

FASCIA AS AN EXQUISITE MEDIUM OF EXPRESSION

Attention is a focusing, a narrowing of awareness; you can only make effort to pay attention. But ... you can't make effort to be aware. [Therefore] relax into the seat of consciousness ... it's a state of ease rather than a state of tension.
Adyashanti, "The Fabric of Reality"

A review follows, of literature pertaining to the fascial system of the body, most specifically how it as a system serves as a crossroads between and among soul and body and world, and reflects unendingly the relatedness between all things.

All fascia is connective tissue; but not all connective tissue is fascia. Connective tissue per se, is a continuous medium throughout the body, comprised of specialized cells (fibroblasts being the most common) surrounded by a ground substance (matrix) of variable consistency, with protein cells present. The fascia is a type of connective tissue that defines the three-dimensional form of a body; Andrew Still calls it the "organ of structure." It is defined as the sheets of dense tissue that envelop all other connective tissues both dense (bone) and less so (blood, for example), as well as muscles and bones.

Fascia also lends us our individual structural qualities, for, as Dick Larson points out, body distortion can and does happen as the result of anything. Gravity, for example, is a force that every body must reckon with. Every ache is a record of gravity's effect on the body (Larson, quoting Ida Rolf). On the positive side, once a working relationship with gravity has been re-established through structural integration, this force invests the work with therapeutic effect over time (Still). Don Setty echoes this, writing that, with mechanical release, the "vast

communication complex of fascia has been stimulated toward ... a kinetic *stress-relieving* structure." The fascia can work as much for our health as they can against it.

The adaptability of the fascial structure to the environment can be considered a liability as well as a gift, for it tends toward holding patterns in response to psychological conditions too – holding patterns which function immediately to protect but eventually lead to at least

"dis-ease" if not out-and-out disease. R. Louis Schultz and Rosemary Feitis draw anatomical parallels between the seven spinal flexures and the seven chakras, and also relate that work in these areas reveals holding patterns not purely structural in nature, but emotional as well. Robert Schliep participated in experiments on anaesthetized patients that suggested similar complexities inherent in the fascia. He writes that fascial restrictions marked before anesthetization do not appear to exist once the person is under anesthesia; that they therefore must be habitual psychological patterns controlled by the central nervous system, not just structural entities. In another article on the same topic he posits that holding patterns are a form of pre-tensioning by the autonomic nervous system, to help prevent injury. In other words, and in any case, to some extent the mind is in control of adhesions and blockages.

Does it follow that these structural issues do not exist outside of the mind's domain? And how does body work bring relief? Of course, we intuit that people cannot be counseled out of their structural impediments or tendencies; and the reason appears to be that consciousness is not found in its totality in the brain,

but is a quality of being, recorded in and throughout the body, most likely in the fascia. Schliep contends that the brain "manages consciousness and the whole body is referenced in the process". James and Nora Oschman, in *Matter, Energy, and the Living Matrix*, write that energy flows during body work point to "models of memory storage and recall that are based on ... holographic properties of the whole organism" not just its central nervous system (and indeed science has yet to pinpoint an answer to the question of where memories are stored). Mind and body are not easily teased apart in these models; and the Oschmans make a clear point that the body system that structural integration works is "the place where the body's relations between matter and energy are manifest," that it is made of a "living matrix" of body-mind.

Far from a simple repository of memory of past events and trauma, though, fascial connective tissue also serves as a vast, inordinately sensitive communication network for the body, a network which efficiently processes information from the environment in order to organize a supportive reaction. Chemical shifts within the body during fascial manipulation account for some of the communications: endorphins are released during body work, and Schliep notes that behavioral plasticity has been shown to increase under influence of similar chemicals, probably as a way of allowing the body to make changes within shifting conditions, This suggesting that structural integration probably does support neural-level reprogramming of habitual holding patterns. But chemicals are responsible for adaptation in many areas of the body, not just the fascial system. It is in the particular liquid crystalline landscape that constitutes the fascia that many new paradigms for intercommunication within the body are being sourced.

According to Mae-Wan Ho, an organism is adaptable (alive, and responsive) because of its ability to store and provide energy at will through liquid crystalline structures found throughout the body. The conscious mind, and the nervous system play bit parts in her model of a body's intercommunication system. Schliep writes that the subconscious is at play in the living matrix of the connective tissues; movement is initiated from here before we can consciously respond, in a fleeting moment of experience outside the realm of our five senses. The matrix is a "whole-body circuit" of immense sophistication which processes far more information than our nervous system and which perceives and reacts to a full spectrum of information which our conscious minds are not party to. Intuition (matrix consciousness) is, then, "closer to reality [and] based on far more information".

Matrix, or ground substance, everywhere surrounds connective tissues, and is a material extremely sensitive to input (mechanical, chemical, or electrical) and extremely fast in transmitting information through the body. She maintains that coherence of the matrix is critical to these transmissions, and that where impedance is found (in an adhesion, say), the local area suffers from "impoverishment in the energy spectrum". However, it also self-organizes continually, within certain energy thresholds, a plastic quality well-known to structural integrators. The piezoelectric fields within the matrix act as semiconductors for intentional, organized energy introduced to the system, so communicating changes to structure, in our work, creates changes to communication pathways, which in turn creates more organized, holistic

responses within the body (Oschmans).

The relative organization of the liquid crystalline matrix is a quality which not only changes in response to input, but is reflected in more established structures within the fascial network. Dick Larson has explored the close relationship between acupuncture points and fascial planes and intersections. Qi, then, the body's source of energy and information, is found in reserve in the connective tissues, which interdigitate to every part of the body, and travels on meridians, which happen to correspond to more highly crystalline (more highly organized) collagen bands. The Oschmans do not talk about qi, but cite work by a researcher from the 1940s who first posited that proteins in connective tissues were the stages upon which the play of life occurred, acted by excited, wide-ranging electrons. They call the matrix a "dielectric semiconductor", and postulate that the crystallinity at interfascial boundaries may serve to best reflect and propagate electron waves throughout the structure; water within the matrix can also carry information via proton. Whether called qi or dielectric, information exchange occurs along the fascial interfaces, and only to the extent allowed by fascial integrity.

Apart from aligning the body in reference to external forces, fascial health arising out of structural integration serves to align the person with a more palpable, true sense of the personal self; as Michael Nebadon puts it, a state of balance inherently implies "no resistance to self". Will Johnson writes that physical ease and deeper consciousness are part and parcel of one another; that resistance in one will be mirrored as resistance in the other. The ego must create a sense of

disembodiment if it is to maintain control, whereas embodiment, as an experience of being aligned with the flow of life forces, is the only condition that allows for "open and spacious" mind, or a conscious sense of freedom. He conceives of pain, or dis-ease, as a guide showing us the areas we have blocked from integrating with our lives, and that acknowledgement of this and a transformational process out of pain, through structural integration, brings new facets to the sense of self. Emilie Conrad-D'Aoud goes so far as to say that the quality of the fluids in the connective tissues is governed by the quality of consciousness – that you can't be made of healthy tissues unless in fact you also seek meaning, freedom, and spirit.

Metaphysical qualities of the fascial network led Andrew Still to conceptualize the fascia as "the house of God" and the "dwelling place of the infinite". So, to some, there is evidence to suggest meaning in it away and beyond anything an individual can strive toward or otherwise consciously comprehend. Nebandon alluded to this same divine property within well-ordered fascia, writing that to find balance is to "transcend internal division, become transparent, and merge with the spontaneously unfolding movement of one's destiny". The sense of journey, of movement is as crucial metaphorically as it is physically, in the case of fascia. For while it ideally offers a body structure, solidity, and form, well-tempered and strong – it also just as ideally moves, is fluid, flexible, embodies in other words, the *flow* of life. Ho calls the two qualities of dynamic order and energy "intimately linked", pointing out that energy flow is of no consequence unless it can be stored to do work before dissipating (that is to say, before all of it is liberated in death of the organism). This "closed loop energy system [is] structured in space time"; in other words, life happens; but it can be a "vibrant coherent whole" only when

energy is not kinked within the fascia. Conrad-D'Aoud speaks to the temporal quality of "becoming" made real within connective tissues: "Continuum maintains that we are part of an unfolding process that remains intact within us."

According to Nebadon, a state of balance, the ideal state for the human body, is by nature also an "expansional" state, not just a self-referencing one. This implies that structural integration serves a further purpose, beyond integrating the structure of the body in relation to its own parts or its own life journey: that of relating the person to his environment (another very real but little-acknowledged part of the self). Schliep maintains that with structural integration, a flow is established wherein the parts of the body "cease to be parts" and the organism can finally unite with its environment, influencing it as much as being influenced by it. Marilyn Beech describes how information in the form of photons is emitted from DNA, and recounts research showing that in fact the matrix material found intracellularly in our bodies is the perfect medium for translating photonic information to electronic information and back, "not just within the body, but also outside the body", and between and among all bodies. The Oschmans describe inter-relatedness in terms of quantum physics; that molecules within the living matrix might oscillate and vibrate thereby creating fields of vibration – communications which are received by the living matrices of other beings.

For as complex as her concepts about "dynamic feedback interrelationships" are, Mae-Wan Ho's suggestion that we can change, that we are not programmed, that we, as embodied spirits, are at the end of it all, continually active participants in life is the simple and profound truth we can see reflected in our connective tissue

and fasciae.

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