

■ ONE

A Short Distance, but a Big Cost

Recently skimming through my daughter's books for her world literature class I came across James Joyce's story collection, *Dubliners*. Remembering the challenge of Joyce's dense prose I forged ahead and came across a certain Mr. Duffy who "lived a short distance from his body." Joyce reveals Mr. Duffy as a one-dimensional bureaucrat who lives a bland, colorless life. He is the postmodern everyman—cut off from his feelings, defined by rules and protocols, drifting aimlessly without purpose or meaningful connections.

From a somatic point of view living any distance from our bodies is dodgy and the consequences harmful, even grave. Now we can scientifically ground, through technological advances in the emerging field of neuroscience, that distancing ourselves from our body places not only our physical health at risk, but our emotional health as well. Furthermore, being out of touch with our body limits our capacity to

learn and evolve, and it dramatically reduces the possibility of meaningful relationships, as well as an authentic spiritual presence—surely all foundations for a fulfilled, satisfying life.

At the beginning of the last century, as the age of industrialization radically altered how we live and work, James Joyce revealed through Mr. Duffy how these forces shape us into a disembodied existence, and that living even a short distance from our body predisposes us to an awkward, disenfranchised, even calamitous life. Now, at the beginning of the twenty-first century the disembodied life has been institutionalized. Instead of being engaged in the direct experience of our living we now inhabit a world of symbols, ideologies, virtual realities, an unexamined materialism, predigested information, and ten-second sound bites. In the industrial age the body was socially organized for efficient mass production; a late capitalistic perspective socially organizes the body toward acceleration and speed in a world that is rapidly collapsing time and space. Both are deeply dehumanizing. The emphasis on rationality has shredded our emotional life, and we're discovering that adopting someone else's ideal is not fulfilling. When we're at a distance from our bodies we become confused about how to live our lives. This leads to fear, which produces violence, inequitable rights, and self-isolation.

The distance we live from our body is the distance we live from our self, from our emotional reality. In the socially manufactured separation of spirit and biology the capacity to feel and sense has been lost. Conscience, self-reflection,

historical memory, imagination, compassion, intuition, energy, and a spiritual truing are less accessible to us when our ability to feel has been pruned from us. This leads to innumerable problems, including difficulty in building trust, working effectively with others, being skillful in action, managing moods and emotions, and accessing the intuitive part of our nature; as well as the physical, emotional, and mental problems that all add up to a disjointed, incoherent life. Currently it's estimated that over 80 percent of physician visits are stress related. We've lost the ability to creatively work with the many pressures that are part of our daily routines.

Modern psychology and contemporary coaching models have taken us to a certain threshold of insight and "knowing," but they have failed to teach us how to discover satisfaction and meaning as we evolve through different shapes of living, and therefore different perspectives, throughout a lifetime. Insight has a place, but it's a mistake to think that if we change our minds, different behaviors will follow. To simply have a good idea about something is not enough. To change how we are means changing how we act; it means functioning differently. It requires a different way of organizing how we feel, act, sense, and perceive. To embody new actions asks that we move beyond insight into the realm of practices that reshape and transform how we actually are, and not just the idea, or desire, of who we are.

To the point of the matter: if we live at a distance from the life of our body we're unable to feel ourselves, and if we are unable to feel it's difficult to learn, change, and transform ourselves. It also makes it impossible to feel others, to

feel their joy, their pain, their hopes and fears; or to feel our four-legged friends, or those that fly, swim, or crawl; or to fully relate to the world of plants, grasses, stones, waters, and trees, or any living system for that matter. Unable to feel we lose our capacity for empathy and compassion, and people become symbols and objects. Life itself becomes one-dimensional, lacking vibrancy and meaning. From here it's a short step to inflicting violence on others and the natural world. Perhaps it's just a short distance that we reside from our bodies, but it's become a big cost.

The institutionalized, rationalistic view that compartmentalizes our bodies, minds, emotions, spirit, and nature has arguably been a cause for the increase of violence, stress, isolation, and physical, emotional, and sexual trauma. This makes it understandable why so many people choose to live outside of their bodies. Simply it's an intelligent strategy that allows one to survive while minimizing suffering and pain. If we do not live in our bodies we do not have to feel the pain of internal and external oppression. The consequences of this plague of disembodiment are the entry points for Somatic Coaching. As we move into this book we'll further address both the dignity and breakdown of living a short distance from our body. For now it's important to simply acknowledge that learning to stifle feeling was, at one point, an intelligent way for many to deal with danger, real or perceived.

The primary difference of living in our bodies or at a distance from our bodies lies in the heart's intent, that is, what we pay attention to, how we pay attention, and in the very purpose of our attending. Most of us live out lives that we've

unconsciously inherited, and we're mimicking patterns of living that have been passed on to us by family, school, religion, government, economic institutions, and the media. We have lost touch with the rich, subjective life of being in the human body, upon which our entire experience is based. The body, the soma, is a source of wisdom and intelligence that is the medicine for much of what ails us. To live from our inner impulse of harmony, of our interconnectedness, the urge to be at one with life, is an evolutionary step. It's evolutionary in that it asks us to confront our own compulsion for separateness and how separation breeds aggression and violence against our self, others, and the environment. It's evolutionary because it's the next step for human beings to embody the principles of harmony that are explicit in nature, and in the cosmos.

It's worth our while to take a brief look at the historical forces that have angled us away from this embodied wisdom.

DESCARTES AND RATIONALISM

The contemporary interpretation of the body that has led us to the marginalization of feeling has its roots in the work of the French philosopher René Descartes. Writing in the seventeenth century, a time of interminable war, religious persecution, and a social order based on superstition, belief, and magic, Descartes was convinced that it was possible to alleviate this chaos by providing certainty through rational means. Developing a theory of reality that could be defended by geometrical proofs and mathematical symbols, he sought

to produce rational “truths” that were clear, distinct, and certain. His philosophy of rationalism, which is also conversationally referred to as Cartesian thinking, was an effort to free people from theological dogma and medieval witchcraft through an objective, impersonal map of the universe.

The triumph of his philosophy was twofold: First, at a time when the only agreed-upon solution to political and religious conflict was war and indiscriminate killing, he made accessible to the leaders of his time the possibility of reasoning their way out of a seemingly endless quagmire of suffering. Second, his philosophy became the basis for the fundamental assumptions of scientific thought as we know them today. Employing a mathematical and mechanical theory of the universe, plus new instruments to validate their experiments, a generation of scientists guaranteed the proof of an objective, predictable universe. Kepler, Galileo, Newton, Locke, and others of this time expounded a scientific understanding of nature, the cosmos, society, human beings, and by deduction, the self.

This transformation of knowledge effectively moved the reins of power from the hands of the priests and church to the scientists and their emerging technology. In this new worldview, the beliefs promulgated by the church were slowly replaced by the promises of science. We want to remember that Descartes acted within a historical context to create a new common sense to solve a crisis of his time. His intention, in part, was to reduce human suffering. What followed was one of the great intellectual revolutions of human history.

THE SCIENTIFIC REVOLUTION

The essential distinction in the rationalistic tradition is the division of the universe between matter, which is governed entirely by mechanical laws, and the mind, whose lofty territory comprised thinking, ideas, and will. In an intellectual turf war whose reverberations we're still riding, Descartes and his colleagues staked out mind, matter, and science, which included the body; and the church claimed spirit and religion. In this interpretation mind and body, spirit and matter, are two separate worlds that are vaguely and mysteriously linked. This was the beginning of the Western model of mind, body, and spirit existing in separate compartments. We work Monday through Friday; we go to church on Sunday.

Once the notion of an inner animating principle was dismissed, a vigorous, reductionistic quantification of the material world began. With rationalism as its base, science claimed first that it was possible to view the world objectively: the experimenter did not influence the experiment, but could see the world through unbiased eyes. Second, the world consists of fixed, external objects that are independent of each other and can be objectively understood through a rationalistic process. In other words, reality has already been established, and it's our job to learn how to manipulate it. And third, data from experimentation can provide objective facts about the world. The operating metaphor is that the material world, which includes the body and nature, is machine-like, similar to a huge clock, and by understanding

its mechanisms we can dominate it, oppress it, and control it to our advantage.

THE COST OF RATIONALISM

Once we grasp this way of knowing we see its imprint in the intimate corners of our everyday life, as well as in our local and national institutions. As the most prestigious and persuasive model for reality, it accounts for almost all of the scientific and technological achievements of Western culture. Scientific reductionism has made it possible to build bridges, advance medicine, and expand global communications. Although this has produced extraordinary advances in our quality of life, these powers of manipulation have also come with a price. Freely applied to humans, culture, nature, and social policies, the emphasis on rationalistic thinking has stunted our emotional and spiritual literacy. With our educational institutions now firmly grounded in mathematical thinking, instrumental reasoning, and pseudoscientific approaches, we now equate the human body with a machine and thinking with a computer. We employ reason and logic to determine our relationship with nature, with those we love, to teams, and within organizations. We are so firmly entrenched in this way of seeing that we have become blind to it. Social scientists, economists, and world leaders have become indecisive in taking action because of a concern that a pragmatic, heartfelt application, regardless of how successful, won't match established theory. Despite the overwhelming evidence that we're draining the earth of its resources,

we continue our exploitation with the faith that science will pull us out of the hole. The legacy of rationalism has made theory more important than action, domination more compelling than cooperation, ideas more regarded than life, abstract logic prevailing over moral intuition, and pure reason trumping emotion.

MIND-BODY DUALISM

In the rationalistic tradition, the body is viewed as a collection of anatomical parts that are organized, guided, and kept in check by a central command called the mind, which is separate from the body. In this separation of mind and body, energy, desire, feeling, emotion, sensation, and spirit are marginal, inconsequential phenomena. The body is useful primarily in its capacity to serve the mind's ability for rationalistic thought. The body carries the mind around in order that it may do the important work. Aside from feeding, cleaning, and having it appear respectable, there's little need to attend to the body. When Descartes declared, "I think therefore I am," he removed the body from Western philosophy in one clean cut. He later expounded on this by saying emotions, feelings, and sensations happen to us, and we must learn to ignore or dominate them in service to what is rational. This position implies that there's no legitimacy to sensing, feeling, moods, or emotions. It also validates that one can deny responsibility for any and all feelings, unless we can rationally come up with a good reason to have them. In this separation of mind and body we have also separated

ourselves from God, nature, as well as other human beings. Spiritual fulfillment can be found only outside the realm of the body; consciousness is something apart from the body. This two-world view, which is a fundamental aspect of the Judeo-Christian tradition, stresses actions in this life that will reserve us a place in the afterlife. The body, in this view, is seen as a hindrance to one's spiritual development. Sensual feelings and sexual desire are one's moral downfall; intuition is illogical and therefore useless. It's mandatory, therefore, to immediately crush any feelings that arise in the body in order not to be distracted from our heaven-bound intentions. This marked the beginning of a concern for respectability and righteousness that gained influence over the next 250 years. This shows up now in our denial of the life of the body. We live in anxiety and fear of our feelings, moods, desires, and emotions. In other words we are culturally taught to fear life.

To see how we divide ourselves on a daily basis, consider a common scenario where a sales team is meeting before delivering an important presentation. As they begin, the team leader notices that the key presenter is fidgeting with his tie, he is gripping the chair with white knuckles, and his breath is rapid and high. He sees, in other words, the anxiety of his partner, which will have a direct impact on how the presentation is delivered, and received. Yet as they begin to focus on the details of the presentation, the team leader shifts his concern away from the anxiety of the presenter to scrutinize his figures, assertions, and assessments as if they were more important than the mood he was just observing. This is the logical outcome of a rationalistic education.

Of course the content of the presentation is important, but because the point is so simple, it's easily lost. That is, the body of the person that will speak the elements of the presentation is the same body as the person who is anxious about presenting. They're simply different manifestations of the same unity. The presenter's anxiety will negatively affect his speech, comportment, and presence, which will adversely affect how the presentation is delivered and received, just as a centered, confident mood will affect the presentation positively. But living in a two-world reality, we don't see what one world has to do with the other. In addition, we have no practice in speaking about such things. We're embarrassed about seeing emotions and awkward about how to interact with them in our work life. We wonder, "Are they relevant to the situation?" "Is it my job to address them?" "Has the person given me the permission to speak about his anxiety?" "Is it appropriate to bring up emotions in our professional life?" "Am I opening a Pandora's box?" These questions arise on a daily basis, whether we're conscious of them or not. Yet by not addressing these moods and emotions, we invite disaster not only for the presentation, but also for the health and identity of the presenter. The coherence, clarity, and focus of the presentation will be negatively affected by the anxiety of the presenter, as well as his connection to the audience. And the presenter opens himself to stress-related diseases caused by the unexamined tension. In addition, his identity as a leader will be judged negatively, placing his career in jeopardy.

Consider a similar example from a different context. A patient enters his physician's office complaining of chest

pains. The doctor engages him in a conversation about his symptoms. She notices his breathing, constricted chest, skin color, and tone of voice. As she begins her examination with stethoscope, thermometer, and blood-pressure instruments, a shift occurs. She now sees her patient as a collection of remotely related parts—a heart rhythm, pulse rate, blood pressure, galvanic skin response, respiration, and so on—that she analyzes, quantifies, measures, and performs procedures on with her instruments. The initial presenting symptoms are dismissed, and the patient is successfully reduced to anatomical parts in order to be treated in a proper Cartesian manner. The causes for the malady can be overlooked as the patient is reduced to symptoms and sections. The physician considers what medications she can prescribe to alleviate the symptoms instead of asking her patient questions about the cause of her emotional state.

Don't mistake this as a condemnation of medicine and its practices; they're useful and necessary. But our lack of practice in being with the living presence of feelings, moods, emotions, spirit, and energy keeps people objectified and at a distance. The price we pay for this includes isolation, stress-related diseases, an inability to relate successfully with others, poor job performance, and a culture of resignation and dissatisfaction.

The combination of extinguishing the voice of an embodied living spirit in humans with our unexamined devotion to materialism has placed us in a position analogous to the one Descartes faced over three hundred years ago. His antidote of rationalism, and the subsequent splitting of mind

and body, applied to a crisis of certainty has now become the breakdown. People are again living in a time of uncertainty, confusion, and fear. To rely only on our rational nature is no longer sufficient. To live the life society assigns us is no longer fulfilling. Material wealth does not guarantee a good life. By separating ourselves from nature we are poisoning our water, air, soil, and bodies. Somatic Coaching reinterprets what it means to live a fulfilled and successful life and challenges the dogma of rationalism. It offers a possibility in which human beings can creatively transform themselves and the world.

To continue our inquiry into Somatic Coaching we'll turn toward the phenomenon of coaching itself. We'll reflect on the difference between a sports coach and a Somatic Coach, and the historical events that now make Somatic Coaching a possibility for people.

■ TWO

Coaching

COACHING IN SPORTS

Growing up in the tradition of the bodily arts I was introduced to coaches and coaching from an early age. Coaches were an integral part of the many sports I played growing up, as well as in the martial arts I trained. They were often gruff, straightforward men who were veterans of World War II or Korea, and they ran their teams like a military unit. When I was the only sophomore on a high-school team of seniors, the coach publicly announced that I was the weak link on the team. My face turned shame-scarlet, but inwardly I vowed, no one will ever say that to me again. Ignited with renewed commitment, I turned my anger into hard work and with some genetic predisposition went on to become an All-American in Track and Field and I ran in the pre-Olympic meet and Central American Games. To this day I wonder if this coach was just fed up with me, or was this a strategic move on his part to motivate me? In any case, no one after

that told me I was the “weak link” on any kind of team or partnership. His words, just or not, stung but they penetrated deeply enough to last a lifetime. They awakened me to the importance of doing my part, to being a valuable team member. In dojos and playing fields I learned from an early age that having a good coach was immeasurable, and a bad coach could make life miserable.

Compared to today’s advances in sports psychology, biotechnology, training methods, and a deep understanding of bodily physics the coaches I had from adolescence through postcollege were in the dark ages; but their intent was sincere and they freely gave what they knew and lent support wherever they could. Despite their limitations compared to today’s standards it was abundantly clear that their influence was fundamental to my learning and the success that I had. I learned that having a coach who could see things that I couldn’t see and who was able to impart that knowledge was essential for learning and transformation. In the Japanese traditional arts the teacher (for the moment let’s use teacher and coach interchangeably) is called *sensei*. *Sensei* translates as “he or she who has gone before,” which points to the importance of having someone who has traveled a path that the coachee/student has not yet traveled. In other words the coach can see things that the coachee has not yet experienced, and he or she has the competency to impart this experience to the coachee. This doesn’t mean they’re superior in any way, and may not even have the skill in a particular domain that the coachee has, but their experience and depth can add immeasurable value for the coachee.

The *kanji*, or calligraphy of *sensei*, depicts a person leading a water buffalo around by a nose ring. This symbolizes that the coach/teacher has both the sensitivity and the experience to lead the most stubborn and reluctant coachee/student in a skillful manner. The other part of the calligraphy is that of a flower growing from the earth. This represents that the teacher/coach is engaged in cultivating life through life-affirming practices.

Traditionally, and as represented in my life, we think of coaches and coaching in the context of sports. In this setting we're familiar with coaches having two functions. One, they offer encouragement and inspiration to their players and team. They strive to maintain a positive attitude among their players and at the same time they rally and challenge them to go beyond their limitations and be the best they can. Second, they have the expertise to point out some limitation, or possibility, in an individual or team's performance. By pointing out what they're unable to see, and to then suggest a different option, the player or team is able to take new actions that will improve performance. A batting coach on a baseball team, for example, may suggest that a player shorten his grip on the bat because he swings behind the ball. Or a track coach may advise her long jumper to lengthen her run in order to attain more speed before jumping. Now with the proliferation of technology a sports coach is able to use computer digitalization to record and then analyze an athlete's technique in minute detail. The computer is able to see things that the coach's eye cannot see and make suggestions that are unavailable to the coach.

In either case the coach is not expected to perform like the athlete, but the coach's experience and education can help the player attain greater performance. The coach improves the player's technique, gives encouragement, and points out the elements that aren't apparent to the athlete. Historically, however, they don't offer feedback or coaching in how their way of being affects their performance. This returns us to the Cartesian influence of separating key aspects of ourselves. Traditional coaching, sports or otherwise, does not draw a link between who the person is, that is, how they are being, and their actions and performance.

In the absence of coaching, improvement is slow, if at all. Without a good coach an athlete may make small adjustments in performance, but little more. The athlete is able only to augment what she's already doing. The support of a competent coach, however, allows players and teams to make shifts in their play that are different in kind, rather than degree. They're able to make quantum leaps in performance rather than a refinement of an existing skill.

A COACH BY ANOTHER NAME

Although we've used the example of coaching in athletics we can see the same phenomena in dance, theater arts, horsemanship, martial arts, chess, painting, or any discipline where one wants to enhance their performance or improve their technique. In these areas the coach may be called a mentor, guide, instructor, teacher, *sensei*, or facilitator. Regardless of

the title the essential distinctions of traditional sports coaching that we've previously outlined are still present. That is, they have the competency to see something that's not apparent to the player and to then suggest a different course of action for their play or technique. It's also important to point out that the sports coach's instructions are traditionally specific and technical, and stay exclusively within a narrow band of their sport or art. That is, the coach rarely, if ever, attends to mood, emotion, the way of being of the performer, and if they do it's by chance, rather than by design, and in a broad, superficial way. Most coaches have little training or competency in dealing with mood, emotions, and presence; thus their role in this domain is somewhat analogous to that of a cheerleader. A coach's advice and instruction normally have nothing to do with who the person is as a self. There is a focus on their doing, but not on their being.

For the Western mentality the idea of coaching is an acceptable way of learning and improving oneself. With our national obsession with sports, and our participation in athletics at an early age (either as a player or spectator), there's a natural path of legitimacy that has resulted in coaches finding their place outside the playing field and into other domains. It's not surprising then, that in the last twenty years or so the phenomena of coaching has been introduced into the domains of business, management, leadership, health, education, fitness, finance, and personal development.

It's worth our while to briefly speculate about the current historical situation that opens the space of possibilities

in which Somatic Coaching can flourish. To begin with we observe a historically strong and consistent element within the Western culture that values and emphasizes self-development and improving one's lot in life. A review of the best-seller lists, which inevitably have an abundance of self-improvement books in the top ten, attest to this interest. In America, perhaps this has its origins in the Constitution that grants us the right to "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness." Many people throughout the world look to America as the place where hard work and education can reward you with a better life. Self-improvement is accepted as a way to progress and get ahead in life.

Beginning in the late sixties, when George Leonard coined the term the "Human Potential Movement," our national predisposition toward self-development took a new turn. Psychology, a discipline less than a hundred years old, was revived by a new humanism. Theorists and clinicians like Abraham Maslow, Rollo May, Fritz Perls, and Carl Rogers placed the person at the center of the therapeutic process instead of their symptoms. Therapists began facing their patients instead of sitting behind them as they lay down. They also began to pay more attention to how the patient actually appeared in the treatment room instead of classifying their neurosis, complexes, and disorders in a rational manner. Many of these early thinkers and practitioners introduced and were influenced by biocybernetics, bodywork, group therapy, encounter groups, T-groups, Eastern meditation practices, and psychedelic drugs. Soon thereafter the con-

cept of treating the whole person spawned the terms “holism,” “holistic health,” and “mind-body-spirit.”

It was at this time that the Lomi School, founded in 1970 and the forerunner of Strozzi Institute, pioneered the integration of meditation, bodywork, movement practices, and a body-oriented psychotherapy based in Gestalt therapy. In practice and theory the Lomi School was a forerunner to the current discourse of somatics. A host of other schools and institutes followed whose goal was to treat and educate the whole person in mind, body, and spirit. Now there are universities that offer degrees in the field of somatics, and institutes that train practitioners to treat and educate people in a more holistic way. Thanks to the development of somatics an integrated body-mind approach to health and healing is finding deeper and broader inroads into the culture.

This development in humanistic psychology has more recently been followed by psychiatry moving toward more biochemical interventions (read: medication) and traditional psychotherapy becoming more embedded in a cognitive position and less inclusive of the body in the treatment room. Currently a psychiatric resident receives minimal and sometimes no training in practical psychotherapy.

At the same time the growing field of coaching has continued to represent the Cartesian mind-body split. That is, coaching primarily addresses what the client is doing, separate from how they are being, how the self is inextricably linked to the actions and behaviors in which they're engaged. Tips and techniques are provided so that the person coached

will be able to do their sport, job, health, relationship, career, etc., in an improved way, much like behavior modification. This type of coaching does not take into account the whole of the person, the how of learning, the role of cultivating the self that allows one to be self-generating, self-healing, and self-educating.

Somatic Coaching fills this gap by including in its methodology the embodiment of universal principles and the cultivation of the self, as well as the learning and embodiment of specific skills. Somatic Coaching posits that a person's way of being in the world, that is, who they are is the ground of the coaching. Transformation occurs when the being of the person is addressed. By working through the body Somatic Coaching represents the next evolution in the relatively new discourse of coaching.

In the next chapter we will directly address the field of somatics and Somatic Coaching.