, but it posits that there are systems of the body with associated movement qualities, and that developmental movement patterns exist. Vivien described the work as aiming to be a 'tool of empowerment', which would give clients 'a way of discovering what they're good at, what they're strong at, what they're maybe neglecting, and that there's a chance to change. There's an option always to change, that anyone can be anything because the material is all there'. For Margrit, the work might aim at reorganising the body, assisting with overcoming injury or 'blocked energies', including stored trauma. She commented, 'psychotherapy goes from the brain to the body. But like BMC if there is stored problems it goes from the body onto the mind,

onto the brain. Like there's so much information stored in the tissue, that working with movement, working with touch, that you can loosen up a lot of stored tension'.

Both practitioners emphasised that their sessions were tailored to individuals and that there was no set protocol about what might happen in them. Both worked with groups and with individuals, and there was no significant distinction between the types of work they might do in each context. Vivien said she usually began with a discussion about the work and what expectations and issues the client had. Generally the work involved touch, although this was not always the case:

Most of the time you probably work with some hands-on, and that's important to make it clear that that can be at all times interrupted by the client if they're not comfortable with that or if that's unpleasant or they want to stop or there's feedback. And obviously movement can be part of that as well, depending on where you are and what it is you're doing.

Margrit also said she used touch quite a lot, often in order to lead into movement. She often used anatomy books to show clients what was going on in their bodies and to give them a sense of 'experiential anatomy'. Visualisation of anatomy and body systems was a key component, and she felt it was useful for conscious awareness to be brought to this. This was one way of involving the mind in the work. Conscious awareness was not required at all times, however, although it might sometimes be helpful. Often, the work involved embodying the 'mind' of a particular system, such as the skeletal, nervous, ligamentous, or fluid systems, using visualisation to imagine what qualities these systems had. This was intuitive and when I asked what kinds of minds various systems might have, she was unable to answer: 'the mind of the skeletal system, is like, just belongs to the skeletal system. It's like the movement quality if you just move from the skeleton is kind of different and it has a certain mind. But I wouldn't know how to describe the mind. That's a really good question'. Describing the movement, however, was easier:

Margrit: [It] can be very kind of loose movement, like all the joints are kind of, the bones are moving, almost random. Like everything is loose and like seeing the bones as being quite a dense part of the body and all the spaces in between, you can kind of

move them. In relation to a fluid movement which is more into a reach or going into space. Almost like with the skeleton there's no movement from A to B, and with the fluid there's almost a reach into space or you think about the organs, so it's like a lot of weight downwards. So there's a lot of density and the movement is much rounder, much more heavy and expanding.

Clients are then expected to develop an intuitive or imaginative sense of what these systems might look like. This emphasises the exploratory nature of the work. However, knowledge of what a bodily system does and what its mind looks or feels like is not innate, but is suggested by the anatomy books and the practitioners themselves. Cohen's book *Sensing, Feeling and Action* suggests some of these, indicating for instance that the mind of the skeletal system provides structural organisation (1993: 3). Group sessions of BMC work often involve the group being asked to move either through developmental stages or systems of the body. The metaphorical qualities of the body are made literal in this process, by being manifested in movement. For Carol, who sometimes used BMC principles in her work with groups of dance students, it was attractive because

it brings me back to an animal feeling in my body, actually. And it makes that completely possible, and as soon as that's possible, I feel like my emotional life is available. Because if you get on your hands and knees, your head and your hands and mouth become what's leading you, rather than your head. ... you start to feel like you can be messy. And my students here, they'll do it, even though they're eighteen and incredibly self-conscious, and they'll stick their tongues out and be moving across the floor like lizards. I can say at least from my classes, they almost never feel oppressed or like I'm trying to shape or mould them into something that I have in my mind.

There's the freedom to explore and I think that's better.

As in Rolfing, body awareness in Body-Mind Centering is the body's awareness of itself, although it may also at times be the conscious self's awareness of the body. Margrit suggested that clients could forget about the work when they left, 'because it's a natural thing, it's something that is in their body, that happens in their body, or a connection that happens because they just realise, oh yeah, that's exactly what happened in the lesson or in the session. And that they shouldn't kind of, they're more

naturally aware of it than oh, I really have to think it'. Nature again is asserted, and the 'naturally wise body' takes over.

Body/Mind and Body/Self Relations

The above descriptions of practices make it clear that even practitioners of these techniques are not always willing or able to explain what they do in physical terms. Often, the physical is taken for granted; it is something one 'just knows'—or, as Brenda Farnell (1999) has put it in relation to dance practice, 'it goes without saying—but not always'. As Csordas (2002) has pointed out, there is a condition of indeterminacy associated with all somatic modes of attention and experience, and this too affects the ability to articulate them. However, the descriptions above do point to certain patterns and points of difference in these techniques which together indicate the emergence of the concept of body wisdom within them.

In Chapter Six, I suggested that in Alexander Technique, inhibition came to take on the function of awareness. I pointed to the fact that Alexander Technique seeks to develop conscious awareness and control over the body and its alignment, where for other techniques the nervous system may take over this role. This is most clearly apparent in Rolfing, where much is done to the client without her or him having to do very much or bring much conscious awareness to it. Chapter Six also argued that Alexander Technique might develop an embodied consciousness, and that in doing so it could perhaps overcome dualism more successfully than later methods of movement re-education which posited the emergence of body wisdom. It is worth re-examining this claim here.

While all these techniques strive to develop a kind of body awareness within their clients, what body awareness means in each context is very different. In Alexander Technique, body awareness is conscious, and furthermore, becomes with practice an embodied consciousness. However, the predominance of *consciousness* links it with the mind; there is no separate consciousness for the body. In Pilates, body awareness refers to becoming aware of parts of the body or particular muscles and muscle groups; there is no intelligence in the body *per se*, only more or less intelligent use of it. Conscious awareness is brought to bear not only on the parts of the body being

used, but is also engaged through the coordination of breath with movement. In both these methods, one's achievements are made visible—through comparisons in the mirror in Alexander Technique, and through the development of a particular physique in Pilates. Neither, however, has a sense that the body itself can know. This is not to say that a theory of body wisdom never asserts itself in these techniques, only that it is marginal and that when it emerges, it is likely to have come from elsewhere.²⁰

By contrast, in Feldenkrais, Rolfing, and Body-Mind Centering, the wise body is asserted. The body is psychologised, and emotional release becomes increasingly central rather than peripheral to the work. Body awareness becomes not awareness of what is happening in the body, but the body's awareness of itself. However, unlike in Alexander Technique, conscious control is not required. In Feldenkrais and Rolfing, the nervous system takes over from consciousness in directing awareness. This is not to say that the nervous system does not 'learn' in Alexander Technique, but its learning is never seen to be sufficient; it is always end-gaining. In Rolfing, however, the nervous system is perceived to know which patterns are most efficient, and actively chooses these when presented with them. In Feldenkrais, the nervous system is also presented with opportunities—not verbally, in an appeal to consciousness and language, but kinaesthetically, through movement and touch. This is also the case in Body-Mind Centering, but in this technique, the entire body is divided into systems, each of which has a mind, or embodies certain qualities of one body/mind. It is interesting to note that these qualities tend to be emotional rather than intellectual ones, intellection being subordinate to body and 'sensing, feeling, and action' in BMC work.

What is the consequence of each of these understandings of the body/mind relationship for subjectivity and selfhood? Pilates tends to treat the body as something to be disciplined or educated, at least in its classical forms. More recently, there has been a shift toward 'listening to the body' and taking its limitations into

²⁰ For example, in one lesson my Alexander teacher suggested that during menstruation, the body might need chocolate (and the magnesium it contains) so that a craving for chocolate might not always be unhealthy, but might rather have to do with the body recognising this need and seeking to fulfil it. While an example of body wisdom, it was a rather off-hand remark and not representative of Alexander Technique as a whole. Pilates teacher Laila, who incorporated many techniques into her classes, also seemed to hold a concept of body wisdom, even though it was not apparent in the classical repertoire of Pilates.

account. This implies a more equal partnership between consciousness and the body, rather than a relation of domination. However, it still appears to split mind from body; working in partnership does not imply merging the two into one, and selfhood still seems to be located in the conscious mind. Alexander Technique posits an embodied consciousness, developed through inhibition and conscious control, particularly of the head-neck-back relationship. A good head-neck-back relationship is referred to as 'good use of the self' and selfhood is thus located in the body. However, precognitive and habitual knowledge is not valued; as Barlow (1973) says, the wisdom of the body is an end-gaining wisdom and always requires conscious direction. Although there is a tension in consciousness and somatic control, Alexander Technique does appear to overcome mind-body dualism to some extent.

The wise body attempts to overcome dualism by putting 'mind' and selfhood into the body, developing the nervous and other systems. It re-values precognitive awareness, suggesting that the body can 'know' even without consciousness. However, it takes a step beyond habitual and precognitive awareness of the kind Merleau-Ponty proposed and sees emotion as located literally in the body; locked into the myofascia of the muscles, as in Rolfing, or embodied in the skeleton, fat and fluid 'systems' as in Body-Mind Centering. Emotional balance is then to be achieved through somatic work. It is interesting to note that none of the systems of the body developed in Body-Mind Centering include cognitive or mental processes, although certain emotional and physiological functions may be drawn to conscious attention. It is emotion, not consciousness, that becomes 'the truth about ourselves', a somatic truth, inseparable from the body which manifests it. However, the emotional body always seems to be implicitly opposed to the conscious and rational mind, the traditional locus of selfhood. With the body as 'true self', consciousness becomes a 'false self', deceptive so long as detached from the wise and knowing body. What body wisdom does, then, is effectively to invert rather than erase dualism. The self is in the body; everything else, it might be said, is quite literally false consciousness.

Thus, the somatic modes of attention associated with each technique of movement re-education are quite different, not only in terms of somatic practices but also in terms of the aspects of the self which do the attending. There is of course a material base to the body, and one does not physiologically have a different kind of nervous system

simply because one takes up Alexander Technique as opposed to Rolfing, for example. However, the two techniques have radically different interpretations of what the nervous system does, with significant consequences for one's interpretation of one's self and the conditions of one's selfhood, particularly in relation to where it resides. This relationship is further complicated in Body-Mind Centering, where it is not even simply the nervous system which 'knows', but a variety of other systems as well. With the psychologisation of the body and posture from the mid-twentieth century onward, the body began to be seen as the source of emotional truth; in later techniques of movement re-education, this has been elevated to the point that the body begins to take on a selfhood of its own.

Somatic Individuality

Novas and Rose (2000) suggest that the medical work in genetics has become the new way of regulating individuals, with genetic screening becoming increasingly prevalent and the research of the Human Genome Project progressing. New genetics, they argue, is tied to contemporary practices of identity in which individuals are obliged to maximise their life chances and formulate strategies for living (2000: 487). Knowing that one suffers from an inheritable condition thus shapes the life choices made by individuals about marriage and having children, for instance. However, the redefinition of individuals in genetic terms does not simply affect those with hereditary medical conditions or the potential for them; rather, the authors claim that this is but one dimension of a wider shift toward 'somatic individuality', 'in which new and direct relations are established between body and self' (2000: 487). These new relationships also reorganise experience in new ways, 'inscribing an indelible genetic truth into the heart of corporeal existence' (2000: 488).

The shift toward finding alignments that fit the self rather than approximating the plumb line is very much a part of Novas and Rose's notion of 'somatic individuality'. It is not too much of a re-appropriation of their terminology to state that movement re-education is a form of somatic individuality; they argue, for instance, that

recent developments in the life sciences, biomedicine and biotechnology are associated with a general 'somaticization' of personhood in an array of practices and styles of thought, from techniques of bodily modification to the rise of corporealism in social

and feminist theory and philosophy. This is what we mean when we speak of ‘somatic individuality’. (Novas and Rose, 2000: 491)

Movement re-education techniques are certainly forms of ‘bodily modification’ and are addressed to the self through the body. As Rose suggests, ‘selfhood has become intrinsically somatic—ethical practices increasingly take the body as a key site for work on the self’ (2001: 18). Movement re-education is clearly an example of this, as the discussion in Chapter Five has shown. It is situated within a broader network of practices in which the body has become increasingly central. Rose points out that within the new ethics of the self, ‘even the natural has to be produced by a labour on the self—natural food, natural childbirth and the like. Even choosing not to intervene in living processes becomes a kind of intervention’ (2001: 19). As I concluded in the last chapter, this is certainly the case for movement re-education, in which training is undertaken often with the purpose of making the body more natural.

Rose’s work has tended to overemphasise the official discourses which shape the construction of truth. Equally interesting are the non-medical interventions which he mentions but does not discuss, part of a broader ‘enlarged will to health’ which includes complementary therapies, self-help, dietary supplements and health food, private health care and health insurance (2001: 18). These too take a discursive role in shaping and moulding ‘truth’, sometimes in conjunction with the biomedical and life sciences, and sometimes in opposition to it, as an examination of movement re-education’s relationship to biomedicine will show. I want to take up the neglected portion of somatic individuality by proposing that movement re-education is also part of this re-envisioning which puts the corporeal at the heart of contemporary life. This can be seen, for example, in its relationship both to eugenics and to biomedicine.

Chapter Five showed that there was a close link between ideas about the natural body and theories that humanity was degenerating and was in need of eugenical measures to correct this. Further, the idea that Western civilisation has caused natural ways of living to be corrupted is still prevalent amongst some of those involved in movement re-education, as Chapter Seven showed. The question then arises as to whether contemporary movement re-educators implicitly share the eugenic goals their founders set out.

Eugenical beliefs in movement re-education were based on the idea that humanity was physically degenerating, falling out of step with its intellectual development. The belief that contemporary society is moving too fast and that humanity is worse off than it once was is one still held by many practitioners and pupils of movement re-education. Roughly half of the participants in my study had a sense that humans were physically better off as hunter-gatherers and that contemporary society had taken them away from that. As one pupil of Alexander Technique described it, intellect had developed but physicality had not. In response to the illustration of the evolution and degeneration of man, he argued that 'mentally, obviously, we're far more advanced there [latter part of the illustration] than there, but you would say around here [upright man in the middle of the illustration], this is where physically you used your body to the maximum...You had to be very aware of how you were, because it would be very base emotions, you were hungry, you were tired, that's about it'. A certain physical degeneration was thereby implied by his description. For another participant, a singing teacher who had studied Alexander Technique, the relationship was even more clear:

Eva: I think we definitely have gone back, I think we've lost out on a lot by this second half of the journey. I don't necessarily think that we've gone back to being monkeys, or conducting ourselves like monkeys.

Jen: So what do you think we've lost out on?

Eva: I think we've lost out on the connection to physicality. Because more and more all we do is in our brains, or in our vision, we live in a very visual time, everything is very flashy and quick and you'll see things in a TV production, you know, you... even being aware, I'm very aware that I read less and less, I write, like, it's very rare that I write for a long time with my hand. 'Cos I'll type. So I think we have lost a very organic um, sensation to our bodies.

Eva's impression that vision and typing are not physical raise the question of where they take place, if not in the body. Her response was echoed by other participants who responded to the picture of the man slumped in front of his computer with comments about the disembodied nature of most contemporary work. While it is true that most office-based employment does not use the body in any strenuous way and

that hands and eyes are the body parts most employed in it, descriptions of such work as disembodied make an artificial divide between 'body' —that is, what goes on below the head and excluding the hands— and mind, head, or brain. Such a division is peculiar, particularly in light of Merleau-Ponty's insight that touch-typing is a form of embodied knowledge (1962: 144) and that perception, including visual perception, is located in the body. This is not to say that office work employs the body in a healthy way—the increasing prevalence of overuse and repetitive strain injuries does indicate that there is something problematic about it. However, the assumption that it is 'disembodied' is suspect.

While many participants did not express views as strong as these, they did suggest that in contemporary society, something had gone awry, particularly in connection to physicality. Only three practitioners opposed the message of degeneration put forward in the illustration. Oliver, the Rolfer, felt that the illustration 'says that the world is bad. That tools are bad, and that's a pity. Because all our tools are wonderful, amazing. It's just how locked in we are'. For Annette, an Alexander teacher who had worked extensively with City workers, the cyberspace in which some employees worked was 'a very interesting development of human consciousness'. Nor did she see technology as necessarily leading people to lose their good use of themselves, despite having many pupils with repetitive strain injuries from office work. She remembered an incident where 'there was this guy standing outside Goodge Street station, I thought he'd gone mad at first. Because he had one of those little ear things, for mobiles, and he was just talking to himself. Quite loudly as well. I thought he was mad. What drew my attention to him was that he was standing beautifully'. While the mobile phone in this account has a strange function, making the man appear to be talking to himself, having a conversation in which one party is neither present nor signified (by the presence of the phone), it does not disrupt his good use.

Despite the fact that many participants did believe some kind of degeneration was occurring, none mentioned eugenics nor expressed any desire to regulate the population through eugenical measures. Instead, they felt that the solution was an individual one, and studying movement re-education should be a personal

commitment. Obtaining a 'natural body' or a 'wise body' is not inherently linked to eugenics, as the discussions of the previous chapter demonstrated.

Rose (2001) argues that with the rise of genetic theories of the self, we are not witnessing the re-emergence of eugenics, but rather a new form of risk management and ethical selfhood. Underlying eugenics was the desire to regulate populations, promoting their health and eliminating the weakest elements so that they could be competitive with other populations. Such a reading is consistent with Searle (1971) who writes that the 'quest for national efficiency' of which eugenics was a part was a result of concerns that the British population was not comparing favourably with the German population, for instance. Rose asserts that this mode of thinking has fallen into disrepute (2001: 5) and has been replaced by the attempt to manage risk and in particular risky individuals. Current genetic thinking focuses on the individual body and not the social body (2001: 7). There is a parallel here with Yosifon and Stearns' (1998) discussion about the fate of good posture, discussed in Chapter Two, as part of the broader health promotional campaigns which often included so-called 'positive' eugenics. Medical practitioners and orthopaedic specialists today tend to treat poor posture as a matter of individual concern rather than something which requires broader social attention. While they are not engaged in managing risk in relation to posture, there has certainly been a shift in this field toward managing individuals rather than orchestrating change in the social body. The ergonomic measures that have been introduced in some workplaces to prevent repetitive strain injuries may be seen as a kind of risk management in this regard.

For Rose, then, contemporary genetic practices are no longer eugenic, but are tied to the governance of risk and the emergence of somatic individuality. I would argue that movement re-education is similarly no longer eugenic, even when some of the discourses of degeneration have persisted. However, while they are clearly part of the emergence of somatic individuality, their link to risk management is more tenuous. As a form of health education, which was how many practitioners saw them, they were seen to prevent injury or poor use of the body/self, or more frequently to correct it where problems already existed. They form an ethics of the self, predominantly with the goal of developing body awareness or body wisdom which ultimately may be understood as managing the 'risk' of ill-health.

Movement re-education is not a form of *alternative* health because it does not seek to replace biomedicine. Nor is it simply 'complementary medicine'; while pupils were likely to link it to this field when asked if it was related, practitioners tended to distance themselves from it, seeing their work as complementary health education. One Alexander teacher explained that although there had been attempts to get the technique covered under the NHS, he felt that this was not desirable because it would mislead potential pupils:

Robert: I think there's a problem with the NHS because the technique is open-ended and relatively, in terms of education it wouldn't be expensive but in terms of treatment, it would be regarded as expensive...until there actually is the health service offering to patients the concept of health education, as part of the NHS, then it shouldn't be [covered] because otherwise it tends to get regarded as treatment.

Being regarded as 'treatment' was seen as problematic for many practitioners. James, for example, worried that Rolfing would be associated with healing, when he felt that its primary goal was to align the body. Although he believed Rolfing did heal people, this was a side effect of alignment rather than a goal in itself. For Hiroshi, a trained neurologist who no longer practised medicine, his association with it could be somewhat problematic:

It's a very political issue. I'm very comfortable giving Alexander lessons as an Alexander teacher in an Alexander centre. But if I do it as a treatment for the patients in hospitals, probably I'd find it a little bit difficult to give lessons because my attitude is going to change and it's like I have to give, you know. I mean the people's relationship is going to be quite different. Especially if I say I'm a neurologist and giving the Alexander lessons. That is going to be quite difficult, nothing to do with myself I think, but the attitude of patients or the attitude of people who are coming to the lessons could be quite different. But it's still okay. I'm not going to do something different at all, and they can still experience quite similar things, I think. For me, I'm interested in combining these disciplines but for me, I don't want to bother to persuade medics to use this technique, they're too much work, so I don't bother.

Most participants had mixed feelings about biomedicine. Those who had sought movement re-education because of health problems which had not been helped, such as violin players Saskia and Michael, or dancers Katja and Vivien, tended to be sceptical. Vivien, for example, said that she had developed horrendous nerve pain when given an epidural by a doctor to help with a back problem she was suffering. She found that with her Body-Mind Centering training, she was able to soothe the pain by focussing on the cerebral-spinal fluid, an aspect of the fluid system emphasised in BMC work. However, neither she nor any other practitioner claimed to be able to effect a cure. They believed the techniques might be able to help in some cases, but they saw their work as health education rather than as treatment. For William, who had been diagnosed with (and subsequently recovered from) cancer, the Alexander Technique principle of inhibition was useful in facing his diagnosis. Upon hearing it, he related that he was silent, unnerving the doctor terribly:

But that was just Alexander in person, in the sense that I wanted to listen to what he had to say. I had enough thoughts about cancer and what was going to happen, I didn't want to play those to him or start distorting what he said to fit into some concept of my mind, I wanted to hear what he had to say. And this is not my original thought that came to mind, that was what happened as a result of years of Alexander training. I mean not in the sense of 'doing an Alexander on him', this was just me meeting one crisis in my life in the way that I was ready to.

Even in cases of serious illness, then, movement re-education could be helpful, but not in a curative sense. Indeed, among the few pieces of medical research on movement re-education is a study of Feldenkrais with Multiple Sclerosis patients (Johnson et al, 1999), which concluded that its most significant effects were on stress and anxiety levels. Most participants wished movement re-education were taken more seriously by the medical profession, and many were frustrated by their own experiences of ailments and injuries which biomedicine had failed to treat. However, they did not propose movement re-education as a comprehensive solution but only as a complementary form of health education.

It is interesting, too, to note that both Rolfing and Feldenkrais employ much more scientific terminology than other methods, doubtless on the basis of the scientific

backgrounds of their founders. This appears to appeal to scientificity, giving the work a kind of medical legitimacy. This was relatively successful for Feldenkrais, whose book *Body and Mature Behavior* was apparently taken relatively seriously within the academic community. Despite this, neither of these techniques has achieved significant legitimation from biomedicine.

Participants did not tend to subscribe to the more extreme beliefs in alternative health, where a form of body wisdom is used to justify claims that cancer and other serious illnesses are the result of emotional problems and blockages of energy (see, for example, the highly influential work of Louise Hay [1988]). Only one participant, Kevin, a pupil of Alexander Technique who was also heavily involved in biodynamic massage, suggested that emotions were the entire cause of illness: 'And I think that cancer is a classic example of that, where you put so much pressure on your body, so much pressure on shutting your emotions down and shutting everything out, that your body eventually goes on strike and starts committing suicide on a cellular level because you've choked the life out of it'. He went on to say that he did not believe genetic research would make any difference in curing cancer, because only emotional work on the self could result in permanent changes.

Rose may be correct to say that genetics is becoming 'the truth about ourselves', inscribing itself at the heart of existence, but it is clearly not at the heart of every existence. Those who live without genetic knowledge of themselves may still find somatic aspects of existence becoming increasingly central. There are also those who reject genetic knowledge entirely and hold fast to a different form of 'truth', such as that of body wisdom, scientifically unproven but no less beguiling for that. In focusing only on scientific and medical knowledge as forms of truth, Rose overlooks sites where 'truth' is constructed without reference to these. Movement re-education has largely either not sought, or has been unable to find, medical and scientific backing. However, this has not stopped practitioners and pupils from believing it to demonstrate somatic truths, often ones they feel biomedicine does not know or cannot see.

Sharma (1992) is correct to separate Alexander Technique and similar movement re-education practices from complementary and alternative health more generally,

however. While there are certain similarities, such techniques are not comprehensive healing systems, nor do they claim to be. Coward (1989) is also somewhat mistaken in identifying practices such as Alexander Technique and Rolfing as part of a system of alternative health that challenges biomedical theories and practices. Most practitioners were quite open to biomedical approaches and desired that their work be more mainstream. They tended, however, to emphasise individual work on the self as the most desirable end.

Coward does suggest that such practices are part of a broader shift toward individual responsibility, with new ideas about body and health emerging, something which Rose's concept of somatic individuality covers well. Practices of somatic individuality can include techniques that construct a truth of the body that stands somewhat outside of scientific and biomedical models. However, the concept is useful in explaining the shift that has occurred in movement re-education, away from eugenic notions of societal governance and toward individual governance through ethical self-practices. These practices may only be marginally related to managing risk, unlike other forms of somatic individuality such as the application of genetic knowledge, but they do constitute a form of ethics and a governance of the individual.

Conclusion: The Somatic Society

Bryan Turner has suggested that contemporary society may be described as somatic because the body is increasingly at the centre of social developments and regulations. He defines the somatic society as 'a social system in which the body, as simultaneously constraint and resistance, is the principal field of political and cultural activity', suggesting that 'the body provides the stuff of our ideological reflections on the nature of our unpredictable time' (1992: 12).

In essence, the somatic society is a backdrop against which to set the work of both Csordas and Rose, dealing as they do with somatic practices and 'modes of attention', and 'somatic individuality'. Although Rose's discussion moves away from *society* to focus on the regulation of the individual *within* society, 'somatic individuality' still implicitly takes place within society and it is a broader social trend which he is chronicling. What the preceding discussions suggest is that very diverse approaches

to the body such as those of Csordas (who follows Merleau-Ponty) and Rose (who follows Foucault) may be united in topic in that both are working on aspects of somatic existence. Their analyses each flesh out a different aspect of the somatic society—one through embodied practice, the other through the analysis of discourse in its broadest sense.

Movement re-education is also a practice of a somatic society. The concept of body wisdom is part of the emergence of the body as the source of truth, something body wisdom and genetics share as practices of the somatic individual. Body wisdom itself is a historically recent phenomenon, emerging only in movement re-education since the mid-twentieth century with the psychologisation of the body and posture. It is apparent in the practices of Feldenkrais and Rolfing and receives its clearest articulation in Body-Mind Centering, but within Alexander Technique and classical Pilates repertoire, there is no sense of body wisdom as somatic truth. Rather, body wisdom is a concept linked to the development of the somatic society. This is not to say that the popularity of Alexander Technique and Pilates is unrelated to the emergence of a somatic society, only that these practices do not understand truth to be located in the body in the same manner.

Turner observes that the somatic society is 'crucially, perhaps critically, structured around regulating bodies' (1992: 13). As both the practices and the relationships to discourse detailed above indicate, movement re-education is also a way of regulating bodies. This regulation is not legal but ethical, taking the individual, not society, as its point of focus. Body awareness is its desired goal, either through an awareness of one's body, as in Pilates, or a wise body with its own awareness, as in Body-Mind Centering. Body awareness may lead to better health or simply increased flexibility and adaptability to new situations. In either case, it is a way in which people can be brought to regulate themselves, through acute attention to bodies and what they 'say'. It is clear that movement re-education reflects the somatic society in which it has evolved. With the appearance of the concept of body wisdom, new ways of regulating the body/self within a somatic society emerge.

Chapter 9 Conclusion

This thesis has sought to show how it has become possible to think of bodies as wise and knowing, through an account which situates movement re-education in a socio-historical context, and a critical assessment of the ways that the discourses of movement re-education techniques are embodied by those who practice them. The research has been conducted using a range of methods, including a Foucauldian discourse analysis of the texts of movement re-education's founders and ethnographic work, which has included participant observation in Alexander Technique and interviews with practitioners and pupils of Alexander Technique, Pilates, Feldenkrais, Rolfing, and Body-Mind Centering. The purpose of employing these methods has been to reflect on the relationship between embodiment and discourse by providing an analysis of movement re-education which attends to its claim to be embodied whilst critically examining the discourses it employs.

Movement re-education has received little attention as a serious topic for analysis, and what academic writing there has been on the subject has tended to be largely descriptive and treat it uncritically as a way of freeing the natural body (Fraleigh, 2000; Green, 1999). In addition to addressing this neglected field, this thesis extends the analyses of sociology of the body, which have tended to be overly theoretical, by applying social theory to empirical research. Also, by applying embodied discourse to studying movement re-education, it has sought to synthesise a new methodology which accounts for both embodiment and discourse.

As a result of these investigations, I have concluded that the wise body is not something one simply has or even is; it is something one becomes, through the process of re-educating the body. As demonstrated in Chapter Two, its historical roots can be found in fields such as modern dance, American Delsartism, the Victorian concern with health and the popularity of non-allopathic forms of medicine, campaigns for good posture, social Darwinism, and 'positive' eugenics. However, it was not until the middle of the twentieth century, as the concern with posture 'fell' (Yosifon and Stearns, 1998) or more accurately, gave way to a psychologisation of the body (Vigarello, 2001) that body wisdom began to be articulated as such.

Anatomy and physiology in these techniques are not only psychologised but also *mythologised*, as the body comes to tell things and ultimately, in Body-Mind Centering for example, to possess ‘minds’ of its own. This is not to say that there is a clear historical progression between forms of movement re-education such as Alexander Technique and Pilates and those that developed later; indeed, they still exist alongside more recent techniques and may in fact be more prevalent. They also share many historical and theoretical similarities, and Alexander Technique is not diametrically opposed to Body-Mind Centering, for example. However, the relationship between body, mind, and self is interpreted differently by each.

Chapters 3 and 4 demonstrated how theories of embodiment and discourse can be developed into a methodology for researching movement re-education, and argued that this is necessary because an analysis of embodied practice provides a very different image of movement re-education than does an analysis of its discourses. By contrasting a Foucauldian approach to movement re-education as a form of ethical self-formation with a cultural phenomenology of its embodied practices as somatic modes of attention, it has become apparent that discourse, which is tied to movement re-education’s theories, does not necessarily link to its embodiment and practice. This split between theory and practice becomes most clear where movement re-educators suggest that they are restoring a natural body through a particular way of training, a key contradiction in movement re-education which some contemporary practitioners are becoming aware of, as Chapter Seven indicated.

Chapters 5 and 6 applied Foucauldian discourse analysis and Merleau-Pontyan cultural phenomenology to the texts of movement re-education’s founders and data from participant observation in Alexander Technique respectively, in order to demonstrate that embodiment and discourse are very different and that researching one does not necessarily provide any sense of the other. Chapter Five showed how the founders conceived of their work in terms of its relationship to holism and the knowledge of oneself, the body/self as an ethical substance to be worked upon, nature, evolution, and the founders themselves as authorities on the ‘right’ way to use the self, and the shift from body awareness to body wisdom as part of the *telos* of movement re-education. Chapter Six examined Alexander Technique lessons as an embodied practice in relation to Merleau-Ponty’s conception of habit, Csordas’ theory

of somatic modes of attention, and Bourdieu's notion of the *habitus*. It demonstrated how Alexander Technique sees habit as something to be overcome through conscious control, and indicated the concepts and practices it uses in doing this. It also indicated that by changing the way individuals use their bodies/selves, Alexander Technique seeks to change their *habitus*, which has mental and emotional consequences and not only physical ones.

In Chapter Seven, I returned to the issue of the natural body raised in Chapter Five, which is a central issue in movement re-education as a discourse. This chapter showed that the discourses of naturalness and verticality have shifted since many of its founders were writing, and that the wise body is rarely a strictly upright one. Although many techniques initially emphasised verticality, the move away from the postural plumb line is characteristic of all contemporary movement re-education techniques, and practitioners do not describe their work as being either about posture or verticality. Instead, all techniques share the goal of bringing about body/self awareness, but they interpret this in different ways, emphasising either knowledge of one's body or the body's knowledge of itself. However, the discourses around naturalness have shifted less than those of verticality; while some movement re-educators interviewed made it clear that the natural body is a goal of their work, others invoked the 'babes and savages' models of the natural body held by the founders and saw their techniques as restoring such a body. While this chapter focussed on changing discourses in movement re-education, it also attended to embodiment by examining how the physicality of the body had changed, arguing that the shift away from the vertical as a desired goal has been accompanied by a turn towards the proprioception and kinaesthetic awareness of the body.

Chapter Eight brought embodied and discursive analyses into dialogue with one another in relation to the issue of the somatic in contemporary society. By examining the embodied practices of Pilates, Feldenkrais, Rolfing and Body-Mind Centering as 'somatic modes of attention' (Csordas, 2002) and contrasting this with Rose's (2000; 2001) notion of 'somatic individuality', wherein the body has become increasingly central to subjectivity, I showed that each of these analyses shows us a different but necessary aspect of movement re-education. Turner's (1992) suggestion that we are witnessing the emergence of a somatic society, in which bodies are key sites of

regulation, can be understood both in terms of how the body/self is interpreted discursively and in terms of the actual practices it undertakes.

As an ongoing practice in which attention to the body, particularly the body as the source of truth, is central, movement re-education fits well with the emergence of a somatic society. Chapter Eight showed that it is always tied to a particular way of regulating bodies, not in terms of the population but as work on the self. Discovering body wisdom or developing body awareness does not simply free people to enjoy their 'true selves' but always involves a constant cultivated attention to the body/self, as a way of shaping oneself in keeping with the truth of one's body/self and its 'authenticity' or 'naturalness'. No longer linked to eugenical ways of thinking, movement re-educators are still negotiating with theories of the natural as pre-civilised as part of the ethics of re-educating the body. Embodied analysis of movement re-education, however, shows that its practices are a way of training the body which has little relationship to the theories of the natural body put forward by many movement re-educators.

Embodied practice may thus offer discourse a critique of itself. This is not unique to movement re-education; in sociology, too, studying embodied practice can highlight the flaws and inconsistencies in discourse, and the ways in which it is negotiated. This may also point to some of the subtle shifts which occur in discourses through their embodiment. Discourse and embodiment may never entirely correspond. This is the reason that it is useful, even crucial, to study them in tension with one another.

My main methodological argument has been that we do not need to choose between discourse and embodiment, or between the work of Foucault and that of Merleau-Ponty, as competing paradigms through which to understand bodies in social life. Nor should we try to smooth out the differences between these approaches, or claim that there are no weaknesses in them. As I showed in Chapter Three, Foucault *does* bracket out subjectivity in order to understand the conditions which make a certain kind of subjectivity possible, and as a result, his model of discourse is one that tends to act on the body rather than through or with the body. As I also demonstrated, Merleau-Ponty, on the other hand, privileges embodied experience at the expense of its cultural situatedness. He acknowledges that embodiment is culturally shaped, but

does not provide the tools for analysing this. It is only through the tension of using these approaches together that the weaknesses of each can be overcome.

In addition to the methodology of embodied discourse, this thesis has offered other important insights for social scientific analysis. One of these is a critique of the social inscription model of the body which is often attributed to Foucault (1984). While Butler (1999) and Grosz (1994) have provided theoretical critiques of this model, through the comparison with movement re-education's theory of the pre-civilised body to be recovered, the weaknesses of such a model become fully apparent empirically, as I showed in Chapter Seven. Moreover, this study also serves to call into question the work of writers such as Bigwood (1991), who seek to 'renaturalise' the body, by asking what use the natural body has served discursively, by demonstrating some of its more problematic manifestations in movement re-education, as the discussion in Chapter Seven regarding contemporary movement re-educators' conceptions of the natural body demonstrated.

The body/mind relationship in movement re-education provides equally important insights for social science and social theory. There has been much discussion, particularly in writing on the body, about how to overcome Cartesian dualist tendencies in academic work. Through its various incarnations of 'holism', movement re-education techniques provide possible ways to conceptualise the body/mind relationship which social science might choose to adopt or avoid. In Alexander Technique, for instance, the body-mind relationship involves conscious control over the body/self and specifically the head-neck-back relationship. Body awareness is developed through work on the self in standing, sitting, and doing table work. In some ways this is a less problematic formulation of the body/mind relationship than that of body wisdom, because it does not posit the body as a separate, 'true' self. However, it may be taken to imply that bodies are subordinate to consciousness and always in need of conscious direction and control. Where conscious control becomes a bodily knowledge, with selfhood residing in the head-neck-back relationship, this implication may possibly be surmounted. In Body-Mind Centering, the body is divided into systems, each of which has a mind of its own. Exploring the minds of the systems may privilege body knowing over intellectual knowing; curiously, while the brain may be an organ and thus part of the organ

system, it is hardly recognised or mentioned. Theories of body wisdom that privilege bodily truth over intellectual knowing thus tend to invert traditional dualisms rather than overcoming them. However, it may be possible to develop a theory of the wise body which does not require recourse to the natural body or privilege body over mind. As Merleau-Ponty has pointed out, bodies *can* know with a precognitive awareness which is not 'natural' but may be unconscious. This is reflected by those movement re-education practitioners such as James or Beth who do not see restoring the natural body as a goal of their work, but still refer to the body as in some way knowledgeable, as I discussed in Chapter Eight.

Despite the possibilities this thesis offers, there are certain issues it has not been able to address. For instance, my initial conception of this research project involved studying body wisdom in all movement re-education techniques. However, through participant observation it became clear that although certain aspects of the wise body appeared in Alexander Technique, the technique's emphasis on conscious control precluded studying it as an exemplar of body wisdom *per se*. It became apparent through further research that body wisdom emerged only in later techniques. This was in fact useful because it allowed a more precise history of the wise body to be developed, however, it does mean that my research has not simply addressed the 'wise body' but the *emergence* of the wise body. It might be argued that in researching the wise body it would have been useful to undertake fieldwork in one of the techniques in which it does emerge. However, although I actively sought classes in Body-Mind Centering in order to make this comparison, the relatively minimal presence of this and other techniques promoting theories of body wisdom in the UK made such a project difficult. This limits some of the remarks that I can make about the wise body itself, and thus where this thesis can make its most useful contribution is in tracing the wise body's *emergence* and not its *presence*.

Another issue which I have avoided is that of the efficacy of movement re-education. In part, I have adopted Csordas' (1994b) position that too much research has focused on whether non-scientific forms of healing work while little attention has been paid to *how* they work. By examining the practices of movement re-education and their relation to its theories, a different sense of efficacy arises, which privileges the processes of healing over its end result. As a sociologist my strength is in analysing

movement re-education as a fundamentally social practice, not in providing the kind of medical studies which might narrowly demonstrate the efficacy of particular practices and techniques in relation to one or more ailments. More attention needs to be given to the socio-historical context in which people use movement re-education and complementary and alternative health practices more generally. In any case, there are significant methodological debates in relation to whether controlled randomised trials, the standard biomedical method of demonstrating efficacy, are useful in relation to evaluating the effectiveness of complementary and alternative medicine more generally (Saks, 1994: 96).

Studying movement re-education can provide insights into related fields such as dance, alternative health, and posture, all of which are rather under-researched in the social sciences. The strength of social scientific approaches is that they can address *how* these fields work and how they have come to articulate themselves in the way they do. The techniques studied here constitute a rich field providing significant possibilities for further research. For instance, research into the decline of posture as matter of biomedical concern would be particularly useful, given the rise of repetitive strain injuries in recent years and the fact that guides to recovery tend to advise better posture without any discussion of what this might look or feel like (Quilter, 1998). Posture and body use have obviously not ceased to be important, as Vigarello's (2001) work demonstrates, and Yosifon and Stearns (1998) conclude that its neglect in contemporary biomedicine is particularly odd given the prevalence of health problems such as RSI and back pain which would seem to be at least partially posture-related (Yassi, 1997). Such a study could contrast how movement re-education approaches posture and body use with the ways that biomedicine has addressed it, opening a greater space for dialogue between them. It could also investigate whether the historical relationship between good posture campaigns and eugenics have been part of the reason for the decline of interest in posture concerns. This would also provide a broader context for movement re-education's original relationship to eugenics.

The relationship between dance and movement re-education is one which requires further exploration, which I have not been able to devote space to here. As dancers increasingly adopt movement re-education as part of their training, it would be useful

to examine how they have used it, and its influence on performance, practice, health and injury treatment and prevention. This would provide a concrete sense of how movement re-education techniques are being employed in a particular field and what work they do. It would give indications as to movement re-education's relation to health maintenance and injury prevention, and provide insights into the shift in dance away from external ideals toward internal and more individualised ways of regulating the body.

Further, embodied discourse as a methodological and theoretical approach is one that is worth exploring in fields beyond movement re-education. It would be useful to examine whether discursive and embodied analyses often provide divergent but complementary types of data, or whether in some fields discourse and embodiment 'match' more than in others. Contrasting these sorts of analyses is an underused approach in body studies and in the social sciences more generally, and one which deserves more consideration. This thesis is merely a first step toward using embodied discourse as a methodology, and much further discussion on this topic would be useful. However, it is the fruitful nature of this kind of investigation which leads to the identification of the need for such work.

This thesis has sought to demonstrate that far from being a practice of marginal importance, movement re-education has significant implications for theory and practice in sociology in terms of ways of conceptualising the body and its 'nature' and sociality. By researching movement re-education with a methodology that takes both embodiment and discourse into account, new insights are produced into the interaction between these two paradigms, and a deeper analysis can occur. Studying movement re-education through embodied discourse provides useful insights into new ideas about the body and health, the emergence of the concept of body wisdom, and the ways in which such practices have become ways of governing subjectivity in a somatic society.

Appendix I Interview Guide

How did you first get interested in/hear about this technique?

How long did you/have you studied it?

Have you studied any other forms of bodywork or movement re-education?

Were they similar or different?

Is this technique similar to anything else you've studied?

Do you have any experience with performing arts or sport?

Does this technique relate to that experience? How so/not?

What do you know about how the technique itself got started?

(Practitioners: how would you explain the goals of the technique's founder?)

What do you see as the aims of the technique?

What will [aims of the technique] do? What benefits will this have?

(Show image of 'evolution of man' that ends with 'man' slumped in front of computer, give context of seeing it on AT website): how do you interpret this image?

Do you think it's relevant to this technique at all?

Do you think there is such a thing as a 'natural' posture/alignment?

What might it be like?

Why do we not have it?

Do you think this differs for different people (across cultures) or is it the same for everyone?

How do you think someone's background might affect their alignment?

What do you do during a lesson in this technique? What kinds of things do you practice?

This technique is sometimes described as holistic. What does that mean to you?

Do you think that it is holistic? How so?

(Possible question on relation to Zen or yoga; similarities/differences. Might come under 'similar to anything else studied' though).

How do you think this technique relates to science and Western medicine?

What was the gender balance in groups where you studied this technique? Do you think this was typical? (Why might this be?)

What about now? Has the technique 'stuck'? Do you still practice any aspects of it?

Practitioners: how has your experience of the technique changed over time?

Appendix II Sampling

Snowball and quota sampling strategies such as the ones I used obviously do not produce a statistically random sample. The choices made throughout the study biased it toward London practitioners and those who were technologically literate enough to be contacted initially by e-mail. Of twenty-eight interviewees, sixteen were female and twelve were male, supporting the suggestion of many interviewees that the gender balance in these techniques was nearly half and half, with slightly more women than men. Participants were predominantly white European, including English, Scottish, Finnish, Danish, Swiss, and Dutch, and three were 'Asian' in the broad sense (of Indian, Japanese, or Chinese ancestry). No participants were African, Caribbean, or Black British, which may be significant in terms of the racist evolutionary models these techniques often employed.

The youngest interviewee was about twenty; the oldest seventy, with most in their thirties and forties. Taking into account that some people had experience with more than one discipline (in which case I spoke to them primarily about their favourite discipline or the one they had been most involved in), seventeen participants had experience with Alexander Technique, four with Feldenkrais, five with Pilates, three with Rolfing, and three with Body-Mind Centering. Of these, sixteen were teacher/practitioners, two were teacher-trainees, and ten were presently pupils of one or more techniques, or had been in the past. Length of training and experience ranged from three months in the case of one past Alexander pupil to thirty years in the case of one Alexander teacher.

Appendix III Glossary

Cerebro-spinal fluid: The fluid that circulates around the brain and spinal cord; apparently has its own pulse which is separate from that of the heart. Part of the 'fluid system' in Body-Mind Centering.

Core stability: Refers to the development of specific abdominal muscles, particularly the psoas, which support posture. This is said to allow other muscles in the back and shoulders to release excess tension as they no longer need to do the work of postural support.

Cranio (cranio -sacral therapy): A touch-based form of bodywork which works on the head and sacrum through gently manipulating the bones and cerebro-spinal fluid.

End-gaining: From Alexander Technique; a term used to refer to performing an action without consciously considering how to get there; thinking only of a desired end.

Fascia, myofascia: envelopes of tissue around the muscles, which connect them to the joints. Ida Rolf believed that by working on the fascial envelopes rather than muscles themselves, one could make significant structural changes in the body.

Head-neck-back relationship: The 'primary control' in Alexander Technique; a particular alignment of the head, neck, and back in which the head goes 'forward and up' and the back 'lengthens and widens'.

***Latissimus dorsi* (lats):** shoulder adductor muscle which wraps from the back to the front of the body.

Lordosis: a front-to-back spinal curve

Means-whereby: From Alexander Technique; opposed to end-gaining. Alexander encouraged pupils to consider the means-whereby a particular action was carried out by making the action conscious.

Proprioception: A developed sense of body movement and positioning; a key sense to be developed in movement re-education, particularly Body-Mind Centering, where it is considered a 'sixth sense', as important as hearing or sight.

Psoas (*iliopsoas*): a central postural muscle which connects the upper body with the lower body; attaches to the lumbar (lower) spine, goes through the pelvis and ends by attaching to the greater trochanter, or hip, bones. In movement re-education, this muscle is absolutely central to posture and core stability.

Scoliosis: a spinal curve going from side to side

Six-pack: the *rectus abdominus* muscle, that when developed forms a set of six bumps between the ribcage and pelvis. This is an external abdominal muscle. Often well-developed in athletes and bodybuilders and admired as a sign of fitness, a developed six-pack is usually derogated in movement re-education because it provides no postural support.

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