

**Dialog with Dr. Marvin Solit**  
Jean Le Vaux, February, 2005

*How the Holistic Living Center came to be, how it evolved, and its present direction.*

**Jean.** I'm remembering 1966, when we first met. I had just come from Montreal, where I had been studying and teaching general semantics from '58-65. Several people, not connected with one another, said I should meet you, since you were also involved in the subject. You had just begun a new direction, away from osteopathic medicine, and towards your holistic orientation. You had started to give away all your medical equipment (which I helped you carry to other doctors). I asked why. You said, "I'm through with it; it's no longer relevant. What I'm interested in now is self-determination, not treatment; examining how the doctor-patient relationship is connected to what goes on; getting behind and underneath roles, and giving up control". Except for the 'giving up control', this coincided with what I had been learning and teaching. I've never asked you this before, but what on earth started you thinking this way?

**Marvin.** When I was an undergraduate at Washington University, I was attracted to the philosophy of Carl Rogers and his client-centered, non-directive approach to restoring psychological health.

In my junior year, probably influenced by Rogers, I organized my fraternity brothers to volunteer with patients at the local mental hospital, introducing sports activities. I built a miniature golf course for them. We instituted Friday night dances and basketball. We started a few chronic patients on a car wash and simonizing business. It was clear to me that all this had a positive effect on the patients. In my senior year I became a paid recreational therapist, and had the opportunity to participate in many other therapies that the hospital offered. It was an incredibly rich, experimental environment in which one could try out almost anything! My favorite was psychodrama and socio-drama, conceived and developed by Jacob Moreno, MD, using dramatic action and movement to discover and express feelings. What an amazing scene that was! People wrestled, choked, sobbed, acted out – they felt permission to really 'feel', and to examine what they had been suppressing.

**Jean.** How fascinating! Was this your first realization of what you wanted to do in life?

**Marvin.** No, I had known since I was 5 that I wanted to be a physician. In my senior year at Washington U. in St. Louis I was introduced to the world of osteopathy when students of Kirksville Osteopathic School came to stay at our frat house during their vacations. The underlying principle of osteopathy appealed to me, that the body has the ability to heal itself, to make its own remedies, and to restore balance, form and function. Besides which, I liked their approach. It combined the medical, psychological and physical. So I veered in that direction rather than towards an MD. The prevailing idea that the human could be thought about as a collection of separate categories: body, mind, emotions and spirit, never made sense to me. I suspected that such thinking actually limited the healing potential we all have.

**Jean.** What was there about the osteopathic approach that supported integrated healing?

**Marvin.** In addition to traditional medical studies, it emphasized manipulative therapy, which was an under-recognized way of restoring structural balance. I was disappointed to discover, however, that the practice of manipulation did not deal with the entire body, but focused on the spine. Correction of alignments was done by directly correcting local imbalances, which struck me as contradictory. The student interest in manipulation was not strong, as evidenced by the fact that the Junior Academy of Manipulators was not functioning. I undertook to reorganize it, and searched out outstanding practitioners in the Kansas City area. I was most impressed with cranio-sacral therapy, which was being done by students of its founder, William Sutherland, and I enrolled in their training program.

During that time I had the good fortune to attend Ida Rolf's first presentation in Topeka, Kansas of her work to the healing professions (1955). The genius of her work was her introduction of a whole new paradigm to manipulation. I was smitten! I continued to study and practice "Rolfing", (then called Postural Dynamics, later Structural Integration) with her during my last two years at Kansas City College of Osteopathy and Surgery (now called Kansas City University of Medicine and Biosciences).

**Jean.** What was it about Ida's paradigm that struck you so forcibly?

**Marvin** First of all, she treated the entire body – from 'stem to stern', and included its relationship to its environment, namely gravity. No orifice or tissue left unattended! To paraphrase Dr. Eugene Taylor, (Shadow Culture, 1999): The general theory behind Rolfing is that experiences are stored in the muscles which, when treated deeply, liberate their content in the form of cognitive and emotional material to be worked through. Body work was thus treated as a form of psychotherapy, since it was an art of both mind and the body. Ida also saw the response of the nervous system to its linguistic environment as relevant, which was an enlargement of even my holistic ideas. She was a student of General Semantics, (A.J. Korzybski, Science & Sanity, 1933) and suggested that I study it as well. (I assumed, at the time, that she was criticizing my grammar!)

**Jean.** Well, I'm grateful to her, since she brought us together. I actually met Ida in 1964, at a conference of the National Society for the Study of Communications, in New York. I remember her as a dominant, powerful figure.

**Marvin.** And that's an understatement! My training in medical education had begun to focus on manipulative work in the treatment of disease, which took me to an internship at the Massachusetts Osteopathic Hospital in Boston, where some of the best manipulative therapists were assembled. The interest in Rolfing grew in the Boston area, along with the demand for her workshops. Ida would plan workshops, I would organize them, and we would present her work at the Sheraton Commander Hotel, in Cambridge. All the equipment we needed was a thick carpet, since at that time most of the work was done on the floor.

**Jean.** Was subsequent teaching of Osteopathy influenced by Ida's and your work?

**Marvin.** No.

**Jean.** No? So you found yourself once again on a different track?

**Marvin.** Yes. Having graduated (1958), I opened an office in Brookline, (Boston) that integrated my medical training with Rolfing and General Semantics. Boston was a hub of exploration and experimentation in therapy. Indeed, until 1914, Boston University Medical School was a Homeopathic institution. In the early '60's, there were still many famous practitioners, who began to teach me the Homeopathic approach. To my delight, I found it to be a non-directive approach to healing, which suited my personality. In 1964 I was certified as a Homeopath.

**Jean.** So you were attracted to very different, almost opposing ideas: you were a student of Ida Rolf, who had a very direct approach to the tissues, yet you're drawn to Homeopathy and Cranio-sacral work, both very indirect approaches. How did you reconcile them?

**Marvin.** Actually, I didn't. I was eventually experiencing burnout, even as my patients were thriving! When I explained my dilemma to Dr. Rolf, she suggested that I get in touch with a man named Dennis O'Connell, then head of St. Hill, the first Dianetics center, whom she had met during her annual 6 month stay in England, where her work was very well received. Before Dianetics became Scientology, it had a strong body orientation. As Scientology became more mind-oriented, he lost interest, and continued with his early Dianetics teachings. It was then that I met him, when he came to the U.S. He tried many Dianetics techniques with me – all unsuccessful – until finally he gave up, and just had me stand still and pay attention to my feelings. He would ask me repeatedly, "What are you aware of feeling?" This was my first introduction to the powerful defenses that served to control my feelings, such as stretching tight muscles, talking, daydreaming, scratching, taking breaks, to name a few. Dennis persisted, however, and I started noticing that if I DIDN'T stretch my muscles, and DIDN'T do any of those other things, and just let my body control me instead of me controlling my body, I began to experience what I had seen many times in Rolfing: the emergence of uncompleted traumas.

**Jean.** How did they manifest?

**Marvin.** The physical feelings of pain, of tension, of labored breathing, led to emotions such as fear, anger and resentments. These, in turn, led to hidden images of traumas, which had become suppressed, and now began to emerge. This was not unlike what I had been experiencing with Ida's direct work, but in this case, the traumas seemed to emerge spontaneously. After my second weekend, I never saw Dennis again, but with my rich background in body work I was able to continue on my own. This proved to be the reconciliation I had been looking for; the integration of non-directed approaches such as client-centered therapy, homeopathy, osteopathy, Rolfing, cranio-sacral therapy, into what I have come to call Non-Directed Movement.

**Jean.** How, in retrospect, would you now distinguish between directed and non-directed approaches?

**Marvin.** One distinction is that, with direct approaches, things seem to get better more quickly, whereas with non-directed approaches they may – often do – feel worse before they get better.

**Jean.** This has certainly been my experience. Say more about the contrast between these two interpretations.

**Marvin.** Traditional medical (allopathic) approaches seek to directly control the problem and to alleviate symptoms as quickly as possible. It's also symptom-specific. Have a headache? Take an aspirin? Have a wrist sprain? Stabilize it quickly and control the inflammation. In the allopathic approach to fever, the objective is to reduce the fever as soon as possible with medication and cold compresses. Many non-directive, or less directive approaches seek to work with the body's own healing mechanisms, which kick in when trauma or injury occur. A homeopathic remedy, for example, is designed to augment the fever, and support the body's direction until there is a natural break in the fever, but to those who don't have that assumption, the impulse is to stop what seems like a damaging process. The fear is that, left unattended, matters will intensify and get worse. This belief scares people into stopping the process. In actuality, what makes the fever increase in intensity is a history of control of previous episodes, so that each new episode becomes more intense than preceding ones. In the non-direct method, we find that each subsequent episode becomes less intense than the last.

**Jean.** So the allopathic assumption is that intervention is required, whereas the non-direct assumption is that intervention tends to freeze incidents that have not had a chance to complete themselves?

**Marvin.** Exactly right. I wanted to understand, when I began to work with people in a non-directed way, what their orientation was; whether they were more attracted to the control, or antidote methods, or more towards 'supporting the process' – 'going *with* it', I devised a questionnaire. It went something like this:

- 1) When sad or depressed, do you prefer uplifting movies and music, or sad ones?
- 2) If you're uncomfortably hot, do you choose to drink warm liquids or cold?
- 3) If your car is skidding, do you swerve to bring it back to center, or do you follow the direction of the skid?
- 4) When turning the pages of a newspaper, and find a crinkling of the seam, do you press down to force the crease, or do you open the paper, find a natural crease and fold it again?
- 5) If a window or door is jammed, do you force past the blockage, or do you go back to the 'pre-jammed' place and start again?
- 6) When you have an injury that has become inflamed and/or swollen, do you apply cold compresses or warm?

Since most of us have been brought up in the allopathic tradition, it's not surprising that control makes us feel more secure and relieved.

**Jean.** An interesting way of discovering initial orientations. Most of us are taught that taking control of our lives is a GOOD thing – certainly I was. Did it take time for people to consider another approach? And also, what did movement have to do with the non-direct approach?

**Marvin.** I think the balance is for each of us to discover, but the willingness to 'be' instead of merely to 'do' increases, the more one does the work. As unwinding begins, it's typically accompanied by movements, small and large; muscles doing what they want to do rather than what we make them do. They originate from the body. It's in many ways similar to the spontaneous way the body moves during sleep. In both instances, the mind/body seems to be constantly working towards restoring itself – and that's the key to 'being' as opposed to 'doing'. (See website, The Great Unwinding, Section 1, 6a, on Sleep).

**Jean** I assume that people that came to you were self-selecting, and were at least somewhat drawn to the indirect approach?

**Marvin.** Not necessarily. Some came because they had tried many other approaches, and were still searching, even willing to try something completely different. But some, including you, were drawn because they had a sense that there was a larger picture to be considered.

**Jean.** By this time, we're in the early and mid '60's, when many new modalities appeared on the scene. Which of them did you embrace, and how did they influence your work?

**Marvin.** Well, the '60's certainly started for me when Mishio Kushi brought Macrobiotics to the Boston area after a brief stint in New York City. I became his student, made house calls with him to students who were ill because they had taken the new eating patterns to extremes. I was later called as an expert witness to defend him when he was accused by the Cambridge Court of practicing medicine without a license and running a boarding house contrary to zoning regulations. I remember saying, when the judge asked, "Is he practicing medicine?", "Your Honor, he doesn't even have a thermometer in the house! All he has are bags of brown rice." They let him go, but banished him from Cambridge.

**Jean.** What a riot! What happened to them?

**Marvin.** They moved to Wellesley, MA, and continued the expansion of their work. Kushi and his wife, Aveline, introduced and promoted the concept of whole foods, starting the first whole foods supermarket (Erehwon -Nowhere spelled backwards!) I learned and taught their new way of eating, as well as an introduction to the balancing

philosophy of Yin and Yang. Now, 45 years later, whole grains rather than meat and potatoes have become a staple of the American diet, though Macrobiotics is seldom given credit.

**Jean.** By the time I met you, in '66, you didn't stress osteopathy, Roling OR food.

**Marvin.** I gradually moved away from focusing on them, and created an environment in which people could explore non-directed movement. First, by appointment, then dropping in whenever they chose to. Sometimes they would be alone with me, sometimes with one or more people who also happened to drop in, and sometimes a whole group came at the same time!

**Jean.** What made you decide to give up appointments, and especially seeing people one at a time?

**Marvin.** As it became clear to me that non-directed work was facilitated by the letting go of controls, I decided to give up some of my controls myself by not having specific appointments, and abandoning pre-set fees. Having discovered that the unraveling of the injuries and traumas which had structured my own tissues, locking them into a rigid state, involved giving up control, I wanted to support unraveling in others. I did not want to impose new layers of control which would only increase what they needed to unwind. Moreover, important things seemed to happen when people were together. It was almost as though they had an unrecognized connection. Sometimes they even sensed what the other person needed, in terms of pressure on the leg or back, or words that would trigger deep emotion. It seemed that, intuitively, they had a role to play in one another's processes.

**Jean.** This was subtle stuff. Were people able to recognize what was going on?

**Marvin.** It was simply part of the experience.

**Jean.** What WERE the early experiences of participants like?

**Marvin.** They were as varied as the people who came. We saw dramatic changes in such problems as eczema-scarred faces, TB, back problems, arthritis, dislocated hips – you remember your own breast lump - as well as broken arms, wrists, and intra- and interpersonal traumas. We also began to recognize that some traumas that were spontaneously unraveling were related, not only to experiences in one's personal history, but even to secondary experiences which had the overtones and undertones of birth scenes and even death scenes. This puzzled me greatly.

**Jean.** Yes, I remember witnessing some rather dramatic episodes on the rug at 1822 Beacon Street, in Brookline. But I don't remember that people talked about them much.

**Marvin.** Occasionally they did. I was interested in finding out more. I attended a lecture by Hugh Lynn Cayce, son of the famous psychic, Edgar Cayce. When we spoke

afterwards, he said it all seemed quite natural to him, and recommended that I look into Theosophy. Fortunately, there was a large Theosophy organization here in Boston. I learned of the work of Mme Blavatsky and her student and assistant, Annie Besant. This introduced a new spiritual dimension to the work and a deeper explanation of eastern philosophy, including Karma and reincarnation and compassion.

**Jean.** That must have been the time when you suggested I read “Many Mansions” by Gina Cerminara, and ‘far memory’ books by Joan Grant – they were fascinating. But in addition to this new perspective, you were also aware of the burgeoning human potential movement. How did you decide which were compatible with your thinking?

**Marvin.** The more holistic, the more likely it was to stick. I encountered most of them through personal contact, including some who were involved with Sensitivity Training (‘T’ Groups - NTL). A participant in one of the workshops was Abraham Maslow, already well-known for his Motivation and Personality, his theory of self-actualization. He invited me to become a member of a newly formed organization of Humanistic Psychology. It was also around this time that Ida Rolf’s work became well-known and was widely introduced by the Esalen community in California. Just as I was getting out of Rolfing, she was emerging as a national figure, and becoming a great influence among the body workers.

**Jean.** I met Maslow around that time too, when I was casting about for connections in the Boston area. It seems you were continually shedding old experiences, encountering new ones, and selectively incorporating them. And somehow geometry entered the picture. How did that happen?

**Marvin.** I had been very much interested in architecture while an undergraduate. I found that what the student architects were doing was more interesting than my chemistry studies. I particularly loved their model building. But I had to choose a primary focus, so I continued in my pre-med studies. Much later, when I got involved in body work, I realized that learning really happened directionally – that is, FROM the body TO the brain, which is the exact opposite of the way we are taught. I understood the importance of learning from the ground up - from the concrete to the abstract, and also building from the ground up. I had realized that underlying everything, whether bodies, chemistry or physics, was structure, and structure could always be expressed as relationships. But structure could not be adequately described in words, particularly patterns of structure in nature. These could best be depicted in the form of geometric relationships. Combining my influences and inclinations, among them general semantics, Buckminster Fuller and Maria Montessori, I found it natural to begin building models. Several of us were especially entranced with *The Dymaxion Universe* of Buckminster Fuller, and as a way of understanding Fuller’s energetic-synergetic geometry, we started building models. So the two interests co-existed harmoniously.

**Jean.** So while the non-directed work was going on, you were also working away at ever more complex models, which seemed to represent the inherent structure of – everything! The connection with body work, though, is still a little unclear.

**Marvin.** I can try to reconstruct it retrospectively. I think that, in my resistance to the way medicine and academic subjects were taught, I was always looking for ways of experiencing relationships in a more holistic way.

**Jean.** Yes, and somehow the geometry did that for you?

Marvin. One of the most important relationships in life is the relationship between area and volume. Take a tree, for example. Looking at leaves and trunks of a tree, I see the relationships of surface and volume. The leaf has a large surface area relative to its volume, which facilitates the absorption of sunlight, whereas the trunk has a cylindrical structure, with a smaller surface area relative to its volume, which tends to protect and support the internal structure. When body workers feel tissues that are bunched up and more cylindrical than flat, (we call that 'gristle'), there is an impairment of function and a reduced ability to absorb nutrients. The therapeutic approach is to reestablish the lost surface. Realizing the relationship between form and function was one of the steps up my personal ladder of geometry. Because I was always curious about the internal structure of everything, and because I was attracted to building, I made more and more discoveries, with geometry as the obvious tool. It soon became evident to me that geometry held the secrets of the Golden Ratio patterns of growth

**Jean.** Now that's a 'Eureka!' I remember having my notion of structure turned upside down in the early years. In my studies of general semantics, I had also learned about the relationship between structure and function, but from an entirely different point of view. Structure was to be imposed, according to one's objectives. With you I learned that structure was to be discovered, which gave a whole new meaning to control, and giving up of controls. But though I had been introduced to Buckminster Fuller's work in connection with his 'thinking outside the box', I had never considered geometry a fundamental part of personal growth.

You managed to interest several of us in at least exploring what geometry meant to you. Every time I came in there was another model sitting on the desk, with complex internal angles. I remember arguing with you about one which you said had 4 dimensions. I didn't get it. I insisted on calling it 4 directions. That was one of our ongoing struggles.

**Marvin.** Yes. Those struggles don't disappear over time, do they? They just change, de-intensify and evolve.

**Jean.** Wasn't it around this time that we were all casting about for ways of making a living that would support our process, such as less demand on the body, and more time to slow down and not add layers of job frustration to be unwound later?

**Marvin.** Yes. That was in the '70s. People were doing carpentry, cleaning and a variety of self-employed contracting jobs. You were teaching general semantics and other communications course, first at the Boston Center for Adult Education, and then at the Cambridge Center for Adult Ed.

**Jean.** Yes, and I was in a perpetual state of exhaustion, partly because there was something not quite right about teaching for me. Someone in the group said I should quit verbal teaching, since I knew that transformational learning doesn't happen that way. "But what would I do?" I asked. "Create a vacuum", she said; "something will fill it". Something did. Having been an entrepreneur once before, I discovered the potential advantages of real estate. I thought I'd work part time so I could spend plenty of time at the 'mill', (a name taken from our spaces at mills both in Watertown and Waltham). Little did I know that you can't DO real estate part time. I was swept along by its demands, finally engulfed by it. The company I started became the base from which several of us have sustained ourselves and contributed. Balancing real estate with the unwinding work remains a challenge for most of us, though it has provided a great deal of freedom and continuous support for the Center.

**Marvin.** And Rhombics came into being around that time. Our body-oriented learning expanded into a community-based business! We moved from Brookline to Watertown Square. We negotiated an exchange for part of the rent with a cleaning and security contract, which allowed many of us to work odd hours and still be there when we needed to 'unwind'. It was our first cottage industry. We started a woodworking workshop, and around the same time we began our weekly potluck suppers, which are still going strong, some 30 years later.

We created precision wooden toys, games and other educational materials. Our big breakthrough was when Museums such as the Museum of Modern Art ordered our Rhoma puzzle, which was a rhombic version of the famous Soma Cube, and our Pyramid puzzle, which was a study of tetrahedra and octahedra. They were also used as desk sculptures.

**Jean.** Those were the days! We would shlepp from toy fair to design fair to educational fair to gifted children's conferences to math conferences. We even taught our system of hands-on geometry training to university professors, hoping to get into the public school system. We got awards, including an international design award. Eventually, though, not being able to support ourselves enough for our growing families' needs, we trained Design Science Toys to manufacture the products, and then we dismantled our precision production line, giving them our production techniques. They manufactured and sold them, together with their own products, under license, and until recently that provided a modest but steady source of income.

**Marvin.** Somehow, we have managed, though it's never been easy. Meanwhile, the geometry has taken many new directions. In fact, we renamed ourselves "Foundation for New Directions" once Rhombics was no longer an active business. Fuller called Synergetics 'the geometry of thinking'. Given my 'druthers', I would paraphrase Plato, when he admonished students at his Academy: 'Let no one enter here who is not a student of geometry' to 'Let no one enter here who does not want to learn more about the significance of geometry'.

**Jean.** But in fact, many have entered here without the slightest interest in geometry. Different people take different things from the work here. How do you feel about that?

**Marvin.** It's okay with me. My interests in holistic physics and evolution are also not shared by many. I've learned that we can all take different paths in our journey.

**Jean.** Speaking of which, you were also in contact with Ida, were you not?

**Marvin.** Yes, I wrote to her in 1975 inviting her to see where her work had taken me. I said, "I expect you know what an important influence you have been in my life. It was fortunate indeed for me to work with you during the formative years of my professional training. I can almost say, as the lyrics go, 'You made me what I am today; I hope you're satisfied.' I'm satisfied, anyway." Then, in describing the evolution of my work, I added, "This non-directed approach to releasing gristle and becoming more flexible is creating bodies that are going to be very adaptive. Dealing with the present diseases is no longer the mystery, nor is it the problem it once was – not for me, anyway. This is fortunate, for in the future, the challenge is not going to be that of dealing with disease, but tapping into the basic potential of protoplasm to adapt to great environmental changes. We may be entering an evolutionary time period analogous to the times that necessitated that fishes breathe air."

**Jean.** And this was the time we first heard you talk about evolution, though you had obviously been thinking about it for some time.

**Marvin.** All the time. The community was developing, and as people got deeper into their tissues, there was more slowing down. I thought a lot about slowing down. I read Ashley Montagu's work (*Growing Young*), and realized that slowing down had an important part to play in evolution

**Jean.** I remember attending lectures with you by Stephen J. Gould, and much later, Ashley Montagu came to visit. They were both interested in the subject of neoteny. You were intrigued by their idea of prolonging all stages of life, especially the early ones.

**Marvin.** In fact, this is not a new idea. Aristotle is credited with saying that abstract studies should not begin before the age of 30! This is totally contrary to our culture, which prizes speed, accelerated early development, a shortening of childhood and adolescence, and puts great energy into prolonging the last stages of life.

**Jean.** Since everything you got interested in eventually made it to our group, what were the ramifications of this perspective?

**Marvin.** We already had our community environment in which attention to 'being' was valued over 'doing'. It flowed naturally into supporting what was going on, rather than pushing towards the next stage. There were several new babies in our group whom I helped deliver at home by that time. On one occasion we waited 8 hours for a placenta to be ready to be expelled! On another – among them, yours – there were very long second

stage labors. We never cut the cord until it had become white and stopped pulsating. When we started to get requests for home deliveries from people who heard about our experiences, however, we decided to work only with those who were already in the work. It was clear that one needed to develop an awareness of one's patterns of control before undertaking anything as unpredictable as the birth process.

As the babies developed, I remember wanting to delay the impulse that parents had to encourage walking early and talking early. I wanted the stage of crawling, for instance, to go on as long as it needed to, without great excitement around first steps. I used to cringe when parents stood babies up, taking pride in their early standing. I knew that their legs needed more time to mature.

**Jean.** Once again, you took the 'road less traveled'. The prevailing view of evolution considered that evolution was continuously forward moving. How did your views differ?

**Marvin.** I had just learned that there are two primary ways of evolving: the specialized and the generalized. The specialized way depends upon amplifying skills that are already present, like fishes becoming better swimmers, or generalizing, that is, discovering new potentials, like the fishes who floundered around and found that, by staying in the shallow areas, they could eventually breathe air, thus adapting to water AND land, and becoming amphibious. This is especially true for humans. Montagu said, in *Growing Young*, that "The specialization of humans is non-specialization."

Yet all around us we see specialization. The athletes want to develop stronger muscles, the thinkers want to become more thoughtful, those who have discovered the relationship between nutrition and health are becoming even more selective in their diets, and using diets to solve problems that are not, essentially, nutritional problems. Breathing exercises are used to gain energy.

**Jean.** But you used to treat athletes, did you not? I remember hearing that you once worked with Ted Williams.

**Marvin.** I did treat him, and his stiff neck became more flexible. However, I realized that, like other athletes, he was more interested in being 'fixed' than in exploring his controls, so that relationship was short and sweet.

**Jean.** I guess another example of specialized behavior is children who are subjected to more and earlier learning pressure. Parents will certainly want to know what's wrong with that idea!

**Marvin.** It fosters specialization, and foists skills on children which adults select, rather than letting the child's interests and inclinations evolve. From the point of view of generalization, amplifying skills requires selection and control.

Generalization applies to problem solving, as well. For instance, we find that awareness of controls allows new and unpredictable solutions to emerge. When one is depressed,

typical recommendations include increased activity, anti-depressants, better nutrition, and a variety of techniques that target a specific condition. In contrast, we try to create an environment conducive to exploring the feelings of 'depression'. In fact, we tend not to label what is being felt at all, since labels freeze what is going on. Once you stop labeling, and start paying attention to the feelings themselves, you begin to notice more specific content. Then, events locked into the tissues begin to surface, and there is a gradual specificity to what had been previously - and vaguely - called 'depression'.

**Jean.** Go back to your idea of evolution, but relating it to today's world.

**Marvin.** We have choices to make today that are reminiscent of adaptations to earlier planetary crises, as the environment is once more dramatically changing. Of course, in the history of the planet, nothing compares to the period when the blue/green algae discovered a way to get hydrogen energy by breaking up water. The release of freed oxygen began to poison the planet until we learned how to adapt to it. Now we are seeing increases in carbon dioxide and chemical toxins, and even a diminishing magnetic field. I believe that the specialized way of evolving depends on a narrow range of conditions which have a low probability of being fulfilled. I lean towards the generalized way, which has historically insured the greatest probability of survival, and therefore evolution.

**Jean.** That reminds me of the time you visited NASA, in Washington, D.C. What was the purpose of your visit, and what happened?

**Marvin.** I had a meeting with the chief physician of the NASA program and the chief scientist of the Life Sciences Division. I presented my ideas about adaptation, which they agreed would be a useful direction, since most of the astronaut training is to develop defenses against the environment rather than adapt to it. However, they thought this would not be acceptable to the astronauts, who had been developing their own training programs, and adaptation was not part of their regime.

**Jean.** An opportunity lost. So since you believe that evolution is challenged by new conditions, does that mean you're not in favor of resisting climate change, carbon dioxide build up and some of the other conditions accelerating today?

**Marvin.** Trying to stop environmental changes requires effort, time and energy. This takes away from the daily adaptation which also requires time, effort and energy, but during which the cells continue the process of adapting to both large and small environmental changes.

**Jean.** Can you elaborate on the adaptation process itself?

**Marvin.** I believe that slow exposure to unfamiliar conditions begins it, such as mountain climbers moving slowly towards higher altitudes, spending time at each new level, especially the first, to acclimatize to less oxygen before going on. As our tissues slowly experience the new conditions, they adapt similarly. The environment at our

Center is conducive to a general slowing down, supporting adaptation. Slowing down may take the form of finding jobs that are less stressful and creating opportunities for sharing, and enough time to pay attention to feelings. We enjoy weekly potluck suppers together, in which everybody contributes food and ideas. This, together with the non-directed movement, promotes a readiness to deal with the unpredictable, the emergent, without intention or predetermination of outcome. To paraphrase John F. Kennedy, “Ask not what your body can do for you; ask what you can do for your body.”

**Jean.** Clearly, this work does not appeal to everyone, nor is it FOR everyone. For whom do you think it's not appropriate?

**Marvin.** It's not for people who want to become better athletes, musicians, etc., and who require more control, whether in business or professions, or for those whose jobs and values demand intense usage of the body.

**Jean.** Are there any other groups doing work similar to ours?

**Marvin.** The closest we have is the work of the Osteopathic physician, John Upledger. In his book, “SomatoEmotional Release” (SER), he describes how emotions and traumas are held in the tissues, and how ‘the laying on of hands’ to determine what the body is trying to express leads to a release of emotions and somatic traumas.

**Jean.** How would you describe the difference between Upledger's work and ours?

**Marvin.** The difference is in the premises. Our premise is that people can learn to communicate with their own tissues without the assistance of a professional therapist. There's a ‘do it yourself’ aspect to our work, whereas SER requires skilled intervention. Another premise is that the people who are drawn here have some kind of connection, so we make it possible to explore what's going on interpersonally, which adds another dimension.

**Jean.** This work has been, not so much difficult to learn as, except for those of us who have been around for over 30 years, difficult to sustain. Why do you suppose that is?

**Marvin.** The most difficult part of the work is creating a lifestyle which allows us to pay more attention to what we are feeling, and to examine defenses that control our access to feelings, and to history of disconnections. We have created an environment where we can appreciate the results of letting go of control. The contrast is sharp with approaches and regimens that teach new methods of control. Regimens, however, are familiar, since we are accustomed to ‘top down’ learning. Many people find that having no agenda except for ‘listening to the tissues’ is disconcerting. Also, the intensity of defenses can be such as to make avoiding them very attractive.

**Jean.** We've touched on the ‘top down’ learning mode before, in contrast to learning ‘from the body up’. Teaching anything, anywhere, seems to have an inevitable ‘top down’ quality to it. How do we NOT learn directly through the brain?

**Marvin.** We need to understand the role of the ‘brain’ and its relationship to the ‘body’. In keeping with the idea that labels are merely symbols, we use quotes to indicate that brain, mind, body, etc. are not actual entities, but labels we apply to very complex relationships. The relationships are intricate, involving multi-faceted ‘communication’ among tissues, ideas, feelings, sensory, motor, nervous and all the other systems that make us functioning organisms. Things go awry, however, when the brain dominates function; we become like an authoritarian government.

Authoritarian relationships exist, not only between government and citizens; not only between management and labor; not only between parent and child – but the original authoritarian relationship may well be between the ‘mind’ and the ‘body’. Attention to experience is what we call ‘bottom up’ learning. Abstract learning is what we label ‘top down’, or authoritarian. In practice, both are always involved, but it’s the relationship and emphasis that matter. For example, if you are inclined to tell a child, “You must eat these carrots; they’re good for you”, or “Don’t hit; it’s not nice”, or “Don’t steal; it’s a sin”, you might want to consider not saying any of that! If you delay your response to a child’s behavior by allowing yourself to listen ‘behind’ what the child says, or does, you have introduced a non-authoritarian, or less authoritarian dimension to your relationship. If the child refuses carrots, you might wonder what they DO feel like eating. Current evidence indicates that the child’s appetites may well be in line with what they need. If s/he hits, you might wonder what had gone on before. Aggressive impulses often mask a myriad of deeper feelings. If s/he ‘steals’, you might similarly explore what they were feeling prior to taking the item that didn’t belong to them.

**Jean.** I can resonate to that personally. Once, my middle son, then 5 years old, stole several packages of gum from a nearby supermarket. Stifling my impulse to read him the riot act and punish him, I explored his feelings, and realized that with his position in the family, between the eldest who was ‘smart’, and the youngest, who was ‘cute’, he felt invisible. I spent more alone time with him, and the problem disappeared.

**Marvin.** So the act of listening, and being affected by what you’re listening to, corresponds with ‘bottom up’ learning, whereas ‘telling’ – both ourselves and others – ignores what’s going on, and superimposes interpretations and ideas instead.

**Jean.** That’s what Korzybski meant by the ‘reversal of the natural order of abstraction’. He was convinced that such behavior is ‘unsane’, and sets up nervous system disorders. But reversing the reversal is a difficult thing to do.

**Marvin.** Yes. For instance, when a boss who has been accustomed to ordering his employees around for years, tries to initiate listening behavior, chances are he will hear things he doesn’t want to hear – complaints and hurts, for instance, that go back a long time. The mind, too, once it starts listening to the body, will not like to hear the body’s complaints and hurts.

**Jean.** And when we talk about listening to the body, we're really talking, in our work, about listening to the feelings that emerge from the tissues themselves, which is truly 'bottom up', not at all abstract! It's about as concrete as you can get, though even memories, including cellular memories, inevitably include abstractions, for instance, interpretations.

**Marvin.** True. The work is subtle, and it takes a lifetime – or more – to do. And as you say, it also rests on ideas, among them the idea that cells retain our evolutionary history, the idea that unwinding reconnects us with ourselves, the idea that connecting with self reconnects us with the larger world out there, etc.

**Jean.** Speaking of the larger world, didn't your interest in the evolution of cells lead you to discover Lynn Margulis' work?

**Marvin.** It was also part of my search for other holistic thinkers. I attended a talk in the late '80's by Lynn, then Professor of Biology at Boston University. I was fascinated by her large view of biology and its role in evolution. After the talk I asked her if I could audit her classes on evolution. She said, "No, you'd have to be part of the class", so I signed up and found myself surrounded by brilliant undergraduates and graduate students. Dr. Margulis is famous for promoting and researching studies of symbiosis as a source of evolutionary innovation. Symbiosis means the merging of organisms into new collectives. When we look at a modern nucleated cell, it is amazing to think that the parts of the cell were originally individual bacteria, or parts of bacteria, that united to create a new organization. Lynn was good friends with, and a promoter of the work of James Lovelock, who himself gained renown for his concept of Gaia, in which he hypothesizes that our planet functions like a single organism. He named this self-regulating, living system after the Greek goddess, Gaia. I was struck by the fact that, as an example of the Gaia principle, the global temperature of the earth has remained constant despite a 25% increase in energy provided by the sun.

**Jean.** Yes, the impact of the Gaia idea was profound. Once again, the parameters of holism were expanded. So by this time, Lynn had introduced symbiosis, Lovelock had introduced Gaia, and then what happened?

**Marvin.** One of the textbooks used in the class was "Genesis on Planet Earth", by William Day. I felt moved to communicate with Dr. Day, commenting on the last chapter in his book that discussed the possible future directions of life on earth. At that time I had no idea that Dr. Day (Bill) was interested in physics. One day his manuscript "Bridge from Nowhere" arrived. It blew my mind! Bill did not see space as a void, but as a fullness. When I saw his manuscript, the effect on me was as profound as though I had received Copernicus' own manuscript describing how the planets go around the sun, and not vice versa! In an analogous way, Bill seemed to resolve many of the paradoxes in 20<sup>th</sup> century physics. From then on, his work became a backdrop for my explorations in geometry, We have been in constant communication for the last 15 years and have published his subsequent books: Though his "Bridge from Nowhere" and "A New

Physics” are not widely known, we nonetheless receive orders from universities and individuals who have discovered them as I did.

**Jean.** Yes, and I did a lot of the editing for them, although goodness knows I’m no physicist. But I have enjoyed trying to clarify some of his ideas. And now he’s written another one!

**Marvin.** Yes, his interests include physics, chemistry and biology, and this new one describes the origin of life on planet earth; it’s called “How Life Began”.

**Jean.** How would you describe the path Bill took, in relation to more orthodox approaches to biology.

**Marvin.** The thing that characterizes his work, both in physics and biology, is his holistic approach. He doesn’t see data as separate elements, but connected to a larger whole.

**Jean.** Which is, of course, entirely consistent with our view of mind/body relationships. I seem to remember that an early student of yours, a doctor, applied the notion of holism and space to his patients – what WAS that?

**Marvin.** Dr. Larry MacDonald, an optometrist who did visual training. Larry knew that space was a crucial element in vision. For example, he was able to demonstrate to his patients, including me, that we tend to see objects separately, and the key to holistic vision is to be able to experience space, which unifies the objects we’re looking at. When you experience space in a room, for instance, you pay attention to the volume of space in a room, and don’t just focus on the objects. Then you begin to see, not just individual objects, but objects in relation to one another, to the ‘container’, to the relative distances, etc. Vision becomes a 3-dimensional experience.

**Jean.** So vision is potentially another avenue to heal disconnection. How did we lose this 3-dimensional perspective to begin with?

**Marvin.** We start reading at an early age, and begin focusing on flat surfaces. We are thus trained early on to SEE 2-dimensionally! This is especially true now with computers, television and movies. I still remember the day, when after a lot of visual training exercises with Larry (which complemented my own unwinding work), I looked out at a field, seeing it at first in the usual flat way, when suddenly it “popped” into 3 dimensions. I could feel the depth and connectedness of what was previously a collection of separate objects.

**Jean.** Now I understand better why you preferred delaying the various stages of learning in our babies and children – not only walking and talking, but also reading. So how do we segue back to Bill Day and his notions of space? I remember when you first mentioned him, in ’89. How did his thinking about space fit into the increasing pattern of holism that was developing? Can you give me a picture of why it meant so much to you? I

understand the excitement of a revolutionary thought, but was Bill's "medium" so very different from the "aether" postulated in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and then discarded in the 20<sup>th</sup>?

**Marvin.** Very different! Whereas the "aether" was regarded as a material "substance", Bill's hypothesis is that the medium is the "milieu of the material world". (Pg 125, P 1). This, however, is a whole topic by itself. Suffice it to say, here, that Bill's work in physics had a synergy with mine in geometry, and my current theme is "The Geometry of Physics" and "The Physics of Geometry". This is my most immediate interest. And when you and I complete that paper, it will be an addendum to this one. In the meantime, I'm eager to offer workshops on these correlations.

**Jean.** I think it's appropriate at this point to at least provide a 'flavor' of what they will be about:

**A NEW GEOMETRY FOR A NEW PHYSICS  
AND  
A NEW PHYSICS FOR A NEW GEOMETRY**

The new physics is the physics presented by William Day in his book 'A New Physics', published by Foundation for New Directions. At the basis of Day's physics is the concept of space as a medium. He calls it 'The Big Jello'. All the motion of the universe starts with the motion of the medium. The motion is organized into a matrix of oscillating 10-sided strings, or loops. These loops are the vortical movements of the medium. They radiate in 60 directions, 30 axes as they form a confluence of 60 decagonal rings. These vortical rings represent what we are now calling 'one-fold symmetry', the symmetry of unity. At this phase, there is only one dimension: Also at this phase, there are no planes, no volumes and no electro-magnetic waves - only vortical oscillations of 10 sided loops.

Going from 1D to 2D, one-fold symmetry splits, transforming the motion of wholeness into the duality of electro-magnetism. The 30 axes of motion coalesce to 15 axes in 30 directions. We call this confluence a 'thirty-verti'. The ratio of lengths in both one-fold and two-fold symmetries is in the Golden Ratio. The 10-sided loops are now organized into 6 electro-magnetic planes.

And then from 2D to 3D as the 6 bands of the 30 Verti (Icosidodecahedron) dualizes into the 6 zones of the triacontahedron. (For details see)

[http://www.holisticliving.info/pgs/geo/holistic\\_geometry.htm](http://www.holisticliving.info/pgs/geo/holistic_geometry.htm)



**Jean.** So we're going to roll up our sleeves and build structures, with Zometool, to represent unity, the electro-magnetic split, and the world of the particle. This feels like the culmination of years and years of dawning realizations. I feel privileged to have been a part of it.

**Marvin.** So this is an introduction to a body of work that is ongoing. There will be many epilogues, but for now, this is it.

For more information on Marvin's work, and that of the Cambridge Holistic Institute, see:

[www.holisticliving.info](http://www.holisticliving.info),

in particular, The Great Unwinding (under the Health link)

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