

## NUMEN OF THE FLESH

by Cedrus Monte

**According to Jung, the experience of the numinous is primary to healing. The numen is often understood as a spiritual agent arising outside of the individual, as in the descent of the Holy Spirit to the Apostles. The author posits a parallel approach: Because of the nature of matter, as seen through particle physics, molecular biology and physiology, matter can also be a source of the numinous experience; this, in particular reference to the matter of the body. The author conducts courses in movement from which case material is here included.**

*Key Words: numen, body, movement, electron, psyche*

### NUMEN OF THE FLESH: OVERVIEW

*For one who has spent so much time in the Absolute,  
perhaps embodiment and reconnecting with instinct and feelings  
is the resurrection.* Course Participant.

The numen, according to Jung, is that which offers the real healing. Following Jung's lead, I propose that the flesh, the *materia* of the body, contains its own capacity for generating the numen, and therefore the experience of healing. The numen arises out of the flesh as a direct result of the very nature of matter itself. In other words, there is no split between spirit and matter. Every natural system has an inner life, a conscious center, from which action is directed. The body, the *materia* of the flesh, is one of these natural systems.

### THE FLESH

The collective unconscious contains not only the residues of human evolution but also the residues of animal evolution. Coming to terms with the unconscious – that is, becoming conscious – requires, therefore, a coming to terms with one's instinctual, animal nature. Given that one's instinctual nature is directly related to the body, one can propose that a new relation to one's body must be established for a more complete individuation.

Though Jung was deeply concerned with the question of instincts, the body itself was and continues to be largely marginalized in psychoanalytic practice. Wilhelm Reich, colleague of Freud and Jung at the turn of the last century, was the only real proponent of somatic inquiry, of working directly with, on and through the body. Unfortunately, he

was rarely taken seriously. He was often mocked and sorely excluded from the formulation of psychodynamic understanding within the context of analysis and the unconscious. It is to Reich that many of the body-oriented approaches to the psyche owe their debt of existence, including Reichian therapy and bio-energetics. From the perspective of analytical psychology, this important work still remains in the shadows.

Considering the negative, pathological effects generated by the relative split of body and mind, it feels important if not imperative to offer skillful ways and means of affirming the irrevocable and harmonizing relationship between the instinctual, animal body and the archetypal, spiritual impulses of mind. To begin this task, I first offer a brief discussion on the nature of numen and matter. This is followed by contributions from participants involved in the somatic work I conduct. Finally, I include personal observations from my own somatic experiences.

## NUMEN

In his letter dated August 20, 1949, Jung says it is the numen which offers “the real therapy, and inasmuch as you attain to the numinous experiences you are released from the curse of pathology.” (Jung, 1973, 8/20/49)

Jung refers to the numen as “a dynamic agency or effect not caused by an arbitrary act of will. On the contrary, it seizes and controls the human subject....The *numinosum* - whatever its cause may be - is an experience of the subject independent of his will....The *numinosum* is the influence of an invisible presence that causes a peculiar alteration of consciousness.” (Jung, 1989, Par. 6)

In addition to the qualities listed above, the experience of the numen carries with it a fateful sense of meaning. It is not just a random or superficial experience but, as with the phenomenon of synchronicity, there is an understanding that the experience carries particular and personal meaning. One gains insight, often profound insight. Most frequently, insight and numen are one. Both are accompanied by experiences of surprise, shock, wonder, awe; both leave us feeling different in our skin.

Perhaps the visitation of the numen is most often understood as a descent of the Spirit to humankind, a transpersonal visitation from “above” that floods the body and mind with its presence. An event in which this is celebrated, for example, is Pentecost, a commemoration of the descent of God the Holy Spirit to the Twelve Apostles granting them the sudden and miraculous gift of tongues.

In contradistinction - not opposition - to this view, I propose as the main thesis of this inquiry that the numen is contained by and released from the flesh itself; that the numen is a presence within and as the material body. The flesh, the body, is not only the receiving vessel of the numen but, by the nature of matter itself, the body is also the generator for the experience of the *numinosum*. By addressing the body, *through* the body, we can experience the “peculiar alteration of consciousness” that is available to us

when we are grounded in somatic experience and informed by the numen of the flesh. We have the opportunity to free ourselves from the “curse of pathology” and to further our course of individuation through the consciousness of the body itself.

## THE NATURE OF MATTER, THE NATURE OF FLESH

### Glimpse I: The Electron

What is it about matter, including the matter of body, that would inspire such thinking, that is, the notion that the numen is contained in and released from matter or flesh? In his masterwork, *The Unknown Spirit*, physicist Jean Charon attempts to answer such physical and metaphysical questions.

Charon’s work has guided us to the discovery that all life, including our own bodies, is made up of electrons. In this electron space-time continuum, there is a memory of past events that continuously and endlessly empowers and enriches not only what we call our mind, but every single cell of our being, in the very electrons that combine to make us who and what we are.

To this end, Charon explains that electrons, examples in particle physics of the “building blocks” of life, are able to exchange informational or spiritual content with each other in the ever-continuous flow of life’s evolution. He portrays the electron as a veritable micro-universe. In this micro-universe, phenomena take place with what is called increasing negative entropy, that is, electrons continually *increase* their informational or spiritual content. In Charon’s words:

“As time flows, Spirit increases its order within each electron. It has no choice in this: it consists of a space in which order cannot decrease...The electron does not consider this constant increase as an aim in itself, in other words the object of evolution, but as a means of *discovering* the objective of evolution...Each electron is like ourselves: as it increases its memorized information, it begins to perceive a new objective and to mould its actions accordingly....That is why we can speak of the spiritual ‘adventure’ of the universe, since Spirit chooses to exist through constantly increasing awareness.” (italics mine) (Charon, 1977, p. 167)

Charon cites as further proof for the spiritual character of the electron the ability of the electrons to form systems with other electrons without any external help, as well as to develop hierarchical orders of ever higher complexity through increased information. Charon claimed that his research into the physics of elementary particles showed that electrons have the ability to store information, that they have a system of remembering and retrieving such information and that they communicate and cooperate with other electrons to create and operate complex systems.

All life is made up of electrons, speculating this as the reason for some people’s recognition of their ability to communicate with all of nature, both animate and

inanimate. In Charon's view, it is the electron that seems to provide the wordless link and language between all creation. "An electron feels the electrostatic influence of another electron whatever the distance between them....Similarly, spiritual interaction between two electrons will be possible whatever the distance." (Charon, 1977, p.64)

Two quantum objects, therefore, once they have been in contact with each other, may be separated by light years, yet if one of the two objects reacts to being measured or observed, the other one, even though light years apart, instantly knows of the transaction and reacts by exhibiting a similar reaction. This fact has been called "inseparability of the quantum object" and has been experimentally verified beyond any doubt.

Finally, Charon believes the electron's journey is our journey, and that this journey goes out into infinity. "We usually call this principle of infinity or eternity, God [the Infinite]....So, for the electron populating the universe, and also for us, the spiritual adventure of the universe is a search for God." (Charon, 1977, p. 168) In the language of this presentation, we might say the very nature of matter, the very nature of flesh itself, is the drive for the experience and expression of the numen; here, making a direct link between "God" and the *numinosum*.

## **Glimpse II: The Cell**

The following comments, like the ones just previous, are of necessity abbreviated. *I am not offering scientific evidence, rather a scientific metaphor.* To that end, the second example suggesting the numen as a presence indigenous within and as the material body is found in Deane Juhan's classic book, *Job's Body: A Handbook for Bodywork*, where he reveals the enormously complex physical and extra-physical systems of the body and the relationship to the psychodynamics of psycho-spiritual health.

Juhan cites recent research made by contemporary biologist Candace Pert. Her research on cell receptors has launched the ongoing discovery of a wide variety of cell membranes whose functions take in and release information, as opposed to food or toxins or other such substances. This information dramatically alters the internal activities of the cell and its functional relationship to the rest of the body. (Juhan, 1998, p. 363) The discovery of cell receptors completely changes the understanding of cell function. It is now understood that rather than merely substances exchanged between cells, there is also information (or spiritual content) exchanged as well.

Pert has called these receptors "tiny eyes, or ears, or taste buds," sensory apparatus that provide the cell information for proper action in relation to the organism's needs. The receptor transmits information "from the surface of a cell deep into the cell's interior, where the message changes the state of the cell dramatically...and can translate to large changes of behavior, physical activity, even mood." (Juhan, 1998, p. 364)

The bonding of particular receptors with cells initiates the experience of a certain feeling state. Moreover, research shows that if the cells of an animal which has experienced a certain feeling state is injected into another animal, the same feeling is incited. These affects include sadness, disgust, anger, joy, fear, surprise. They all appear to have their individual and respective receptors. Pert asserts that these affects are not just the more familiar ones such as fear and anger, or states of pain and pleasure, hunger and thirst. In addition to these measurable and observable emotions and states, she also includes intangible and subjective experiences such as spiritual inspiration, awe, bliss, wonder and other states of consciousness of which we have all had some experience but that have been, up to now, physiologically unexplained. (Juhan, 1998, p. 367-8)

This suggests that there are specific receptors which stimulate or correspond to numinous experiences. Within the cells of flesh, there exists a physical, instinctual dimension, which corresponds directly to the archetypal experience of the numen.

Receptor cells, then, can communicate the numen in the form of bliss, awe, wonder and other similar states of consciousness. In addition, within the cells, within the flesh, is the experience as well as the ability of the experience to “transmigrate,” to be communicated from one separate entity to another. These are the instinctual dimensions of the archetype mediating the arising of the numen, coming not from “above,” but from within and in direct exchange with the material, vegetative substance of life.

“What is also fascinating is that the effects of the receptors are not...exclusively human. All mammals, in fact all species so far observed, have exactly the same...molecules. They are present in creatures that do not even have nervous systems, and indeed are the messengers that even single cell populations use to communicate with each other and organize the collective activities of the colony. Perhaps this is why so many people achieve such a deep and evidently mutual emotional connection with a pet...and why some individuals have such immediate rapport with creatures of all kinds.” (Juhan, 1998, p 367) We share with all of creation, the instinctual impulse to exchange information, including that of the ecstatic and awe-inspiring.

#### **ELECTRON, CELL AND NUMEN: A SUMMARY**

In the examples of electron and cellular receptor, is the essence, the activity, the conductor and the delivery of the numen. In other words, it is the nature of matter itself to embody and transmit the numinous experience. The numen is within the flesh as the flesh, and accessible to us if we allow ourselves the opportunity to discover it. What we might call spiritual content or information, and what is referred to as the infinite, is accessible directly through and as the physical body. Within the paradigm of quantum physics this idea has been described as the notion that every natural system has an inner life, a conscious center, from which action is directed and observed. This is an animism that goes beyond *participation mystique* and brings us into the world of mystics and a shamanism that has become conscious of itself.

Because it is the nature of the electron to continuously increase in consciousness, the nature of matter itself is the desire to be opened to the influx and integration of the unconscious, of the Unknown. The nature of matter, and therefore the body, is the desire to conduct the Infinite. When the body is understood in this way, it can unfold us into the embodied Self. The body *wants* the experience of the numen because the numen is the very thing that is the center and core of its existence.

## **A PERSONALIZED VIEW OF THE NUMEN IN MATTER**

Before presenting individual commentaries from movement participants in relation to this thesis, I would like to introduce a physiological view of the nature of flesh and movement as background to the work I undertake with individuals and groups.

### ***Connective Tissue: Piezoelectric Crystalline Molecules***

The somatic experience is sometimes encountered in hands-on bodywork, sometimes in and through movement. In both cases the flesh is moved. From the discussion that follows, one might speculate that it is the *movement* of flesh that can deliver the insight, that carries the numen.

In *Job's Body*, Juhan devotes an entire chapter to connective tissue. Juhan states, "...its 'connective' qualities cannot be overstated. It binds specific cells into tissues, tissues into organs, organs into systems, cements muscles to bones, ties bones into joints, wraps every nerve and every vessel, laces all internal structures firmly into place, and envelopes the body as a whole. In all these linings, wrappings, cables and moorings it is a continuous substance, and every single part of the body is connected to every other part by virtue of its network; every part of us is in its embrace. (Juhan, 1998, p. 63)

Connective tissue belongs to a class of crystalline molecules called piezoelectric, *piezo* having the Greek root meaning "to press" or "to squeeze." Piezoelectric crystals generate spontaneous electricity when they are affected by pressure or movement. This considered, the entire matrix of connective tissue is "an electric generator producing fields of current whenever pressure or movement is taking place." (Juhan, 1998, p. 359) This energy production is what generates heat, keeping connective tissue pliant and all parts of the body in healthy relationship to all other parts of the body.

Connective tissue is also a semi-conductor of the currents they are generating. Semi-conductors are different than pure conductors. Semi-conductors are the various electrical mediums we use to transform electricity into other forms of energy and information. Heating coils, for example, use electricity to transform it into warmth; bulb filaments use electricity to make light; and phonograph needles (piezoelectric crystals) transform electricity into impulses that are amplified into sound. The web of connective tissue, then, does not simply generate electrical energy; it converts this energy into

various forms, one of which is *information*. Connective tissue can be seen as a processor of electromagnetic signals informing one part of the body about another.

There has been much investigation on the biological significance of this piezoelectric phenomenon. (Juhan, 1998, p.359) Research has shown that *every movement* in the body generates electric fields induced by the compression or stretching of bones, tendons, muscles. These processes lead to pulsating fields that spread through the body. It is now assumed by some that the communication of information between various tissues and cells is, in part, generated and mediated by the electrical fields produced by the piezoelectric effect pulsing through the network of connective tissue.

In relation to the above phenomena and to the thesis of this paper, we can ask: What, exactly, happens when we engage the body to access greater consciousness? What does that mean? How does the numen become activated and released through the body? How does insight arrive through the flesh? From the discussion above, it is understood that the nature of flesh is such that movement is responsible, in part, for the dissemination of life-giving information from one part of the organism to the other, from one set of cells to the next. Movement, both autonomous and self-regulated (as in walking and jumping), or imposed from without (as in massage or other forms of somatic manipulation), is required for the continuation of our existence. Without movement, there is no life. Without movement or vibration, the spirit does not circulate. Without movement the numen of the flesh is not activated. Down to the smallest imperceptible vibration within the cell, the circulation and continuation of life is conducted through movement.

It would follow then that to gain insight in and through the body, one must let themselves have a fully-embodied experience, one must let the flesh be moved, as awkward and as disturbing as that can sometimes feel. What is required, according to this argument, is an “experiential study in movement.”

### ***Experiential Studies with Movement Participants***

In order to access the numen of the flesh, the stage must be set to invite and receive the insight available when it arises through the body. The proper context in which to receive insight, to be open to the numen, must be introduced. Bodybuilding, typical athletics and other forms of competitive sport do not set the context (though experiences of the *numinosum* have, in fact, been noted in martial arts, yoga and endurance sports such as long-distance running). In the West, the given context to receive insight through the flesh is largely defined within the parameters of body-oriented approaches to the psyche.

The following contributions from participants in body-oriented approaches to the psyche may help the reader to see in more detail how insight and numen can arise from the flesh. Although words rarely do justice to the true depth of feelings, they still remain one of the best ways to communicate any shifts in awareness or consciousness that occur.

To give an idea of the physical and philosophical context in which these experiences have taken place, a brief introduction to the movement/dance discipline of *Butoh* stands as a preface. The somatic work referred to in this writing has taken place within the context of many movement approaches including bio-energetics, ritual theatre and dance/movement therapy; however, *Butoh* has had the strongest and most pervasive influence. It is to *Butoh* and to those who have created and defined *Butoh* that I owe a great deal in the formulation of my current work.

## ***Butoh***

*Butoh*, also known as Dance of Darkness, is a Japanese dance form that emerged out of post-war Japan which includes the experience of nuclear holocaust. Although its roots can be found in the oldest Japanese folkloric traditions, *Butoh* recognizes influences from post-war European movements, most predominantly, German Expressionism. Although one can make attempts to describe *Butoh* according to these categories, conclusive classification is not possible. *Butoh* arises outside convention, outside form, outside any prescribed approach. It is, at its most authentic, a protest against those very elements.

*Butoh* has been viewed by some as a search for a new identity, a way of establishing meaning for a society that had unmercifully experienced a profound breach in their personal, cultural and existential reality. It is considered by its practitioners to be an exploration into the unconscious, into the realm of imagination and shadows. Movement in this art form does not focus on depiction, nor is it choreographed in the usual way, i.e., shaping movement from the conscious level. Movement intentionally begins and continues from the inner recesses of the psyche. The focus is on tracking the immediate metamorphosis of psyche through movement. The discipline in tracking the psyche in this way can then, when desired, be ritualized or formalized into performance.

In *Butoh*, the intention is to follow, through movement, an internal psychic image to the conclusion of becoming the consciousness of the image itself. You are no longer moving like a river, for example, you become, as closely as possible, the consciousness of river. This approach encourages an experience of the primal energies which animate and nourish the very core of our being and engages the instinctual level of soul.

One well-known *Butoh* performer, Min Tanaka, traveled the entire length of Japan, dancing each day. His idea was to feel the difference in the ground at different places. He called the experiment *Hyperdance*. He said that the dance is not *in* the place, rather the dance *is* the place. “The *Butoh* dancer tries to capture subtleties of the soul, understanding that dance is the movement of the soul...accompanied by the body. The soul is not there for others to like it. It is there to express what it has to express...The only requisite [for *Butoh*] is to not lose faith or hope; to pursue dreams and grab them strongly in the body, like a beautiful treasure that keeps us alive. Once there, it begins to wake up and move the world of emotions and feelings.” (Website: see References)

## ***Personal Accounts***

The accounts included here are not case material in the typical sense. There is, therefore, little or no interpretation or personal background given. The participants have offered something of what was significant for them. They are snapshots of a much greater continuum of experience, starting from before the person arrives to the work and continuing on after the work is over as deeper reflection arises. The experiences offered are meant to give the reader an idea of how body, movement, sensation and kinetic image coalesce into an event or events that call forth sudden insight, or the numen of the flesh, and of how that experience can release an individual from the constraints which inhibit psychic growth. (Permission to use this material has been granted by each contributor.)

### ***Rafaela***

In the following account, Rafaela describes her process as it unfolded. In this particular group session, we worked on the archetypal energies of Home and Exile, the point being to know through movement and the consciousness of the body what these states are, and to gain insight into the personal meaning of these themes.

The first stages of the somatic sessions involve physical warm ups, including running, bio-energetic exercises and other forms of movement. This is to open the body, encourage group trust, release inhibition to moving and, most importantly, to bring the center of consciousness into the body itself. In the second stage of the sessions, we work with material from the unconscious, either in the form of dream images, psychosomatic symptoms and/or collective archetypal themes such as Longing, or Home and Exile.

Each session is five hours long. Rafaela's account of the second stage of this particular session refers to the event that included walking back and forth across the full length of the room with all the other participants simultaneously, each holding a small piece of cotton about 12 by 3 inches in dimension. The cotton cloth is held between one's two hands which are extended straight out in front of the individual. At no time are the elbows to slacken in their extension. The only alternative position that can be taken is to raise the arms over the head, elbows unbent. The very slow, sustained walking and the holding of the cotton cloth is maintained for about 30 minutes. The exercise challenges our resistances, allowing something new to enter that cannot be controlled by ego demands. It is out of this physical challenge and strong discomfort - the physical equivalent to the psychic "holding the tension" - that something new often arises.

HOME AND EXILE: Rafaela's entry from her journal.

*HOME: I chose a place in front of the window.* The previous exercises had me centered and meditative enough to get in touch with the *feeling* of home (as opposed to

what it looks like). The light poured in. The birds were singing, and the far-off sound of people's voices could be heard. Light and Beauty and Connection to the Universe through the sounds of people and nature. I felt the right to be here in this space and time.

EXILE: This was a killer. I'm not used to suffering pain and exhaustion in these kinds of workshops. And yet it worked, i.e., something happened that surprised and enlightened me about me, and that simply doesn't happen for me in other workshops. Also, what happened wouldn't have happened without the actual physical pain. We were to go through the exercise imagining that we were in Exile - a perfect juxtaposition to the last exercise of Home which made it an even deeper experience. No one we knew, no place to be, no one to help, only to keep walking and be in exile. You are alone.

Stage One: Walking back and forth and back and forth with arms straight out or up, elbows locked, hands holding unyielding cotton band. My self-talk: Can this be right? Am I doing it right? Is it supposed to hurt so much? How can I do this? I'll just have to do it because everyone else is doing it. I have no choice. I'm not allowed to quit when I'm on view. I can only quit in privacy because it's so shameful to quit/give up/fail. I can't opt out. I would once again fail to be engaged due to my personal pain and anxiety. If they can keep going, I guess I can. So I started walking fiercely - with controlled Fuck-It Anger which fuelled me because no one and nothing else was going to be able to do it for me. I was against it, and all I had was myself and Fuck all of you.

Stage Two: I KNOW THIS FEELING! This thought came as a total unbidden surprise. The physical pain during that exercise evoked the same emotional response that the emotional pain of aloneness in my life evokes. Finding that out meant something. It gave a new meaning to, or at least a clearer picture of, my emotional pain. It's that feeling when I'm in the depths: I'm alone. No one connects with me, loves me, supports me, wants me. I am not wanted. Given a lifetime of dealing with it, I know how to get through it. The Fuck-It energy is the only thing to crack me out of my paralysis.

Stage Three: (This was about 3/4 of the way through.) All of sudden, I had a thought, again unbidden: What if I can do this without the extraordinary fierceness, tense body and rigid laser-like anger? There must be a way to do this without expending so much energy, without feeling so miserable. So I let go of the anger and yet stayed in the same focused energy place and became one with the task. I stopped fighting and went with it. Amazing! I could have kept going much longer - pain got put in its place. It was like I was floating. When I finally stopped and put my arms down, it felt AMAZING.

Stage Four: We were to go back Home. My final surprise. As I approached the spot in the room that was Home, as I came round the corner, I became overwhelmed with sobs and I collapsed. It was the contrast between the incredibly deep pain of Exile and being alone, and having a place where I had a *right to be*. I was home. I was Home.

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Rafaela says she measures her connection to the Self by how deeply she is surprised by the experiences and insights she might have (in the movement work). This

sense of surprise is, I feel, directly related to the arising of the numen. Surprise of this nature is sudden, pervasive and alterative, not within the control of the ego, and effecting an immediate shift in one's understanding. This brings to mind Jung's description of the numen noted above as "a dynamic agency or effect not caused by an arbitrary act of will." To the contrary, he says, "it seizes and controls the human subject....The *numinosum* - whatever its cause may be - is an experience of the subject independent of his will [generating] a peculiar alteration of consciousness." (Jung, 1989, Par. 6)

Grounded through her insights of the flesh, beyond a largely intellectual understanding, Rafaela found a new way to hold her sense of aloneness, her sense of personal Exile. She also found a new relationship to Home and to the way one can be in relationship to the world. The experiences will hopefully deepen and continue to serve her in the release of psychic energy which when blocked keeps us in bondage to the unconscious energies of our deepest complexes. When one experiences psychic energies in this way, when one is struck by the numen that arises from within the flesh, one begins to understand that what we are seeking is already within us in a very real, concrete way.

### *Christopher*

*When I think about the movement work I remember* so many instances when, suddenly, what felt like an inner light started to vibrate through all the cells of my body. It was a kind of energy that went beyond my individual being. I felt linked to the cosmos. Often this light started to vibrate after the opening ritual. Later, I often thought that creating a sacred time and a sacred space and then starting to move is the perfect invitation to the numinous. It was somewhere in the room. It was somewhere in the cells of my body. Many experiences, even when they were painful, had a certain light in them. Often this light started to vibrate just when the pain was nearly unbearable, when the experience brought me into contact with sensations or feelings I wanted to dismiss as soon as possible. But the more I was able to go into the experience with all my awareness, the more I was available to a sudden shift in consciousness or understanding.

I am aware of how significant the movement work continues to be after the actual experience. That understanding comes in the form of what I call "body metaphors." It's like finding a very old and deep wisdom...in the body. These body metaphors have helped me in difficult moments afterwards, when they suddenly popped up involuntarily.

For example, this tiny little exercise: Starting with one hand closed and one hand opened and then, taking a full five minutes, you slowly, slowly, slowly open the closed hand while simultaneously closing the opened hand. Seems to be nothing special, but when doing this exercise for the first time, I thought I would never be able to move my hands again. I felt my hands didn't really belong to me. They seemed to be like stones, moving in an impersonal way and within the dimension of millennia. I felt a flood of panic starting to rise from deep in my body. I had to breathe in very focused way and not resist the experience. Then suddenly, the fingers on one hand made a jump; they moved,

not smoothly, but with a jump, followed by a jump from the other hand. And slowly, the body awareness in my hands came back and I was able to proceed with the exercise.

Later, I realized that this experience felt very close to the experience I have when I'm emotionally blocked, when I'm not able to move forward or backward. I realized that it's exactly these jumps I need to come out of my blockage. Furthermore, I understood that I block myself with my own expectations of moving in a very gentle, tender or smooth way. I have to jump and to trust the unknown. I have to jump even if it doesn't look very graceful. And so this tiny little exercise has become a body metaphor for me that pops up involuntarily whenever I need it. And it has given me a lot of strength and courage to move on - to jump!

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Each person who does this exercise has his or her very own unique experience of it (accommodating for some similarities). In Christopher's hands the psyche sought and brought the insight described. For someone else, the insight would be different.

What was it that electron, receptor and connective tissue coordinated for this insight to occur? Christopher was able to make the jump...yet how? Perhaps insight dawned as information gathered in the electrons, encouraged by the pressure of movement within the piezoelectric nature of connective tissue, making a leap, a "jump" in spiritual information. How exactly these things happen will probably remain a mystery. *That* they happen seems evident.

### ***Anna***

When I first saw Anna in the group, I had a very strong and visceral impression. She was extremely quiet and contained, to the point of feeling painfully withdrawn and in a protective shell. Her hair was short and "practical." She was dressed in a very conservative and "proper" way. I had an immediate response: Will this work be too overwhelming for her? Will she derive any benefit from it? Will she leave in the middle if she is overcome with affect? I could only be very attentive and trust that we would find our way with each other, and she with herself.

At the end of the course, after witnessing her within the events given for exploration, I felt I had failed her. I was certain nothing had happened for her. She had come and received nothing; and there was nothing I could do. The surprise came when she wrote to me about two months later. This is part of what she said:

*I recently underwent a series of neurological tests to determine the cause of inadequate response to stimulus to my feet and lower legs. The tests revealed lesions in the white matter of my brain, and some deterioration in the discs of my neck and lower spine. The neurologist came up with a physiological explanation for my balance disorder, and told me I shouldn't worry. I was left with a feeling of vague dissatisfaction and the thought that perhaps there is more to this than can be technologically determined.*

What I do know is that this condition comes and goes. As I get older, it is with me more than it used to be. However, I notice that increased physical exercise, even just more walking, results in almost immediate improvement.

Anna continues by explaining some of her experiences in the movement work:

*Several things happened which seem important.* The dream image I worked with was that my knees wouldn't work when facing a serious threat. This is a recurring dream image from my childhood. When I became the dream image, I felt stuck and immobilized. I was also keenly aware of the emotions being expressed all around me [referring to other participants in the group], and wished they would go away. Once, I opened my eyes and thought of leaving, but I couldn't. Then, when you told us to be the opposite of the image, the best I could do was walk around in a circle with very small steps. When I thought about this afterward, I realized that I had been so limited and confined. I was unable to ask for help, or scream, or crawl away. This dream image is a metaphor for the way I deal with life. I can't cry out, I can't ask for help, I can't move in response to emotional threat.

Since the work we have done together, I have given much thought and energy to a long-cherished plan I have to move to the country; I have also gained insight into a major guiding principle in my life. It became clear to me a few days ago that I have been willing to go to extreme lengths of personal sacrifice in order to feel connected emotionally to a person or group. I can't quite explain why, but this insight along with the movement work has given me the information I need to *mobilize* myself and make the necessary changes to move to the country and live more for myself, and more fully.

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I do not know the final results of Anna's neurological examination or what has happened since she contacted me; however, it seems that Anna's expressed desire to mobilize herself toward a life that would allow her to live in a way more responsive to her vital needs, to her soul needs, was the beginning of necessary change. By connecting somatically to the fear and immobility within the dream image, Anna was better able to understand, in an immediate way, to what extent she had been holding herself back.

This insight was precipitous; and it came from her relatedness and connection to her body within the vessel of the somatic inquiry or "exercises" provided. I had given her no interpretation, only an opportunity to engage in the experience and a willingness to acknowledge the numen of her insight. The understanding came from her, from her own body, from the flesh itself; from the ability of the flesh to support and contain the insight required to release her from a destructive immobility. The more she moved, and the more she was moved by her own insight, the more mobilized she became.

## **LANDSCAPES OF THE SOUL EMBODIED: PERSONAL REFLECTIONS**

How we conceive of ourselves, our bodies, and our bodies in time and space, define in part who and what we are. Down to the words and wording, to the languaging, is how we are determined and defined. How we move in the world, how we think, what we think, all are influenced by how thought forms itself in the mind. If we think of ourselves, because of our languaging and our notions of reality, as an object moving through space in linear time, separate from other objects, then we set up an experience of object and subject with a limited understanding of time. In so doing, we omit circular time, eternal time, we omit the field in which all resides simultaneously and through which all is inextricably related. We omit zero, the void, the absolute stillness out of which all arises.

The movement work I do attempts to challenge the experience of subject and object as well as chronological, linear time. Rather than, "I am walking on the road," we shift and we have, "Roadwalking is happening." Rather than, "I am singing a song," we have, "There is singing going on." We can take one step further and say, "The song is singing itself. The walking or movement is moving itself." In other words, the song and the movement are living beings. The movement we invite is a being that we honor with our attention and our surrender to its expression. We offer ourselves to the impulses of the unconscious, sacrificing ego desires.

...For years now I have experienced a place or a moment in somewhat Proustian fashion: A breeze moves past in a certain way, a certain scent arises in the air, and my body is flooded with a kind of memory, or a recollection...my body, not my mind.

The memory is often without visual image, but always with corporeal sensation...a kinetic image. Walking suddenly into a quality of air or sunlight stirs places in my body, flesh memories returning like a tender lover. A couple of days ago: raining, stepping onto Tram 7 from Wollishofen to Central, taking a seat on the hard wooden chair, suddenly being thrust back into time from the touch of the moist air, the movement of stepping up onto the tram, feeling the wood against my back. No visual memory, nothing specific to recollect cognitively, just a sudden journey back into some time, maybe 15 years ago, maybe 40 years ago. Perhaps both. Perhaps neither.

Trying to pin down the memory is often to no avail. At that juncture everything disappears: memory, sensation, everything. I've learned to just let the sensation come in and simply notice the quality of feeling, sometimes appearing in the heart or in the throat. Fleeting, though grace-filled. A visitation. Perhaps an annunciation of some secret birth, a sacred child, the presence of whom vanishes under the stress and glare of demanding definition.

I am often under the strain of an existential *angst*, both personal and collective. These flesh memories are sweet "remembrances of things past," reminding me that there were times, and could be still, and indeed are, when life is joy-filled. These visitations open the heart, diminishing the need for defense and protection. They come from the unexpected, from the small and subtle. They allow me an open window into grace.

If I, if we, move too fast, want too much, too soon, these visitations can never be noticed. We rush past them in our relentless search for The Big Prize. Next time you are curiously stopped in your tracks, next time you feel a presence in your heart, or you feel the impression of some unknown remembrance, let that sensation in, let it unfold, let your body lead the way soundlessly into the mystery of that cellular Visitation.

...Although I refer to flesh memories as somewhat Proustian in that they often feel like memories of things past, they may also be forays into a parallel understanding, a concomitant reality where comprehension is purely instinctual, with the conscious mind simply along for the ride. Or, these flesh memories may also be, as James Hillman suggests in his book, *The Soul's Code*, a call from the soul already in full comprehension of our path, beckoning us to some understanding still secret to the ego. Or, they may be the flesh alerting us to deeper realities through pan-matter communication: electrons of one body - of air, tree, chair, stair, water or stone - communicating to the electrons of our own bodies, helping us make connections in new ways, enlivening a greater sense of Eros. And then again...they may be all of the above. Real truths, I believe, express themselves in multiple ways, just as dreams do.

We can be stirred in so many ways, have the ecstatic experience of the flesh with all of life through the exchange of mutual recognition and praise. Perhaps, if we could grasp this understanding, truly grasp it, violence and war would be obsolete.

## EPILOGUE

It seems imperative for reasons that span the spectrum from spiritual and environmental health to the consideration of world peace, that we engage the integration of psyche and soma in ever greater earnest, not just by talking or writing about it, but by embodying it. With a more embodied sense of the self/Self we have the opportunity of bringing our animal nature to the fore consciously and, as has been suggested, to further the deeper evolution of our individuation. We have the opportunity to realize a deep communication with all of creation. Holding this understanding in the flesh encourages the full-bodied sense of compassion and relatedness required to give consciousness a solid stand in the world. It allows consciousness the opportunity to be related, in the body and of Eros.

*For one who has spent so much time in the Absolute,  
perhaps embodiment and reconnecting with instinct and feelings  
is the resurrection.* Course Participant.

**Cedrus Monte, PhD dipl.**, is a Diplome Jungian Analyst, graduate of the C .G. Jung Institute-Zurich. The movement research addressed in this paper was funded by the SUSAN BACH FOUNDATION. Cedrus Monte's research into synchronicity and the creative process was published (in abbreviated form) in the anthology, *Images, Meanings and Connections: Essays in Memory of Susan R. Bach* (Daimon), and was also funded by the SUSAN BACH FOUNDATION. She has recently contributed to the anthology, *The Moonlit Path: Reflections on the Dark Feminine*. (Nicolas-Hays). Currently, she lives and practices in Zurich, Switzerland. Her courses can be reviewed on [www.cedrusmonte.org](http://www.cedrusmonte.org)

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