

BIODANZA

.... *A songline home*



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The blue dot - that's us



Introduction

“The cosmos is within us. We are made of star stuff. We are a way for the universe to know itself” Carl Sagan

We are already home.

We are dancers poised / primed to express the desires of the cosmos.

Relationship to my place in this cosmos has meant holding many bold questions to the light, not as a quest for answers so much as being present with the Experience of life as a learner and seeker.

When this Paper started appearing in dreaming, made visible through words, ink and print, it has asked much of me - steering me to bring together, one idea or thing.

I want fluidity from the captivity of ‘one idea/one thing’. I extend a bold invitation dear reader, to take flight like a Bird, covering a vast terrain, from places - some familiar many not, settling here and there. There will be moments we won’t fly together, I may lose you along the way - I simply hope to pique your interest and perhaps a word here or there will resonate with your place in the cosmos.

My practise of the Biodanza system has been a meaningful passage to my Becoming - the ‘rites of passage’ or milestones are not clearly marked...rather, appear to me as a continuum and significant never the less.

Rolando Toro proposes an organic dance, that responds to patterns of movement that generate life.

To propose a new vision of the world (Biocentric principle/ Biodanza) is to propose new LANGUAGING # with the potential to give rise to this new world.

This is the central theme for this Paper and flowing alongside, is that of learning.

Learning in this pulsating life to be in relationship with ourselves, other human and non human species, the universe and that which arises as “a felt sense” and unexplainable.

LANGUAGING, (as distinct from language) is a term borrowed from Humberto Maturana (Chilean Biologist and Philosopher) to indicate that language is a Process of Living, which like emotions are integral features of perception and cognition.

I accepted another invitation from Rolando Toro “look at biology for guidance, recognise that this is not all. Be insolent and sensitive, walk an integrative path with hearts and minds open”.

We will weave threads of language, identity and body, theories from science about the biochemical language of emotions and social engagement, play, hearing, archetypes, myth, and groupwork, drawing from many commentators.

What conditions arose such that I elevate conversations so diverse and varied?

Similar conditions that existed as far back as my memory and experiences take me - as a learner in life extending either side of awareness that a theory named the Biocentric Principle came to my attention.

LIFE. Experience, Wonder, Curiosity. Live life to the full!

The practise of Biodanza has amplified my permeability to life.

Emerging from the experience of living LIFE fully is a natural pull to what resonates and away from what doesn't - and this spirit is brought to you via this Paper.

I have been especially curious that since practising Biodanza my world has expanded in new directions with curiosity about much at the same time being very selective at what I give my attention to. It has been revealing for me to simply notice both.

The diverse and varied lines of enquiry reflected in the Paper represent the qualities that attempt not so much to answer as to open up conversations that resonate most strongly and influence the expression of all that I am becoming, growing my Identity.

The pathway to live biocentrically and practise Biodanza is a bold one indeed. It takes its cues from the natural world. Rolando Toro drew inspiration from this living organism (Biocentric Principle) to develop a dance integrated movement system, Biodanza.

Biodanza is a human development system, a vivencial methodology, using music movement and the group, with intention of integration of identity.

It is an open system robust enough to be informed by other Biocentric Principles also. As part of this enquiry I have also invited the following:

Marshall Rosenberg, Non Violent Communication (NVC)
Arnold Mindell, Process Oriented - World Work, Deep Democracy
Myrna Lewis, Deep Democracy (DD).

Their contributions may enrich the practise of Biodanza by:

- recognising what's at play universally as and when we participate as a dancer with others.
- bringing an awareness to what's alive in and around each of us in the here and now,
- and offer proven practical approaches to inform Biodanza facilitators when there is 'tension', in the group.

When bestowed with a human nervous system (all living organisms have nervous systems) a rich endowment of potentiality is pregnant with the need to express its unique structure.

Research confirms that in the natural life of a human much potential is not activated or is thwarted.

Bodily learning happens through the integration of sensory stimulus, movement and dance, and stories ***in relationship*** with all else.

Sounds, rhythm and music, dreaming and expression of emotions are encoded in this relationship.

“My approach is to save this interior jungle and to carry out not an ecology of mind, but rather an ecology of the instincts. It is necessary to look at the instinctive manifestations from the biological prospective of exaltation of life and of natural grace”. Rolando Toro

(an instinct is an inborn disposition towards certain kinds of adaptive behaviour)



Taking flight



Context - cognition, culture and history.

Biological, Holographic and Mystic concepts - point to a (human) re discovery that the cosmos is alive and intelligent, that we live with background fields organised by patterns (not time and space) with many names and many types of power.

With the advent of systems theory, the concept of earth as a living being is not just a myth.

Thresholds of transition of theories are explained in the three levels of unconscious.

(Personal unconscious, Freud, Collective Unconscious, Jung, and Vital Unconscious proposed by Rolando Toro)

The concept of Vital Unconscious allows us to understand the Biocentric Principle deeply - as a cosmic tendency towards the generation of life.

The idea that we are a hologram (part of the whole and the whole in each part) - means we are in touch with the cosmic intelligence that organises life. The Vital Unconscious is a channel manifesting itself in human form as a desire to live.



Cognition

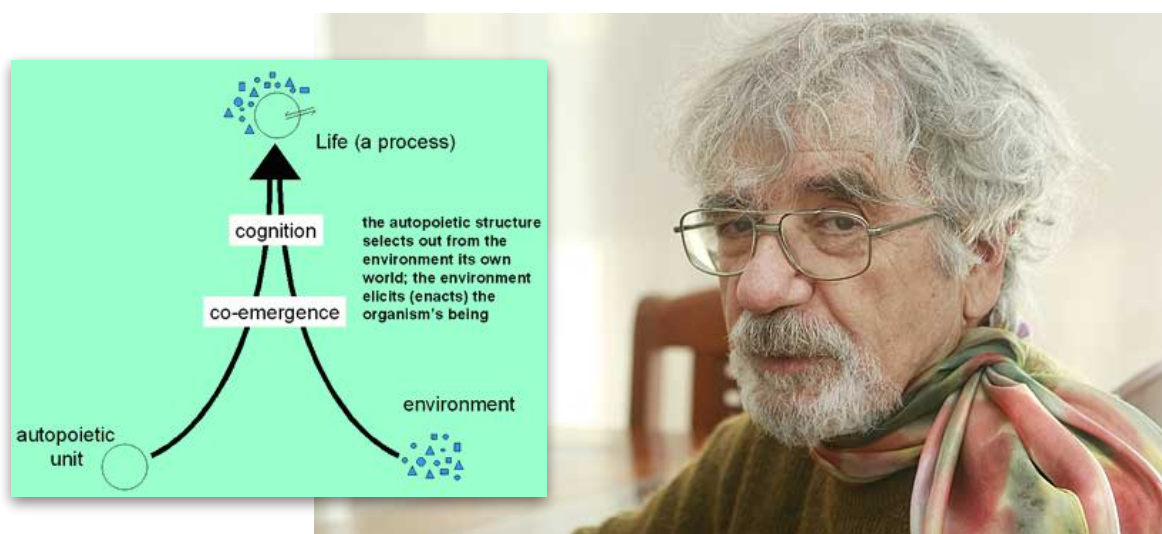
Humberto Maturana, (Chilean Biologist) offers a theory of how it is that we come to 'know' anything. His theory of the biology of cognition points to living systems that are cognitive and what it is to be 'the observer'. What is observed depends on the observer.

It is the structure of our nervous system that primarily determines at any point in time what is reality for us (individually and collectively),

For Maturana, events and circumstances that are spatially separate from an organism perturb its nervous system. However, it is not the external circumstances that primarily determine the response of the organism. Rather, it is the structure of the organism's nervous system that primarily determines its response.

Through their continual interaction living systems perturb each others' nervous system, a process he refers to as 'structural coupling', existing in mutual influence with their environment, in which the structure of their nervous systems is continually perturbed and altered to shift how they are as observers.

For Maturana, cognition is framed in terms of actions and interactions and cognition is integral to the process of observing and living. "Living systems are cognitive systems, and living, as a process is a process of cognition".



Culture

According to sociologists, culture consists of the values, beliefs, systems of language and communication, and practises that people share in common and that can be used to define them as a collective, otherwise referred to as non material aspects.

Material culture is composed of the things that humans make and use, (film, literature, art, music among others).

Non material and material aspects have a mutual influence between them, and rooted in the theory of French founding thinker of sociology, Emile Durkheim, they hold society together and strengthen the social ties that bind them. Critics of this theory may argue that whilst culture can be a force for creativity, resistance and liberation, it can also be a force for oppression and domination.

The Biocentric Principle points to the utmost reverence for LIFE being the point of reference - a paradigm to serve as a basis for foundation of human sources of education, medicine, parenting.

In Biodanza, environmental factors that stimulate or inhibit the development of human potential are referred to as Ecofactors. Culture creates a strong network of Ecofactors that act upon the development of individuals.



Perspective of history

Dr. Shlain in “alphabet verses goddesses” asserts the uptake of literacy rewired the two hemispheres of the human brain, reinforcing linear abstract predominantly masculine (left) at the expense of the holistic feminine (right).

He is at pains to detail a historical timeline of transformation, a brief snapshot follows:

Est 200,000 - 90,000 years ago

The shift from vegetarian to meat eaters required hunting skills.

Males predominantly engage in hunting and killing. Females predominantly engage in nurturing and gathering.

Split brain phenomenon becomes highly exaggerated only in humans; most killing strategies placed in left hemisphere of brain
most nurturing and gathering strategies in right hemisphere on brain.

“fast forward “

5,000 - 3,000 years ago

Up to the farming stage (when the female Deity was lauded) eventually a goddesses’ power was usurped by males. Hera, Athena and Aphrodite (Greeks three most potent goddesses), none of which were born from a woman.

“What event was so pervasive that took god from a woman to a man?”
he asks.

His answer is the invention and discovery of literacy.

Writing invented. Left hemisphere modes of perception, hunting/killing side reinforced. Literacy depends on linear, sequential, abstract and reductionist ways of thinking... same as hunting. Scribes became priests and new religions emerge - the god begins to supersede the goddesses.

45,000 - 3,000 years ago

Alphabet invented. First alphabetic book is the Hebrew Bible.

Goddesses harshly rejected from Israelite belief system. God loses His image.

Images of any kind proscribed in first culture - to worship written words.

3,000 - 2,500 years ago.

Greeks became the second literate culture (the first were Semites-Phoenicians and Israelites). Whilst not rejecting images, Greeks suppress women's rights.

Socrates disdained writing and wrote nothing down. He held egalitarian views. Plato wrote extensively of what Socrates said. Not as generous toward women as Socrates. Aristotle taught that women were an inferior subspecies of man.

In between Gentle prophet named Jesus emerges, writes nothing down. Paul commits to writing what he interprets to be the meaning of Christ.

Women play a prominent role in this new religion, and enjoy high status, until 1000-1453 masculine values being to re assert dominance over feminine values. Renaissance beings, male artists, thinkers, etc.

1454-1820 Gutenberg printing press makes available alphabet literacy to masses. Women's rights suffered decline, women mystics called witches and burnt (estimated to be 100,000+ in number).

"There is no parallel in any other culture in the world in which the men of the culture suffered a psychosis so extreme that they believed that their wise women were so dangerous that they had to be eliminated."

1820 - to present

Invention of photography and discovery of the electromagnetic field combine to bring about the return of the image.

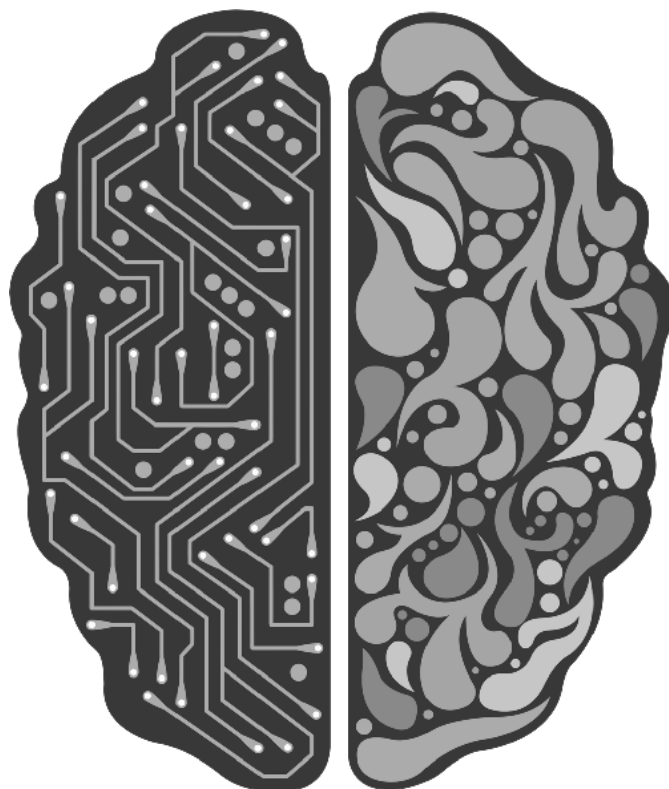
Right hemisphere called upon to decipher images more than the left.

Then invention of telegraph, radio, film and telephone, television, advertising, internet re configure the world. All image based. Shlain foresees that increasing reliance on right brain pattern recognition instead of left brain linear sequence will move culture toward equilibrium between the two hemispheres, between masculine and feminine, between word and image.

Commentators of western culture would agree we have lived in a dominant paternal and hierarchical structure for centuries.

One may hypothesise that the advent of literacy propelled the cultural (re)evolution of humans with unprecedented speed. Who knows the trajectory?

Many observations led Rolando Toro to seek a system that would rescue humanity from the 'ills of civilisation'



Language

There are many distinctions held by the word communication; it includes the spoken word, listening, sounds, utterances, gestures. Many of these are available to all species and natural life.

Even insects such as bees and ants know how to communicate in sophisticated ways, informing one another of the whereabouts of food. Yuval Noah Harari.

It is the human species that evolved oral expressions in the form of speech to the alphabet, written word then printed word.

David Abram writes, "Every attempt to definitively say what language is is subject to a curious limitation. For the only medium with which we can define language is language itself. ...it may be best to leave language undefined, and to thus acknowledge its...mysteriousness.

"Active, living speech is just such a gesture, a vocal gesticulation wherein the meaning is inseparable from the sound, the shape, and the rhythm of the words."

Of course, it is tempting to enter the discussion about the origin of language with the founder of modern linguists, Ferdinand de Saussure, "language is a system of signs that expresses ideas", or Prof. Noam Chomsky, "Contrary to what people thought, language is not taught, not even learned. It's something that your mind grows in a particular environment, just the way your body grows in a particular environment." Or Steven Pinker in his 1994 book "the language instinct" refers to language as an instinct, an innate human ability.

Ludwig Wittgenstein, "the limits of my language means the limits of my world", and "language is part of our organism and no less complicated than it".

Maturana's view of language is based on the notion of 'consensual domain' of human activity. Language allows features of the world to be distinguished, and for the development of shared understanding, co operation, collaboration and co ordination - essential in constructive relationships.

"Verbal language was generated, as it is well known, phylogenetically and ontogenetically, in pre verbal languages. The words articulated and organised in a sentence are nothing but the refined expression of visceral resonances that produced the objects and the facts in the primitive man. The 'yes' and 'no' are our visceral responses to events that we accept or reject. If the words were not corresponding to the visceral resonance, language could not be acquired with the ease with which children learn it"

(Translated into English by an unknown person Rolando Toro is quoted as writing).

According to Rolando Toro, affective communication in all its forms, including verbal, is a positive eco factor.

Language shapes the way we think

Systems of language and communication shape the way we think. Prof. Lera Boroditsky, (Stanford University) collected data from around the world. What they learned is that people who speak different languages do indeed think different and affect how we see the world.

Lera points to local Cape York, Australian aborigines (Kuuk Thaayorre) talk about space. Instead of 'right', 'left', 'forward', 'back', which as commonly used in English, define space relative to an observer, this community use cardinal-direction terms, - north, south, east, and west to define space. ..an obvious consequence is that you have to stay oriented at all times. "Where are you going? would answer something like "Southsoutheast, in the middle distance"...Lera points out that if you don't know which way you are facing, you cant even get past 'hello'.

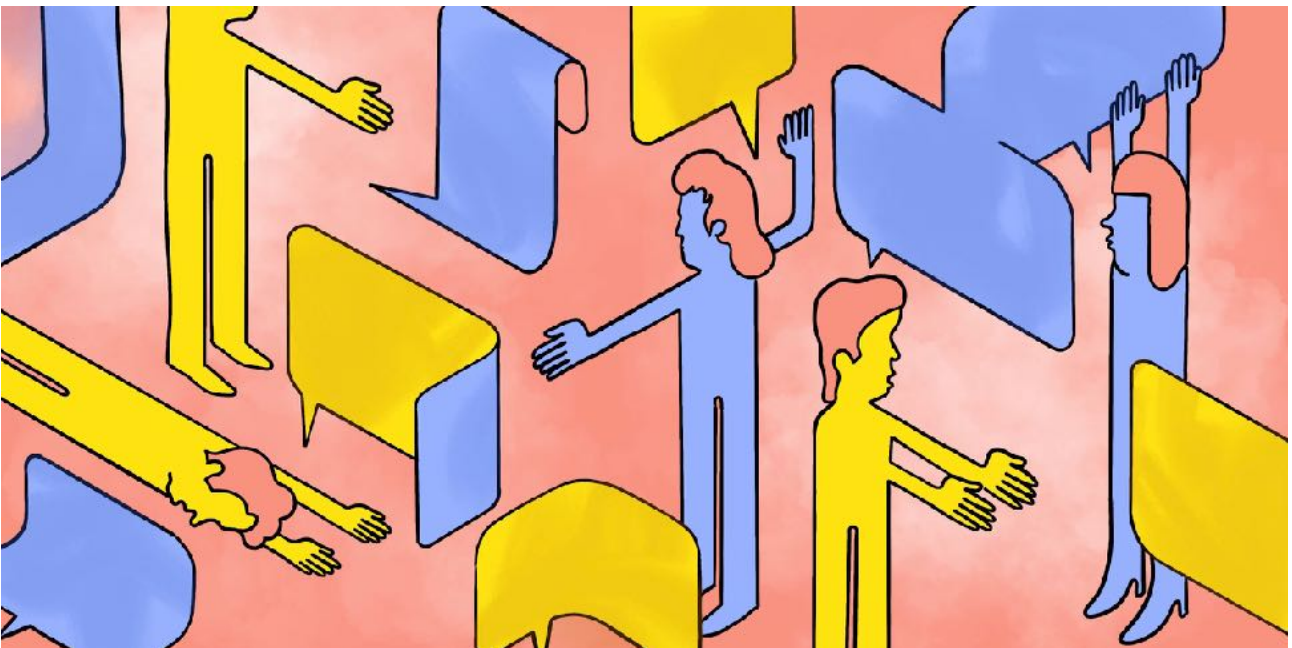
The result is a profound difference in navigational ability and spatial knowledge between speakers of languages that rely primarily on absolute reference frames (like Kuuk Thaayorre). Simply put, speakers of languages like Kuuk Thaayorre are much better than English speakers at staying oriented and keeping track of where they are, even in unfamiliar landscapes or inside unfamiliar buildings. What enables them - forces them - to do this is their language.

Because space is such a fundamental domain of thought, people rely on their spatial knowledge to build more complex, abstract representations. Representations of such things as time, number, musical pitch, kinship relations, morality, and emotions have been shown to depend on how we think about space. The Kuuk Thaayorre people think differently about space - they also think differently about time.

Lera's research proved that in learning a new language, you are not simply learning a new way of talking, you are also learning a new way of thinking.

Language shapes the way we think about space, time, colours and objects,...”linguistic processes are pervasive in most fundamental domains of thought, unconsciously shaping us from the nuts and bolts of cognition and perception to our loftiest abstract notions and major life decisions”.

Language is central to our experience of being human, and the languages we speak profoundly shape the way we think, the way we see the world, the way we live our lives.



Language and the body

It is assumed that language is inherently a conceptual system, comprising logical forms and distinctions. It is much more than that.

Fossils don't speak so the 'living body' does, rooted in our sensorial experience of each other, and the natural world.

The body spontaneously expresses feelings and responds to changes in its affective environment. The gesture is bodying - forth of that emotion into the world, writes Merleau-Ponty of the gestural genesis of language *Phenomenology of Perception.

Gendlin invites us to consider language as implicit in the body. The body knows language. The body can always give the words more feedback than can be derived from concepts, forms or distinctions. It is the physical body that you enter to get to the intricacies. The physical body is continuous with the universe, but to enter it you start not with microscopes. You start with ordinary experiences, in the same place where you are in this moment, hungry or scared. Starting with this ordinary body you get a wider at first murky (...) sense that we are taught to consider as nothing. But a FELT SENSE comes. And when we have a point to make, words come. You know how? We open our mouths and expect. (Eugene T. Gendlin "focusing")

In a Biodanza session the movements evoke progress through stages of motricity rhythm, synergism, fluidity, integrated movement, unity, harmony, and finally graceful movement.

Could NVC offer a way towards a graceful language?

The central tenet of Non Violent Communication (NVC) is that everything a human being does (whether benign or hurtful) is an attempt to meet their human needs.

(confirmed by Heidegger as commented upon below)

Marshall Rosenberg founder of NVC proposes that the thinking, 'human beings are innately evil' was entrenched 1,000's of years ago also. Although he does not specifically link this thinking pattern to literacy - the writer speculates that the timing coincides with Shlain's timeline theory.

The desire to punish and use of punitive measures only exist in cultures that have moralistic good/evil world-views.

Being 'bad' or evidence of warfare makes no sense to the peoples of Semai in Malaysia, or the Mardu aboriginal peoples of the Western desert (near Gibson Desert, Australia), the peoples of the Nilgiri Hills in India, or the tribes of the upper Xingu River basin in Brazil for example.

We are educated to make violence enjoyable, cut off from our feelings and disconnected from the ability to have our needs met. We are not taught (through our institutions or culture) to meet our concerns without employing manipulative strategies. NVC focuses our attention on compassion as our motivation, rather than fear, guilt blame or shame.

Rosenberg playfully contrasts 'jackal language' the punitive judgemental practise in our interactions that cuts us off from life. The jackal - hierarchical, pack animal, yells and howls, scavengers, low to the ground, —with his proposed 'giraffe language'. The giraffe has a much bigger perspective of whats going on. The largest heart in the animal kingdom - mythically connects heaven and earth. Powerful, graceful - (lions are afraid of them).

NVC postulates that conflict between individuals or groups is a result of miscommunication about these needs, often because of coercive or manipulative language (eg. inducing fear, guilt, praise, blame, duty, reward punishment). NVC is a way of speaking that facilitates the flow of communication needed to exchange information and resolve differences peacefully. It helps us identify our shared needs, encourages us to use language that increases goodwill and avoid language that contributes to resentment or lowers self esteem.

*The following headings suggest some of our universal needs :
Connection, Physical Well Being, Honesty, Play, Peace, Autonomy, Meaning.

Words we use when we express our feelings (when our needs are satisfied)

Affectionate, Engaged, Confident, Excited, Grateful, Inspired, Joyful, Exhilarated, Peaceful, Refreshed.

(when our needs are not satisfied)

Afraid, Annoyed, Angry, Aversion, Confused, Disconnected, Disquiet, Embarrassed, Fatigued, Pain, Sad, Tense, Vulnerable, Yearning.

* *Credit to CNVC*

Maturana and Varela; from a biological perspective in their ontogeny**
living systems have 2 tendencies: a conserving and transforming tendency.

They make a profound point about the nature of change and that is; All change happens around what is conserved. Living systems are oriented towards conserving its capacity of continuing to produce itself (conservation of autopoiesis), simultaneously making structural changes in response to changes in its medium (conservation and adaptation).

** In biology of cognition - ontogeny is the history of the structural change of the nervous system of an organism without loss of organisation in that unity.

Taking a Heidegger perspective we can say that the conserving tendency orients people to take care of what matters to them (concerns). Rosenberg agrees - having our needs met! Societies and cultures will only change to the extent that they can continue to take care of what's most important. A core concern for people is their individual and cultural identity.

The NVC Model



Language and listening

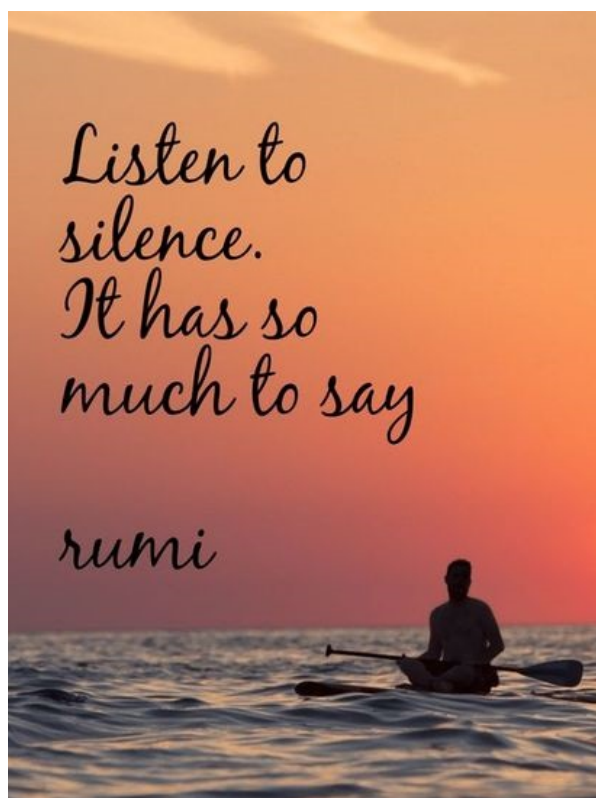
John O'Donohue (Irish poet and author of *Anam Cara*) amplifies listening (the flip side of speaking).

“There is a voice within you which no - one, not even you, has heard. Give yourself the opportunity of silence and begin to develop your listening in order to hear deep within you, the music of your spirit.”

Our interactions are enhanced by the qualities we bring to listening in relationships with each other and all else.

Listening is a full body experience....hearing is auditory listening is about meaning.

Playfully, I wonder if with two ears and one mouth there is an intention to listen more than speak.



Language as a Vivencial tool

The Biocentric Principle is the 'intuition, around which Biodanza is organised" which has its starting point in the vivencia. "The vivencia is the essential operative element of the Biodanza system and the induction of vivencias constitutes the basis of the Biodanza method.

Whilst language is unsuited for the description of the vivencia experience, I cannot limit myself to describe Biodanza as verbal or non verbal.

The vivencia springs from a source supplied by the music, movements, the group context and the enunciations by the facilitator. Language is embedded in the experience of vivencia - words in the enunciation, in lyrics, in listening, in movement. It cannot be extracted, and separating it into a particular category is not affording it the opportunity to take its place - to give rise to a new world.

As a passage to vivencia, a facilitator of the Biodanza experience will adapt their speech to the level of integration of the group. Speech will follow the process of the group.

This requires a sensitivity and awareness (in feedback) provided through many modes of communication, including language.

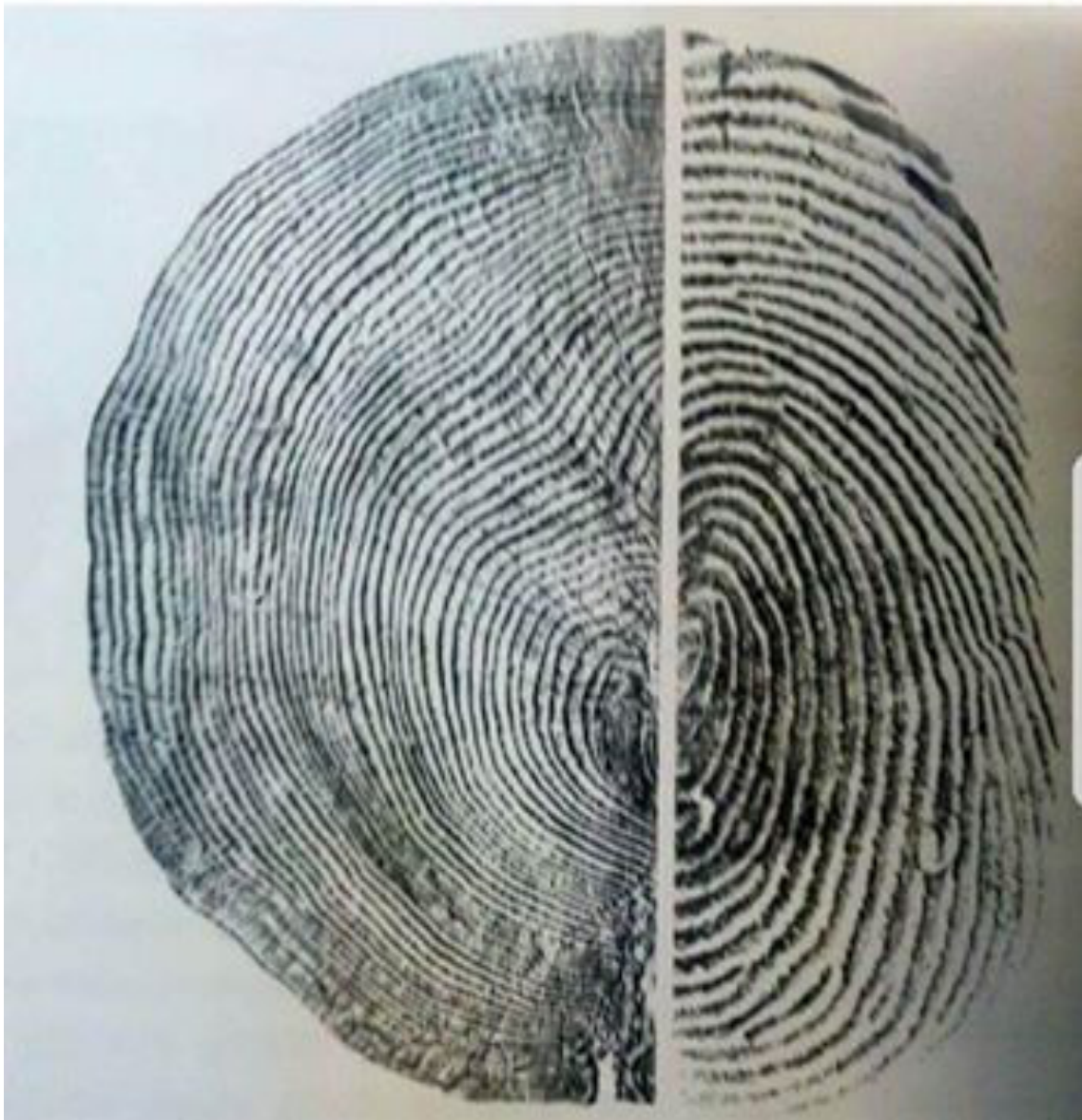
When we come to appreciate an expanded view of language (beyond interpretation /analysis), I see now that it is more a welcomed integration.

As I have progressed my movements with and from the music with others, I have noticed a softening - a permeability...access to a repertoire of communication and a sensitively arise, new languaging.

VIVENCIA. A lived experience in the here and now. EXPERIENCES BECOME EMBODIED - as a languaging being.

What would the human species be had it not developed capacity to communicate by way of language?

Tree Stump and Thumb Print



Identity - body

“To recognise a being as living, it is said that we must recognise and distinguish an organisation, structure and processes that make it possible.” ‘Organisation’ signifies those relations that must be present for something to exist. Tree of Knowledge, Varela and Maturana.

Living beings are characterised in that they are continually self producing, (an autopoietic organisation) and are autonomous. Life derives from autopoiesis (from Greek, self and creation) biologically with the cell.

The word ‘identity’ (shorter oxford dictionary) reveals that the origin of this word is possibly a combination of Latin ‘idem’ meaning same, and ‘identidem’ meaning over and over again.

The uniqueness of each of us begins with our genetic structure (biologically beginning with fusion of sperm and egg).

The primary source is the awareness of being alive. Our experiences begin with the brain stem, the body growing the brain, pulsating between the two poles of identity (or consciousness) to regression (or fusion with the whole), in the stable vertical axis of the five lines of genetic potential (vitality, sexuality, affectivity, creativity and transcendence), modulated by (positive) ecofactors.

The sensations at birth and during the first few months are our first form of contact and way of perceiving the world. They come prior to language and allow the body to be built from this body consciousness.

The identity is built from this body consciousness.

Referring to consciousness Maturana points to the latin root of the word “conscire” meaning ‘knowing together’. We evoke the cosmic unconscious as a collective, different from the idea of an individual separate existence.

Sieler “ Through language we develop a sense of our identity, which we take to be our individuality. We develop an image of ourself as a self who is separate from others.”

“By ‘Others’ we do not mean everyone else but me—those over against whom the ‘I’ stands out. They are rather those from whom, for the most part, one does not distinguish oneself—those among whom one is too. By reason of this with-like Being-in-the-world, the world is always one that I share with Others.” (Being and Time 26: 154–5)
Heidegger.

We recognise ourselves as part of the species and of the whole.
Heidegger “speaks of being - with another. ”Man is an unfinished poem”.

However, whilst our identity has much to do with how we distinguish ourself from others, Maturana suggests that the roots of how we come to identify ourself are social.

Husserl began exploring how the body impacted on perception and he regarded the body as a hidden source of the perceptual meaning the world has for consciousness. He wrote that ‘the lived body (“leib”) is flesh of perceived things. ‘They (ie bodies) have a relation to other things because they are perceptually situated and they are perceptually situated because of the orientation they have to our perceiving and moving bodies’.

Building on Husserl and Heidegger, Maurice Merleau-Ponty wrote that the body is an active and engaged lived - in body which is the anchor of world perceptions. ”My lived body is a system of possible actions”, and according to Merleau-Ponty ‘ to have a body is to possess a universal setting, a schema of all types of perceptual unfolding’.

(Merleau Ponty. Phenomenology - means the reality facing you, that which arises in your presence, the phenomena, the world, the people).

Martin Heidegger's theory about the body can be primarily encapsulated in two expressions he used; embodiment (a way of standing, walking, gesturing; facial expressions, vocal characteristics, seeing and hearing) and comportment (embodies our attitudes, orientations and dispositions to both ourselves and the world - the expression of our being). That we do not have a body, but rather we are bodily.

For Heidegger, humans understand themselves in terms of their existence; the possibility to be ourself or not ourself.

He speaks of consciousness not as being 'I think, therefore I am' 'cogito ergo sum' attributed to (Rene Descartes) but 'I can'. 'My body is what opens me out and closes me off from the world and possibilities.'

He also places the body at the centre of communication, claiming that 'we have a bodily need to communicate', 'The living body is a loving body and the loving body is a speaking body'.

In Biodanza, identity is the body and at its foundation is the rehabilitation of identity.

Antonio Sarpe " ...You are your body. Even if I am in a wheelchair my corporeity is not the shape of my body. It is the vivencia of the body that defines your identity. You can have a body that had a genetic problem and still develop your embodiment. Each new movement you learn represents your identity expressing a new field of your identity. Nothing is just motor. In Biodanza everything is auto-motor, affective motor, etc. Each new movement allows a new area of your identity to be revealed.

Biodanza has its own math's equation:
organic music + integrated movement + biocentric vivencia +
expression of identity."

Maalouf describes a person's identity as the genes of the soul. 'A person's identity is not only singular, but something we experience as a complete whole. A person's identity is not an assemblage of separate affiliations, nor a kind of loose patchwork; it is like a pattern drawn on a tightly stretched parchment. Touch just one part of it, just one allegiance, and the whole person will react, the whole drum will sound.' (Amin Maalouf on Belonging, conflict and how we inhabit our identity).

To identify as a member of the human species is a developmental process of likeness, divergence, affiliations that requires one to be in relationship.

What determines a person's affiliation to a given group, tribe, clan, is essentially the influence of others; the influence of those about her (family, relatives, musicians) who try to make him/her one of them, together with the influence of those on the other side who do their best to exclude him/her and in so doing we acquire an identity step by step.

We move in, out and around these groups, fleetingly or eternally, drawn spontaneously to participate by way of affiliation or a waiting in the wings, perhaps of ones choosing or being chosen.

Humanae



Brazilian born artist and photographer, Angelica Dass captures revealingly portraits of global citizens without the cultural markings of wardrobe. All against a background of Pantone colour identical. A very beautiful depiction of one species. Humanae.

Dass's exploration of our skin tones is based on an 11-by-11-pixel sample taken from each subject's nose. She then matches it to a colour card from Pantone, which she uses as the backdrop for the person's portrait. Below each picture, Dass prints the official Pantone number—her own is “7522 C,” a warm brown.

“Using this scale, I am sure that nobody is ‘black,’ and absolutely nobody is ‘white’...pointing out how people from vastly different ethnic backgrounds sometimes wind up with the exact same Pantone colour. But whereas Pantone's library only has 1,867 colours, there is no end to the shades in the human spectrum.

Language and our identity expressed through bodily movement is entwined in the experience of all our emotions.

The Biochemical Language of Emotions

When Candace Pert discovered that molecules, called peptides, 'white blood cells are bits of the brain floating around in the body' she turned a traditional view that required specialist study of the nervous, endocrine, and immune system as three separate systems that serve different functions.

Peptides interlink and facilitate conversations between immune cells, glands, and brain cells in one 'psychosomatic network' throughout the entire organism. They are 'the biochemical manifestation of emotions' altering behaviour and mood states (a universal biochemical language of emotions).

Traditionally neuroscientists have associated emotions with specific areas in the brain, the frontal cortex, the hypothalamus, the amygdala-the limbic system. This is correct. The limbic system turns out to be highly enriched with peptides (about 85%). However, it is not the only part of the body where peptide receptors are concentrated. The entire intestine is lined with peptide receptors. 'Gut feelings' - we literally feel our emotions in our gut.

Scientists have observed that nodal points in the central nervous system, which connect the sensory organs with the brain, are enriched with peptide receptors that filter and prioritise sensory perceptions. In other words, all our perceptions and thoughts are coloured by emotions.

To emphasise, sensations received through our ears, eyes, nose, tongue, skin, proprioceptors are the foundation of knowledge!

Memories.. Memory is encoded or stored at the receptor level. When a receptor is flooded with a ligand, it changes the cell membrane in such a way that the probability of an electrical impulse travelling across the membrane where the receptor resides is facilitated or inhibited, thereafter affecting the choice of neuronal circuitry that will be used.

An important discovery in appreciating how memories are stored. In a psychosomatic network extending into the body, particularly in the ubiquitous receptors between nerves and bundles of cell bodies called ganglia, which are distributed not just in and near the spinal chord, but all the way out along pathways to internal organs and the very surface of our skin.

The skin is the body's largest organ. The dances of caress in Biodanza gives us access to a restorative relationship with our species!

According to Fritjof Capra, Pert's findings 'imply that cognition is a phenomenon that expands throughout the organism, operating through an intricate chemical network of peptides that integrates our mental, emotional and biological activities.'



The body as a resonant entity

In a research project conducted by Prof. Fuchs with depressed mothers who had just given birth. Babies who interact with their depressed mothers get accustomed to the reduced expressiveness and the withdrawnness of their mothers; to the slow and rather dull expression that they show.

The baby itself becomes withdrawn as well; a bit reserved less expressive, waiting. The child self regulates in a specific way. When these babies interact with other mothers who are not depressed then interestingly these mothers start behaving a bit more like depressed mothers.

The child learns a way of behaving, an expressiveness or lack of expressiveness, an inter-bodily scheme of behaviour, of being with others that is transferred to other partners and is enacted in a way that influences the third partner; similar to what they have learned before.

The baby can get the mother to adapt more than the baby adapts to the mother. The mother has to adapt to the individual baby because it brings its temperament, its different ways of reaction which are partially innate. The mother responds to what the individual child brings into the relationship.

We normally tend to think of our bodily experiences as reactions to a primary affective experience. The body is not a reacting entity. It is the resonant entity, that means it is the resonance of our emotional relations to a situation that we experience bodily and which makes up the affect. The affect is not something which can be separated from bodily resonance, but body resonance is an intricate part of what we experience as affects or emotions. Our affective relations to the world are mediated and enabled by our bodily postures, expressions and gestures.

Returning to Pert, the emotions are the connectors, flowing between individuals, moving among us as empathy, compassion, sorrow and joy. I believe that the receptors on our cells even vibrate in response to extracorporeal peptide reaching, a phenomenon that is analogous to the strings of a resting violin responding when another violin's strings are played. We call this emotional resonance, and it is a scientific fact that we can feel what others feel. The oneness of all life is based on this simple reality; our molecules of emotions are all vibrating together.

Fortunately given propitious (favourably disposed) conditions, the human nervous system is designed and attuned to receive and to offer a regulating influence to another person.

The intention and design of a Biodanza session is to create such conditions - an eco factor(s) to stimulate and develop affective integration .

(Thomas Fuchs, is Karl Jaspers Professor for Philosophy and Psychiatry at Universität Heidelberg. His research areas lie at the intersection of phenomenology, psychopathology and cognitive neuroscience, with a main emphasis on embodiment. Author of many books and articles on body memory).

Porges investigates how the nervous system mediates our visceral feelings and how these feelings are easily mediated by social interactions. He uses the term “social engagement system”

Social Engagement Theory

We are social creatures, expressing our identity through language, bodily movement and the full spectrum of emotions.
The intention of Biodanza is the full expression of that which is healthy.

Scientists, Levine and Porges share a map of human psychophysiological systems that mediate core feelings of goodness and belonging and of practitioners of Biodanza it is of interest because it's a different exploration of the autonomic nervous system.

Stephen Porges offers up his Polyvagal theory which describes recent findings on the neurobiological mechanisms involved in perceptions of risk and safety.

He coined the term “neuroception” to describe how neural circuits distinguish situations or people are safe or life threatening . Neuroception takes place in primitive parts of the brain (the same brain structures that are involved in defence functions) without our conscious awareness - (it explains why a baby coos at a caregiver and cries at a stranger).
A neuroception of safety is necessary before social engagement behaviours can occur.

To create relationships, humans must subdue these defensive reactions to engage, attach and form lasting social bonds. We invite participants to do this in every Biodanza session.

To switch from defensive to social engagement strategies, the nervous system must do two things (1) assess risk, and (2) if the environment looks safe, inhibit the primitive defensive reactions to fight, flee, or freeze.

By processing information from the environment through the senses, the nervous system continually evaluates risk.

Specific neural structures and areas of the brain detect and evaluate features such as body and face movements and vocalisations that contribute to an impression of safety. This Polyvagal theory links the evolution of the neural regulation of the heart to affective experience, emotional expression, facial gestures, vocal communication, and social behaviour that is responsive to the behaviour of others. The neural control of the heart is neuroanatomically linked to the neural control of the muscles of the face and head.

The most important neural circuit that regulates the Autonomic Nervous (ANS) is called the Vagus Nerve.

The Vagus Nerve

The largest nerve in the autonomic nervous system (and the major nerve of the parasympathetic nervous system) with about 80% of its fibers being sensory.

The vagus continuously conveys information about the status of peripheral organs to the brain stem. Visceral feelings are generally diffuse, so the actual labelling becomes difficult and the diffuse feelings often colour our perceptions and reactions to social interactions.

Connecting to the brain with most of our internal organs, it largely serves the gastrointestinal system, influencing ingestion, assimilation and elimination and significantly affects the hearts and lungs.

Furthermore, embedded within the lining of the gastrointestinal this complex network of sensory, motor and interneurons (those nerve cells that connect between the sensory and more neurone) integrates the digestive and eliminative organs so that they function coherently. Because of this complexity it's been called the enteric brain. It produces 95% of the serotonin in the body. Serotonin, sometimes called the happy chemical - is produced naturally and affects sleep, memory, and the way you feel.

In other words, for every ONE motor nerve fibre that relays commands FROM the brain TO the gut, NINE sensory nerves send information about the state of the viscera TO the brain.

Sensory fibers in the vagus nerve pick up complex information going on in the gut and relay them, first up to the (MID) brain stem and then the thalamus. From there, these signals virtually influence the entire brain, and subliminal 'decisions' are made that profoundly influence our actions. Many of our likes and dislikes, our attractions and repulsions, as well as our irrational fears, are the result of these illicit computations in our internal states.

It can be said that humans have TWO brains; one in the gut (the enteric brain) and the 'upstairs brain', sitting within the vaulted dome of the cranium. These two brains are in direct communication with each other through the hefty vagus nerve.

And if we go with the numbers - nine sensory/afferent nerves to every one motor/efferent nerve - our guts apparently have more to say to our brains (by a ratio of 9;1) than our brains have to say to our guts! Peter Levine.

The vagus nerve is essential in understanding heart rate variability (the window into the nervous system). It enervates the diaphragm and influences breathing.

The parasympathetic nervous system (of which the vagus nerve is part thereof) has the primary role of turning the sympathetic nervous system off and self regulating physiological functions, (an anti inflammatory state). On the other hand constant activation of the sympathetic nervous system promotes inflammation.

We are taught that the autonomic nervous system has two components, a sympathetic (associated with flight-fight behaviour) and a parasympathetic (growth, health and restoration) and associated with the vagus cranial nerve.

This presentation suggests that these components are antagonistic (which is not completely accurate).

According to Porges, although we often use the construct of autonomic balance, the autonomic nervous system seldom functions as a balance system and is more likely to react to challenges in the environment in a hierarchical manner.

The functional hierarchy.

All vertebrates share an UNmyelinated (without a covering/sheath) vagus that originates in the dorsal motor nucleus of the vagus .

The vagus nerve is one of the most important nerves in the body and its central role in all body functions.

In mammals this system when triggered as a defence system inhibits breathing, slows heart rate, and promotes defecation. However in safe contexts, this system supports the sub diaphragmatic organs to promote health, growth and restoration.

The sympathetic nervous system when triggered as a defence system functionally inhibits the old vagus and stops digestion , and diverts energy resources to mobilization.

Unique to mammals it represents a Myelinated vagus, which originates in the brain stem structure linked to the muscles of the face and head. So there are 2 parts of the vagus nerve.

Now we understand that when people smile, when they are happy, and when their voice has prosodic # features reflected in variations in vocal intonation - they are able to focus, to hear and to understand vocal communication.

prosody (patterns of stress and intonation in a language/ or patterns of rhythm and sound used in poetry.

He identifies a second defensive system - linked to IMMobilization, shutting down, fainting and dissociating.

Humans have three principal defence strategies - fight, flight and freeze. We are less familiar with freeze or immobilization.

Each of the three adaptive behavioural strategies is supported by a distinct neural circuit involving the ANS.

1. Immobilization (feigning death in mammals, in humans we observe a behavioural shutdown, frequently accompanied by very weak muscle tone...heart rate and breathing slows, and blood pressure drops.- dependent on the oldest branch of the vagus nerve (unmyelinated meaning without a covering /sheath))

2. Mobilization (fight-flight behaviours..depending on the sympathetic NS, -increase metabolic activity, faster heart rate...)

3. Social communication or social engagement (facial expression, vocalisation, listening, dependent on the myelinated vagus which fosters calm behavioural states by inhibiting the influence of the sympathetic nerves system on the heart).

Through the process of evolution, neural circuits in the brain that were originally involved in freezing behaviours were modified to serve intimate social needs.

Porges developed a simple narrative to describe the unique autonomic and behavioural features of mammals.

As mammals evolved, their survival was dependent on satisfying a need to interact for nursing and for other forms of social interactions and group behaviours linked to obtaining food, reproducing, playing and supporting general safety needs. The new mammalian vagus was able to turn off defensive systems.

However, to balance the needs of social interaction with the needs for safety, it is necessary to know when to turn the defences off and when to turn the defences back on.

In our society this is a major issue. When are we safe to be in the arms of another? ..to go to work? ..to sleep?...
People have difficulties turning off their defence systems. They can't be hugged.

According to Porges all these symptoms are features of the ANS that can only occur when the Myelinated vagal system isn't appropriately regulating the sympathetic and unmyelinated vagal components of the ANS.

Over time, these brain structures grew receptors for this neuropeptide. Oxytocin is released during the birth process and nursing. It is also released to establish social bonds, and allows us to enjoy the comfort of an embrace without fear. But if our nervous system identifies someone as dangerous, no oxytocin is released and we struggle against the attempted embrace.

Immobilization without fear, because for mammals, immobilisation is potentially lethal. So mammals are always moving, unless they can feel safe with another. The 'good' (immobilisation without fear) requires the co-opting of neural pathways involved in (immobilisation with fear) with neuropeptides such as oxytocin*. This system enables women to birth without fainting, enables people to cuddle and hug without problems, and women to breast feed without having to move.

* oxytocin -a hormone released by the pituitary gland - plays a role in pair bonding, associated with empathy , trust, sexual reproduction

Porges asserts physical and mental illness may be a consequence of an adherence to Rene Descartes' dictum "I think, therefore I am" - which entrenched a train wreck philosophy in western culture of emphasising thought at the expense of feelings.

Not respecting the body's own responses and filtering visceral feelings, over time may contribute to illness by dampening the bi directional neural feedback between brains and body.

We focus on words and cognitive representations and minimise bodily responses and feelings to define safety. Being 'safe' is really the body's response to the environment, it does not sit with cognitive skills to define safety.

Our socialisation process work hard to dismiss the body's responses to environmental features.

Music, movement and dance in a Biodanza session provide a contrasting environment by which the moment to moment experiences of the body's responses appear (without necessarily having to dismiss or accept).

An in-depth exploration of these findings are important and relate to the theory and practise of Biodanza and the importance of acknowledging all bodily sensations.

Porges points to a skill set of learning how to regulate your visceral state in the presence of others, to be able to reciprocally interact and to regulate each other to feel good.

“A goal of society is to be able to immobilise without fear, for people not to remain tightly wrapped, anxious and defensive. You want people to be embraced without fear, and to be hugged and to hug others, to conform physically when embraced, and to be reciprocal in their relationships”

If a person is tightly wrapped with tense muscles, they are conveying this state of defensiveness to others. This is an adaptive state to prepare an individual to move or fight. This state unambiguously conveys to others that it is not ‘safe’ to be in close proximity with this person.

The embodied experience is critical to humans, because being interactive with others is critical for human survival. As we move from infants requiring care the maturing shifts from safety and food to facilitating our physiological state, which we experience as emotional and behavioural regulation through our social interactions with friends and loved ones.

Social interactions facilitate neurobiological processes. We reciprocally send cues to each others nervous systems, characterised by transmitting cues of safety or danger whether to be safe in the arms of another or retreat and protect ourselves.

Play

Porges stresses a few more important findings with this 'counsel'
Many people who have uncomfortable experiences do not in a sense ,
respect the uncomfortable bodily reactions until it's too late and they
can no longer control their behaviour.
We get the signals, we do not respect them.

Something as simple as slight shifts to posture can change how we
react to the world, how we organise thoughts, and how we motivate
ourselves.

Once we easily engage the social engagement system, we are free to
mobilise without being in flight or fight. Rather we can move and play.
Play turns off defensiveness by maintaining face to face social
referencing. Play uses the social engagement system to signal that the
intentionality of the movements is not dangerous or hurtful.

Prior to reading his work, I admit to associating play more aligned to a
beginners session.

The work of Porges, has helped me appreciate more fully the role of
play in every Biodanza session through each stage of progressivity .

Hearing

The vagal nerve affects:

- facial muscles and thus the ability to make communicative facial expressions.
- the larynx and thus vocal tone and vocal patterning, helping humans create sounds that soothe one another.
- the middle ear, which filters out background noises to make it easier to hear the human voice.

Dr. Tomatis commenced work in the 1950's as a ear, nose, throat physician in Paris, culminating in the development of the 'electronic ear' he is famous for)

The work of Porges confirms Tomatis' findings from decades ago.

According to Tomatis, muscles are influenced by emotional processes, If emotions trigger for eg "i want to hear more of this voice because it sounds so melodious and warm", the middle ear unconsciously contracts.

The frequency components of the human voice lie in the middle and higher tonal range. Tensing the middle ear muscles and eardrum amplifies and transmits these medium and high tones to the inner ear. The voice stands out amongst deeper ambient sounds. This explains our capacity to hear the voice of our interlocutor despite a wild babble of voices. Our stomach and brain says 'yes' to the other persons voice and our middle ear muscles tense correctly.

Tomatis' findings were: the voice contains frequencies of overtones only as are equivalently perceived by the ear. For example, the average deterioration of older peoples hearing ability with regard to high frequencies. As a result the overtones of their voice are reduced.

He built a device with amplifiers and filters, recording voices, making adjustments, allowing singers to listen to their 'altered' voice. It worked, verifying the feedback loop between hearing and voice and resulted in the second finding: If a person is given the opportunity to normally hear frequencies that were not well heard anymore, those frequencies immediately and unconsciously appear again in the voice. He established that the human ear is most sensitive to the tonal range between 1000 and 5000 hz. Very deep and very high tones have to be significantly emphasised so that the human ear can perceive them at all.

This is where the 2 small middle ear muscles between the eardrum and inner ear that regulate the eardrums tension play an important role - we use these 2 muscles all the time. For example if we suddenly hear a loud noise, we will be immediately wide awake, our heartbeat accelerates and move quickly to determine the cause.

Returning to the ANS and Porges. The sympathetic nervous system is the stress mediator that triggers interest, desire and curiosity. These muscles, controlled by the ANS, then tense the eardrum. i.e. the ears are 'pricked up'. Similarly to the stretched membrane of a drum, higher tones are now better transmitted to the inner ear and brain. We become attentive, awake and alert. Our heartbeat and respiratory rhythm then become perfectly synchronised and the face takes on a lively tension.

The primary function of the ear is to convert sound, which is a nutrient, to electrical waves (energy) that charges the brain which in turn energises the entire nervous system. The quality of an individual's listening ability affects communication, thereby shaping their (social) development.

When Rolando proposed that the practise of Biodanza rehabilitates... the active process of listening can be restored or enhanced by prescribing music and sounds rich in (high) frequencies. This awakens the intellect and enhances the desire and motivation to listen, with the whole body.

We have established the direct links between sound, the ear and the body. Therefore, stimulating the ear with nutrient sounds not only affects communication, it also leads to improved balance co ordination and motor functions. Body posture straightens , the capacity for deep breathing returns along with an overall increase in energy levels.

The nervous system is focused on communication and contact!
In the practise of facilitation, when you are listening where is your attention ?



Voice - The Vivencia of Voice

“Music can name the unnameable and communicate the unknowable”
Leonard Bernstein.

“We speak not with our vocal chords and tongues, but with and through our body. Non verbal components of our speaking - pitch, rhythm, speed, volume and how bodily drives are discharged.”

Julia Kristen, a Bulgarian philosopher claims that all ‘drive energy’ has its source in bodily organs and its aim is the satisfaction of desires. The voice produced by the vocal cords (vocal folds) located in the larynx reflect the state of a persons wellbeing.

Singing and chanting. When you open up to chant or sing in deep, resonant lower belly tones, you also open up your chest (heart and lungs), mouth and throat, in pleasurable stimulation of the many serpentine branches of the vagus nerve. Vagal activity can be altered.

The following is quoted directly from translated works of Sergio Cruz on Voice and Biodanza.

‘when the spoken word is provoked by emotion it transforms itself into a true dance. Voice cannot be isolated from integrated movement, in which pelvic abdominal, diaphragmatic, pectoral, cervical and oral segments flow integrated and freely, extending themselves in resonance to the arms, hands, legs and feet.’

A very personal story

I remember vividly the first time I called out my sister Edwina's name in babble language. Her name became ding ding to me!

My parents immersed their seven children in a sensory world of word acquisition. Acquiring and practising a vast vocabulary was a daily practise, whether my head bobbed securely wrapped on my mums back as she worked the land, planting food and flowers, or sat me on the rhythm of the ground when the African dancers and drums welcomed her medical attention.

Each mornings embrace, with my face between mums breasts, and my arms wrapped around her soft belly - I learnt the words of affection, and I have 'loved' words ever since.

Food shared around a picnic rug or dinner table was digested with conversation, humour, laughter - always together with other needy mouths, until good-night kisses of thanks for the small rations of food, and exchanges of what was memorable in the day. Everyday was a birthday, so celebrating the day you were born wasn't necessary.

Through the passage of life's experiences, words seduced me, momentarily held by a sea breeze, old tree, birds in flight, crackling fire, and eluded me most when thought translated into words vocalised in front of an audience.

A stand out feature of this passage was the thwarting of sound - 'you laugh too loud', 'you sound awful', 'whisper so no one can hear', 'you sound too posh'. In hushing sound, I swallowed the words.

My practise of Biodanza surfaced a visceral tension - a juxtaposition. On the one hand my vivencial experience in the dance as a participant is a relief not to have to speak. As a facilitator, finding the words that give passage to dancers - erhmm !

UNTIL participating in the "Vivencia of voice extension in Norway with Sergio Cruz, in June 2018".

Existentially I ventured to Norway to find MY SOUND again, my voice, revive my words, secretly holding up hope for a little magic.

What the experience found was an affectionate resonance in my body, to transcend beyond the need for words - the deepest capacity to listen, the natural courage without hesitation, (similar to a toddler's impulse to rise off the ground and step forward) a repertoire of sounds that make words available to flow - to give rise to a new world.!

Biodanza transports me to a place that feels like 'home' - wherever I practise it in the world - The vivencia of voice has the potential to give rise to a new world!

Teaching my shadow to dance

Michelle Troop



Archetypes

“Biodanza contains in its conception the legacy of a wisdom that was lost over time, and that was the essential intuition of the people at the dawn of humanity” Rolando Toro.

The term ‘archetype’ has its origins in ancient Greek. The root words archein (original or old) and typos (pattern, model or type). Combined, “original pattern” of which all other similar persons, objects or concepts are derived, modelled or emulated.

Carl Jung (Swiss psychologist) used the concept of archetype in his theory of the human psyche. He believed that universal mythical characters - archetypes reside within the collective unconsciousness of people the world over. Archetypes represent fundamental human motifs of our experience as we evolved; consequently they evoke deep emotions.

An archetype in itself is neither good nor evil; they are the patterns of our own human nature. Jung sees each archetype as consisting of both a bright side (an aspect that we readily claim as a part of ourselves and a dark or ‘shadow’ side, which remains in darkness,) and like a shadow persists in trailing us everywhere we go. Both aspects are equally important. This does not mean that the bright side is ‘good’ and the shadow side ‘evil’. Jung took the idea that all matter can be neither created nor destroyed. Therefore those feelings, impulses, which we repress do not simply go away, but remain with us in our unconscious. And as such, if repressed they are always ready to surface at the most unhappy times. Those parts of ourselves we reject are often also projected onto others.

Biodanza uses music and dance, (the Minotaur project), the ‘sacralisation of nature -constitutes the legacy of Demeter, the joy of living -through dance, are the legacy of Dionysius’.

Myth Matters

“Myths are sacred narratives. They can be expressed in words, in images and symbols, in drama and dance, in ritual and ceremony.”
Neil Philip.

Myth is a vital element of our cultural inheritance. If we fail to understand it, we fail to understand ourselves.

Joseph Campbell was the foremost authority on mythology. To him, mythology was ‘the song of the universe, the music of the spheres’. They were the ties to our past that helped to understand ourselves and the world around us.

Joseph Campbell had a ‘guiding idea’ of his work - to find ‘the commonality of themes in world myths, pointing to a constant requirement in the human psyche for a centering in terms of deep principles’.

Campbell ‘Furthermore, we have not even to risk the adventure alone, for the heroes of all times have gone before us. The labyrinth is thoroughly known. We have only to follow the thread of the hero path, and where we had thought to find an abomination, we shall find a god. And where we had thought to slay another, we shall slay ourselves. Where we had thought to travel outward, we will come to the centre of our own existence. And where we had thought to be alone, we will be with all the world! ‘

and when an interviewer Bill Moyers asked Campbell “You’re talking about a search for the meaning of life?” JC replied “No, No, No, he said. ‘For the EXPERIENCE of being alive’.

The EXPERIENCE of being alive is the first ‘gesture’ of our identity.

Campbell continues “All over the earth people recognise (certain images), whether reading Polynesian or Iroquois or Egyptian myths, the images are the same and they are talking about the same problems’.



Uluru - the navel of Australia



The Dreaming

I reside in a vast terrain, the land named Australia. The wisdom and myths held by our indigenous peoples have long intrigued me and my encounters with them have shaped a very different appreciation of my Place on this land.

The geographic land mass of Australia is thought of not so much a landmass as a story mass to Aborigines. The land itself is a living myth, the myths give narrative life to the land.

The dreaming - sometimes referred to as the Dreamtime mythology of Aboriginal Australia.

The concept of the Dreaming is central to the spiritual and intellectual life of Australian Aborigines. It used to be known as the Dreamtime, but it is a continuous and ongoing process, rather than something that happened in the remote past.

The Dreaming is the real, eternal present, accessible through ritual, sacred objects, song, dance, storytelling and visual art.

The whole landscape of Australia is alive with the eternal potency of the Dreaming Myths tell of the wanderings across the land of the First People in a time when the world was still malleable and in a state of creation. These ancestral beings were asleep in the primal world. When they awoke they shaped human beings and a landscape in which they could live; then they transformed themselves into geographical features.

Dreamings are always intimately tied in with the landscape - placed within it. The actions of the First People infused the land with their spiritual essence, their djang, and it is this that makes the land alive.

The sacred geography of Australia converges on Uluru, a large sandstone rock formation in the Northern Territory. It is perceived as the centre from which all the dreaming tracks in the Dreaming radiate. These are the 'songlines' that trace the travels of the central beings. Thought of as the sinews, bones and internal organs of the living body of Australia, of which Uluru is the navel, not the heart. It is regarded by the Aborigines as a great storehouse of spiritual power, or djang.

David Abram explains this eloquently; "the dreamtime is a kind of time out of time, before the world itself was entirely awake (a time that still exists just below the surface of wakeful awareness) - that dawn when the totem Ancestors first emerged from their slumber beneath the ground and began to sing their way across the land in search of food, shelter, and companionship.

The earth itself was still in a malleable, half awake state, and as Kangaroo Dreaming Man (the ancestral progenitor not only of kangaroos but of all humans). Tortoise woman, and innumerable other Ancestors wandered singing, across its surface, they shaped that surface by their actions, forming plains where they lay down, creeks or waterholes.

Eventually having found an appropriate location from the work of world shaping, each of the Ancestors went 'back in' transforming into some physical aspect of the land, and / or metamorphosing into the planet or animal species from which he takes his name.

These trails, or dreaming tracks, are auditory as well as visible and tactile phenomena, for the Ancestors were singing the names of things and places into the land as they wandered through it.

Meandering 'songlines'

Every Ancestor, while chanting his or her way across the land during the Dreamtime, also deposited a trail of 'spirit children' taking the line of their footsteps. These 'life cells' are children not yet born, they lie in a kind of potential state within the ground, waiting.

While sexual intercourse is thought by traditional Aboriginal persons, to prepare the woman for conception, the actual conception is assumed to occur much later, when the already pregnant woman is out of her daily round gathering roots and edible grubs, and she happens to step upon (or even near) a song couplet. The 'spirit child' lying beneath the ground at that spot slips up into her at that moment. Wherever the woman finds herself when she feels the quickening - the first kick within her womb - she knows that a spirit child has just leapt into her body from the earth. And so she notes the precise place in the land and reports this to the tribal Elders. The Elders examine the land at that spot and discern which stanzas* of that ancestors song will belong to the child.

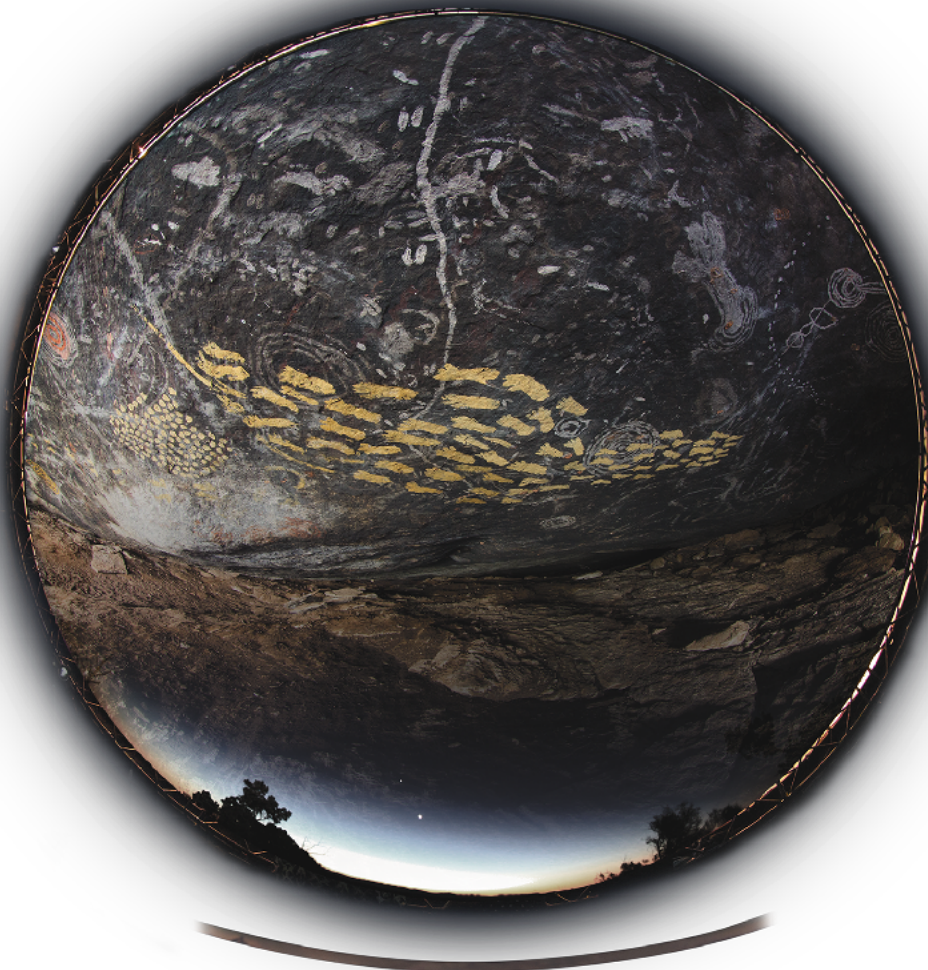
*stanzas -.. a smaller unit within a poem or a verse within a song.

In this manner every Aboriginal person, at birth inherits a particular stretch of song as his private property, his conception site. A place on the earth itself where he most belongs, and his essence is indistinguishable from that terrain.

Language, song, story, chanting, shapes and features of land and animals are inseparable. All linked with the song line. The song structure carries the memory of how to orient in the land, provide codes of behaviour for the community (social taboos, customs, the right way to hunt or gather medicines and food) - all contained within the land itself.

Unique to native peoples, and specifically Aborigines of Australia who found themselves corporeally immersed in just such a linguistic-topological field, walking through a material landscape whose every feature was already resonant with speech and song.

“For diverse Aboriginal peoples of Australia - as for numerous indigenous oral cultures, - the coherence of human language is inseparable from the coherence of the surrounding ecology.. It is the animate earth that speaks; human speech is but a part of that vaster discourse.”



Identity - Ubuntu

The writer (of mixed ethnicity) with an African ancestry explores African philosophy. My readings have facilitated a bonding of ancestry, my family narratives and an appreciative inquiry of the link to 'life at the centre' (the biocentric principle).

For this exploration we turn to Prof. Mogobe B Ramose's writings, African philosophy through Ubuntu (1999).

Three themes in the African way of thought that differ to western thought are:

The basic concept of vital force; differing from the basic concept of being prevalent in western philosophy.

The prevailing role of the community, differing from individualism.

The belief in spirits, differing from the scientific and rationalistic way of thought.

The stem - ntu expresses the concept of vital force in many Bantu languages, also in ubu-ntu.

To reduce ubuntu to the saying "I am because we are" as so frequently happens, is too schematic. The "I" and "We" is different to the African ubuntu way of thinking.

For a clearer explanation, we refer to Ramose's book organised around three proverbs or aphorisms, (taken from the language of the Northern Sotho).

The first aphorism, 'motto ke motto ka batho' can be understood as a simplification of ubuntu. According to Ramose it expresses the central idea of African philosophical anthropology. It means more specifically; 'to be human is to affirm one's humanity by recognising the humanity of others and, on this basis establish respectful human relations with them'.

The second aphorism, 'Feta kyoto o tshware motho' ...if and when one is faced with a decisive choice between (one's own) wealth and the preservation of the life of another human being, then one should opt for the preservation of life'. Life or life force is the highest value, which determines also the relations between human beings.

The third is about kingship and ...'that the king owes his status, including all the powers associated with it, to the will of the people under him'.

Ubuntu has aspects that reach further than the contents of these 3 proverbs. It shows how the be - ing of an African person is not only imbedded in the community, but in the universe as a whole. Expressed in the prefix -ubu - of the word ubuntu. It refers to the universe as being enfolded, containing everything. The stem - ntu - means the process of life as the unfolding of the universe by concrete manifestations in different forms and modes of being. This process includes the emergence of the speaking and knowing human being.

'We' and prevailing role of the community in African theory and practise. The answer to the question "how is your wife doing" can be answered "we have died last month". Not only the living members of a family or village are joined together in a community by a language of 'we' and a feeling of 'we', but also those who have passed away and who are present as spirits.

Joseph Nyasani from Kenya "The whole African society, living and living - dead, is a living network of relations almost like that between the various parts of an organism. When one part of the body is sick the whole body is affected. When one member of a family or clan is honoured or successful, the whole group rejoices and shares the glory, not only psychologically (as one would rejoice when the local football team has won a match), but ontologically, each member of the group is really part of the honour".

According to Nyasani, even those who have not yet been born belong to the spiritual whole of the community. The 'we' of the living members of the community are part of a flow of life that is passing through them from the past and to the future.

In the notions of ubuntu a person is a person in the community and through the others of his or her community. This implies a culture of mutual help, of caring for and sharing with each other. This is not only expressed in the African languages, it is also practised by talking to each other, by means of dialogues. Of course this culture should not be understood in an idealised way. But in spite of envy/hatred, and struggles between members of a community, every member can rely on support from somebody of the extended family when in trouble or in danger of life.

and staying with African (identity), relationships and language that link to theory of the Biodanza system..

K.C. Anyanwu from Nigeria (1987), writes in an article, 'The idea of art in African thought' that the universe as a whole is 'sound'. Like in the unfolding of ubu - by - ntu , the cosmic sound is taken over and differentiated on earth. The human beings participate in this process of continuing the cosmic sound on earth and of answering it by making it explicit.

The most prominent answer to the music of the universe is dance.

Dancing is participating in the vibration of all that is and giving expression to it in a common and personal manner. That is the realm for an esthetical # interpretation of the world in African thought , closely related to ethics and to all forms of behaviour. A good action has to be a beautiful action as well, showing some elegance. The concept that connects aesthetics and ethics is that of harmony. Besides music and dancing, oral literature and story telling ...are important expressions of a thoroughly esthetical world view.

Human persons are part of a universal interplay of forces through the communities in which they live, and they are in close and permanent connection with the spiritual world of those who have passed away and those who are yet to be born.”

#esthetical; refers to beauty or appreciation of the beautiful; especially from a philosophical point of view - sometimes spelled aesthetic.



In every organism there is this symbiosis between it and its environment.

Humans are tuned for relationships and this relational view of cognition makes it a social phenomenon.

“Human ecology is generated within the network of relationships among human beings. Where the lines of human potential intersect these potentials are either reciprocally fecundated (fertilised) or they are blocked or inhibited. Humans are the most powerful cofactors because the relationships they generate take place on all levels: organic, vivencial, and noetic *(noetic, relating to intellect) P36 of Biodanza workbook.

In no other way is this magnified so, as a group of people that arrive to participate in a Biodanza session.

“Biodanza is a system of affective integration, organic renovation and re learning of the original life functions, based on vivencias induced by dance, music, singing and situations of encounter in a group”.

The Group - matrix out of which something grows

“The group is a ‘biogenerator’, a life generating centre.

In page 6 of notes, Methodology V, the dynamics of the Biodanza group..

makes clear the Biodanza approach is radically different to any other ‘technique of group psychodynamic from other kinds of therapy.’ ‘the concept of therapy in Biodanza, does not take symptoms (pathos) as a starting point, but starts from the healthy part of people. reinforcing the healthy aspects and developing human potential through the five lines of vivencia’.

This is consistent with the theory and methodology and the intent is clear.

AND

Our daily lives as languaging beings rest somewhere in the haze (between the primordial cry and the possibility of laying on the psychiatrists couch!).

We converge in the space of a Biodanza session with varied levels of integration of these 5 lines (vitality, affectivity, creativity, transcendence, sexuality) AND our histories or pathology - the shadows, murkiness.

The Biodanza process is one of progressively, pulsating along a vertical axis with the need for optimum conditions to fully express genetic potential.

The group is an arena for transformation. What is being transformed? Making present an emotional experience in the here and now.

Unlike a sensuous object, an emotional experience cannot be seen, tasted, smelled, or touched. It is an unknown 'thing in itself'. We make access of it through the transformations we make or perform from it moment to moment. The name and the thing named are not the same. I do not just feel, understand or know something new, I become something new - new information is available to me.

In Biodanza we call this vivencia. Vivencia with others participating in the arena.

The facilitator "intervenes" in a unique way because something more is also arising through the stages of progressivity and integration .

It amounts to a sixth sense required of a Biodanza facilitator - the capacity to register and attend to the quality of emotional experiences she becomes aware of in herself.

Apprehension, uncertainty, lack of confidence, irritation, anxiety, pressure to do/not do or say/not say something, joy, the feeling of being on the receiving end of expectations or feelings from others; curiosity, admiration, envy, dislike.

This attention to her own emotional experiences includes attention to the (corresponding or contrasting) experiences of the group as a whole and individually.

The intent to create optimum conditions within the space of the Biodanza practise cannot preclude a global awareness of other forces at play by the facilitator in group culture that may impact integration of the group.

W Bion* offers a theory about “group culture”. The group evolves a structure of roles, rules, in order to contain the anxiety of the unknown and the responses which, unconsciously, are mobilised to defend against that unknown.

The unknown is at the same time what is unknown and feared in each of us, and what is unknown in the realities we engage with” (in our interactions).

This ‘unknown’ could potentially be a wisdom lost..or not visible to us!
Wilfred Bion (to 1979) British psychoanalyst of group processes
“Experiences in groups”. His writings are related to work groups



Role Theory

(Acknowledgement to Arnold Mindell, father of Process Orientated Psychology, a physicist and Jungian analyst. Mindell's work has enabled the paradigm shift in psychology from Newtonian to Einsteinium/Quantum thinking. And to Myrna Lewis, Lewis Deep Democracy).

Roles. The first law of group dynamics. The factions or roles in a group call on people to fill them. Roles usually have longer lives than people and are different. An individual can assume all the possible roles in a group. For example, mother father and child in a family. Cultural and biological processes tend to create roles, but the freedom to be an individual enables any of us to fill any role we need to. Thus, at a given moment, the man, woman, or child could be the father or mother.

Mindell takes the colloquial term like role, but it means something different. Role is anything that exists, a basic unit of energy translated into opinion, emotion physical symptom, human dynamics. We cannot get rid of the roles or parts of a group, and the role is beyond the person.

All human interaction can be described in terms of Role Theory. A role can be a thought, an idea, a point of view, an emotion, a physical symptom or an archetype (Arnold Mindell).

Added to this; 'time' is a man made phenomenon. In reality there is no 'time', therefore all the roles that ever were and will ever be are in the now.

Part of the energy field means that we have all the roles (energies) that are in the world within us. However, we consciously identify with certain roles.

“There are ways of resisting or escaping from the meeting with the unknown, and ways to meet the unknown. We detect elements in the emergence of imagery, or dreams of myth, within a group, commentators have called 'serious play'.

Play Imagery, dreams or myth are woven through the dances in Biodanza.

“Myths give us an immense overview, portraying the catastrophes and joys life as internal conflicts of the awakening global organism. But these tales do not tell us how to facilitate global processes in order to minimise human suffering.“ Mindell

'Heaven and hell are within us, and all the gods are within us. This is the great realisation of the Upanishads of India in the ninth century B.C. All the gods, all the heavens, all the worlds, are within us. They are magnified dreams, and dreams are manifestations in image form of the energies of the organs of the body in conflict with each other. This organ wants this, that organ wants that. The brain is one of the organs.'

And here Campbell gives us a clue to energies that have existed long before quantum science offered up an explanation - tensions and conflict.

We have neither training nor experience in life to be attuned to characterising this dilemma and 'tensions' in group dynamics with the vivencial process.

Mindell realised that body experiences and symptoms mirror dreams and are meaningful expressions of the unconscious. He used the term 'dreaming body' to identify the numinous underlying process expressing itself through both dream and the body. The dream, the living unconscious in its momentary expression is found in every aspect of our lives.

All experiences, when approached with curiosity and respect, reveal an inner order and coherence that can bring new information vital for our personal and collective growth.

Elsewhere in this paper we have noted the body as being an energetic entity (beyond the boundaries of the skin). It is inseparable from a vast energetic field - these vibrations are invisible to us.

The energy everywhere resonates with the energy of our bodies, creating an unconscious alignment.

We give negative feedback to change so automatically, unconsciously and rapidly that we think maintaining stability is a natural law. Disturbers can be ignored by the group (repressed) momentarily, however must soon deal with the syndromes or a major illness. In the process work Mindell proposes, these disturbances are amplified, by increasing awareness of them; for they are always the secret to change.

What is not proposed is that Biodanza facilitators become (biodanza) therapists - that is inconsistent with the theory and the vivencial methodology. What I do propose is to investigate the Deep Democracy methodology (and fit) as part of a developmental program - to support facilitators to recognise what's at play within themselves and the group that may inhibit integration.

Bion, We have a combined wisdom which is extraneous to the little that each one of us knows, by analogy like individual cell bodies in the domain which is bordered by our skins. There is something by which this combined wisdom makes itself felt to more people at the same time.

We like to think that our ideas (or experiences) are our personal property, but unless we can make our contribution available to the rest of the group there is little chance of mobilising the collective wisdom of the group which may have the potential to lead to progressivity and integration.

The group also potentially embodies a collective wisdom, a multiplicity of resources, centres of awareness, which may feed what any individual has been able to discern and communicate.

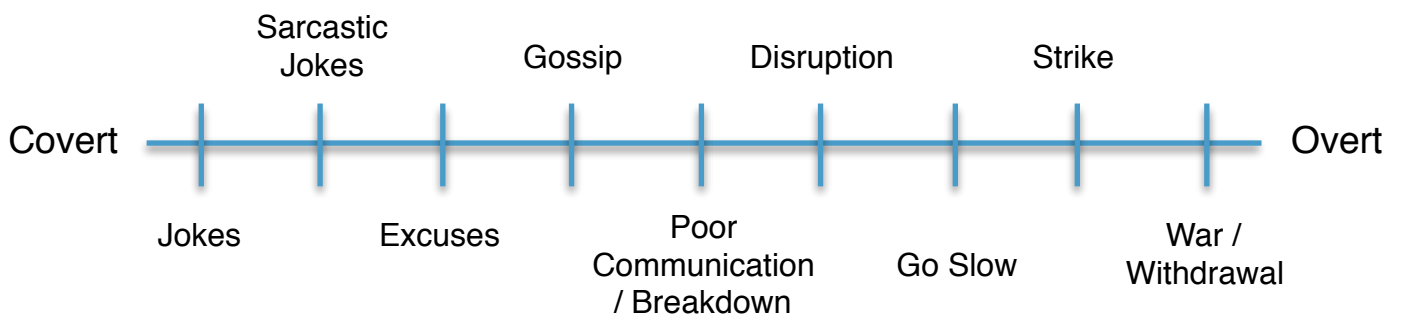
'Something' rests below what's visible- beneath the surface, the unused capacity noted on page one.

How is this 'felt' in the energy of a group.

Bion The group resists the very opportunities for transformation which its own resourcefulness provides. Each individual moreover, shares in this resistance. He implies, the resistance does not only spring from one's being a group member. The resistance in the group resonates with the resistance in the individual, under the guise of protecting something felt as personal, belonging only to oneself; my idea, my experience, my thought.

What's at play? Lewis and the work of Deep Democracy (LDD) offers this explanation. LDD describes the importance of developing awareness of and appreciation for all levels of experience that rests in the unconscious, where the wisdom and potential is.

The line of resistance. (Acknowledgement to Lewis Deep Democracy; - subject to copyright) from Covert to Overt (reading from left to right).



This is a graphic illustration of the stages of resistance present in individuals and amplified in group behaviour.

In group dynamics Mindell and Lewis affirm that of roles and fields. We cannot get rid of the roles or parts of a group, and the role is beyond the person.

Energetic field; everything that exists is energy, a vague atmosphere that we sense with our feelings, fantasies and hallucinations.

There is an awareness of emotional experience in the group, that is unfocused and inchoate; that it may not be possible to put into words and may betray itself in behaviour; compounded of feelings of excitement, expectancy, despair, loss of control or emptiness, an 'unborn idea' waiting to be formulated.

What does Lewis propose in Deep Democracy, (with adaptation for a Biodanza session)?

Before the start of the Biodanza ceremony, and in a circle, by invitation, 'Check In'; introduce your name, express the 'essential' of how you feel in the moment and if you wish, express the part that doesn't want to be here.

A slightly different proposal is to express by way of some kind of movement (without words) how one feels in the moment.

An alternative proposal is a conversation with our feet, using the 'soft shoe shuffle' .*

Here a person is invited to say (or move in such a way that expresses) how they feel and people move either closer or further away depending on whether they feel similarly, and wait until another has a different view or movement to express that may be a little different, and so on.

Movement is encouraged between different views; and I particularly enjoy how the soft shoe shuffle provides a canvas from which to see and feel what's alive in the space. So I can be tired and excited and a little uncertain, and joyful. There is a flow and movement early with potential to orient the group to their experience of vivencia.

When facilitating groups it is important to listen to the comments and movements as an expression of the roles present and emerging (not critical judgements of the person). Another opportunity for a facilitator to practise neutrality and make appropriate adjustments in the vivencia to support group and affective integration.

A check in gives a snapshot of the prevailing field, although that will not be in plain view necessarily. The check in need not obtrude on our experience. On the contrary it supports a safe space to verbally express 'what's alive' in the moment.

And remembering the work of Porges, creating a safe environment is a basis for people to engage socially.

The opportunity afforded the facilitator is to model listening, and to 'summarise the field' - whats present in the moment. The facilitator practises neutrality - not taking on stories or judgement...simply listening. When roles become more fluid this process supports my idea of the facilitator and participants growing closer in their shared experience. In contrast to a facilitator being a 'teacher' . We may have access to a greater wisdom.

* soft shoe shuffle - Credit and copyright acknowledgement to Lewis Deep Democracy.

We grow an identity shaped by infinite variables, circumstances and events.

The optimum conditions to rehabilitate humanity is a reverence for life and all that emanates from that principle.

Languaging, as a process of living, elevates how our physiology and emotional health is expressed through language, sound and gestures within a cultural and historical narrative in this moment.

With integration of authentically expressing how we feel, what we say , and what actions we take we are participating in shifting the consciousness of humanity (latin root of the word “conscire” meaning ‘knowing together’). We evoke the cosmic unconscious.!

We are bound together (entwined) in this social discourse.



Carl Sagan “ Somewhere something incredible is waiting to be known”

Its in the Dreaming, Its in the song line

The writers proposition: To propose a new vision of the world (Biocentric Principle/Biodanza) is to propose new languaging with the potential to give rise to this new world.”

‘Only by means of reverence for life can we establish a spiritual and humane relationship with people and all living creatures within our reach’. Albert Schweitzer, winner of Nobel Peace Prize in 1952.

Biodanza urges us to look up to the stars for our reflection, be in relationship with human and non human species, and open our infinite sensory capacities to listen intently for sounds and messages - our intuition - the spirits of our ancestors and those waiting to be born, the stories encoded in our cells, vibrating to be revealed as we fuse with the cosmos.

“In a world like ours, of hunger.....how could we possibly dance? At first glance it seems inconsequential. However, our proposition is not only to dance, but also to activate, through specific dances, affective and communication potentials connecting us with ourselves, with our fellow human beings, and with nature. Moreover, how can we possibly change the world without changing ourselves?“ Rolando Toro.

“We are a songline in resonance with the Dreaming of ALL and every (thing) vibrating ..

all expression,

all movement,

all dance,

is a living language - in relationship

We are always in resonance and therefore always in relationship.

Gratitude

Deepest gratitude for the sacred lives of these teachers

Alan Rennison (husband) 'structural' coupling with me, and a witness to my life.

Catherine Borgeaud - Biodanza School of Australia (for your courage in breaking new ground).

Doris and Fritz Mamet - (parents) for life, love, deep affection, playfulness, humour and 'breaking the mold for parenting'.

Kate Clement - Biodanza School of Australia, and supervising Director for this Paper (gratitude is not enough!).

My Six Siblings - an affective introduction to a group - matrix from which something grows.

Patricia Apelgren - grandmother - and greatest orator 'the story teller' with heart,

Rolando Toro - founder of Biodanza

Too many 'Others' that I hold in my heart -

The past, present and future dancers I have the pleasure of learning to live fully in the here and now.

There is a notable tension in being selective (judicious), that ideas, pictures, symbols, sounds are lost when words must be shaped onto paper.

Weaving my experience of engagement with the written word, many strangers too became intimate so much so that I take their words, not as my own, simply borrowed so to speak when they have captured the essence of something I have not been able to convey but felt.

With integrity I therefore offer apologies if references have been made without clear acknowledgement or express permission.

In honest declaration I have not sought the permission from artists whose work is represented here graphically ..

For these reasons and others - this document is confidential and not to be circulated generally electronically or in print without the express written permission of the writer, except to those recipients related to the work of IBF and to meet the requirements of becoming a Facilitator of Biodanza.

With love, Linda Rennison 2019, Australia.

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Prayer of the Student

Don't impose on me what you know
I want to explore the unknown
And be the source of my own discoveries.
Let the known be my liberation, not my slavery.

The world of your truth can be my limitation;
Your wisdom, my negation.
Don't instruct me; let's learn together.
Let my richness begin where yours ends.

Show me so that I can stand
On your shoulders.
Reveal yourself so that I can be
Something different.

You believe that every human being
Can love and create.
I understand, then, your fear
When I ask you to live according to your wisdom.

You will not know who I am
By listening to yourself.
Don't instruct me; let me be.
Your failure is that I be identical to you.

The book by Humberto Maturana *El Sentido de lo Humano* (Dolmen Ediciones, Santiago de Chile, 1994) includes a poem titled

"Plegaria del Estudiante"
Prayer of the Student

A note by the translator Marcial F. Losada "I have clumsily translated and abbreviated (for which I ask for Humberto's forgiveness)."
I offer it in this commentary as a reflection on how we can live and learn together:

my unfinished poem

Words float in amniotic fluid
birth themselves anew

with every encounter
some stay forever
linger longer
vanish like a cloud.

Words elude us in the here and now
fleetingly like butterflies
appearing in our dreams and dances
in the eyes of the other
encrypted in each Cell
a paintbrush
a musical note
the stars

Words prize open hardened hearts
to humour and play

Linda Rennison
Australia - the land of the Dreaming