BODY AWARENESS, SELF-SCRUTINY, CRITICAL THINKING, AND MORAL EDUCATION

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Having recently been introduced to the field of Critical Thinking, I find the program of critical thinking delineated in the Inquiry journal to be admirable and exciting. The articles provide a clear statement of critical thinking as a necessary element in the development of a moral, self-correcting and humane society. However, as a somatic educator, I can’t help feeling that the program of critical thinking as it is currently defined is incomplete and is set up to fail. I hope that critical thinking educators and theorists will find this paper valuable as an opportunity to examine the field of critical thinking through the eyes of someone engaged in a very different approach to clarity of thought and action.

It is clear from the articles in Inquiry that self-scrutiny is the essence of critical thinking — that is, examining and reflecting upon the adequacy of one’s thinking, as a means of improving one’s judgments and actions. There are two components of critical thinking identified in Inquiry, the methods of critical thinking and the disposition to engage in critical thinking. The methods are the technical elements about grounds and warrants and so on which allow cognitive self-scrutiny. The disposition “involves all the personality attributes, motives, values and interests that predispose a person to think critically.” The disposition includes such things as independence of mind, respect for alternative viewpoints, intellectual enthusiasm, commitment to intellectual accountability, and the desire to pursue truth even at the cost of discovering one’s own mistakes.

As I have seen it in Inquiry, the teaching in the field of critical thinking is confined to the linguistic/cognitive domain, and there are two significant problems with that. First,

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2 I would like to express my special thanks to Robert Esformes for encouraging me to write this paper and for his very helpful critique of the first version of it.
not enough of the self has been included under the CT microscope to allow self-scrutiny to be fully effective. Examining only linguistic/cognitive functioning leaves out areas of the self which exert influence on the rational process and must be taken account of in improving thinking and acting. And second, the disposition to self-scrutinize is an affective state and cannot be effectively taught through a purely cognitive/linguistic focus.

My work involves teaching people to observe, monitor, experience, and understand changes in breathing, muscle tone, posture and movement as processes of consciousness, and through this achieve more effective ways of moving, feeling, thinking and living. From my point of view, thinking is not a merely cognitive act. Thinking is not even a merely mental act. Thinking is done, at least partly, in and with bones, muscles and breathing. The structure and function of the body influences even “purely intellectual” thinking, and I would like to suggest that examining the structure and functioning of the body is a necessary element in self-scrutiny and critical thinking.

The method of somatic work I have developed extends the scientific/critical method into the realm of feelings and values through using body-based language to operationalize the mental/emotional elements of the self. The emotional forces shaping judgments can be scrutinized in a critical, rational manner through a somatic (body-awareness) process of self-examination. In addition, through somatic work, it is possible to operationalize the disposition to think critically and render it more effectively teachable.

A BROADER PROCESS

Both expanding the focus of self-scrutiny and including teaching of values are necessary in improving the effectiveness of the critical thinking program.

EXAMINING MORE OF THE SELF.

Self-scrutiny to be effective must include all parts of the self, not just be limited to one piece. In CT, what is scrutinized is ideas and statements. That is a tacit argument that behavior is fundamentally rational and can be scrutinized and improved by examining assertions which define the behavior. However, there is much more going on in an individual making a judgment than just cognitive/linguistic processes — all the subconscious, visceral elements of the human being affect the process of intellectual judging. Feelings and desires influence thoughts. Attractions and repulsions motivate actions. The intellect is an indispensable tool for providing checks and balances on our urges and for channeling them into effective action, but the intellect is not the source of our actions and cannot even express the full content or meaning of our actions. Much of what we do is really a manifestation of the non-intellectual parts of ourselves.

Think how often personal emotional history colors people’s “rational” thinking. Perhaps someone you are interviewing for a job position looks like someone you know and love, and you might feel a tendency to pre-judge the interviewee as someone likable. Or perhaps your parents had extremely negative views of some racial or religious group,
and those feelings were internalized and still operate in a shadowy visceral level try as you might to eliminate them.

Consider how fears, angers, jealousies, laziness, desire to avoid pain, etc. seduce us into shying away from or moving toward various rational positions. If those emotions are left to operate in the background, they will color all the rational evaluations being done in the foreground. In the process of body awareness work that I teach, I help my students feel more and more clearly the details of their emotional/physical responses to situations and analyze what background feelings are coloring their foreground thinking.

The sources of mistaken judgments can be brought down to two areas: first, unskilled data gathering and analysis; and second, the perverting effects of out of control emotions and unresolved elements of our past history. In addition to learning careful cognitive procedures for gathering and analyzing data, it is important to discipline and mature the senses and emotions. They are important sources of mistakes, but they are also the heart of our life and our liveliness. Purposely leaving out scrutiny of affective/body processes, as CT does, is to legitimize and institutionalize ignoring powerful non-rational forces which shape our acceptance or rejection of propositions.

TEACHING THE DISPOSITION.

If people identify themselves with their opinions and thoughts, and if they do not possess the courage and desire to confront their flaws, they will feel that a critical evaluation of a judgment of theirs is an attack upon their self. They will feel that the critical thinker who is dialoging with them is an enemy and will lash out against him/her. It takes courage and a secure self-identity to respect others who have differing opinions and to tolerate and appreciate having one’s own opinions judged in the bright light of critical thought.

However, this state of self-confidence, which is the underlying disposition to think critically, is not a cognitive/linguistic state but a psychological/spiritual state and cannot be approached in a purely cognitive/linguistic manner. There is, of course, a cognitive element to that state. It can be expressed as a series of rules for thought and behavior, and without a clear cognitive grasp of those rules, people will be unclear as to what critical thinking is and what they may be attempting to live up to. However, the disposition itself is more fundamentally an affective state, and it must be created with affective training. Mere cognitive training will not suffice to create affective learning. Something more fundamental than critical thinking training (as it is currently done) is needed as a to create within people who do not possess it to begin with the disposition which is the foundation for critical thinking.

WISDOM.

In the Inquiry articles, there are some hints of the need to deal with the affective and physical aspects of critical thinking. Weinstein states that “strong sense critical thinking requires more than understanding the mechanics of reading process, it requires
that readers identify personal biases and other limitations that might affect reading comprehension. In that way critical thinking extends meta-cognition to include student’s beliefs, implicit assumptions and affective blocks.”

Lenore Langsdorf argues that body and movement training can be part of the process of critical thinking education. She presents “a case for expanding the assumed parameters of reasoning beyond the domain of reading writing, and speaking — which rely primarily upon sight and sound — to performance, which relies primarily upon the muscular tensions and movements that are the basis of our sensorimotor capacities.” She comments that “as a culture, we are so far removed from performative reasoning that even characterizing what someone does as a meaningful statement, as stating a position, or as proposing an argument, seems like an odd way to speak.”

These quotations expresses clearly the need to go beyond ideas for critical thinking to be effective, but there is no explicit and practical program offered in the CT writing I have encountered in Inquiry for doing this. As you will see in the next section, in my approach, cognitive, affective and physical elements are all seen as interpenetrating and interacting, as being reflections of one another, separable not in a practical sense but only in the sense that we give different names to different facets of the human being.

The tools of cognitive self-scrutiny must be joined to the tools of affective, physical and spiritual self-scrutiny in order to develop a fully effective program of total self-scrutiny which will help people learn to judge well what to think and what to do. This would be a program to help people develop self-awareness and wisdom.

Lipman states that “those who are wise exercise good judgment.... Wisdom ... [is] the characteristic outcome of good judgment.... A judgment, then, is a determination -- of thinking, of speech, or action or of creation.... Critical thinking is skillful, responsible thinking that facilitates good judgment.” “Critical thinking, then, is a cultivation ... of wisdom and its application to practice and to life.”

I would prefer to say not that wisdom is the outcome of critical thinking but rather that wisdom is the outcome of self-scrutiny, and critical thinking as I have seen it defined in Inquiry is one component of self-scrutiny. Critical thinking seems to have developed as the cognitive/linguistic branch of self-scrutiny and wisdom development, but one branch doesn’t make a whole tree. In the next section, we will examine a practical

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6 Ibid. p6.
8 Ibid, p 1.
approach to working with physical/affective processes as a means of accessing a greater wholeness of self-scrutiny and self-development.

**SOMATIC EDUCATION AS A PROCESS OF SELF-SCRUTINY**

The easiest way to explain how physical and emotional self-scrutiny can contribute to the development of critical thinking and wisdom is to provide an example of the teaching process involved.\(^9\)

**THE FIELD OF SOMATIC EDUCATION**

However, before going on to the example, I should say a bit about the overall field of somatic education in order to provide a context for this example and help make sense of my approach. My work is part of a field which over the last twenty years has been emerging as a unified profession called "somatic education"\(^10\). The word “somatic” refers to the body, but the body as both an objective material object and lived subjective experience.

Somatic education methods work with the musculoskeletal structure of the body and with movement as processes of awareness and consciousness. Somatic education methods work with the whole human being at once, though different methods focus in different ways and to different degrees on each of the aspects of body, mind and spirit. There are a broad variety of somatic methods, which take very different approaches.

The material in this article derives from my own work, which I call Being In Movement\(^®\) mindbody training, and which grew out of a problem that caught my attention twenty years ago as I was teaching Aikido (a non-violent, Japanese martial art). I realized that there was a relation between attentional focus and postural balance in the execution of self-defense techniques, and I wanted to figure out what attentional/postural state would lead to most effective movement and how to achieve it. To investigate this, I found that I had to develop my own tools for investigating the body as a process of consciousness.

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\(^9\) For detailed instructions on how to do the basic breathing, body awareness, and centering exercises I teach, see the file *A Downloadable Script for the Eight Core BIM Exercises* on my website, [www.being-in-movement.com](http://www.being-in-movement.com).

\(^10\) This term was introduced by Thomas Hanna. See: *Bodies in Revolt: A Primer in Somatic Thinking*. 1970. Holt, Rhinehart & Winston. New York. In 1976 he established the journal *Somatics*. (Eleanor Criswell Hanna, Editor. 1516 Grant Ave #212, Novato, CA 94945.) Hanna was a philosophy professor and a practitioner of the Feldenkrais Method\(^®\) of movement awareness training, and more than anyone else, he provided the overarching conceptual framework which began the process of coalescing a wide range of bodywork and movement disciplines into a single coherent field.
I have concentrated on learning to observe, understand and deal with objective biomechanical facts of posture and movement as both manifestations and causes of subjective states of awareness, consciousness, feeling and thought. I have focused on how the mind/body organizes itself for action in the world and about how we restrict our capacities for action.

The forms that people choose for their bodies and their movements — whether consciously or nonconsciously — are expressions of their sense of what they are and what the world is. (If this idea seems somewhat obscure, hopefully the example of somatic education will clarify it.) By experimenting with simple movement situations, people can discover the nature of the beliefs, feelings and strategies that underlie their actions. They can evaluate the efficacy of their choices and discover why they have become committed to them. By practicing new ways of being in their bodies and new ways of moving, people can consciously and deliberately construct, experience and evaluate new ways of approaching the world. This is a process of self-scrutiny and self-development which can lead to deep and lasting personal change and to new and different patterns of behavior and thought. In this way, body/movement education can be an effective component of the overall process of self-scrutiny and critical thinking.

The example of somatic education will illustrate this process of somatic self-scrutiny. However, in order to help readers of Inquiry understand the logic of the example, I should point out that from my perspective I am not so much dealing with a philosophy of human functioning as with a technology for achieving certain specific changes in functioning. The assertions I make about human functioning are not ideas. Rather they are expressions of the experiences generated by the training methods I use. Since this is so, as a general rule, I back up my assertions not with philosophical arguments but with descriptions of how people come to experience the truth of the assertions, that is, with descriptions of the exercises which give rise to the experiences. However, there is a danger in this style of communication. People who have not experienced the exercises and the insights they give rise to may not grasp just what I mean at various points, or they may find what they take to be “arguments” unconvincing. I hope that the vicarious experience provided by reading about the exercises will communicate at least a faint sense of what I mean and be sufficiently convincing that the example is acceptable.

**SOMATIC EXPERIMENT**

In my private practice as a somatic educator, I frequently have students come for lessons in body and movement awareness with questions about how to communicate more effectively. I have, for example, worked on performance anxiety with musicians and on public speaking anxiety with people undergoing job interviews. Choosing an example which is related to critical thinking, let us say that a person comes in with a question about how to be comfortable with disagreements. He is the head of a manufacturing company and is very uncomfortable with subordinates tearing apart his arguments, finding difficulties in his plans, and making alternative suggestions. He has noticed that he needs to control the planning meetings and prevent free discussion and has realized this is interfering with his business functioning.
As the company head tells me about the trouble he is having getting along with his employees, I watch what he is doing with his breathing, muscle tone, posture and movement. As he talks, simply by thinking through the situation which presents the difficulty, he will recreate/relive the situation emotionally/physically. He will subtly replay his interactions with his employees on the somatic level, and I can observe how he actually responds in the situation. Once I identify some component of his response, I will construct a somatic experiment as a means of capturing, elucidating and changing the response pattern that I see.

A somatic experiment is a simple, safe, controlled body or movement situation which functions as a solid metaphor for or limited representation of the real life event or problem a student is dealing with. Unlike real life, the experiment is a safe situation, undertaken only with the student’s permission, and therefore he can afford to use the challenge as a learning situation. In the experiment, I teach the student how to monitor his responses, how to evaluate them, and how to construct new and better responses.

Let us say that as he talks, I see the student breathing in a shallow, tense way, with all the movement at the top of his chest. I see him tensing his neck, pulling his head slightly back and down in an abbreviated fear-startle response. And I see him tightening his shoulders and tensing/collapsing his chest. All this appears to be a response of anxiety and resistance to the situation.

I would not, however, communicate any of my observations and thoughts to the student for two reasons. One, my observations and inferences offer a preliminary starting point and need to be checked for accuracy and completeness. And two, even if they are absolutely right, my telling the student eliminates the opportunity for him to learn how to observe and understand his responses for himself. Instead of telling him what I see and infer, I would set up a movement experiment which I guesstimate will elicit the same set of responses and in which he can learn to observe his responses.

There are many possible experiments I could set up. Picking one, I would ask the student to stand up, and then I would start pushing him across the room, telling him that his belief that the moon is not made of green cheese is completely wrong and that he is a total idiot. Even though this is an obviously absurd and artificial situation, the student will react in a real way to my belligerent tone of voice, the assertion that he is wrong, and my physical aggression. This situation is an exaggerated instance of the problem of being disagreed with, and the student will almost certainly perform the same physical responses that characterized his way of handling the real situation at work. My challenge to the student will be to tell me exactly what he feels and does in response to my actions.

**CONCRETE THINKING: OPERATIONAL DEFINITIONS AND BODY-BASED LANGUAGE**

Let us say that the student responds with the same responses that I noted when he first told me about his problem with disagreements, and in addition (given the more physical nature of this situation) he leans into me, trying to physically resist me and
shove me back. When asked to describe what he felt like when he did all this, he might say that he was angry and also a bit anxious (if he has any awareness of his inner processes, which many people do not).

Most people when asked to detail their responses will reply with statements using such mentalistic language. However, words such as “anxious” “angry” “joyous” “fearful” and so on are the names of emotions, not the emotions themselves. I take the position that emotions are constellations of physical events in the body, and feelings are what those physical events feel like to the person experiencing them. Very few people will be able to describe in a precise way the physical components of the emotion, that is, what they do with breathing, muscle tone, posture, and movement.

Concrete thinking is the key to using body observation to reveal and elucidate patterns of perception, thought, feeling, choice and action. Thinking concretely means pinning down thoughts, feelings, and intentions as actions by defining them in terms of observable, physical response patterns and tangible physical sensations. This is a process of providing operational definitions for abstract emotional language.

An operational definition assigns meaning to a word or idea by specifying a list of actions to be performed. Thus “relaxation” can be defined operationally by detailing a list of exercises focusing on muscle tone and breathing. These exercises produce the actual experience of relaxation, and that experience defines the concept for the experiencer. Rather than defining the concept of “relaxation” by the use of more concepts such as “the ability to let go of anxiety and be at ease,” “relaxation” is defined operationally by a set of instructions which will produce it. Having produced it, a person can experience it, examine it, observe its functions, and understand it.

Without grounding words through the process of operational definition, the words and concepts we employ refer simply to other words and concepts and there is no concreteness to our communication. The function of operational definitions is to phrase things in such a way that our words become shorthand labels for events in the world. Once our words refer to concrete events, empirical tests can be devised to evaluate what we say, and in addition, our words become pointers toward practical skills for observing and controlling events in the world. In my approach to body and movement awareness work, the process of operational definition is represented by the use of body-based language.

Normally, people are so used to feeling themselves as “mental” and “emotional” beings that they don’t notice the physical substrate for mental and emotional events. Using body-based language rather than mentalistic language in defining feelings and habits of behavior accomplishes a number of important purposes. Physical thinking helps people pin down the specific meanings they attach to the broad, vague words which are used to name emotions. To begin with, this allows an individual to identify more precisely for him/herself just what feeling is occurring in him. If he is not sure quite what he is feeling at some moment, he can search for the body events taking place, focus on them and amplify them, and begin to “taste” what emotional tone they have.
In addition, by allowing people to compare the meanings they attach to the same emotion label word, it allows them to achieve more precise communication. Thus, for example, someone who uses the label “anger” to denote an emotion which includes holding the breath is operating from a very different emotional state than the person who experiences anger as increasing the rate of breathing.

Body-based language also anchors people in the lived experience of the present moment. Rather than allowing them or encouraging them to go off into memories of the past or verbal/cognitive statements about their lives, physical thinking compels them to keep up a running process of self-monitoring, focusing on the current details of breathing, muscle tone, posture and movement. This forces people to feel their feelings by getting them to notice just exactly what they are doing as they do it. It also forces them to notice that their feelings are actions that they choose and do, and it moves them to assume responsibility for themselves.

Physical thinking also offers a clear and distinct avenue for creating internal change. The body is solid and graspable. Once people can experience mental, emotional, energetic, intentional and behavioral patterns as lived physical configurations/actions, they can identify the configurations of dysfunctional patterns and then deliberately construct more positive patterns as replacements. By altering physical configurations, the student is also altering mental, emotional and behavioral patterns.

Going back to our example of the company head, I ask him to use body-based language to specify in detail his responses to my shoving him and telling him he is wrong about the moon not being made of green cheese. I have him specify what he is feeling by giving detailed and complete statements of precisely where in his body he feels something and just what he is feeling there. I have him go through his body part by part and notice whether anything is occurring there. I may have him magnify his physical sensations and body responses in order to get a clearer sense of just what they are and what they feel like. When the student has built up a list of all the body responses to my disagreeing with him, then he knows in an operational way what his reactions are. (Later, after he can maintain this physical sense of his feelings and responses, then he can include the more usual mental statement of them as well without getting distracted or losing operational detail.)

HYPOTHESIS CONSTRUCTION, HYPOTHESIS TESTING AND BODY RESPONSES

Once the student knows what he is doing, I show him how to analyze and evaluate his responses. The key is that movements are meaningful. Movements are expressions of people’s beliefs about and strategies for handling themselves and the world. Once I have identified the student’s beliefs and strategies, I reframe his behavior as an hypothesis about the best way to handle the world and then use an empirical movement experiment to test the hypothesis. For example, the behavior of shoving me back could be reframed as the hypothesis “Shoving Paul away will be the most effective way of resisting his push on me.” By getting students to think in terms of specific hypotheses and crucial tests which provide the opportunity for falsification or verification of the hypotheses, their
beliefs and feelings about how they should live become transformed from mere philosophies to practical and testable theories of effective behavior.

This process of evaluating a response involves finding out what results the student expected or wanted from the responses, identifying the actual results, and determining whether or not the responses were the most effective and comfortable ways of handling whatever situation is the issue. If a response is found to be inappropriate, we try out new responses, looking for some that are better.

Evaluating responses is complicated because effectiveness can be judged only in relation to achievement of some goal, and comfort can be judged only on the basis of accurate feelings of what is or is not comfortable. Often people are out of touch with their body sensations or have learned to believe our culture’s misunderstandings of what ought to be comfortable. I find that usually the best way to help a person evaluate his habitual response is to help him construct for comparison a response that I know will be better, both in terms of comfort and appropriateness of goal definition.

However, I generally confine myself to teaching students to perform physical actions, and I make a point of not telling them what is best to feel, believe or do. I think it is very important that they try out new responses and then evaluate on the basis of their own experience the results of the responses. This way they are empowered to be their own teachers rather than simply depending on me.

It is only for the sake of discussion that the steps of monitoring, evaluating and improving responses can be separated. In actual practice, it is only in the process of learning a new and better response that a student can identify and evaluate his old response. As a general rule, I explain the concepts of body-based language and hypothesis/response testing through the process of working with actual responses.

To help the company head understand the meaning and efficacy of his way of responding to being disagreed with, we would repeat a number of times the situation of my shoving him and telling him he is wrong. By replaying the event, he would have the opportunity to watch over and over again what he is doing and pin the down the details. Once he knows what he is doing, I ask him to pay attention to what it feels like to do it. I have him pay attention to the physical details, exaggerate the actions, go deeply into them, and notice what they feel like.

In this example, I would have the student exaggerate the shallowness of breathing, the tensed quality of his arms, and the harsh aggressive quality of his whole body movement. As he does this and savors the experience of those actions, he would come to notice that the pattern he is doing feels constricted, brittle and defensive. As he goes more and more into the movements, he may come to notice that his body processes are really about safety. He may realize that he is tensing his body as though he could armor his outsides and not let me penetrate him, and he may realize that he often experiences
disagreement as piercing and hurting him. That process could be reframed as a hypothesis: Not letting in criticism is the best way of maintaining safe, inviolate boundaries for the self.

In order to test this response hypothesis, I would begin by teaching him more appropriate skills for creating safety, and I would do this through somatic processes for constructing the psychophysical state of power and love. Once he has learned these skills well enough to use them, I would go back to the experiment on being disagreed with and have him test whether the new or old response patterns function better to create safety. It is relatively easy for people to give up old responses when new and better ones are already in place. I would not present the company head with a philosophical argument about the inadequacy of his old responses and the greater desirability of new ones. Instead, through his own experience of mastering new responses he would learn that the old ones were not as good as he thought.

POWER AND LOVE

The heart and guts of my somatic work is the process of teaching people to create a balanced somatic state of power and love as the platform for effective action. In essence, my somatic approach focuses on the disposition to think critically, on ways of defining this disposition as a somatic state, and on methods for constructing this psychophysical state. It is in the process of actually learning to construct the balanced state of power and love that the company head would learn and practice the skills of concrete thinking and hypothesis testing.

Power has to do with such qualities of body organization as solidity, weight, rootedness, resoluteness and tenacity. Power is involved with the elements of force and control. The physical organization which gives rise to the emotional experience of personal power and to the capacity for powerful action in one's life is rooted in a particular way of using the pelvis and the belly.

The first step in the cultivation of power involves the breath, the belly and the pelvic floor musculature. Most people hold these parts of themselves tense and sucked in, which produces a feeling of physical and emotional constraint and weakness (though it may be so familiar that they never notice this). By letting their bellies plop out, allowing their breathing to drop down into the pit of their bellies, and letting their genitals and anal sphincter muscles relax and open up, people can create a free, open and focused physical state. This internal physical softness creates a psychological state of relaxed alertness, which is a fundamental element in empowerment.

Much further on in a series of lessons, once the student has built up stronger and more appropriate ways of handling disagreements, I might ask him to go into his body, find out how old this way of experiencing input is and trace it back to whatever situations originally taught him to fear being disagreed with. Learning to relive these particular situations and handle them in new and more appropriate ways is important in mastering new and better ways of handling being disagreed with.
The second step in cultivating the experience of power is learning how to align the pelvis and spinal column for efficient support. Most people think that maintaining a straight posture is done by throwing the shoulders back and by straightening the back, but this destroys the integration between the pelvis and the spinal column and results in a very weak posture. In fact, straightening up is a function of pelvic rotation. When the pelvis rotates backward (the direction in which the guts would spill to the rear out of the pelvic bowl), the stack of vertebrae has no foundation on which to rest and it curves and slumps down. Rotating the pelvis forward in the right way provides a foundation for the spinal column and the torso as a whole and creates an upright posture.

The right way to rotate the pelvis forward involves using a deep trunk muscle rather than superficial back muscles. There are two ways to tip a bowl forward — lifting the rear edge or lowering the front edge. Using the back muscles to lift the rear edge of the pelvis arches the back and creates tension and discomfort, and this is why everyone will sit up "straight" for a minute when exhorted to and then give it up as uncomfortable. Using the psoas muscle to create a movement which in effect drops the front edge of the pelvis creates a very strong and comfortable physical organization of the pelvis and spinal column. This form of body organization also produces a psychological feeling of personal power and strength of will. (Unfortunately the reality and personal meaning of an exercise like this are best conveyed by actual experience. Simply giving a brief verbal description is dry and lifeless.)

Love has to do with such qualities as softness, fluidity, mobility and lightness. Love is involved with the elements of perception and sensitivity. The experience of love is rooted in a particular way of using the chest.

This can be experienced through working with imagery and body responses. Everyone has something or someone—perhaps a friend, a lover, a child, a flower, a work of art — something that when they imagine it makes their heart smile. I have people stand with their eyes closed, imagine whatever it is that makes their hearts smile. I have people stand with their eyes closed, imagine whatever it is that makes their hearts smile and notice the changes in their bodies. Most people experience a softening and warmth in their chests, and a freeing up over their whole bodies. These sensations of being “warm hearted” or “tender hearted” are the bodily manifestations of love or compassion.

Creating the sensation of love in the chest is a way of replacing negative feelings such as fear, anger, and aggression with love. In this state, people will indeed feel loving and act in genuinely loving ways. “Love” is a broad term, and this exercise actually has within it the seeds of many exercises focusing on how people deal with themselves and others and on such elements as acceptance, compassion, forgiveness.

By fusing the two physical/spiritual states of power and love, people are able to move freely, perceive sensitively, and exert efficient force. A person acting from power without love is strong but so insensitive that he or she cannot apply the power well. He will apply his power in a way that will be destructive rather than constructive. A person acting from love without power is sensitive but cannot affect the world through clear
action. Even though his heart is in the right place, he will not have the power to achieve anything useful. The fusion of power and love produces an ability to act forcefully and effectively from a place of sensitivity and compassion. Power is the foundation for the ability to act with love, and love is the foundation for wise use of power. This is not mere philosophy but is simply a shorthand method of stating that the body/self must be soft and receptive as well as active and strong in order to function well.

Returning to the experiment with the company head, when he does love and power when I aggress on him, he will find that he can maintain an unshakable concentration and that such emotions as defensiveness and anger are either absent or manageable. His experience of the whole situation will be radically different. He will find that he can be comfortable, strong and self-possessed as well as sensitive and caring in the face of my aggression.

Rather than closing down to himself or to me, he can meet my aggression in an open way and stay open through it. He will find that his physical and emotional discomfort is vastly lessened and will realize that most of the discomfort he experienced he actually created himself by his tension and resistance. Receiving my aggression in a body/spirit of love and power, the experience of being disagreed with becomes very different. The company head will find that he does not react with fear or anger to being disagreed with. He can continue to experience a compassionate connection to me rather than feeling alienated from me and feeling an urge to hurt and destroy me. He will find that he will be able to think of loving and effective ways of handling the situation.

As the company head contemplates the experiment, he will realize that his initial feelings of defensiveness were based on an hypothesis that being less vulnerable means having a hard shell and that being soft means being unable to keep threats and intrusions out. However, the series of experiences produced by the somatic experiment falsified that hypothesis. By being soft, he increased his perceptivity and mobility, and was thereby made safe rather than vulnerable.

At this point in the experiment, I would point out that in our culture rigidity is taken to be the source of strength and readiness to deal with threats. Rigidity is, however, created by tensing muscles against one another, and the sensation of muscular conflict is what people interpret as strength. The feeling of rigidity is a sign that energy is being wasted internally rather than being applied externally to good effect. Therefore the sensation of strength that people experience when they are rigid is actually a signal of weakness. The sense of fluid, relaxed, loving power that was built up through the somatic exercises is a sign of effective power.

Beyond that, vulnerability is really a source of power in that being open and relaxed means being ready to perceive and move. The sense of being closed and protected is really a sign of insensitive, unadaptable rigidity. In other words, it is through feeling vulnerable that people can act effectively and reduce their actual vulnerability. And it is being willing to become vulnerable (meaning open and free) in the face of a threat that truly enables
people to handle the threat. This openness can be accomplished through the integration of power and love.

The crucial next step in the student’s process of learning is applying this new state of being during the business planning sessions that were his presenting problem. When he takes care to construct and maintain the state of power/love in the sessions, he will be able to receive criticism with respect for what it could offer him by way of new insights. He will also be able to present his own point of view without feeling that he will be diminished as a person if his ideas are not accepted or that he has to tear down his subordinates to strengthen his position. He will experience that disagreeing with someone is not a way of demeaning them and will be more able to participate in a respectful exchange of viewpoints.

This example illustrates how somatic education could be used to improve people’s ability to think critically and communicate effectively. Included in this training are specific, practical methods for examining the emotional pressures that exert negative force on rational functioning and for teaching the disposition to engage in critical thinking. Thus the two elements of examining more of the self and of teaching the disposition to think critically are really part of a single process. Teaching the disposition focuses on creating a positive self-state, and examining prejudice and disharmony focuses on eliminating negative elements of the self.

MORAL EDUCATION

In the example given above and in discussing somatic work and self-scrutiny, I am clearly talking about a process of moral education, so it would be appropriate to directly consider some implications of somatic education for moral education and critical thinking.

The basic idea I am advancing in my approach to moral education is that somatic self-scrutiny is a key to moral action. I am suggesting that moral actions arise from a moral disposition, which is a mind/body state of power and love. Remembering to observe, interpret and control their physical responses gives people a powerful tool for choosing moral ways of acting. Rather than attempting to give a list of ethical do’s and don’ts, this approach to morality focuses on finding a powerful, loving and centered state of being and from that state making decisions as to how to act. It puts the power and the responsibility for moral decisions in the hands of the individual and challenges him or her to constantly aim at understanding and creating a moral way of acting.

In this approach to moral thinking, the body is the touchstone for decision making and action. In practicing body/movement awareness exercises, people come to experience that thoughts, feelings, intentions and actions which lead to smallness and twisting in the body are those which upon reflection would be identified as weak, hurtful, immoral and unethical. And thoughts, feelings, intentions and actions which lead to expansiveness, symmetry and freedom in the body are those which are respectful, compassionate, nurturing and confident. If people who are faced with decisions about how to behave turn
their attention to the sensations in their bodies, they will have a way of judging whether they are moving in life-affirming or life-destroying directions.

Actually, it is a bit more complicated than this. Actions which lead to smallness and twisting in the body are generally unethical, and actions which lead to an expansiveness and symmetry are most likely and comparatively more ethical. Smallness and twisting do indicate that there is some difficulty that must be resolved, but there are two kinds of difficulties which may arise. The simple difficulty is that the thought or action is one which is indeed hurtful and unethical. The more complicated difficulty has to do with fearful and painful associations. If in our past experience we have learned to associate pain and punishment with something that otherwise would be life-affirming, then our bodies will become small and twisted when we contemplate doing that which actually is good. Smallness and twisting, therefore, are indicators of a requirement for learning and growth. Either we are faced with some traumatic experience to be worked out and overcome or we are experiencing an urge to do something wrong and destructive. In any case, experiencing smallness and twisting in the body indicates that some self-study is needed before we can make an ethical choice.

Likewise, expansiveness and symmetry do not indicate perfection. Thoughts, feelings, intentions and actions which lead to an expansiveness, symmetry and freedom in the body are those which are moving in the direction of respect, strength, compassion and nurturance. Opening and freeing of the body do not indicate that some choice or behavior is absolutely right, but they do indicate that we are moving along the right path. There is always more opening and freeing of the body to achieve, so there will always be a deeper or more complete understanding to achieve of what is truly life-affirming. But if we base our decisions about feelings and actions on a search for the more open and free body state, we will be led in the direction of an ethical and constructive life. When we do something hurtful, our bodies rebel. And when we affirm our communion with life and the planet, our bodies function well.

This is a practical, empirical view of moral thinking and acting. There are within Inquiry two streams of thought concerning moral education. One presents a rational/cognitive view of the process, and the other is a practical view very much like the one I am presenting. Weinstein comments that “critical thinking like much of moral education, sees the function of education as the bringing forth of the rational capacities of the child.”12 Weinstein, in discussing Lipman’s idea of cognitive apprenticeship, identifies the other stream of thought: “Lipman develops the notion of education for judgment on the model of professional education and in particular, education within the fine and performing arts.... Lipman sees the artist in her studio as the model for critical thinking as education for judgment.”

Weinstein, coming from a rational/cognitive/linguistic view, sees a problem in the studio model of moral education. “The student is not taught abstractly and theoretically;

rather, the student engages in practice that is subject to the continuing involvement of the instructor through interactive ‘coaching.’ ... Is the ‘studio model’ of learning, with the attendant danger of ‘apprenticeship,’ consistent with rational autonomy?” Weinstein suggests that apprenticeship is dangerous because the teacher is seen as more knowledgeable than the student and consequently rational debate between equals about values cannot take place.

It is clear that Weinstein believes that the rational/cognitive/intellectual domain should be the primary focus of learning. From that viewpoint, full rational autonomy is an appropriate value. The cornerstone of that approach is freedom and equality of individuals. Weinstein asserts that philosophical discussion cannot take place in a situation in which one person is an authority presumed to know the truth.

However, as I have discussed above, the idea that critical thinking should be limited to rational/cognitive/linguistic processes is much too narrow an approach. It is particularly out of place in the domain of moral education and functioning, which is concerned with the practical question of how to cultivate dispositions to behave in certain ways.

More than that, the goal of full rational autonomy is inappropriate. Autonomy means being free of constraints, but it is impossible to be free of the constraints imposed by facts. Certainly individuals have the right to embrace any intellectual position they wish, but some intellectual positions have little to do with practical, effective judging and acting. Can you imagine a physicist arguing for his right to full intellectual autonomy independent of the constraints of laboratory tests? The process of empirical testing provides a check for intellectual opinions that are worthless. Autonomy is appropriate only within the constraints of fact.

The practical, somatic approach, presented in this paper, for cultivating the disposition underlying critical thinking truly is a studio model of moral education. In Aikido, for example, a lot of my teaching focuses on such things as conflict resolution and peacemaking. I do in fact teach moral functioning in a studio, and this process is based on a respectful use of my authority to cultivate intellectual and somatic autonomy in my students. However, by virtue of my twenty-four years of training in Aikido, I do have greater skill in and insights into effective, humane ways of behaving, and students come to my classes to be helped to become what I have experienced that human beings can be.

This, of course, puts me in a very dangerous position, one in which there is the danger of my misusing the power I have and am given. In many master-disciple relationships, this danger becomes a real problem, as the master uses his/her power with no checks or balances. In my way of teaching, the somatic procedures of operational definition and hypothesis testing serve to confine my teaching to what I can demonstrate works well. Thus it is not merely my own opinions which I am transmitting, but techniques for making effective judgments.

\[13\] Ibid, p 12.
In my teaching, I am fully open to disagreement and rational discussion, but the solution to a rational challenge is not a debate. It is a movement experience which tests my viewpoint. Not only does this remove moral issues from the realm of mere philosophical debate, but it is a self-regulating mechanism for me as well. I can advance only moral and behavioral approaches which I can demonstrate actually work well (in the empirical sense described above). The empirical nature of my approach to values ensures that the power I have as a teacher is not used in self-serving or destructive ways.

Moral judgments, then, are hypotheses tentatively confirmed by observations. The teacher is more advanced and does have a privileged position in terms of greater skill, understanding and experience, but that privilege is not an absolute. Looked at as individuals on the path of self-scrutiny, teachers and students are equals. Looked at as masters of a skill, the teacher is more advanced than the students and does have a privileged position. As long as the teacher remembers that s/he is in principle open to challenge and correction even by students, and as long as s/he remembers that s/he is more advanced than the students only in a limited and practical way, there is no incompatibility between the studio model of moral education and the ideal of freedom and respect. When teachers forget this fundamental equality, that moral mistake will show up in their bodies and their movements.

The studio is the place in which real, practical moral cultivation occurs. I would go so far as to say that only in studio education can people practice and learn practical skills for judging and acting, the skills that constitute wisdom.

CONCLUSIONS

Critical thinking and somatic thinking are two varieties of self-scrutiny. The core of critical thinking is scrutiny of ideas and assertions in terms of evidence and processes of logic. This scrutiny is a process of meta-cognition, that is, going beyond thinking about the position being asserted to thinking about the adequacy of the thinking involved. My work with body and movement is also a process of meta-cognition and is very much allied to the fundamental approach taken by critical thinking. Operationalizing statements of emotion and experience, framing somatic processes as hypotheses about the best way to interact with the world, subjecting these hypotheses to experimental testing by way of movement tasks — all these elements are processes of meta-cognition and self-scrutiny. It could even be said that what I am doing in my work is applying principles of critical thing to bodily being.

Somatic elements are part of the processes of feeling, thinking, judging and acting. To be free to make clear judgments, one must be free in the body. And to be free in the body, a long course of somatic self-scrutiny must be undertaken. Critical thinking without somatic thinking is like a duck with only one wing. (And the reverse is true too, of course.) It won’t get off the ground or get where it wants to go.
The key to my approach to somatic work is that movement has meaning. It is more than biomechanics. It is purpose, meaning, interaction with the world. There is no separation between philosophical ideas and the musculoskeletal system. The primary meaning of “attitude” after all is “the posture or position of a person... or the manner in which the parts of the body are disposed.” Many of our psychological words are physical. Your stance on some issue may be influenced by how stiff necked or warm hearted you are. The position of your body is your attitude. To examine the position of your body is to discover your psychological attitude, and changing the position of your body means changing your attitude. Observing and savoring the functioning of your body is a path of psychological and spiritual self-scrutiny and growth.

Mind and body aren’t two different things. They are the same thing spoken of in two different ways. It is interesting to think about the mind-body problem. There are really two different mind/body problems. The first one, which is typical of Western philosophy, asks what is the connection between the mind and the body, presuming that the two are separate and wondering how one can influence the other. The second one, which is typical of Eastern approaches such as Aikido, asks how the mind and body can function as a better-integrated whole. There is a presumption that they are just different pieces or aspects of one whole, and the mind-body problem is a practical problem of tuning this whole for optimal functioning. This model is more like asking how to improve hand/eye coordination, presuming that the hand and eye are separate facets of the same whole.

The descriptions of the dispositions of a critical thinker focus on respect and open-mindedness. Being open-minded and respectful, tolerating ambiguity, desiring to have flaws exposed and corrected — all this involves being grateful for rather than threatened by having one’s position challenged or overturned. More fundamentally, this means not mistaking one’s ideas for one’s self. It means having a strong and well-established sense of one’s boundaries and one’s worth.

Though it is true that the logical elements of critical thinking training can play a part in cultivating this well-established self, it is only a part. There are many other elements of life and learning that must be brought to bear in helping people without the critical thinking disposition cultivate it. Along with critical thinking methods, somatic, psychological and spiritual tools must be employed in the appropriate areas of human experience in order to create a full and truly functional process of self-scrutiny and growth.

The intellect is just a part of the whole person. It has its duties in life, but it can function well only as part of a complete, balanced human structure. Our goals and desires come from our emotional and spiritual “parts.” The reasoning mind is a servant to those parts. It is a tool for evaluating and improving plans for attaining goals and desires and for overcoming negative subconscious forces. The linear, rational thinking process is for checking the accuracy of thought and action. The non-linear feeling process is life itself.

14 Webster’s Second Unabridged Dictionary
Developing the reasoning mind is important but so is developing the connection between the reasoning and feeling parts of the human being.

The discipline of Critical Thinking, with its cognitive/rational/linguistic focus, has a crucial place to play in the evolution of a broad path of self-scrutiny, but CT is only one piece of the whole puzzle. A broad program of self-scrutiny, including both somatic education and critical thinking, would be a very powerful tool indeed for helping people cultivate wisdom.

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