

TISSUE TALK : ACCOUNTING FOR BODILY FEELINGS  
THROUGH AN ANALYSIS OF MASSAGE AND  
MOVEMENT

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## DECLARATION

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*I certify that the substance of this thesis has not already been submitted for any degree and is not currently being submitted for any other degree.*

*I certify that to the best of my knowledge any help received in preparing this thesis, and all sources used, have been acknowledged in this thesis.*

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# Abstract

In a qualitative study of the effect of the massage of malleable bodily tissues on massaged women's reported bodily feelings, I was both researcher and massager.

In order to understand the reports I constructed a discursive framework of the movement of the malleable body. The discursive terms of the massager relied on the mobility of massaged tissues, and those of the massaged person depended on the discomfort or pleasure felt during massage.

During talk in massage, the meaning of some bodily experiences of the massaged person were negotiable in the discursive terms available to the massager and the massaged person. I linked feelings of pleasure with a person's awareness of the increasing symmetrical quality of the rhythmical movement of interconnected segments of malleable tissues, and a feeling of bodily discomfort with an awareness of a lessened degree of interconnected movement. In reports in which the massaged person's sense of the spatial placement of their malleable tissues were different to the perception of the same tissues by the massager, the discursive terms of the massager and the massaged person were no longer congruent.

In order to investigate accounts of a discrepancy in the spatial perception of the massaged tissues, between the massager and the massaged person, I developed a bi-phasic model of bodily use. It was based on an alternation of two modes of malleable tissue movement. One consisted of movement oriented to a distant object(ive), the other of the interconnected movement of contiguous segments of malleable tissue. I have suggested that an increase in tissue malleability, effected by the tactile interventions of the massager, coincides with an increase in the rhythmicity of the interconnected movement of malleable tissues.

My patterning of malleable bodily movement is germane to the freely acting individual. I suggest that it can aid their assessment of their bodily placement in relation to object(ive)s within their range of oriented movement, whilst ensuring a feeling of bodily pleasure by a maintenance of an optimum degree of interconnected bodily movement.

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# Part I

## Talking about massage

# Preamble

## 0.1 The discursive setting of massage

The 'tissue talk' of my title places this project within a discursive setting. I see the talk of bodily tissues as being a transliteration, by myself as a massager and researcher, of the terms of my tactile interaction in massage, to a discourse communicable to people who are not necessarily versed in the tactile procedures of massage. The following section uses concepts which are expanded on in later chapters. Whilst this preamble is necessarily an outline, I suggest that its usefulness lies simply in orientating the reader to the overall subject matter of this project, thereby anticipating the route by which I have felt my way through the texturally unfamiliar territory of massage and movement.

'A discourse that considers language capable of logical formalization, of 'translation' into unambiguous terms, wishes to limit the free play of terms in order that only one meaning is possible... This is a language reduced to the role of a communicational tool, whose purpose is the transmission of ideas from one subject to another. It has become a language without pleasure or play, without difference' (Grosz, 1989, 129).

As a massage teacher, my overall research was aimed at a more complete understanding of the massage interaction so that I could teach massage students to become effective in their massage practice. I conceptualised the effectiveness of a massager's practice in terms of their skill in enabling the massaged person to feel better. The original formulation of my research question was: 'Given reports from massaged people that they feel better following massage, how can the tactile nature of massage be



used to explain such an effect?' My aim as a massager in posing the research question was to increase the effectiveness of my massage practice through an increased understanding of how - in the context of massage - another person came to feel better. At a personal level I was interested in developing a systematic understanding - oriented to 'feeling good most of the time' - of my own fluctuations of feeling through an analysis of the association of movement and feelings.

The most salient feature of massage as a way of making a person feel better is that the massager systematically handles the bodily tissues of the massaged person. Throughout this project the evidence which I could utilise and present in the written format of a thesis came from the verbal interaction of massage. An additional source were my descriptions - via the spoken and written context of my massage teaching - of the tactile process of massage. My research agenda became clearly focussed therefore in the realm of language.

I shall examine the separate discursive positions which I found to be present in the massage interaction from the perspective of bodily learning rather than from the more usual view of massage as a type of bodily therapy. I take this approach because I see the massager's comments about the well-being of the massaged person and the massaged person's talk about their own well-being as being drawn from distinctly different bodily contexts. In my analysis of malleable body massage each person interacts with the other to learn about the discursive position of the massaged person. The massager learns about the bodily discourse of the massaged person through the conversation of the massaged person. Conversely, the massaged person learns how the tactually-oriented discourse of the massager reflects on their own understanding of their bodily experience.

My analysis of conversation during massage sessions was coloured by my interpretation of the characteristics of the massaged body from my perspective as a massager. I chose the motif of bodily movement as the central component of my interpretation of the interpersonal interaction of massage. The analysis of the respective positions of the massager and of the massaged person incorporates verbal (conversations between the massager and massaged person) and tactile material (my descriptions of the tactile interaction of massage). The first position which I distinguish is that employed

by the massager. She relies on tactility as a source of perceptual information as she adjusts her tactile techniques to maximise the massaged person's feeling of well-being.

The second position - that of the massaged person - is also influenced by the tactile input provided by the massager. The tactile framework of my thesis becomes increasingly differentiated when the respective positions of the massager and the massaged person are considered in conjunction with each other. The massaged person speaks from a position where the feeling(s) associated with the entire interconnected malleable body are potentially accessible. From the massager's tactile and visually based perception of the placement of bodily segments - both at the skin of the bodily surface and to the depth able to be manipulated via massage - graspable sections of tissue can be moved in multiple directions within the range of movement provided by their attachments to surrounding tissue. The movements of massage at one bodily area will have some effect on that of surrounding, contiguous tissues, potentially distributing a degree of altered mobility across the body-wide network of malleable tissues.

The massager's talk about the massaged body uses as a major referent her tactually-based perception of the tissues as isolable segments within her understanding of the massaged body as a whole. I suggest that in the massaged person's talk about their bodily feelings there is a perceptual emphasis on the whole body interconnectedness of tissues, wherein specific areas stand out due to the actions of massage at that site or due to ongoing localised discomfort.

### **0.1.1 The massager's discursive position**

#### **A negotiable position**

I suggest that the discursive positions of the massager and the massaged person in regard to the well-being of the massaged person are congruent at the beginning of massage, with both agreeing that massage will enhance well-being. From that point onwards the massager uses manual massage movements to loosen up areas of lesser mobility in the massaged tissues and perceives and talks about the massaged tissues on that basis. In contrast the massaged person talks about their feelings as they

progress along a continuum from feeling less good to feeling better throughout the massage. The massaged person has access to their feelings through the enhanced and *partial* registration of their whole body available at the site of the touch of the massager's hands, whilst the massager's tactile access to the palpated tissues forms the entirety - at any given moment - of what the massaged tissues feel like to the massager.

As the massage interaction goes on - in an effort to learn about the positioning of the massaged person within a discourse of feeling - the massager can ask them about the feeling which is associated with the degree of tissue malleability assessed by the massager. The massager actively works by varying the location, pressure or speed of her massage to establish a congruence - limited by the parameters of the comfort or discomfort established and stated by the massaged person - between her perception of the mobility of the tissues and the massaged person's feeling of bodily ease. The massager's notion of an ultimately pleasurable feeling corresponds to a body whose bodily parts each have an optimum degree of mobility in relation to each other.

In terms of the massage-based information offered within the framework of the massager's discourse, the massaged person learns to locate the feeling associated with segments of their bodily tissue within the feeling of their whole body. I suggest that this is done according to the augmented feeling of that area which is being massaged in conjunction with the relatively immobilised physical positioning of massage. In this resting position the massaged person is disengaged from whole bodily movement which has a specific directional involvement with an object(ive)<sup>1</sup> separate from their bodily tissues.<sup>2</sup> The massager's comments about the relative malleability of that area (eg. 'it's tight', 'it's loosening', 'it's resistant to loosening'), contextualise the massaged person's comments about areas of massaged tissue, within the massager's overall aim of an optimally malleable body. For instance if a massaged person feels discomfort whilst the massager is working, the massager's description about that area

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<sup>1</sup>I denote the object as an 'object(ive)' to signify my interest in the movement associated with the person's perception of a particular object.

<sup>2</sup>The massager encourages the massaged person to relax. She also discourages any unnecessary movements initiated by the massaged person other than turning from a prone to a supine position or vice versa.

as becoming progressively more loosened shares some of the massager's overview of the malleable body - her observation of its increasing malleability and her understanding that that increased malleability will lead to an associated sense of bodily comfort - with the massaged person. A negotiation of the meaning of the respective talk of the massaged person and of the massager is feasible, even though the perceptual possibilities accessible from the physical positioning of each speaking person are not congruent. The aim of the massager's negotiation of the meaning of the massaged person's statements about their bodily experience - on behalf of a promotion of the massaged person's sense of well-being - is to assist the massaged person to locate the places which the massager is touching within the massaged person's entire bodily feeling. This project is ranged alongside the massager's tactile aim of maximising the mobility of bodily parts within the ambience of the entire massaged body. In the negotiating process the massager feels for palpable bodily textures which indicate some abnormal malleability - eg. tissue tightness - and asks if and what the massaged person can feel of that area.

The massager's more specific goal within the negotiation process is to fix upon the *location* of areas which can become more malleable through massage. The massaged person's reported feeling for a massaged bodily area can take many forms ranging from a report of 'feeling nothing' to pain or pleasure. By contrast, the massager's feeling of palpated tissue is always tangible and invariably classified as either acceptably or unacceptably malleable. The obstacle to the massager's project of massaging the body to optimum malleability is constituted within the massaged person's concurrent feeling for their whole body. On the occasions when the massaged person does not feel the locality and the sensation associated with the locality where the massager is working, then the massager can offer no sensory validation, to the massaged person, of her assessment of the deficient mobility of that area of bodily tissue.

### **A non-negotiable position**

Whilst the massager continues to rely on increasing the malleability of tissues as the basis for her contribution to the enhanced well-being of the massaged person, the massaged person who has no sensory basis for checking on the massager's perception

- who doesn't feel anything at the massaged area - brings an impasse to the process of negotiation. In what ways does the massager negotiate this impasse without the assistance of the massaged person?

The most direct approach is for the massager to try out other possible verbal options for the massager's description of her feeling at the massaged site. To achieve this the massager can draw on her own bodily experience and the reports of other people she has massaged. If the massaged person still has no sense of what is happening at the massaged area then a more oblique approach which the massager can use to stimulate an awareness of feeling is to massage the tissues surrounding the particular site in question. From the massager's viewpoint sustained immobility in the tissues can be associated with an absence of bodily feeling of the massaged person in that area. By freeing up tissue at the outer boundaries of the site of sustained immobility, the massager and the massaged person can achieve more mobility and more feeling within the longer-term goal of greater well-being for the massaged person.

If neither of these methods indicate a physical course for the massager to follow, the massager can no longer rely on the massaged person's comments to check the interpretation that a loosening of areas with a lack of mobility will contribute to the person's overall state of well-being. One recourse that the massager has is to focus on aspects of the tissue texture which point to whole bodily mobility in addition to tightened areas. This strategic approach is linked with my assumption that if the attention of the massaged person is not focussed on particular bodily sites then the next most likely source for their bodily feelings is the undifferentiated, entire body. From the massager's perspective, whole bodily movement in the tissues of the resting massaged person is most observable in the intrinsic actions provoked by the rhythmical movers of the body such as the action of breathing and of the heart and associated fluid flows. Observable movement here is characterised by repeated alterations in the distance between palpably raised areas of tissue tightness rather than by the areas of tightness themselves. In a metaphorical sense the massager observes the movement of the spaces between the tightened areas which had previously been her focus.

When the massager is relying on observations of rhythmical movement the applicable range of her questioning of the massaged person is altered. I suggest that the

massaged person's report of their whole bodily feeling in relation to the tactile actions of the massager indicates that the massage should stop or should continue. In my experience as a massager, a massaged person's description of their feeling as pleasurable implies that the massage should continue whilst a report of discomfort acts as an indication that the massage action should cease. The massager's questioning of the massaged person is aimed at gaining more information about the feelings of the massaged person which she can then match with her tactile assessment of the massaged tissues. When the massaged person's feelings shift towards a predominantly whole bodily feeling then constraints are put on the massager's use of verbal questioning, which has been aimed at developing the massaged person's verbalising of their sense of particular bodily areas.

Assuming that a report of a pleasurable, global feeling allows the massager to continue with her work then any query by the massager for more detail as to how the person feels is liable to prompt the massaged person to inquire of themselves in what manner they feel pleasure. I suggest that by beginning to scan for specific sites of unusual bodily sensation the massager dissipates the unfocussed feeling which is associated with an attention to the repetitive and rhythmic increase and decrease in the distance between tissue segments which marks a feeling related to the whole body. As the massaged person attends to a bodily area which is marked by its *potential* for a rhythm which equates to the rhythm of other bodily segments their bodily inquiry becomes focussed onto a specific area. I take the characteristic of this area of potentially equivalent rhythm to be discomfort or lack of feeling on the part of the massaged person and tightness or a lack of malleability from the perspective of the massager. Given that the massager's aim is to assist the massaged tissues of the entire body to approximate an optimum interconnected mobility, it is not in the massager's final interest to draw the massaged person away from the feeling of their whole body, as long as that feeling can be described as pleasant. Whilst the bodily feelings of the massaged person remain characterised by pleasure, as a massager I expect that the massaged tissues will offer no sustained resistance to the mobilising actions of the massager, tightness of areas of tissue will be eased and the range of movement between contiguous sections of interconnected, malleable tissue will be

optimised. The massager's aim is to allow the massaged person to remain within a feeling matrix in which a pleasurable bodily feeling extends and diffuses into an increasing awareness of a pervasive unity of bodily rhythm, where the rhythm of one sensed bodily part becomes increasingly indistinguishable from another.

At the same time the massager - whilst carrying on a process of loosening tightened areas - uses her ongoing sensing of the relationship between the parts and the whole of her bodily feelings to model the relationship between the varying parts of the massaged tissue. She accesses her own whole body feelings (ranging along a continuum from discomfort to comfort) as a guide to the relationship between areas of tightness of the massaged tissue and the extent of the sustained rhythmical movement of her whole body. I suggest that this is done by shifting her attention from the registration of palpable, localised tightness of the massaged tissues - which she can voluntarily mimic by minimally contracting sections of her own body whilst she is engaged in massaging - to an overall sense of the rhythmical activity of her entire body. In this schema the massager is working alternately at a tactile investigatory level and the level of whole bodily analogue or mimicry. By using her own bodily feeling reactions as a guide, the massager has a means of assessing an appropriate tactile method of increasing the malleability of the body in situations where the massaged person is too preoccupied with the whole bodily sensations of massage to effectively negotiate as to the meaning of particular sites of unusual bodily feeling.

The massager uses the concept of bodily movement as a basis from which to link the tactile feelings associated with differing degrees of localised tissue malleability with an analogue of the effects on her bodily feelings. I suggest that this occurs from the particular to the general and back again in a recurring cycle as the massager uses her bodily feelings as a metaphorical hinge to allow herself to switch between the registration of localised and entire bodily movement functions. I suggest that the massager engages in this process in order to emulate the feeling processes which are going on for the massaged person so that she can direct her tactile intervention in the direction of enhanced tissue malleability and any associated increase in the massaged person's sense of well-being. The next section is a glossary of terms used in the thesis.

### 0.1.2 Terminology

The ways in which the body and the massage process are conceptualised are important within this discussion. Whilst none of the following terms are neologisms, each has a particular meaning in the context of this study.

The term *malleable body* describes the surface of the body as well as underlying, interconnected segments of the body which are moved indirectly by palpation at the surface of the body. The characteristics of the malleable body are specified in the way that the movement of bodily segments is reflected in whole body movement (and vice versa). I take the malleable body to be a pattern made up of the differing degrees of palpable hardness or softness of malleable tissues. The arrangement of tissues is affected by environmentally imposed factors within the field of the effects of gravity.<sup>3</sup>

The *malleable tissues* are the tissues of the body which can be touched and moved directly (or indirectly through the movement of intervening layers of tissue) and which have skin coverings which will support the pressure of manipulation. I include the skin, musculature and connective tissues of the body as malleable tissues. The shape of the linings of channels which convey the fluids of the body is influenced by the manipulations of massage and I take these linings to be malleable tissue.<sup>4</sup> This group of tissues is traditionally termed 'soft tissue'.<sup>5</sup> The term 'malleable tissue' - in contrast to 'soft tissue' - brings out the quality of plasticity of these tissues and the way in which the massaged person can learn to stabilise the fashioning carried out in massage and to continue to reshape bodily structure in the interests of a more sustained sense of bodily pleasure.<sup>6</sup> Malleable tissues characteristically move in

<sup>3</sup>Examples of some influences are: the person's bodily use in everyday life eg. leaning over a desk and writing; the person's physical reactions to stressful situations eg. shallow breathing patterns and associated tightness in the pectoral muscles of the chest; or a person's functional response to physical trauma eg. pulled calf muscles resulting from a strenuous tennis game, with a subsequent lessening of use of the calf area by the person.

<sup>4</sup>'Whether it is blood in the arteries, capillaries, and veins, the contents of the digestive tract, lymph in its vessels, secretions in their glands, or the fluids that fill all of the spaces in between our cells, manipulations can move them around much like I can push water back and forth in a rubber tube...' (Juhan, 1987, xxii).

<sup>5</sup>Chaitow refers to the musculo-skeletal system as consisting of 'muscles, ligaments, tendons, bones and fascia (connective tissue)' and describes the soft tissues as all those listed except for the 'bony structures of the body' (Chaitow, 1980, 13, 16).

<sup>6</sup>Keleman eloquently refers to the characteristics of what I describe as malleability: 'One [fact]



relation to adjacent, interconnected areas of tissue and movement in one section of tissue is reflected in contiguous sections to varying degrees, according to the extent of immobility of surrounding tissue.

*Malleable body massage* is the application of a range of massage techniques by a massager using a bodily part (usually the hand) which allows a multi-directional access to the malleable tissue. It is a term which I devised for a specific application of massage techniques which are aimed at the regularisation of the malleability of segments of palpated tissues relative to that of surrounding tissues.<sup>7</sup> This regularisation allows distorted areas of tissue (eg. those which are brought about by the sustained contraction of the muscular tissue of a bodily part which is adequately supported without any mechanical necessity for the use of muscular activity to maintain a particular position) to be integrated into a fuller degree of mobility in relation to contiguous tissue. The massager adjusts her qualities of touch (eg. pressure, duration, angle of approach) in order to assess and encourage an ongoing regularisation of sections of tissue whose malleable qualities change in response to the massager's touch. I will use the term 'massage' throughout this study within the sense of malleable body massage.

*Interconnected movement* is the movement of areas of malleable tissue relative to contiguous sections of bodily tissue. This movement is exhibited as an adjustment of the relative lengths of areas of contiguous tissue. The term 'interconnected movement'

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is that the body is more plastic and mobile and reorganizable than we think, and that the body is capable of regenerating, reshaping, and growing. A second is that a person is capable of participating in these changes, not only on a biochemical level, but also in terms of the shape and mobility of the body; that is, on the muscular neural level. The body speaks the language of change and may learn to reorganize for pleasure and survival' (Keleman, 1979, 15).

<sup>7</sup>Traditionally, massage defines its effects in terms of the physiological body (eg. Wood, 1974, 1). Downing's more recent application of massage alludes to experiential effects such as 'peace and aliveness', 'heightened awareness' and 'a sheer sense of mutual physical existence'. Downing also states that '[w]hen receiving a good massage a person usually falls into a mental-physical state difficult to describe' (Downing, 1989, 7). My account of massage is based on the explanatory framework of movement, which I see as being a factor common to the events within massage and to the effects of massage on the person who has been massaged. One source which alludes to the mobility of tissues as an effect of massage is the Shorter Oxford Dictionary: '[Massage is] the application with the hands of pressure and strain upon the muscles and joints of the body, by friction, kneading etc. in order to stimulate their action and *increase their suppleness* (Shorter Oxford Dictionary, my emphasis).

also describes an adjustment of bodily parts in relationship to the surface which supports the person, without a displacement of the whole body in a specific direction.

An *object(ive)* is that which the person moves in response to. I describe the goal of movement as an 'object' with the suffix '(ive)' to emphasise my concern with the movement characteristics of the malleable body. The malleable body can become a perceptual object(ive) for another person. The goal can be a living object capable of self-propulsion and guidance, (eg. a person or an animal), a non-living object which is artificially propelled and guided (eg. a machine) or a stationary object. The object is at a distance from the person whose patterns of movement are being described.

*Distance-oriented movement* or *oriented movement* is movement of the body in response to a distant object. Distance-oriented movement equates with the concept of translatory movement which is the 'movement of a body from here to there, from one place to another' (O'Connell & Gardner, 1972, 49).

I shall introduce the project in the following chapter via an overview, a background to the study and a preview of the chapter format.

# Chapter 1

## Introduction

### 1.1 Derivation of a study of the malleable body

#### 1.1.1 Background

This project - throughout the stages of research and writing - has been intricately connected with my own massage practice and teaching. The extent and form of this project is derived from observations and reflections on my work. I will foreshadow the influence of these biographical events on the overall form of this project.

#### Personal

My professional background is that of a teacher of English and History who has trained in remedial massage and psychology. In an honours project in psychology I had examined the effects of imagery on posture. My general interest in bodily movement has been reflected in participation in creative dance workshops, as well as training in the Alexander and Feldenkrais methods.

My present occupation is as a massage teacher and practitioner. Four years after I began teaching remedial massage to a number of groups consisting of approximately twelve male and female students, I observed changes in people who had participated in the six-month courses which I offered. The courses included the experience of massaging and being massaged on a weekly basis. Over time I observed that individuals

showed greater friendliness with each other, and increased their receptivity, in terms of areas of bodily accessibility and pleasurable responsiveness to the interpersonal touch of massage. Some people showed an interest in particular physical problems which they had. One particular example, was a bricklayer with consistent lower back pain. Over the six months, he reported the changes which he had discovered about his personal contribution (phrased in terms of postural imbalance) to the continuing back problem. He experimented with the techniques (notably pressure to sore spots which corresponded to acupuncture points) which he had learnt in the class. By the end of the course, he was able - when he had backache - to treat himself with massage and postural adjustment. he also used these techniques as a preventative measure and his back condition diminished to a level which whilst requiring his maintenance techniques was now managed without substantial discomfort.

At that stage in the programme I had been teaching body awareness exercises as part of the massage course. The last half hour of each class was devoted to relaxation and flexibility exercises, as well as techniques taken from the Feldenkrais (Awareness Through Movement) exercises and extracted from my own training in the Alexander Technique. As time became less available in the massage classes I dropped body-awareness from the curriculum. I found that over an equivalent six-month period, the openness of the students to bodily sensations increased in a comparable fashion to when I had been giving specific body-awareness exercises. I began to link the continued effect of pleasurable relaxation in massage, reported by students, with the bodily touching implicit in massage.

My interest was in the psychological effects of massage on the body. The psychological effects quoted in the massage literature were of a generalised relaxation or of effects which were based on the particular theoretical bodily construct underlying a specific massage technique which was used. My observational focus in the classes turned to the development of an alternative theoretical construct of the body which depended on the elements of massage which I emphasised in my teaching.

A theory of the body needed to be relevant to massage students, many of whom had no prior training in the anatomy and physiology of the body as presented in formal medical and paramedical training. As a group these people were also motivated by a

need for physical therapy for themselves or for their immediate social or family circle. Their motivation was invariably sparked by a particular experience of their own or another person's physical discomfort.

My proposed theory of the body needed to be applicable to individuals interested in assisting themselves or others to move from a less comfortable to a more comfortable experience of the body. I classed this aim within a preventative health care model. Types of bodily problems requiring surgical or drug intervention were not directly within the scope of the massage which I taught and were viewed as contra-indications for massage.

My requirements for a theory of the body based on the use of massage were as follows:

- It incorporated a physical and prolonged (usually one hour) interaction between two individuals.
- It was phrased in terms understandable by people with no training in formal descriptions of the body (ie. anatomy and physiology), such as people who were massaged or massage students commencing their studies.
- The theory included recognition of the uses of massage in lessening bodily discomfort or increasing the person's customary sense of well-being.
- The interaction between massager and the massaged person draws on a wider social context than that of the therapeutic situation and is based on a common interest in the bodily experience of the massaged person. The massager has certain skills of tactile manipulation which make her<sup>1</sup> expert in judging the condition of the soft tissues. She also has a physically distant stance which makes her well able to have an overview of the massaged tissues which is not directly available to the massaged person. In contrast, massaged people have a knowledge of their own bodily feelings which cannot be attained by the massager. Massaged people have access to the meaning of their bodily feelings.

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<sup>1</sup>My references to a massager are based on my own experience as a female massage practitioner. In my generalisations from my own experience to that of the massager I will use the feminine pronoun to refer to the massager

Whilst feelings can be verbally communicated to the massager the immediate sensory registration of the effects of the massage is confined to massaged people. Ultimately massaged people and the massager draw on the verbal descriptions which accompany their separate histories of bodily experience in order to communicate *about* the mutual interaction of massage.

### Reflections

In my private practice of massage I had noticed an unusual amount of increase in reports of feelings of well-being and the bodily co-ordination of some individuals following massage. The reports were inordinate in terms of the effects cited in the traditional massage literature (eg. Wood, 1974) as corresponding to the physical manipulations of the tissue which I carried out during massage. The physiological effects of massage are reasonably well documented (Wakim, 1960) and are specific to the area being massaged. Little reference was made to global effects on the person - such as well-being and a feeling of pleasure - other than that of relaxation. The effects which the individuals reported to me were not only of relaxation, although relaxation was a component of their accounts.

On combining the reports from groups engaged in touching (ie. learning and practising massage on each other) and clients who were massaged by me I hypothesised that the manner of touching which was being used had some effect on the experience of the person who was being massaged.

The style of touching which I taught was based on my own application and interpretation of the techniques which I had, in turn, learnt in the course of practical massage training. I taught students to feel for differing qualities of the soft tissue on which they were working. A common comment from the people I massaged was that I was accurate at finding the sore spots. As my intention in my massage practice was to assist rather than hurt the person, I would check as to the severity of the pain and often be told that the level of pain was all right and that the person would rather I continue than stop massaging. From my analysis of the connection between instances of pain and the quality of the tissue at that point, I had concluded that sore spots

usually had palpable characteristics. Qualities of the soft tissue which often accompany sore spots are described in the literature on soft tissue manipulation (Chaitow, 1980, 42), the trigger point literature (Tappan, 1988, 146; Simons, 1975, 28) and in writings concerned with connective tissue massage (Ebner, 1956, 178).

The type of touching which I encouraged in the massage training was one which was aimed at assessing and treating abnormal tissues which could be felt by the exploring hand of the massager. This investigative touch drew on a wide range of massage techniques. The common link between the differing types of massage techniques which allowed both myself and the people I taught to apply such a range of movements systematically, was that they were a means of manipulating the bodily tissues. Rather than regarding the massage techniques as ways of promoting physiological effects, ie. movement of blood and lymph at the local area, the application of techniques was based on an assessment of the qualities of the soft tissue being worked.

I became increasingly interested in the reported bodily experience of massage for the massager and for massaged people and observed the experience of my students as they massaged other people as well as my own behavior as a massager. The bodily awareness of the people I was observing appeared to be an important factor in their reports of well-being.

In my psychological studies I had taken a course in biofeedback. I had participated in laboratory experiments on the effects of electromyographic feedback on tension in the muscles of the forearm. After observing the lessened muscular tension of the people in my massage classes, I hypothesised that the reports of well-being which followed my use of massage with individuals and the reports of an increased ease with which people who had been taught and experienced investigative massage techniques in the group situation regarded their bodies, could be usefully explained by the concept of feedback. The notion that the massager was using a process of feedback to enable the person being massaged to learn more about his or her body - via an experiential mode - seemed a useful alternative to other options which I had considered as explaining my observations.

One such alternative was that my observations were invalid. In an effort to reduce the effect of any unacknowledged bias on my part as a researcher, I had relied

on unsolicited comments from people whom I had massaged. These reports had invariably indicated a positive feeling after the massage. Statements such as, "I feel looser" indicated to me that people were experiencing benefit from the massage and reinforced my decision to continue investigating the experiential phenomena which accompanied massage.

A second option to account for the positive effects associated with massage was that relaxation - as quoted in textbooks on massage - was the benefit accruing from massage. Relaxation did not wholly account for the experience of the man previously quoted, who was able actively to improve the condition of his back whilst not receiving professional treatment other than that given by his fellow students, and whilst maintaining a comparable workload at his profession of bricklaying. In order to do work, the muscles cannot be relaxed. It seemed to me that a factor which accounted for his increased ability to maintain and not damage his back during work activities over and above that of relaxation was needed.

The intervention of some force or intangible agency was a third possibility for the beneficial effects of massage. In the absence of a specific application or directions for the use of an intangible agency in my private practice or in the classes, the possibility of the operation of such a factor was difficult to assess. A means of speaking about such an influence whilst using terms which were congruent with the descriptive terms used by the massager was difficult to arrive at.

### **The literature on touch**

The literature on touch provided little foundation for a theory of the malleable body. The material which was available illustrated by omission the scarcity of applied interactional studies of touch. My analysis of massage - which examined a regime of deliberately applied tactile contact within a dyadic social interaction - intersected the fields of perceptual psychology and preventative bodily care. Relevant areas of the tactile literature included developmental, social and therapeutic psychology as well as touch in nursing research. I found that investigations in these areas lay outside the sphere of malleable body massage where the massager explores the tactile properties of the body using a systematic skin-to-skin contact with the surface soft tissues of



the massaged person.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup>Researchers have examined the effect of touch on the developmental process in human infants, notably their motor and social development (eg. Schaeffer & Emerson (1964) and Casler (1965). Descriptions of maternal touching behaviors with newborn babies have been given by Rubin (1963). Frank (1957), on a more theoretical note, reviews the effect of physical contact on human development, as does Montague (1971, 1979). Interpersonal touching in schools by teachers (Clements, 1977) and between peer groups of adolescents (Willis & Reeves, 1976) has been examined. Temerlin, Trousdale, Lacrone, Harrison & Rundell (1967) studied the effects of increased physical contact on retarded boys.

The literature on the role of touch in social psychology is relatively extensive. Reviews may be found by Argyle (1975), Harper, Wiens & Matarasso (1978), Thayer (1982) and Heslin & Alper (1983). Studies on gender differences in touching behaviours include those by Henley (1973); Major & Heslin (1982); Nguyen, Heslin & Nguyen (1975) and Willis and Rinck (1983). Touching behaviours have been related to self-esteem (Silverman, Pressman & Bartel, 1973). The use of touch has been linked to interpersonal attraction (Boderman, Freed & Kinnucan 1972), compliance (Willis & Hamm, 1980) and tipping in restaurants (Crusco & Wetzel, 1984). The demand characteristics of touch have been analysed (Hoddinott & Follingstad, 1983) as have the meanings of touch in varying social situations (Fisher, Rytting & Heslin, 1976). A number of authors have examined the effects of touch on self-disclosure eg. Cooper & Bowles (1973), Jourard (1968), Lomranz & Shapira (1974) and Pedersen (1973). The effect of counsellor touch on the counselling interaction has been studied by Alagna, Whitcher, Fisher & Wicas (1979); Bacorn & Dixon (1984); Hubble, Noble & Robinson (1981); Pattison (1973); Stockwell & Dye (1980); and Suiter & Goodyear (1985). The touching of differing bodily parts has been studied by Jourard (1966) and Paulsell & Goldman (1984), whilst self-touching of the face was examined by Hatta & Dimond (1984), and self-touching in the interview situation by Harrigan (1985). Cultural patterns of touching have been delineated by Frank (1957) and Kauffman (1971). Some of the physical qualities of interpersonal touch have been categorised by Weiss (1979).

The other major area of research on touch involves touching in therapy work. Psychotherapy's involvement with physical contact has been reviewed by Geller (1979). Much of the psychotherapeutic literature outlines a controversy over the usefulness of touch in psychoanalytic work, eg. Bosanquet (1970), Ehrlich (1976), Forer (1969), Heller (1964), Mintz (1969), Mittleman (1957), Spotnitz (1972) and a review by Wilson (1982). Some anecdotal comments on the use of touch in general psychotherapy have been given by Frank (1957), Horner (1968), Leland (1976) and McCormick (1973). A description of the early tactile stimulation needs in the psycho-analytic vein has been given by Shevrin & Toussieng (1965). Groddeck (1977) writes of the value of touch and massage in psychotherapy. Experimental studies of the need to be held have been undertaken by Hollender (1970) and Stein & Sanfilipo (1985). Investigations of the type and extent of physical touching by therapists (Borenzweig, 1983) and by therapists of children in therapy (Cowen, Weissberg & Lotyczwski, 1983) have been undertaken. The use of contact desensitisation for acrophobia (Ritter, 1969) and the use of touch with autistic children have also been studied (Burchard, 1984). A classification of types of touch has been given and researched by Edwards (1981). Accounts of body-therapies which utilise touch have been given by Brown (1973), Jourard (1974), Rappaport (1975) and Schutzenberger & Geffroy (1979). The physical techniques used in a range of these body-therapies are outlined in Schutz & Seashore (1972), Selver (1957), Shatan (1963) and Wethered (1973). An experimental study of Rolfing has been done by Carrera (1974).

The use of touch in nursing practice and health care generally has been studied by Angelini (1980), Barnett (1972), Burnside (1973) and Hall (1966). Reactions to touch in the nursing context have been examined by Whitcher & Fisher (1979). Pratt & Mason (1984) researched the meaning of

The paucity of research which takes account of the characteristics of the malleable body, combined with a background in massage practice, prompted me to fashion a theoretical underpinning for a linkage of the palpable body with individual action 'in the world'.

## 1.2 Thesis format

The structure of this project is the result of an evolution in my methodological approach throughout my enquiry into massage. The present form was largely a function of my approach to the novelty of the topic.

My first exploration of the effects of massage was within the framework of the discipline of psychology. One immediate difficulty for research in the area of psychology which I found was that any measurable category which I chose to study as an effect of massage limited the type of information which would be available as an adjunct to my massage teaching and practice.<sup>3</sup> For example, a measurement of electromyographic activity would be restricted to gauging the extent and depth of intra-muscular activity which could be accessed by a limited number of channels (and therefore muscular attachment sites) available through E.M.G. equipment in addition to the tolerance of the massaged person to the attachment of electrodes. I could not measure the effects of massage on the activity of the entire bodily musculature or evaluate the person's spoken responses by this means. A questionnaire format in which the massaged person was asked to report on the effects of massage would conversely be useful in categorising the person's responses to massage. I had very little specific information from the literature on the effects of massage which would guide my choice and analysis of questionnaire items and equally, no overarching theoretical framework for massage which would allow me to establish suitable and measurable categories of

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touch in health care practice. An amount of research and anecdotal evidence has been devoted to a specific system of touching called therapeutic touch. See, for example, Clark & Clark (1984); Krieger (1975); Krieger, Peper, & Ancoli (1979); Peper, Ancoli & Quinn (1979); Quinn (1984) and Randolph (1984).

<sup>3</sup>Wiedemann (1986) gives a thorough coverage of models and methods of psychological research into body experience. However I found that none of the approaches were specifically applicable to bodily experience studied from the perspective of massage practice.

items.

This chapter has presented an introduction to my development of the concept of the malleable body. Chapter 2 of Part I provides a background for my choice of qualitative methodology for the initial stages of my research into massage.

In my research process the next step was to use an open-ended approach within a qualitative methodological framework. I drew on a qualitative analysis of the discussions between the massager and the massaged person about bodily experience during the massage sessions.

In Chapter 3 I examine the massage interaction as a process of negotiation of the meaning of bodily feelings viewed from the respective positions of the massager and the massaged person as well as with statements of bodily experience which were incongruous within a model of a negotiation of the meaning of bodily experience in terms of qualities of the malleable tissues as perceived by the massager.

After completing an initial study of the verbal component of bodily feelings in massage, I was still not able to present to a massaged person, and to massage students generally, an explanation of the effects of massage which incorporated both the categories of negotiable and non-negotiable aspects of bodily experience. Given that the verbal data provided limited explanatory opportunities for an analysis of the tactile interaction of massage I went to the non-verbal aspects of the massage interaction in order to make sense of massaged women's reports. My first approach was to view the videotapes of the massage sessions. They offered a consistently visual version of the process of massage with little evocation of the sensory order which had informed my own experiences of being massaged and my use of massage to encourage beneficial changes in the feelings of the massaged person.

My own experience of the process of massaging provided a source of data other than that of the spoken comments or of a visual tracking of the massage process. The advantage of using my own experience as a massager was that it enabled me to combine many perspectives of the massage interaction.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup>Merleau-Ponty points to the perspectival character of perception: 'The perceived thing is not an ideal unity in the possession of an intellect, like a geometrical notion, for example; it is rather a totality open to a horizon of an indefinite number of perspectival views which blend with one another according to a given style, which defines the object in question' (Merleau-Ponty, 1964, 16).

The five chapters of Part II present differing perspectives on the movement patterns of the malleable body. My aim is to present as well-rounded a picture as possible of my position as a massager in relation to massage. I use the central metaphor of movement to maintain an expository distance between my experience and my interpretation of that experience and to link massage practice and the effect of massage on the person. The descriptions of massage which result from this perspectival approach are filtered through my own position in relation to massage and rely on my own understanding of my bodily use. Chapter 5 of Part II is an examination, from the massager's position, of the movement of parts of the massaged bodily tissues and is implicitly based on my experience of attending to sore areas and stiffnesses in my own bodily tissues. Chapter 6 is a description of the massager's use of tactile techniques and her aim in working in a particular mode throughout the massage. It is based on my handling of objects and people in my tactile interaction with the environment. Chapter 7 is concerned with the massager's aim in massage in relation to the movement of the bodily tissues as a whole, rather than in parts. This chapter stems from my analysis of the stages in feeling which I move through in pursuit of feelings of well-being. In Chapter 8 I extend my analysis of the movement patterns of the malleable body to the movement of the ambulatory person. In Chapter 9 I present an expository foundation for the account of bodily feelings to be presented in Part III.

Chapter 10 of Part III is an analysis of the significance of bodily movement in terms of feelings. It is based on my analysis of my own bodily feelings and on my listening to the expressed feelings of others in my everyday life. In Chapters 11 and 12 I examine two key theoretical issues emerging from a theory of the malleable body. Chapter 11 is concerned with the person's registration of the interconnected movement of bodily parts, along a continuum of bodily experience marked by pleasure. Chapter 12 refers to the person's intersubjective movement in the world. In Chapter 13 - which concludes this project - I present a precis of the figuring of the phases of movement on which my construction of bodily feelings is based. The resulting schema is aimed at assisting a person to access ways of maintaining free movement in the world along with a sense of bodily pleasure.

## 1.3 An outline of malleable body movement

### 1.3.1 Interconnected movement and the construction of bodily experience

Touch can be viewed as a continuum of interpersonal contact ranging from a light slap on the back to the complexities of therapeutic massage. My perspective is that of a teacher and practitioner of therapeutic massage. I am concerned here with the effects which a particular perspective on massage training can bring to the bodily experience of the massaged person. I suggest that an increasing differentiation in the manner of the manual manipulation of bodily malleable tissues has an explicable effect on the bodily experience of the person who is touched.

I have used transcripts of the reported bodily feelings of nine women who I massaged as a cue for the construction of a model of the movement in space of the massaged tissues. The aspects of the women's talk which I have focussed on are feelings of bodily pleasure and statements relating to felt spatial positioning. My agenda, through the construction of a model of the movement of the 'able to be massaged' malleable body, is to interpret bodily movement and bodily feelings in the language of the movement of parts and of the whole malleable body. In a practical sense, an interpretation of bodily feelings in terms of bodily movement can be referred to by massaged people in order to use their bodily feelings as a basis for enhancing the malleability of their tissues. Conversely, by increasing tissue malleability, an adjustment of massaged people's bodily feelings in the direction of increasing bodily pleasure can be attempted by the person.

Theoretically, my project has links with a feminist reconfiguration of the notion of the body as set out by Grosz. She points to the need for a theoretical provision for apparently dichotomous aspects of bodily theorising:

'human bodies have the wonderful ability, while striving for integration and cohesion, organic and psychic wholeness, to also provide for and indeed produce fragmentations, fracturing, dislocations that orient bodies and body parts toward other bodies and body parts'(Grosz, 1994, 13).

By the interpolation of the concept of interconnected bodily movement, I anticipate that seeming discrepancies between the perceptual positioning of the massager and the massaged person, posed by reports by massaged people of unusual bodily experiences in massage, can be included in the terms of movement of the malleable body.

I view bodily movement as divided into two phases; the interconnected movement of contiguous tissue segments and that movement of the entire body which is oriented to distant objects. The project of the massager who conceptualises massage in terms of the malleable tissues is to use precision in their tactile manipulations to assist the massaged person during massage to maximise the degree of rhythmicity of interconnected movement. An application of my model of malleable bodily movement is to help the massaged person to maintain an ongoing high rhythmicity of interconnected movement during transitions from the bodily stillness which characterises massage to a primarily oriented bodily use. I link a predominantly rhythmical sensing of interconnected movement, gained through an overall evenness of the pliability of the malleable tissues, with a feeling of pleasure. The maintenance of regions of sustained tissue contraction is associated in my model with a disjunction in a feeling of bodily rhythmicity and with sensations of discomfort.

### Touching tissue

In treating massage as occupying a point along a continuum of touch, several issues emerge. The manual techniques of massage can be viewed as an extension of the use of a perceptual mode which has been termed the haptic system by J. J. Gibson. In a diagrammatic coverage of the perceptual systems Gibson specifies the mode of attention of the haptic system as touching; the anatomy as the skin (including attachments and openings), the joints (including ligaments) and the muscles (including tendons); the activity of the organ as exploration of many kinds; the stimuli available as deformations of tissues, configurations of joints, stretching of muscle fibers; and the external information obtained as contact with the earth, mechanical encounters, object shapes and the material states of solidity or viscosity (Gibson, 1966, 50). Gibson's treatment of the haptic system opens up the field of tactile perception to an analysis of massage as a sophisticated development of a common human perceptual

ability.

Gibson (1966, 320) maintains that proprioception or self-sensitivity (also termed 'muscle sense; muscle, tendon, and joint sensibility, kinesthesia, position sense and the appreciation of passive movement' (Jensen, 1976, 354)) co-exists with all the perceptual systems (such as vision, hearing etc.). In the words of Gibson 'the supposedly separate realms of the subjective and the objective are actually only poles of attention' (Gibson, 1979, 116). I suggest that during massage the massaged tissues form one pole of attention of the massaging person and the massager's registration of their own bodily feelings the other.

Massage education can be treated as the development of a perceptual skill which is intrinsic to human bodies as touching entities and which is inextricably linked with a person's feeling of their own body. In my model the role of the massager as participant in a therapeutic intervention falls into a unique category. The information which is available to the massager runs a gamut ranging from the condition of the surface, malleable tissues of the body to the nonverbal responses of the person - expressed in terms of the movement of bodily parts - and includes the talk of the massaged person as they refer to their bodily feelings. The range of bodily-based information available to the practised massager allows them, by recourse to their own oriented movement capacities, to interpret the directional content of comments about bodily feelings made by the massaged person, within the context of the traces of tension palpated by the massager in the malleable tissues of the massaged body.

Gorge Groddeck, who used massage regularly in his psychotherapy practice and was a colleague of Freud, wrote of the way in which massage makes available to the massaged person experiential information about their own body. [Through the effects of massage] 'the patient gets some insight into his own condition and wants to find out something more about himself than can be given by the phrase which for him is purely fantastic' (Groddeck, 1977, 237). The context of the term fantastic is provided earlier by Groddeck, who observes that 'One may take it on the whole that the physician is able to construct a more or less accurate picture of the real state of affairs when he gives his diagnosis, but it is absolutely certain that for the patient the diagnosis is at best but an empty phrase, while in some cases, it gives

rise to a completely false idea of the situation' (Groddeck, 1977, 237). Groddeck's comments emphasise that the massaged person's knowledge of the condition of their bodily tissues and feelings can be accentuated via the actions of massage. Gibson's delineation of the embeddedness of a person's perceptual knowledge of distant objects within an information flow generated by the person's own movement opens up a way of conceptualising experiential bodily learning in terms of a body which is fundamentally composed of malleable tissues and capable of being massaged.

### **Malleable bodily movement and bodily feelings**

One facet which emerges when people talk about enjoyable bodily feelings experienced during massage are instances where the massaged person reports a changed experiential quality to their sense of time and place. For example, an hour's massage time may be said to have taken fifteen minutes. Massaged people have commented to me that they feel as though they are floating above the massage table. From my perspective as a massager there is a strong discrepancy between the spatial terms used to describe the massaged person's reported bodily experience and my perception of the positioning of the massaged person, who in their guise of a collection of malleable tissue, is firmly sited on the massage table. The perceptual terms used to describe the spatial positioning of the massaged person and the massaging person are of two apparently incompatible orders with no obvious route available for establishing congruency between the two perceptions.

I suggest that a counter to the problem posed by a disparity of the spatial terms of reference of the massager's and massaged person's perception of the massaged tissues can be gained through the massager's ability to feel their touching of their own tissues. At issue here is the capacity of the massager to translate the terms in which the massaged person's tactually induced feelings are framed, into a language which is congruent with her perception of the malleable tissues.

The massaged person's construction of the felt meaning of the massager's touch is an individual matter, dependant on that person's social history of bodily experience (Douglas, 1970, 93) and thereby accessible to the massager via the words of the massaged person. Happily, both the massager and the massaged person have



experience with the everyday terms which describe spatial positioning in relation to objects and which are the basis of a common construction of the meaning of bodily experience in terms of surrounding events and objects (Coulter 1979, 80). In this sense the massager can consult with the massaged person about the meaning of their bodily experience in relation to the actions of the massager at the bodily interface where the malleable tissues and the massager's hands meet.

The touch of the massager's hands can be understood as a variant of impacts on the bodily surface of the massaged person which are differentiated on the basis of various tactile categories. Weiss has developed a sophisticated categorisation of the qualities of touch along these lines, including the factors of duration, location, rate of approach to a body surface (action), intensity (of pressure) and sensation (of comfort or discomfort) (Weiss, 1979, 77-78). How can the massager conceptualise, however, those expressed bodily feelings of the massaged person in which the massaged person's sense of the bodily locality of the sensation generated by the point of impress of the massager's hands no longer corresponds with the massager's notion of their own hand's positioning?

An excerpt from the transcript of a massage session illustrates an example of the dilemma which can be posed by verbal descriptions of bodily feelings during massage. For me as the massager the spatial terms of reference of Alice, the massaged person, were distinct from my own perception of my visually observable hands on the massaged tissues:

*Alice: Yeah, ... It feels like, sometimes when you're relaxed and you're lying down you can almost be above the table, it feels like that ... and your hands seemed a lot bigger, than hands ... And a sense of wellbeing, I felt in parting from the palm, but I didn't think of them as your palms. Palms. The big palm in the sky, yeah.*

In order to understand, in my role as a massager, the gap between Alice's and my own perception of the spatial positioning of the malleable tissues, I have extrapolated from the massager's descriptions of the movement patterns of the malleable tissues to that of the movement options for an entire generalised body. In this way I anticipate

being able to make available a pattern of movement of the whole body, congruent with the pattern of movement of the malleable tissues, which allows for a palpable contextualisation of the apparently incongruous felt bodily sense of the massaged person within the massager's perception of the entirety of the malleable tissues.

My construction of bodily experience in terms of the malleable body draws on a use of language which is structured around the spatial orientation of the moving person. I see the movement of the person in the world as bi-phasic. One form of movement I term oriented movement. It is oriented to object(ive)s and corresponds to the translatory motion of O'Connell & Gardner (1972, 49). Object(ive)s are palpable objects (including other people who also have the capacity of independent propulsion) which are distant to the tissues of the person. Another type of movement which is intrinsic to oriented movement I term interconnected movement. This is the movement of tissues which are successively contiguous with each other throughout the entire body. Juhan emphasises the interconnectedness of muscular action in the body:

'...in our conceptualization of muscular activity ... we regard the body as having only one muscle, whose millions of fiber-like cells are distributed throughout the fascial network and are oriented in innumerable directions, creating innumerable lines of pull. ... Any contraction on one part will necessitate lengthening in other parts, and an extension of any one part will necessitate contractile bracing in other parts, so that the entire musculature must always utilize many of the different directions of pull afforded by the arrangement of its fibers ...' (Juhan 1987, 114).

Muscles effect movement in the world through their implicitly interconnected movement. The interconnected movement of the still body is the predominant style of action which influences the massaged person when they describe their bodily experience as having categorically different spatial and durational parameters from that of the massager. Interconnected movement is observable in the rhythmical bodily movement brought about by breathing and the contraction of the cardiac muscle with its effect on fluid flows throughout the body.

The trained massager can see and palpably feel rhythmical bodily movements. In

order to make a link between the massager's predominantly tactually-based perception of the movement of the malleable tissues and the bodily feelings of the massaged person I will draw on writers whose work makes use of movement or spatial parameters. Whilst their work is not in the area of massage, I have taken hints from them on the form of a model of bodily feelings based on the malleable body.

A recurring comment about massage by massaged people is that it feels good. Ricoeur refers to Freud's linkage, in his early work of pleasure and rhythm:

'Pleasure, then, would be linked to a qualitative characteristic of the excitation itself, perhaps to its rhythm, its temporal rise and fall'(Ricoeur 1970, 320).

Freud's proposition serves to theoretically substantiate my observations, during massage, of the predominance of rhythmical bodily movement which accompanies the relaxation of muscular contraction in the malleable tissues as massage progresses. From the tactile perspective of the massager, there is a decrease in the differences between the tightness of contracted muscle and the enhanced malleability of relaxed muscle. The level of malleability of the tissues of the whole body becomes increasingly homogenous.

The psychoanalytic work of Matte-Blanco reveals further clues as to a means of connecting the reports of unusual spatial perception given by some massaged people, with the palpable condition of malleable tissues which is sensed by the massager as the massaged person relaxes during massage. In his book *The Unconscious as Infinite Sets - An Essay in Bi-logic* (Matte-Blanco, 1975) Matte-Blanco describes the psyche as being characterised by either symmetrical or asymmetrical functioning. Feelings and emotions are more closely allied to the parameters of symmetrical functioning where people's accounts of their experience exhibit an absence of the sense of time and/or space. Asymmetrical functioning is characterised by a propositional logic, where a person's language shows an orderly and sequential progression of events and physical placement in space.

From the perspective of the massager, as the massaged person relaxes during massage, the palpable evidence (shown as tightness in the tissues) of the sequences of

muscular contractions which enable the enactment of oriented movement in the world, disappear. With no distinction between the degree of malleability of interconnected bodily tissues available to the touch of the massager, the remaining evidence of bodily movement is contained by the rhythmical movements of breathing and vascularly pumped bodily fluid flows. I take a predominant quality of rhythmical movement in the body to be associated with those linguistically expressed spatial qualities of *symmetrical* functioning specified by Matte-Blanco. I also associate a high degree of interconnected tissue malleability with the pleasurable bodily feeling invariably reported by massaged people in the present study.

In addition to optimising a sense of whole bodily pleasure one of the aims of massage practice is to decrease discomfort on the part of the massaged person. I have taken a corollary of this aim to be the education of the massaged person in how to increase the malleability of their bodily tissues during everyday activities, undertaken apart from the massage interaction, in order to to minimise feelings of discomfort and increase feelings of comfort.

Quotidian activities use oriented movement which is based on an interaction with objects which are separate from the person. I suggest that the person's bodily use, in the case of oriented movement, is more reliant on perceptual systems which function in terms of distant objects (eg sight and hearing) in contrast to the surface to surface contact provided by touch. The quite differing operations of perceptual systems which operate via contiguity or over distance are referred to in Grosz's reiteration of Irigaray's claim that:

'the visual and the tactile function according to different logics and rhythms...'  
(Grosz, 1994, 105).

The spatial components of oriented movement are additional to that of the rhythmicity of interconnected bodily movement in that the whole mass of interconnected tissue is organised to propel itself from one surface to another via movement through intervening space. The bi-lateral nature of the human body, in the context of gravity, means that the person proceeds towards or away from an object by means of a shifting of weight between two alternately supporting surfaces (as in the case of walking

or even inching along the ground on one's belly and elbows). The distance senses function to maintain the orientation of the central (spinal) axis of the body to an object(ive), whilst allowing for a multi-directional use of the bodily parts involved in the sequential progression of oriented movement. Taking vision as an exemplar of the most distantly operating of the senses, a maintenance of the orientation of the central spinal axis of the body occurs by means of a binocular muscular focussing. In terms of muscular activity there is an accompanying maintenance of muscular contraction to allow the eyes to fix on the position of an object(ive). To the massager working with the malleable tissues, a maintenance of muscular fixity when oriented movement ceases, and the massaged person is lying still, can be palpated as a rigidity of the malleable tissue. Such a rigidity is often described by the massager as being sore to the touch. The actions of the skilled massager commonly bring about a diminution of that feeling of discomfort. For the person who is concerned with optimising the malleability of their tissues away from the context of massage, I would wish to describe the movement process whereby a decrease in discomfort translates to an active sensing of heightened bodily pleasure.

Oriented movement involves the contraction of interconnected muscular tissue in a pattern which allows bodily parts to be placed in a desired spatial relationship with an object(ive). I take the directional options of oriented movement to be a movement which either brings the person closer to or further away from the object(ive). In malleable tissue terms, the transition from a retention of rigid areas of tissue in the body to a maximal degree of malleability of the interconnected tissues of the entire body, initially occurs by means of a relaxation of areas of specific tissue tightness. The relaxation of each area of the tissues is a reversal of the direction of oriented movement exhibited in the residual states of tightness of each specific area. When successive areas of muscular tension relax during the extended period of the action of the massager's hands during massage, the interconnected nature of the malleable tissues incorporates and nullifies the directional sum of many specific areas of the residual directional traces of oriented action, perceived as areas of tightness by the massager.

As the massaged person again engages in oriented action following massage, the

dissolution of those residual patterns of muscular contraction which had marked the person's way of approaching or moving away from an object(ive), into the overall rhythmicity of the pleasurable state of massage, suggests that the person's manner of movement with an object(ive) in a second interaction, will be different. The person's dissolution of their previous pattern of interaction with that object(ive) will mean that their capacity for engaging in directional options for oriented movement will retain a multi-faceted quality. Conversely, if residual tightnesses are retained in the malleable tissues, the degree of interconnected malleability, the degree of bodily rhythmicity attainable, and the directional options for oriented movement, are restricted.

### A diagram of oriented movement

I propose that a diagram of the spatial setting of the trajectories of a person's oriented movement, taken from a tactile perspective which includes the functioning of more distantly based sensory systems, will serve to contextualise my outline of malleable bodily movement alongside spatial references made by the theorists to whom I have referred.

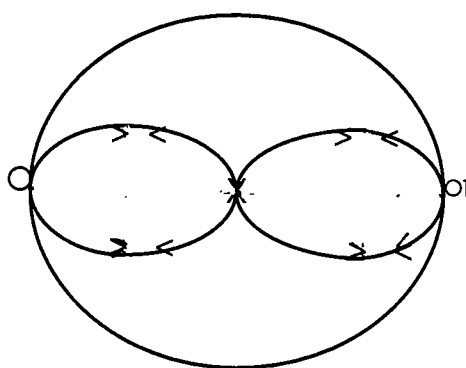
*Diagrammatic representation of oriented bodily movement trajectories p. 32a.*

The figure is mathematically classed as a lemniscate: 'a curve shaped like a figure 8, or a knot, or bow of a ribbon' (Lockwood, 1961, 117). A trajectory of oriented movement proceeding from O crosses over at X to diagonally travel to O1, then continues down the other side of the ellipse XO1, through X and via the untravelled side of the ellipse XO to O. The figure 8 shaped trajectory is continuous with itself.

Important elements of the diagram are:

- The central point (X) of the two intersecting ellipses of the diagram represents the central spinal axis of the person. The diagram is viewed from above the central spinal axis of the person, ie looking down on the top of the head of the person.
- The curved lines indicate the trajectories of the movement available to the person whilst their central spinal axis remains in a constant relation to a supporting

*Diagrammatic representation of oriented bodily movement trajectories*



surface (ie they stay in the same spot) in relation to an object(ive) O, situated at a point along the boundary of the outer ellipse of the diagram. The outer boundary is delineated by the sites of differing object(ive)s which lie at the same distance from the person who is engaging in rotational movement and maintaining a constant relationship with a supporting surface.

- The diagram represents a bodily positioning which invariably allows for tactile contact with an object(ive). The perceptual systems of sight, hearing, smell and to a lesser extent taste allow a bodily orientation to distant object(ive)s which does not necessarily extend to tactile contact. For example whilst the reach of the person remains close to X, the malleable tissues may stabilise the bodily position in space at a position which is represented at a point between X and O, allowing the eyes to bilaterally fix on O through fine adjustments of the entire body. A stabilising of elements of the visual system in relation to O allows the orientation of the malleable tissues along a particular path of approach to the object(ive). Oriented movement along such a path is taken to its extent when tactile contact with O occurs. In the sense that the person's bodily contours are arranged in anticipation of an approaching tactile engagement with O, they can be said to mimic the perceived contours of O whilst remaining at the distance from the object(ive) which is most appropriate to the functioning of the person's currently predominant perceptual system. I suggest that the level of activity of any particular perceptual system is largely dependent on the distance of its external organs from O.
- The two ellipses to either side of the central point X represent the sum of pathways along which movement of parts of the body in relation to an object(ive) O is directed and the orientation of the entire body is displayed. The arrows along these lines indicate the possible directions of movement available to the person - either away from or towards an object(ive). The curved track of the outline of each ellipsoid allows for oriented movements in which the person begins from an initial anatomical position (erect, eyes facing forward with arms by sides and palm forwards) at X and then shifts sideways in a lateral or abducted movement



- whilst still maintaining an overall orientation of the spinal axis in relation to O.
- The two ellipses which decussate at X are symmetrical. As the person maintains their orientation to O, then the trajectory of one ellipse will be towards O and the trajectory of movement of the other ellipse away from O. An extreme example of this type of movement is a line of people holding onto a tug of war rope which angles them forward towards their object(ive) as their feet strive to maintain a constant relationship with the ground. If the forward momentum of the chain of people is suddenly broken, eg the other team lets go, then the orientation of the original team would be angled away from their object(ive). Each person of the chain would tend to right themselves, re-establishing their position as upright and centrally supported by their spinal axis. Apart from this somewhat simplistic example where the object(ive) is in close alignment with an individual's central axis of support, the trajectory of movement of the ellipse which is further from O and which is maintained over time will be visible as a bracing of the body in order to counteract a movement towards O.
- The direction of the arrows on both ellipses indicate that movements along the lines of the ellipse are reversible, with bodily extensions being able to go towards and away from O. Diagrammatically the interaction is not bounded by the extent of the arms of the ellipse from X to O. I have depicted the capacity of the body to move away from O, beyond the point of stability of the central bodily axis and surface of support at X, as an ellipse with endpoints X and O1.
- As a person rotates around a central surface of support at X the ellipse which represents their orientation to an object(ive) (not necessarily O) will also rotate with an equivalent movement of the point O to a new point along the outer perimeter which represents object(ive)s at a fixed distance from X. The ellipse XO1 is unique in that it represents the trajectory which enables a person to retain one orientation to O whilst being able to move towards, away from or fixate (by bracing) their position.

- The narrowing in of the diagram at the central point X indicates a minimisation of the directional possibilities of oriented bodily movement. The spinal axis at X maintains its relationship with its supporting surface via an immobility relative to the remainder of the body. Such a position of stability provides the conditions for an optimal degree of interconnected movement which is represented by the point X, ie a movement which has no object(ive) other than the maintenance of its own stability.

The explanatory purpose of the diagram is to illustrate principles of bodily movement and feelings which derive from the substance of my thesis. I view intersubjectivity as a variant of the interaction between person and object(ive) which takes place between two people. Intersubjectivity is represented in the diagram by a person at the perimeter O of the bodily range of the person whose central axis is represented by X.

A key component of intersubjectivity in my model is mimicry. Mimicry is undertaken by shaping the contours of one's body to the perceived contours of another body depicted in my model as an object(ive). In the diagram this is represented by the person assuming a bodily contour - at any point along the ellipses with endpoints O and O1 - which allows a trajectory to be traversed whose resulting final position is a contiguous alignment by the bodily shape of the person with the conformation of the desired object(ive). Mimicry can be carried out at varying distances from the object(ive) according to the distance over which the predominant sensory system utilised by the person functions. A maximum of interconnected movement at the point X acts as a hiatus in the oriented movement patterns towards and away from an object(ive).

A successive mimicry of differently contoured bodies necessitates an intervening stage where the amalgamation of each differing bodily orientation occurs via a movement through the point denoted by X, where the flexibility of interconnected bodily movement is predominant. In order to maintain one's own position of support in relation to gravity a movement of re-establishment of one's own postural stability occurs before a reorientation to another object(ive) occurs.

### Oriented movement and bodily feelings

In an examination of intersubjectivity within the context of the malleable body, the maintenance of a feeling bodily comfort is important. I am interested in the way in which the muscular tension implicit in the sequential fixations of oriented movement along the ellipsoid trajectories involved in interpersonal interaction is transformed into a pleasurable state of optimum interconnected movement. Throughout the text of my thesis, a transition through the stages of fixity of oriented action to an increase of the extent of interconnected movement involves the registration of bodily feelings. (In terms of the malleable body, I take a bodily feeling to be the registration of a change in the bodily extent of interconnected movement in the direction of an overall bodily condition where the degree of plasticity of interconnected movement is greater than the fixity of oriented muscular activity.) Such a transition occurs, in terms of the diagram, in one of two ways. It is either a return from the fixity of a positioning of an oriented action along the ellipse XO towards a state of greater interconnected movement more closely aligned with X, or a return from a positioning along the lines XO1, indicative of a bodily bracing away from O, to a condition of a greater extent of interconnected movement (where the bodily contour is also positioned closer to X).

In my diagrammatic analysis so far, the epitome of bodily pleasure is contained either at X, where the body is at rest and interconnected movement covers an optimum bodily extent, or in a situation of tactile contact with the object(ive) at O where the bodily extent of the bodily rhythms of one person are enhanced through the incorporation of the contours of an inanimate object(ive) or the rhythms of another person. The reference point of the ellipse XO1 is X, rather than O. From any point of fixity situated along the ellipse XO1, movement in response to O must be in the direction of X before being translated into oriented movement which can contact O. Rather than being a function of oriented bodily movement which increases or decreases the distance between the person's central axis X and O, changes of fixations of positioning along the ellipse XO1 use the central spinal axis as a mediator of multifaceted adjustments of bodily attitude. Nonetheless an overall directionality of the sum of the many directional attributes of interconnected movement persists which is directed either closer to or further away from X. In terms of bodily feelings a

movement closer to X would be characterised by pleasure and a movement further away from X characterised by discomfort.

Differences in the quality of bodily feelings experienced by the person in relation to the diagram of the movement of the malleable body can be analysed from the perspective of bodily movement or of bodily fixity. In terms of movement along the two ellipses an overall movement towards O from the direction of O1 will have a pleasurable quality attributable to an increase in the extent of interconnected movement as the person approaches X, simultaneous with a decrease in the fixity of the malleable tissues as the person relaxes a previously assumed positioning of bracing. Movement along a trajectory of the ellipse XO towards O will have no particular feeling as the oriented action of the whole body is organised in relation to O with no opportunity to feel an increasing degree of interconnected bodily movement. Movement away from O along the ellipse XO1 will also have no prominent feeling characteristic in a sequence equivalent to that of a movement towards O.

When the element of bodily fixity is brought into this schema of bodily movement and feelings, the factor of duration has its own effect on tissue malleability. A position along the ellipse XO which is sustained over time necessitates an increasingly extensive bodily rigidity in order to counterbalance the disequilibrium of a projection of bodily parts towards O and away from their most direct surface of support at X. Such a fixity of bodily parts outweighs the extent of interconnected movement of the malleable tissues. When a movement of return to the positioning at X takes place, discomfort generated by the prior immobility of the malleable tissues is liable to be felt. When there is a fixity of movement along the trajectory from X to O1 discomfort can be similarly felt when a movement of return to X is initiated by the person. Both the ellipses XO and XO1 can be marked by hesitations of movement in relation to O which are a function of restrictions of the interconnected mobility between the malleable tissues involved in the oriented position of particular sensory systems. Whilstever the varying sensory systems have ranges of perception which differ in their most appropriate distance of operation from an object(ive), fixities of the linkages between the interconnected malleable tissues which orient those particular systems, will lead to hesitations in the progress of oriented movement and the possibility of discomfort

when the process of return to a more centrally supported bodily position at X is resumed.

### Oriented movement and intersubjectivity

Staten (1984) uses terms in a commentary on Derrida's concept of *differance* which I see as compatible with the spatial relationships evoked in my diagrammatic illustration of the feelings and movement of the malleable body. I suggest that an examination of the concept of *differance* from the spatial perspective of the malleable body provides a useful means of illustrating the principles of movement of the malleable body within a contemporary theoretical context.<sup>5</sup>

‘*Differance* as set forth by Derrida is designed to frustrate the project of repression of frustration and anxiety by describing the relation between self and other - which is not parallel with the relation organism/outer world - as an indissociable synthesis, a structure which is not that of a unity or self-identity but which includes as part of its “identity” its own otherness from itself or inability to fill with its own substance all the space of its “being”’ (Staten, 1984, 155).

In malleable body terms, whilst the person is able to mimic the contours of a desired object(ive), ie to engage in oriented movement in such a way that their body parts conform in directionality to that of the object(ive), they will always only approach the exact configuration of any object(ive) which has an inexact correspondence with their own tissues. The notion of interconnected movement allows leeway for the difference in contour between the person and the object(ive). The alteration of a sense of

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<sup>5</sup>Within this section I am attempting an analysis of Derrida's approach to the Freudian concepts of pleasure, unpleasure and repression only within the context of the malleable body and not that of literature. I am departing from Derrida's strict application of the spatial terms of his analysis to the project of deconstructing texts (Grosz, 1989, 26) on the lead of Grosz (1990). She views the body from the perspective of a participant writing surface which can be etched by social practices, commenting that the body: ‘has a texture, a tonus, a materiality that is an active ingredient in the messages produced’ (1990, 72). I have used the spatial relationships within the context of language referred to by Derrida (1978, 91-92), Grosz (1989, xvii) and Staten (1984, 155) to round out a model of the movement of the malleable body within the context of pleasure and unpleasure and have not sought at this stage to reflect on the role of the written text in relation to the malleable body.

time and space which I take to be implicit in the pervasive rhythmical quality of an extensive degree of interconnected movement allows for and absorbs the distinctions generated by the movement of bodily parts by which oriented movement proceeds. A comment by Derrida on the trace, a notion intricately connected to difference, provides an analogous spatial construct of the changes in the malleable tissue which are involved in a transition from oriented to interconnected movement:

‘Since the trace is not a presence but the simulacrum of a presence that dislocates itself, displaces itself, refers itself, it properly has no site - erasure belongs to its structure’ (Derrida, 1982, 24).

I take the trace to be the remainder of the muscular contractions employed in oriented movement in response to a desired object(ive), and erasure to be a function of an increasing degree of rhythmical interconnected movement, which in turn displaces the orientation of muscular activity in response to an object(ive).

The concept of difference offers a promising avenue for an examination of the bodily consequences of an individual’s successive interpersonal interactions with different people. In diagrammatic terms such interactions over time would be depicted as the person rotates their body at the point X in order to orient to differing object(ive)s at points along the perimeter which are separate from O.

I see intersubjectivity as the assimilation of differences between perceived people by the perceiving person via the utilisation of a process of engagement with difference, brought about by their own oscillation between oriented and interconnected phases of bodily movement.

Grosz glosses difference as:

‘Where dichotomy defines a pair of terms by a relation of presence and absence, or affirmation and denial, difference implies that each of the two (or more) terms has an existence autonomous from the other. Each term exists in its own right’ (Grosz, 1989, xvii).

I see dichotomy in an intersubjective context portrayed in a situation where a person has a limiting degree of bodily fixity - of a part or of the whole of the body - with

regard to an object(ive). As the person is not able to freely move to contact an object(ive) and/or to move away from that object(ive) to a state of centrally supported maximisation of interconnected movement, then bodily strategies can limit the perception of the object(ive) whilst maintaining the person's original positioning. An example of such a strategy is a fixing of the malleable tissues which make up a perceptual system so that the interaction with the object(ive) occurs only at a set distance from the object(ive).

In diagrammatic terms, I interpret difference to mean that the surfaces of support provided for people situated at X and O are interchangeable. Each person can assume the position of the other. Staten sees difference as a description of the situation where:

‘The relation between self and other ... includes as part of its ‘identity’ its own otherness from itself’ (Staten, 1984, 155).

I view the relation between self and other as based on a process of mimicry by the person sited at X of the invariably differently sized and shaped bodily contours of the person situated at O. I suggest that the process of assimilation of these differences - which incorporates a movement of return to the stage of maximally interconnected movement at X - can be described as difference. Grosz elucidates difference as: ‘the unacknowledged ground of the opposition between identity (or sameness) and difference’ (Grosz, 1989, xvii). In malleable body terms the unacknowledged ground of the opposition between identity and difference is provided by the notion of interconnected bodily movement. A person's oriented movement, undertaken to include difference within their own identity, devolves into a predominance of interconnected movement as the person returns from focussed actions to a feeling for the ongoing interconnected movement of their bodily tissues at rest (ie as the body is not changing its surface of support to any appreciable degree).

Staten comments that the relation between self and other implies the self's ‘inability to fill with its own substance all the space of its “being”’ (Staten, 1984, 155) and Grosz further characterises difference as: ‘an excess or an unincorporated remainder which resists the imperative of binary organisation. Difference is *both* as well as *neither* identity and difference’ (Grosz, 1989, xvii).

In malleable bodily terms I take the concept of difference to provide an opportunity for acknowledging the correspondence of a reduction and dissolution of oriented action with an increase in the bodily extent of interconnected movement. A full bodily extent of interconnected movement possesses a quality of no relation to an object(ive), being as it is marked by a constant rhythmicity undisturbed by muscular effort in any specific direction. As the person engages in mimicry of the contours of an object(ive), there will always be an element of approximation of the differing contours of another differently sized and proportioned person. As the person's musculature returns from a fixed state of orientation in relation to an object(ive) to a greater degree of interconnected flexibility, the approximation of the contours of the other is dispersed by the rhythmical quality of interconnected movement. In reviewing Derrida's notion of the trace diagrammatically, the trace would be displayed in instances of bodily fixity which have formed along the trajectory of movement away from O and towards X. The trajectory formed by the fixed stages of oriented bodily positioning would dissolve as the increasing stability of the bodily positioning at rest at X enabled a greater degree of interconnected tissue mobility.

The *approximation* of the shape of the other means that the dissolution of a guessed at contour lends an indefinable and exploratory quality to the assimilation of interactions with others. In terms of interconnected bodily rhythms this implies a temporary disrhythmia whose eventual position of integration as a component of the overall bodily rhythm is unpredictable. When several variously structured instances of oriented action to a particular object(ive) have been enacted with a sufficiently repetitive sameness, the inclusion of the bodily pattern provided by the person's approximation of the other's positioning has a greater likelihood of being incorporated into a maximal degree of interconnected mobility.

In summing up this section in malleable body terms - where tactility is taken as an essential element of perception - discomfort can be described as function of a lack of malleability of the interconnected bodily tissues. I suggest that an interpretation of bodily discomfort as resulting solely from an undesired positioning in regard to a distant object(ive) reduces the self-initiated movement options available to the person for achieving a consistent feeling of bodily pleasure through a return to the feelings



associated with an optimum degree and bodily extent of interconnected movement. My consideration of the notion of interconnected movement has attempted to clarify the etiology of bodily feelings within the predominantly tactile context of massage in contrast to a more traditional, visually derived perceptual approach. The practical aim of my consideration of intersubjectivity has been to provide a means of assisting the person to identify their spatial placement in relation to an object(ive) on the basis of a tactually-derived understanding of bodily feelings, facilitated through ongoing massage of the malleable body.

In the next chapter I will describe how I approached and carried out a study of the verbal interaction of massage.

## **Chapter 2**

# **Researching malleable body meaning**

### **2.1 The research process**

#### **Introduction**

In this chapter I will present my derivation and use of a method in which I analyse the talk and movement of massage sessions to form a spatially-based account of the actions of the malleable human body.

Many effects claimed for massage and referred to in the massage literature are physiological (for example Mennel (1934), Wright (1946), Jacobs (1960), Wakim (1960), Wood (1974), Tappan (1988) and Cottingham (1985)). Whilst the bulk of these claims are made in passing or on an anecdotal basis, others are the result of quantitative studies which examine elements of bodily functioning in response to massage (for example Ladd, Kottke & Blanchard (1952), Nordschow & Bierman (1962), Rice (1975), Wolfson (1931) and Clews (1988)). The massage literature provides little precedent for a methodological approach which examines the effects of massage on the entirety of bodily functioning, maintaining the status of massage as a tactually based interpersonal interaction.

The prospect of an experientially-based approach to massage is glancingly alluded

to in an early perceptual study of touch by David Katz which descriptively examines the tactile processes involved in massage. Whilst commenting that 'massage almost entirely lacks a sound experimental basis', in another section he makes a statement which I have taken as a starting point for examining how a study of massage as an interpersonal tactile interaction eludes and goes beyond experimental methodological parameters. After an observation that massage has been mainly developed as a practical technique, and is maintained as such (Katz, 1936, 148) Katz refers to the principle of entity or Gestalt, to account for:

'A great variety of factors, corresponding to dynamic, temporal and local factors, [which] mould the elementary strokes of the masseur into more complex stimuli with correspondingly large variation of effects on the body'  
(Katz, 1936, 148).

I have built on Katz's observations on the complexity of the technique of massage to include as a foundational element of my research the suppleness of the hands as manipulatory organs, and the intricate interconnectedness of the three-dimensional facets of the segments of the malleable tissues with which the massaging hands engage.

The inclusion of the complexity of the manual interaction of massage into a research agenda for the practical discipline of massage allows for an accounting for the effects of massage on the whole body. In a way which I will cover in this chapter, such an inclusion also increases the difficulty of the methodological task. Rawlinson points to the manner in which:

"The diversity of the senses and body 'parts' become a unity in the intention of encountering the world in some way. . . . In the particular gesture or act, the subject is inscribed in the world in a determinate way and brought to presence, but never completely so, such that this inscribing must be repeated again and again. While the body is an original inscription in the world, as such it describes only a field of possible activity which must be oriented and claimed in gesture, act and word" (Rawlinson, 1982, 159).

Rawlinson's comment shows how a recognition of the speaking body as an amalgam of bodily parts which constitute a whole implies a concomitant recognition of

determinate actions and words in the world and a series of unpredictable, potential activities implicit in the undifferentiated, unintentioned 'undivided power' of the body. I treat the body as an amalgam of bodily parts which are linked to one another and as a unitary whole which moves in relation to objects and events which are separated from the bodily parts of the person. I will examine the massaged person's nonverbal and nonverbal responses to the actions of the massager as acts in the world of the massage interaction. Such responses are mediated through the massaged person's felt response to changes in the texture of the malleable tissues which are initiated by the predominantly tactile interventions of the massager.

Within my methodological stance I define the salient body in massage as one whose tissue malleability can be changed through the actions of the massager. The massager's project of mobilising less than optimal tissue malleability is undertaken in response to a problem or discomfort perceived by the massaged person. The massager's efforts at promoting the feeling of wellbeing of the massaged person are informed and constrained by the structure of the tissue with which she works. I have taken the chief characteristic of massaged tissue generally to be the facility of movement and specifically to be the interconnected movement of contiguous bodily tissues. I will argue that my attempt at a theoretical linkage of the interconnected movement of the entire body of malleable tissues with the massaged person's reported feelings of bodily pleasure, necessitated the development of a theoretical construct of the movement patterns of the malleable body.

My conceptual model is based on an analysis of my description of the successive phases of movement implicated in the activity of the malleable body. The analysis grew out of my observations, as a massager, of the movement of the malleable tissues. I used those descriptions to construct a generalised pattern of movement of the malleable bodily tissues which was congruent with the language use of the massaged women as they described their own bodily feelings. As I will illustrate in the remainder of this chapter, that analysis is dependent on two earlier methodological steps. A number of key elements influenced my route through the methodological stages of experimentally-based data gathering and qualitative data analysis, to the

development of a theoretical concept of the malleable body using an analysis of my observations of bodily movement in massage. The notion of malleable body massage as a therapeutic intervention, emphasising the achievement of a pleasurable feeling state by the massaged person, brought into question the adequacy of my initial choice of a quantitative methodology as a means of studying the complexity of a tactually-based interpersonal interaction which was conceptually dependent on bodily movement. My commitment to a parity of the spatial terms of the talk of the massager and the massaged person extended my research methodology into a qualitative analysis of the data offered by the talk during massage. The qualitative analysis utilised the concept of a process of negotiation by the massager and the massaged person as to the verbally expressed spatial orientation of each person relative to the bodily feelings of the massaged person. The bodily feelings in question were specifically described by the massaged person and identified by the massager at a corresponding location on the interface between the massager's hands and the surface contours of the malleable tissues. When the possibility of parity between the verbally evoked roles of the massager and the massaged person was challenged by a discrepancy between the spatial terms used by the massaged person to describe their bodily feelings and the spatial terms used by the massager to describe the malleable tissues, I extended my methodological approach to encompass the construction of a theoretical model of the spatial terms of reference of the malleable body.

I employ a construct of the patterns of movement of the malleable body to invest the malleable and moveable body with the status of a speaking person who can verbally describe their own spatial positioning. The schema of malleable bodily movement which I have constructed allows the massager to apply the descriptive terms relating to bodily feelings employed by the massaged person to the degree of malleability of bodily parts and to the language relating to whole bodily movement both within and outside of the spatial and durational setting of massage.

### 2.1.1 Theoretical and methodological considerations

#### Methodological groundwork

My interest in maintaining the interactive aspect of the massage process, in a manner akin to the situation during massage practice, where I see the massager and the massaged person as mutually exploring the meanings which feelings associated with the massaged body hold for each person, effectively ruled out a thorough application of a quantitative methodology. I will describe my preliminary experimentally-based methodological steps and the way in which my theoretical slant, which emphasised the complexity of the dyadic and tactually based social interaction of massage, influenced a successive amalgamation of methodological approaches. Reinharz points to the validity of combining different methodological approaches within one research project (Reinharz, 1992, 197-213).

Initially, I trialled my massage procedures and use of equipment in a pilot study with four people, two men and two women. The procedure began with all subjects filling out a consent form which listed contra-indications for massage. Each person was interviewed to find out how familiar they were with massage, and with the act of attending to their body. Each person then marked, on a gridded chart of the body, any sore spots which they had noticed in the last three days or any areas which were a recurrent problem. They also noted the feelings of these areas. A ten-minute massage of the area from the neck to lower back was then given by the massager. I asked for comments which the massaged people had to make about their bodily feelings. Women described the feelings of their body in more detail whereas the men's accounts showed a lack of detailed description of bodily feeling. Two main methodological directions emerged from the pilot study. The first was that my experience of handling the malleable tissues in massage meant that I could assess and talk about the person's responses to sore areas whilst I was also massaging. This way of working with the massaged person conformed with my desire to adhere more closely to everyday massage practice and I subsequently used massaged people's comments about their bodily experiences during massage as a source of data. The second consequence of the pilot study was that I excluded men from the study as the

massaged women were more forthcoming in giving detailed comments about a range of bodily feelings.

In the major experimental study which came after the pilot study I examined the talk, between the massager and massaged person, about the bodily experience of eight women during hour-long, full body massage sessions. As both massager and researcher I carried out three massage sessions per person over a period of four weeks. The people massaged were women volunteers who were academic or general staff at the University of New England and who were randomly approached and asked to participate in the study. The research data came from transcripts of the conversation between the massager and the massaged women. The massaged women have pseudonyms and I refer to myself as Catherine in extracts from transcribed material. The massaged participants wore surgical type gowns which opened down the back. They initially lay prone (face down) whilst the back surface of the body was massaged and halfway through the session changed to the supine position whilst the front of the body - excluding the genital and breast tissue - was massaged. Massage was carried out on a firm bench which was waist height to the massager. A light vegetable oil was used as a lubricant. Areas not being massaged were covered with towels. Each session took approximately one hour and was audiotaped and videotaped by an overhead camera. The massages were carried out in a laboratory of the Psychology Department, U.N.E., during May and December 1987. For ethical reasons a consent form with a checklist of conditions where massage is contra-indicated was completed by participants. They were asked to inform the massager if there was pain, so that the massager could adjust the massage to alleviate any undue discomfort.

The eight women approached were randomly assigned to one of two experimental conditions. In one condition, malleable body massage was used by the experimenter over a one-hour time period. The other group was massaged using a set regime of traditional Western massage techniques. Malleable body massage specifically used the bodily cues of the massaged person to guide the type and sequence of massage movements which were drawn from traditional Western (often termed Swedish) massage. Bodily cues were categorised as distinctions within the observable qualities of the soft tissues, and the nonverbal and verbal utterances by the massaged person

which delineated their bodily experience. Both groups had been initially told that the experimenter was interested in their experience of the body during massage. They were offered the choice of stating, either throughout the massage or at the end of the massage, anything that seemed to them to be either interesting or important in regard to their bodily feelings. At the beginning of each massage session, the women were asked to talk about their bodily experience, eg. in the first massage session with Beverly:

*Catherine: So, I suppose from your side I'm interested in any feelings, bodily feelings, or, I don't know whether emotional feelings come into it. Anything that seems to be connected with what I'm doing and what you're feeling, in your body.*

If clarification was sought as to the meaning of the term 'bodily feelings', the statement was generalised to 'anything you can feel that seems important or unusual'.

The hypothesis of my study was that malleable body massage, which was specifically aimed at isolating and alleviating areas of tension in the massaged body would evoke more stated instances of reports of particular bodily feelings than would the use of a set routine of massage derived from traditional Western massage techniques. The hypothesis was based on my prior observations with massaged people that tactile exploration of areas of muscular tightness resulted in reports of increased sensitivity at those areas. With my use of an hypothesis phrased in quantitative terms, and the inclusion of experimental design elements which sought to control the number of variables under study, such as the use of control groups, I had initially committed the study to the use of quantitative methods in data analysis. The reports of two women in the malleable massage group who said that they felt as though they were floating above the table disabanded my notion of the efficacy of a quasi-experimental methodology in investigating the effects of malleable bodily massage on the whole person. An evaluation of verbal reports where the spatial terms used by the questioner (the massager) differed in kind from that of the questioned person, was not subject to the kinds of statistical analysis with which I was familiar in my psychological training.

My inclusion of verbal reponses to a research question, within a context which took account of multiple changes in the texture of soft tissues which were being



assessed, monitored and re-assessed at each moment of the massage according to the response of the massaged person to the tactile contact of massage, precluded a method of data analysis where numerical values were assigned to categories of comments and a hypothesis then assigned a level of probability, which proved the hypothesis acceptable or not according to sample size and number of variables. I suggest that when the potentially incalculable characteristics of interconnected bodily movement are taken into account, the formation of meaning in language which is based on bodily movement is irreducible to numerical values whereby the predictability and measurability of the observed bodily actions is ensured.

In order to empirically investigate a more appropriate method of analysing the reports of bodily feelings I carried out a second pilot study in which I massaged one woman using malleable body massage. We verbally explored her bodily feelings throughout the massage. I used this data as a basis for carrying out a qualitative analysis of material drawn from the transcripts of the conversation between massager and massaged women about bodily feelings during the massage interaction. I included the data from the one-woman study with the material of the previous eight women in the analysis.

In the analysis I concentrated on a categorisation of the types of descriptions of bodily feelings displayed in the audio transcripts of all the women studied. I extracted and grouped statements of the massaged people which reflected a common theme of spatial referencing. My task had shifted from a differentiation of the types of bodily feelings displayed between the Swedish and the malleable body massage groups. The distinguishing feature which emerged from transcribed material was not a difference between groups, but rather an apparently impassable divide between the spatial terms of reference of the massager and the massaged person. My problem now had become not a matter of a proven or unproven hypothesis, or significant or non-significant differences between experimental and control groups. An underlying issue had become evident which called into question the way in which I used language to describe my own terms of spatial reference as an experimenter and massager, or alternatively the bodily terms of reference of the language of the massaged person.

My phrasing of my earlier research hypothesis in terms of the malleable body had

implicitly generated major theoretical issues. A view of the body based on movement meant that the movement capacities of the massager and the massaged person were equivalent. My concern with the spatial referents contained in the talk of the massager and the massaged person during massage, based on the notion of the movement through space of bodily tissues, implied an equivalence in the spatial positioning of the massager and the massaged person. An obvious discrepancy between the spatial terms of reference used by some of the massaged women, in contrast to the perceptual positioning of the massager in relation to the massaged tissues, called into doubt the equivalence of the verbalised positioning of the two massage interactionists. In the following sections I will firstly examine the methodological influence of my concentration on language and then the way in which my adherence to the spatial values exhibited in the massage talk changed my notion of a simple equivalence between the massager and the massaged person and resulted in my transition to a methodological approach involving a theoretical analysis of the speaking, malleable body.

### Language and researching the malleable body

Groddeck, a physician contemporary of Freud, presents a connection between the awareness of changing bodily sensations in massage and the patient's increased understanding of their own condition and also points to the problematic role of language in such an instance:

'... his [the patient's] state is more with a changing situation, since illness is an organic process of life, not a thing that is fixed and dead. *As day by day he is faced by new problems arising out of changing sensations in massage,* his awakening desire to learn then becomes so intense, that generally, after a very short time, in the company of his doctor, he is exploring new physical and mental fields... [Through the effects of massage] the patient gets some insight into his own condition and wants to find out something more about himself than can be given by the phrase which for him is purely fantastic' (Groddeck, 1977, 237) (my italics).

Whilst Groddeck opts for the efficacy of massage as aiding insight into feelings, I propose that an unravelling of the 'purely fantastic phrase' would assist in the understanding of any process of bodily learning which is attributed to massage.

Several women in the study commented on the difficulty of putting their bodily experience of massage into words, eg.

*Carol: I think we're not really good at describing our ah, sort of sensory perceptions really.*

*Alice: Yeah, well I just seem to be using really clumsy images and words. . . I remember that and I couldn't say it, so I wrote it down. And I thought, all right here you are, in case you thought I was a lunatic.*

Schiebinger (1987, 331) has pointed to the need for research into areas of experience which have been associated with the feminine and labelled unpredictable or irrational. As a researcher I view the project of unravelling the statements about bodily experience given by women, within a mode of access to the body developed from a woman's (my own) perspective on massage, and analysed using the tenets of that perspective, as crucial in legitimising accounts of bodily experience which the person feels are bordering on the lunatic.

One consequence which I found of having a clear bodily sense of the meanings of comments coming out of massage, and yet of emerging from a tradition with little explicit precedent for accounts of women's bodily experience of the malleable body, was of my own implacability in regard to the facticity of reported feelings. I felt committed to substantiating the meaning of reported feelings in terms of the felt and implicitly malleable body because of my own bodily experience of difficulty in expressing and having heard, the feeling content of my words. A comment which I made whilst speaking about my approach to the research process with a colleague reflects the disquiet prompted by my simultaneous recognition of the immutability of my bodily feelings and my difficulty in arranging these feelings into a communicable, verbal sequence:

*Well, usually, with my work, if I'm talking to someone about it, and they say, "Well what about this idea, maybe it works in this way?", and I'll say*

*"No, that's not right". But I can never say why. So I just feel as though I'm digging my heels in, and being stubborn, and at the same time I find it very hard to explain. Cos it's a feeling thing that I act on, rather than a logic, a rationale.*

In terms of methodology, I decided that an orderly, verbalised statement about the feelings evoked in malleable body massage required a theoretical analysis of the way in which feelings are associated with the malleable body.

Work on the body by E. Grosz points to a possible rationale for the seeming impasse between the terms of language used by the massager and the massaged person. Grosz's approach, drawing on the work of Irigaray and other theorists of the body, points to an elision of women's embodied perspectives from traditional theoretical writing about the body. My identification of a style of interconnected movement - which is particularly observable through tactile contact and absent from traditional accounts of bodily movement - is analogous to the appraisal by contemporary feminist theory of traditional bodily theory as being perforated by the theoretical omission of 'a body, pleasures, and experiences adequate to women's subjectivities' (Allen & Grosz 1987, viii). My attempt to remedy this gap as displayed in the area of massage and bodily movement has involved a restructuring of the material of the theory of bodily movement. This project has proceeded by a process of metaphorically increasing the elasticity of the conceptual fabric with which I have been working, stretching the meaning of words so that they serve to describe bodily feelings as well as palpable bodily movement. In this sense the work of theorists of bodily movement is located at points within my descriptive analysis of massage and bodily movement. The structure of my analysis is woven with an axis of construction which is absent from their work.

My treatment of corporeality - derived from the tactile interaction of massage practice - relies on the interconnected mobility of bodily tissues. I suggest that an elision of the role of interconnected bodily movement in traditional accounts of bodily action encourages an appearance of incompatibility between the language which describes bodily experiences. I interpret the incongruity as being associated with the difference in descriptions of the bodily experience of the interconnected movement

and the oriented movement of the malleable tissues. One such apparent discrepancy is exhibited when a massaged person describes a feeling of being in two different spatial positions at the same time (eg. that they feel as though they are floating above the table). I suggest that such a verbally instituted gap derives from a traditional valorisation of a predominantly visually based style of perception which incorporates a fixing on the positioning of an object(ive) which is distant from the person.

A difference of attitude, expressed in language, between bodies made up of parts which are differently shaped, eg. differently sexed bodies, is open to the attribution by one person of another person's placement in regard to an object(ive), as inaccurate or accurate. When a difference in attitude is, alternatively, described in terms of a difference in the interconnected movement patterns of the amalgam of differently shaped bodily parts which make up different bodies, differences in perception can, to a large degree, be verbally traced by each person to individually specifiable spatial relationships with an object(ive). The distance and angle of orientation between a person and an object(ive) is contextualised by one person's perspective on that object(ive). One individual's distance from an object(ive) is also able to be adjusted, both in terms of moving away from and towards an object(ive) and in terms of adjustments by the person to the degree of fixity between contiguous bodily parts of that individual.

In methodological terms, my treatment of the malleable body brings into question the comparability of the potential bodily use of the researcher and the researched when the source of data is provided by a person who is massaged by the researcher. Given that in this case the massage interactionists are women there are few significant differences between the sum of the shapes of the malleable tissues of each person. As the substance of my project is founded on an analysis of the movement of the malleable tissues, I take as axiomatic that there is a potential parity of the options of movement for separate and comparable bodily collections of malleable tissue (ie. the massager and the massaged person).

### Congruency of researcher and researched

The literature on phenomenological and qualitative methodology emphasises a link between the characteristics of the research topic and the way in which it is studied. Examples of this approach can be found in Davies (1982, 175-188), Fischer & Wertz (1979), Giorgi (1971), Keen (1975, 33-60), Koning (1979), Macleod (1959), Perrot (1979), Sardello (1971), Richer (1979) and Von Eckartsberg (1971).

Giorgi (1971, 20-21) writes of the difference between phenomenological and experimental methods as involving qualitative and quantitative attributes. He sees a qualitative approach as revealing the meaning of the phenomenon for the subject. I propose that an explication of the meaning of feelings associated with the malleable body, from the massager's viewpoint, calls for a description of that meaning in language which is applicable to the massaged tissues and which is explicable to the massaged person.

In this project I particularly addressed women's use of their bodies, as mediated through the process of massage and exhibited in their comments about bodily experience in massage. The way in which I extracted meaning from the transcripts provided by such 'massage talk' was influenced by my bias towards a bodily interpretation of the meaning of such talk and marked by my own experience as a bodily oriented woman. The influence on my work of methodological approaches which were framed within a feminist perspective (Stanley & Wise 1983, 160-165; Oakley, 1981) with strong links to a qualitative approach (Boukydis, 1981) also included an emphasis on the parity of participants within the research process (Reinharz, 1992, 197-213).

In my analysis of the women's talk which described their bodily experiences I found that I was interacting on a personal level with the massaged women in order to gain access to and identify their reported bodily experience. Acker, Barry and Esseveld have pointed to the mutuality of participants within their outline of a feminist researching process: '[both] are assumed to be individuals who reflect upon their experience and who can communicate those reflections' (Acker, Barry & Esseveld, 1983, 427).

One cogent implication of the preceding approach is that research is influenced by the structure of the project, which in turn is determined by the particular stance and

involvement of the researcher. A critique of the capacity of a person to be objective in their perception of the world has been supported in analyses of the phenomenological versus the experimental method within the study of behaviour, for example, Allport (1955), Henle & Baltimore (1967), Giorgi (1970, 1971), Lana, (1979), Meehl, (1978) and Thines (1977).

Acker, Barry & Essevold, working from a qualitative methodological position, comment on the strengths of an interactive approach to data collecting, where 'researcher' and 'researched' are mutual participants:

'The research process becomes a dialogue between the researcher and the researched, an effort to explore and clarify the topic under discussion, to clarify and expand understandings. ...neither the subjectivity of the researcher nor the subjectivity of the researched can be eliminated in the process' (Acker, Barry & Essevold 1983, 427).

My interpolation of the notion of interconnected movement brings a difference in the terms of access to experiential bodily knowledge of the massager and the massaged person. In terms of the movement options available to each person the massager is standing whilst the massaged person is most commonly found lying down during massage. The massager can sense both her own interconnected movement and the movement associated with her oriented movement in space. The massaged person can sense her own interconnected movement plus the consequences of the oriented movement initiated by the hands of the massager. In previous sections I have shown that the descriptions of bodily experience of the massager and several of the massaged people have discrepancies in relation to perceived bodily spatial parameters. In this project I have chosen to investigate anomolous descriptions of the massaged person's spatial positioning by recourse to an aspect of bodily experience which was displayed by all massaged women, that of 'feeling good' in massage.

In malleable body massage the massager actively seeks to generate a pleasurable bodily experience for the massaged person. Her knowledge of the tissues is saturated by her intention that the bodily experience of the massaged person be equated with a lessening of pain and an increase in bodily comfort. The massager enhances the

experience of generalised bodily comfort by means of her specialised experience of the malleable body. In this sense the parity between the bodily knowledges of the massage participants is limited. There was a strong impetus for me in my role as a massaging researcher, whilst acknowledging the equality of the massager and the massaged person, in terms of their potential to optimise their self-initiated patterns of malleable bodily mobility, to extend the research project into the realm of theory, using as a basis my specialised and tactually-based knowledge of the malleable tissues. I did this in order to resolve the issue of anomolous reports of the massaged person's spatial positioning during massage. Thus whilst remaining cognisant of the methodological importance of maintaining the congruence of both research participants' access to self referent bodily knowledge, my role as a massager also involved skills gained by virtue of my experience in massaging malleable tissues and the freedom of movement available through the physical positioning of the massager. By extrapolating from my specialised knowledge base I had the scope to explore the implications of the massaged person's statements within a theoretical aegis not immediately available to the massaged person. The first tool which I used in developing a theoretical structure of the meaning of the movement of the malleable body was the notion of pleasure in massage.

### **2.1.2 Influences in developing a theoretical construct**

#### **Pleasure**

In this study, I take the role of bodily pleasure to be a crucial component of the interaction between massager and massaged person. My use of massage de-emphasises feelings which are associated with discrete incidences of genitally focussed pleasure. The intent of malleable body massage is to promote a feeling of pleasure in the context of more continuous, everyday bodily use. I take the pleasure of massage to be an amalgam of bodily experience compounded of multiple bodily sensations and based on the actions of malleable body massage. It is felt alongside the massage of differing bodily locations, and assigned meanings through the kinds of touch and the talk of massage.



Throughout this project I have taken 'pleasure' as an encompassing term for reports of a positive affect which is experienced in massage.<sup>1</sup>

The use of descriptions of bodily pleasure as a strategy in investigating the massaged person's spatial perception in massage carries the possibility of some confusion as to the relevance of the concept of the feeling of pleasure as a legitimate research tool. The comments of a senior lecturer in the university psychology department where I was originally researching this project highlighted the border line on which massage lies in relation to a sense of bodily pleasure. He jokingly referred to my massage study as touchy-feely. An analogical interpretation of the truncation of the words touching and feeling to 'touchy-feely', is that the study of the interactive interpersonal bodily contact of massage in some way occupies a contracted and marginalised space within the research discipline of psychology. The linkage of feelings with touching is seen as having a quality which justifies a humorous response.<sup>2</sup>

A member of the technical staff described the lab where I was carrying out videotaping of massage sessions as the 'massage parlour in the basement'. A massage parlour is a descriptive term for a place where massage which includes genital massage, for the purpose of a commercial sexual transaction, is carried out. In the current project, the genitals are not massaged, making the use of massage as genitalised sexual exchange unlikely. In the context of touching and feeling provided by the label touchy-feely, I interpret the technician's conflation of two values of massage (that is, as a research project and as sexual exchange) as derived from his perception of the

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<sup>1</sup>Stern distinguishes two main aspects of pleasure when it is viewed from either the 'Darwinian and object relations tradition' or the Freudian perspective of 'gratification of a drive state'. Respectively: 'Joy is an affect generated between individuals and therefore situated within the context of an object relationship. Satisfaction is an event that occurs within an individual, where the social context is secondary and the object is related to the satisfaction only by association' (Stern, 1990, 13-15). My use of the term 'pleasure' aligns with Stern's 'satisfaction'. I am interested in the person's reports of their bodily experience in a situation where they are not directly concerned with movement in relation to an object(ive) and am more concerned with the role of intrinsic bodily feeling as a parameter of 'feeling good'. I use the term 'pleasure' because to my mind it emphasises the positive aspects of feeling contained in massaged people's reports more than does the term 'satisfaction' whilst at the same time retaining less specificity in regard to a 'cause' than does the term 'joy'.

<sup>2</sup>Humorous responses can be seen as a way of managing a disjunction between differing perceptions of a situation: 'There is no doubt that the essence of humour is that one spares oneself the affects to which the situation would naturally give rise and dismisses the possibility of such expressions of emotion with a jest' (Freud, 1985, 428).

feelings which are stimulated by systematic, interpersonal touching of the body. I suggest that the men's comments expressed a disquiet with the perceived value of massage as an arbiter of bodily feeling and its placement as a part of traditional research. One connection between touching, feeling, massage and sexual exchange which was implicit in the passing comments of the two staff members is formed by the notion of bodily pleasure. I use the notion of bodily pleasure as a means of exploring the spatial parameters of the feelings of a massaged person.

Massaged people, when questioned in this study about where or how they felt good, gave descriptions of the quality of their feeling in terms of a unified bodily experience. The pleasurable descriptions of Alice's feelings had an indivisible quality, such as "I feel terrific", or "I feel great". In addition, this 'whole body' feeling is echoed when Alice gives a summary of her feelings at the end of an hour-long massage session with the massager/researcher, Catherine:

*Alice: I'm relaxed... I felt like I could have been really small - you know how when you're really small and you're frightened or something and someone'll cuddle you and you feel relaxed and secure... and a sense of wellbeing.*

When Alice later wrote down an account of her pleasurable bodily feelings in massage in a self-initiated effort to clarify them, she continued to use terms which gave a sense of the unitary nature of those feelings:

*My mind relaxes - mind and body unite in relaxation. ... I feel confident and happy; rested and at home in my body.*

### Interconnected bodily movement

In my reading of the theoretical literature on the tactually accessible body there was no explicit provision for the terms of movement which were specific to the malleable body.

I have taken movement to be an axiomatic attribute of massage. The phenomenological approach of Merleau-Ponty unerringly utilises movement as a basic attribute of perception. A drawback of the scope of his work for this project is that it does

not explicitly allow for the multiple facets of the bodily movement of the massaged body. I interpret the fundamental style of movement of massage as being the movement of contiguous areas of tissue against each other in response to the action of the massager's hands, whilst the massaged body remains unmoving within the context of whole bodily movement which is oriented to distant objects. Merleau-Ponty's analysis explores the directional movement of the body in relation to objects and assigns a quality of vagueness to a bodily condition where there is 'no movement' (Merleau-Ponty, 1962, 108). Merleau-Ponty's allusion to a person's sense of their body as 'an amorphous mass in which actual movement alone introduces divisions and links' (Merleau-Ponty, 1962, 110) provides a profound obstacle to an investigation of the intrinsic movement of a body which, whilst not moving in relation to distant objects, is nonetheless exhibiting observable bodily movement such as that which is provoked by the actions of breathing and of the heart's pumping of bodily fluid flows. Merleau-Ponty's work on movement does not explicitly allow for my interpolation of the concept of interconnected bodily movement, in my formulation of a theoretical basis for a therapeutic effect of massage which is denoted at its core as pleasurable.

My solution to the problem posed by a lack of theoretical material on the speaking, massaged body was to build up a system of bodily movement which derived from the malleable body. The work of Ignacio Matte-Blanco formed my source for bridging the conceptual gap between traditional descriptions of bodily movement from which, as a massager, I drew my descriptions of the movement of malleable bodily tissue, and reports by massaged people of a spatial orientation which was anomalous in the spatial terms employed by the massager. Matte-Blanco describes emotional states using language which is amenable to the spatial referencing terms of the massager and which also describes in spatial terms the way in which emotional states employ a unique style of spatial perception.

Matte-Blanco points to indivisibility as an immediate aspect of descriptions of what he terms sensation/feeling (under which he includes pleasure) (Matte-Blanco, 1975, 258). Feeling here is characterised as having a unitary quality:

'I believe that the findings of introspection suggest that there is, in fact, a very fleeting instant of *prise de conscience*, or 'becoming aware', or

of 'assumption of consciousness' when sensation is in consciousness in a naked state, not clothed in either explicit or implicit propositions, not even rudimentary ones'(Matte-Blanco, 1975, 230).

I take an indivisibility of feeling to be important in an analysis of massage which attends to the role of pleasure in massage. In relation to the measurement of emotion, Matte-Blanco points out that emotion is a 'unitary being', which whilst not measurable in itself, is measurable in its physical manifestations:

'Within immeasurable emotion there is, therefore, an infinite number of measurables which continuously emerge from it, in its inevitable contacts with the realm of the measurable'(Matte-Blanco, 1975, 273).

Although Matte-Blanco is unique in his combination of spatial terms and emotion, his work on nonverbal language (Matte-Blanco, 1968) does not specifically refer to a bodily use which can be conceptualised as malleable.

The strategy which I have taken in establishing a theoretical framework for the malleable body is to go back to a descriptive analysis of the movement of the malleable body, taken specifically from my perspective as a massager. In this way I anticipate the establishment of a theoretical currency which can be used to speak of the effects of massage on bodily feelings. My perception of the need for this methodological approach is based on the active profile of massage as a therapeutic intervention. A massager acts to change the malleability of tissues and works in the expectation of a change in bodily feelings in a predictable direction. The position of the massaging person presupposes an existing knowledge of a substantial degree of practical skills, which allow a predictable effect on bodily feelings resulting from the tactile actions of the massager. My one innovative strategy in this project, in terms of methodological considerations, is an attempt to match the terms of the language of tissue manipulation with the terms of described bodily feelings. The main outcome of this approach has been an analysis of bodily feelings from the perspective of movement.

A strand within feminist theorising critiques the direct applicability of either a replication of or a reaction to ways of dealing with knowledge. The possibility of

an opening up of the traditional criteria of research is displayed in these feminist understandings of women's projects:

'Without the fissuring of existing intellectual categories and textual norms, there is simply no conceptual space available for women's positive self-representation' (Grosz, 1989, 231).

The distinction emphasised by Grosz between differently gendered bodies adds another dimension to the position of the experimenter. Grosz refers to Irigaray's description of the morphology of the body, the way in which: 'Representational systems and power relations inscribe themselves psychically and physically on the body to constitute the sensations and experiences of that body' (Grosz, 1986, 75). Grosz also notes some methodological implications of this concept of the body:

'... accounts of the sexually differentiated, social, acculturated body would need to integrate what have, up to now, been regarded as mutually exclusive methodologies. On the one hand, it needs an experientially based conception of the 'interior' or psychical lining of the body - that is, an account of the *lived* body, ... and on the other hand, some understanding of the body as an object of cultural inscription or social production, the *external* or extroceptive body, a surface on which meaning is written' (Grosz, 1988, 33).

The methodology of my project has traversed the territory of a number of traditional research approaches. Ultimately, in exploring uses of the body which have not been previously explicated, my methodological strategy has been to move one step at a time, using as cues to further research notions from other writers (such as those in Section 13 of Chapter 1) which are spatially apt in the context of the malleable body. My freedom to draw neatly on the parameters of existing methodological agendas has been constrained by my theoretical interpolation of the concept of interconnected movement. One implication of using a basic concept which is absent from the theoretical foundations of traditional methodological strategies is that I cannot assume that an exact dovetailing of other approaches with my own exists.

## Chapter 3

# Negotiating the meaning of bodily experience

### 3.1 Investigating body experience in massage

I have conceptualised the interaction between the massager and the massaged person as providing a way of matching up the 'touching' and the 'touched' perceptions of the massaged body, rather than as resulting in one correct perception of the malleable body. As bodily experiences associated with a tactile means of production were conveyed through language and were flavoured by the individually embodied social history of the massage participants, I initially conceptualised the massage interaction as a negotiation of the meaning attached to each person's perception of the massaged tissues. After I examine the negotiation of meaning in massage, I will look at anomalous reports of bodily experiences. The latter reports will lead to a detailed analysis of the movement patterns of the malleable tissue in Part II of this project, in order to consistently account for such experiences in terms of a theory of the unitary malleable body.

In the massage sessions from which transcribed extracts of conversation were taken, the massager was interested in exploring the way in which the bodily feelings of the massaged person were couched. For instance, with a painful area, the massager would inquire as to the history of the pain, what factors other than the immediate

tactile pressure of massage might have caused it, etc. Whilst the massager may well have her own notion of what textural tissue qualities were associated with the pain I suggest that a discussion of the meaning of painful spots established the type of context from which the massaged person's registration of painful bodily areas emerged.

As the massager, my form of questioning about bodily experience within the massage sessions was generalised to allow room for the varying interpretations which the massaged person might make of their own bodily experience. For example:

*Catherine: Anything that seems to be connected with what I'm doing and what you're feeling in your body.*

Within the massage sessions - whilst talking about my tactile perceptions - I used language and descriptive terms which reflected my approach to the massaged body which was based on the movement of my hands on the massaged tissues and the movement of the bodily parts of the person being massaged.<sup>1</sup> I aimed my questioning, combined with the movements of massage, at a negotiated congruence of my own and the massaged person's view of what was happening during the massage.

I liken a negotiation of the meaning of reported bodily feelings in massage to a mutual verbal dance between the two people engaging in the interaction of massage. I suggest that the constructed meaning of bodily experience can be traced through the interactive comments of the massager and the massaged person throughout the massage session.

I had realised the difficulty of verbalising expressing bodily experience during my own experience of being massaged and whilst talking to people who were being massaged. This understanding was echoed in comments made in the present study, eg:

*Myfanwy: There are a lot of things that I feel, that I don't necessarily know how to put into words.*

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<sup>1</sup>During conversation, massage movements were generally described according to commonly used terms, rather than the technical terms of massage. Similarly areas of the massaged tissues were described in everyday terms rather than those of anatomy. This project was designed to apply to the experience of people not necessarily familiar with current specialised terminology applying to the body.

In order to minimise possible problems with this issue, I suggested at the beginning of the massage sessions that the experiencing of massage take priority if a conflict between experiencing and talking emerged for the women, eg:

*Catherine: You kind of can't be yapping on about how you're feeling and be feeling at the same time, so if it's a choice between saying something and tuning into your body, then tune into your body and we'll talk about it afterwards.*

Comments made by the massager at the beginning of several massage sessions indicated that her aim was: "not to hurt you", and for the massaged person "to relax". The expectation was that the massage would be a comfortable experience. If the massaged person felt uncomfortable, she was asked to say something, that is, to exercise control within the massage interaction over the movements of massage which were applied to the massaged tissues.

In my role as researcher I was able to group comments made by massaged women into categories. These ranged from references to the meaning of experiences relating only to bodily parts (as in the next quote), to instances where allusions to part bodily feelings were combined with whole bodily feelings (the following two quotes) to comments which referred solely to the experience of the entire body (the final quote of the sequence of four extracts).

One massaged woman's comments were quite analytical. She described, both verbally and nonverbally, her discovery of specific relationships between bodily parts:

*Pam: It kind of seems so obvious to me now that I can't think why I didn't figure it but the connection of that muscle wasn't part of my consciousness at all. . . . When I go over I'm much more conscious of there, (Pam touches lower back), rather than up here (Pam touches thoracic area) and seeing that that needs to be loosened.*

Other reports were of a generalised feeling of relaxation combined with an awareness of parts of the body, eg:

*Myfanwy: I feel a lot more relaxed. I feel like my body's a lot heavier. . . Uum, and just when you were working on the back and neck, I'm sort of aware of the connections through to other parts of the body.*

One person reported both an undifferentiated feeling of peacefulness and a reduction in the impact of a bothersome bodily part:



*Beverly: I feel much more peaceful. Uum, I can still feel sort of, the head thing that I've had all day, but it doesn't seem as much of a bother, now.*

Another woman spoke of an undifferentiated, whole body feeling:

*Alice: And now I feel warm and glowing.*

### 3.2 Negotiable accounts of bodily experience

The role of speech in the mediation and communication of bodily experience is crucial (Wiedemann, 1986, 189). Coulter suggests that whilst bodily experience can exist prior to the acquisition of language 'a training in the conceptual resources of a natural language is a pre-requisite for our *knowledge* of subjective experiences' (Coulter, 1979, 77).

In a commentary on Luce Irigaray Grosz points to a link between the lived or experienced body and language:

'The lived body, the experience of corporeality, is a *social* body ... systems of language and representation must be internalised, taken on as one's own, in order that speech and language are possible, and that the subject's perceptions and experiences acquire meaning and thus value within its terms' (Grosz, 1989, 111).

A consideration of the role which language plays in the management of bodily experience incorporates the social and individual factors affecting bodily experience (Campioni & Grosz, 1983, 132).

The social world is explicitly incorporated into Merleau-Ponty's notion of perception (Merleau-Ponty, 1964, 18). Merleau-Ponty (1962) uses the term 'perspective' to describe the differing orientations of people in regard to objects and other people within the surrounding environment. Only certain profiles of an object can be seen at any one time rather than the whole of an object or another person. The proper structure of perceptual experience is described as being composed of the combination of partial profiles with the total signification which they present to an individual.

The different physical positions and the differing social histories of two people allow qualitatively different perceptual views of the massaged body. In a massage

session each person's perspective on the massaged body extends and changes via the talk of the massager and massaged person. An incident from the transcript of Alice shows the massager and massaged giving their own interpretations of a palpated area:  
*Alice: Ah, what is it? It feels like a lump.*

*Catherine: Here? Ah, it feels to me like a taut muscle through, through there.*

The process whereby the massager and massaged person agree on the meaning of language with a bodily referent has implications for the way in which such an understanding can be applied outside the massage session. For example, a sensation of discomfort within massage would be usefully applied to learning about bodily experience when a person has understood more about which actions in their everyday life predispose their muscular structure to tighten and lead to soreness of a tissue area. In a massage session, the massager and the massaged person interact in interpreting and matching up individual social constructions of the bodily events encountered during massage.

An incident from the massage session with Carol illustrates the way in which the massager responds with tactile exploration to find out more about an area which was initially designated by Carol as a problem area:

*Carol: I mean I often have a a bit of a problem with this sort of hip (Carol gestures to her left hip and lumbar area), and a bit of muscular pain just down around there.*

*Catherine: When you were talking about your hip before, is that...? You seemed to be indicating this side. (Catherine strokes the left gluteal area).*

*Carol: Yes, it's usually the left side. Yes. And it often feels as if there's a real knot there.*

When Catherine massages the left hip, she finds a spot which is quite sore:

*Carol: Just there, yeah, there. Oh, yes, just there. Got the spot.*

In conclusion Carol reports that the left hip is getting less painful as it is massaged:

*Carol: Mm, it's getting less painful.*

In terms of the experienced body there has been a resolution of the problem of muscular pain indicated by Carol and verified by Catherine in terms of a physical location.

A final incident between Pam and Catherine shows a more complex negotiation

about the meaning of bodily experience:

*Pam: No, Mm. Just a bit above there, I think, yeah, there. (Catherine feels for the tender location which Pam is speaking of.) Uum, it sort of feels as if what's whatever is happening there is important, but I don't.*

*Catherine: In this area? (Pam touches right hip.)*

*Pam: Yeah.*

*Catherine: It feels quite knotted to me through there.*

The massaged person is aware of a problematic area in her right hip. In the next extract Catherine massages the area to find out more about its palpable qualities, initiates additional comment on the area and continues to give feedback as Pam asks for clarification of the significance of Catherine's tactile perception:

*Catherine: Mm. That's interesting along there.*

*Pam: So that, is the left one knotty as well?*

*Catherine: Yeah. It is.*

*Pam: What sort of knotty, what?*

*Catherine: It's just a very solid mass in there.*

*Pam: That shouldn't be there?*

*Catherine: I think it's better if there's a more even feel to it. That's what I call a knot, that little bit there. (Catherine continues to probe the right hip area.)*

*Pam: And is that due to tension? Is that what you mean by a tension knot, or?*

*Catherine: Well, you feel this? (Catherine probes deeply upwards along the upper right thigh, along the muscle which leads into the sore spot on the right hip.) You feel that? A bit of soreness through there?*

*Pam: Yeah.*

*Catherine: Well that leads right up into there. And this knee joint (Catherine moves the right knee joint and leg from side to side) is not as mobile as the other one. You've already told me that from your exercises. Can you feel that range of movement? The quality of the movement?*

*Pam: It's not nearly as good, no.*

*Catherine: Not nearly as free. So this spot down here, as well? (Catherine probes a point superior and lateral to the right knee, and then rubs along a line between*

the knee and the hip.) *That's sore. All of that is one muscle joining the knee to this area. So if it's tightness through here, then the end result of that is happening up here.* (Catherine probes right hip again.)

*Pam: Yeah.*

Following Catherine's comments Pam gives her own perception of the events and feelings during massage. In the following quote she clearly demonstrates the way in which she is able to apply the understandings gained during the massage to her bodily experiencing outside the massage session:

*Pam: Yeah, yeah. Uum, right, what I didn't know and what I can now feel. It kind of seems so obvious to me now that I can't think why I didn't figure it* (Pam starts to move her right leg from side to side and touches her anterior right thigh muscles) *but the connection of that muscle wasn't part of my consciousness at all, like I, for me, it was sort of, something like a tendon there* (Pam touches her upper right thigh near the groin) *then it was the actual joint I was fretting about. Then when I did that* (Pam demonstrates a movement of her right leg and hip across the left side of her body) *and I went over like that, and my shoulder wouldn't stay on the ground I thought well, there must be a tension higher up here but I couldn't quite figure where it was* (Pam points to her thoracic vertebra) *how it all hung together. Whereas now you've sort of, uum, I'm able to sort of wonder how that's* (Pam touches lower back), *right, when I go over I'm much more conscious of there* (Pam touches lower back) *rather than up here* (Pam touches thoracic area) *and seeing that that* (Pam touches lower back), *and seeing that that needs to be loosened.*

This incident illustrates a rapprochement between the two perceptions of the body exhibited individually by Pam and Catherine in the previous incident. In her comments Pam incorporates the sensory-based feedback given by Catherine into her awareness of a new patterning of her felt bodily perception.

An aspect of a negotiation process of bodily feelings which is more difficult for the massager to interpret emerges in the following exchange between Catherine and Beverly:

*Catherine: Is that painful?* (Probing to anterior upper arm just below original sore spot.)

*Beverly: No. (Beverly is smiling to herself.) That's, no it's not painful, just a little bit tender. But it's funny, I felt like a rock with ants walking all over it. (Catherine moves to massage the right hand and arm.)*

*Catherine: Gee, you're imaginative.*

*Beverly: Yeah, it's funny what images sort of arise.*

Beverly speaks about her bodily sensation in metaphorical terms. She compares her feeling to that of a rock with ants walking over it. The terms of the massage interaction have changed from the original, physically specified descriptions of bodily sensation - painful and tender - to an image of a rock with ants walking over it which 'sort of arises' as Beverly speaks. For Beverly and Catherine to engage in a negotiation of their positions in regard to the meaning of bodily sensation, Beverly's image would need to be investigated in terms of its metaphorical value, rather than as a virtual expression of the tissue malleability of the body.

For a negotiation of meaning to be effective in allowing an adjustment in the perspective of each person, the terms in which statements during massage are couched need to be accessible to each individual. Catherine is the person who is tracking the verbal and tactile interaction in order to make sense of the bodily meaning which is expressed by the massaged person. From her experience of massaging and listening to reported bodily sensations, Catherine can link together a particular bodily textural quality and a likely quality of sensation. The instance of ants walking over a rock given above - whilst obviously descriptive of a bodily feeling for Beverly - would require a lot of verbal investigation by Catherine in order for her to understand Beverly's associations with her image in terms which would be congruent with the feel of tissues as palpated by Catherine.

I liken a negotiation of meaning - when used to describe the interaction between massager and massaged person - to successive and slightly differing reiterations of the position of each person. These perspectives - observable as positionings in relation to an object of attention - are shifted incrementally by each person in response to the answers of the other person. At the same time the bodily stance of each person remains within reach of a stable bodily positioning which allows the person to access a feeling of comfort in relation to the terms of each person's personal history of bodily

experience.<sup>2</sup>

### 3.3 Dichotomy of movement and language

In massage the massager is moving tissues with the aim of smoothing out any felt irregularities of bodily parts. In relation to the whole body of the massaged person, the massager designs her tactile and verbal interaction so as to encourage the possibility that the massaged person's movement through space in relation to objects - including people - in the world is fluent, with access to many possible directions of action in relation to objects of perception.

The massager chooses an appropriate type and style of massage movement based on her assessment of the locale of malleable tissues as being excessively tight. Tissues which are too tight are to be loosened.<sup>3</sup> I am interested in examining - within a schema which includes negotiation of the meaning of the massaged person's verbally reported feelings - the effect of an alteration in the degree of malleability of bodily parts via massage on the reported bodily feelings of the massaged person.

In the account quoted earlier Carol reported an easing of localised soreness in response to massage. An equation between the movement of the tissues performed by the massager and the change in an accompanying sensation which is felt by the massaged person is identifiable in this instance. As the massager increases the range of movement of massaged tissues within the limits of their fixed attachments to surrounding tissue then the person being massaged becomes aware of an alteration in

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<sup>2</sup>I use the two terms 'position' and 'perspective' with specific meanings and in relation to my concept of the moving and the malleable body. I take 'position' to be an observable and static placement of the body in relation to the object of perception. 'Perspective' (which I derive from Merleau-Ponty's use of the term) is rather the directional arrangement of bodily parts, firstly in relation to each other (forming the observable positioning of the body) as well as in relation to an object of perception.

<sup>3</sup>In the body as a whole, flaccid as well as tightened areas of tissues can be found. Tightness is easier initially to distinguish from the surrounding matrix of tissue. Tightened or more rigid tissue stands out further on the surface of the massaged body and is more immediately accessible to palpation. Whilst it is useful if tissues which are too loose are stimulated by massage to take on a greater degree of tonus in relation to the surrounding tissues the effect on observable movement patterns of massaging flaccid tissue is much less immediate than that resulting from massage to localised shortenings which are retained in the malleable tissue after the specific bodily action which prompted those contractions has been completed.

the sensation of tissues in the direction of lessening discomfort.

Other categories of reported changes in feelings which accompanied massage show a less readily identifiable connection between the massager's and the massaged person's perception of malleable tissues. One category is when a massaged person makes the comment: "I didn't know that was sore". Rather than a change in the level of bodily comfort, an increase in the massaged person's awareness of discomfort - alongside the addition of the massager's tactile pressure - is indicated. This type of comment does not easily fit into a model of a negotiation of feeling with the aim of increased bodily comfort and an increase in the malleability of tissues. In this last instance the effect of increased tissue malleability is actually an increase in reported discomfort.

The range of comments given by massaged people about their bodily experience appear to me to involve more than a simple relationship between an increased loosening of malleable tissue and increased bodily comfort.

When investigating the language used to describe the meaning of bodily sensation in terms of movement, the relation of the person with the surrounding world is an important consideration. Action in the world forms the basis of the shortening of malleable tissue. An examination of the movement of the body in relation to surrounding objects is implicated in the tissues tightnesses which guide the tactile engagements of massage. In the direct relationship between the person and an object of attention in the world there are limited potentialities of action. The individual functioning from an originally static positioning can either move towards the object, away from it, or stay in the one place (although it is difficult to do this without some small bodily evidence of directed movement, eg. a lifted finger, etc). When no movement is discounted as a postponement of action in relation to the object of attention then a dichotomy of movement possibilities is open to the person. A quality of duality in relation to bodily action in the world is outlined by Merleau-Ponty (1965, 147).

The quality of movement or of stillness of the object(ive) of interaction - for each oriented movement engaged in by the person - will affect the possibilities of the extent and the direction of movement of the moving person. The interaction of one person with another person can be seen as a particular instance of interaction with an object

in the world, an interaction whose major characteristic is the capability of self-directed movement in the world. For example, according to whether the second person acts against, moves towards, or is unmoving in response to the direction of movement of any of my actions - either by her bodily or verbal response - then my own movement will adjust accordingly. For instance, when in greeting I put out my hand to shake the hand of another person and when the person makes a move away from or towards my hand, I must also change my whole bodily orientation to deal with the way in which the other person has taken up the options of movement which I originally presented.<sup>4</sup>

I suggest that when this interaction is in the form of a conversation between two people about the malleable body and the feelings of the massaged person then the concept of duality of options of movement (ie. away from and towards an object(ive)) is limiting.

An alternative to the availability of a dichotomy of the person's movement options is opened up by considering the limited area of the massaged body which the massager is able to work on at any one time as one of many such interconnected parts of the entire body. The malleable body then becomes conceptualised as a collection of a number of mobile and interconnected parts which combine to form the whole body, itself then able to move in relation to an object(ive).

In the next section I will examine a conceptual basis for the construction of bodily feelings in massage which will focus on whole body experiences. I have placed reports of feelings applying to the simultaneous perception of the body as whole (eg. Alice's statement that she felt "warm and glowing") in a separate category to the negotiation of the meaning of reported feelings relating to bodily parts.

Phrased in terms of tissue malleability, the aim of massage is to maximise the malleability of bodily parts, with the massager relying on an associated increase in the massaged person's bodily comfort as a guide to the efficacy of her massage. An increase in a sense of bodily well-being, however, comes to a stage where that feeling extends to the whole body and the person only recognises a unitary feeling of the entire body. I suggest, in the next portion of this chapter, that a unitary feeling of

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<sup>4</sup>A more complex listing of metaphorical characteristics of bodily force, which includes both interaction and directionality and some common options for forceful usage of the body, is given by Johnson (1987, 42-48).



bodily pleasure shades into verbal descriptions of bodily experience in massage, where the spatial terms used by the massager and by the massaged person are no longer congruent and where the verbal interaction between massager and massaged person is not so readily described as a negotiation of the meaning of bodily feeling.

### 3.4 Spatially non-negotiable bodily experiences

There are a number of comments in the transcribed massage sessions which refer to experiences of a sense of changed time, distortion of space, the feeling of being a small child etc. These comments are unusual in that they are incongruent with my earlier treatment of bodily referent statements in the massage sessions as the negotiated construction of bodily experience participated in by both massager and massaged person.

Alice's experiences at the close of her first massage session are an example of a category of experience where disparate terms of reference are available to the massaged body and to the massager:

*Alice: And the other thing that was really interesting - cos to me, I like, that's the culmination is my head - but you could have been anybody, except a machine definitely, but you were sexless, or personless, just hands.*

*Catherine: Uum, and that was, you liked that?*

*Alice: Yeah, it was just the right combination of massage and still...*

*It feels like, sometimes when you're relaxed and you're lying down you can almost be above the table, it feels like that...*

*It was just... and your hands seemed a lot bigger, than hands... Like that programme I saw, it's on the felt self, and they did a model of looked like one of those primitive statues and around the mouth it was huge and it had, sort of fairly skinny, with really big hands and that's what they felt like, cos I had my eyes closed for a lot of it, I thought...*

*I'm relaxed. And also about those - when the hands were resting. Like small - you know how when you're really small and you're frightened or something and someone'll*

*cuddle you and you feel relaxed and secure. . . And a sense of well being, I felt in parting from the palm, but I didn't think of them as your palms. Palms. The big palm in the sky, yeah.*

Some additional descriptions by Alice which fit into this category of reported bodily experience are:

*Alice: And now I feel warm and glowing.*

*Catherine: Warm and glowing. That'll do. That sounds wonderful.*

*Alice: Yeah.*

Alice's perception of the massager and the massaging hands has a different experiential quality from that of Catherine. Alice makes several references to her perception of the hands of the massager. They are felt as disproportionate in size to an everyday perception of massaging hands. Alice's perception of her own bodily occupation of space is different from that of Catherine. Alice describes herself as feeling as though she is 'almost above the table' and in another instance as being very small. Her perception of herself in time also changes, ie: "I didn't feel any age either".

The problem with these descriptions in terms of sensory feedback in massage is that the terms of reference of the two people who are communicating are different. All the information which Catherine has contributed to a negotiation of the meaning of the massaged person's bodily experience in massage have been based on the palpable qualities of the body. The bodily experiences which are now being described have no obvious palpable referent.

Edie's report shows a similar experience of space to that described by Alice. Edie says that she felt as though she came 'up out of her body' at the close of her first massage session:

*Edie: I feel like I've just been meditating. You know how when you meditate you sort of come up, out of your body?*

*Catherine: Yeah. A bit zonky.*

*Edie: . . . I only felt like that once before when I went to meditation classes and I sort of felt like I was up here and my body was down there. Yeah. It felt really nice.*

A point of disjuncture exists between the perception of the massager and the massaged person. The palpable body had previously been used as a common reference

point in the construction of the meaning of bodily experience for both Edie and Catherine. This link is no longer available. Whilst Catherine can touch Edie's body, the "I" mentioned by Edie as being is "up here" and "out of her body" is not palpable by Catherine. The physical evidence on which Catherine bases her judgement of the condition of Edie's tissues - in which Edie's tissues are seen and palpated as being wholly present on the massage table - contradicts the reported bodily experience of Edie. The result is a discrepancy within two verbal accounts of ostensibly concurrent bodily events.

One way in which to form coherence from the statements of Edie and Alice is to locate the descriptions of bodily experience in the same terms which are used for massage. The main criterion which I have used to encompass the aims and the ongoing feedback mechanism of malleable body massage is that of movement.

### 3.5 Language and discrepant bodily experiences

Alice used a different approach from Edie in her communication of her unusual bodily experiences to Catherine. She had more reservations about the communicability of her descriptions of those experiences:

*Alice: And also you picked different places as well. Am I explaining this well?*

*Catherine: Yeah, you're explaining what you feel.*

*Alice: Yeah, well I just seem to be using really clumsy images and words, probably because it's not something that I'm asked to do very often.*

*... No, I remember that and I couldn't say it, so I wrote it down. And I thought, all right here you are, in case you thought I was a lunatic.*

She acknowledges the difficulty of communicating her bodily experience by verbal description and elects to make it more comprehensible through the written form. Her reservation about her original spoken comments is also expressed through her concern that Catherine will think that she is mad.

As can be seen in the following extract from an account which she wrote in the week following the massage experience which she describes, Alice puts together a quite coherent statement from her original remarks during massage:

*Alice: By the time the massage arrives at my neck, head and face, my eyes feel heavy and seem to like being closed. I never know which part the hands will choose to work, yet on the rest of my body it is relatively predictable. The hands feel huge, warm and full of energy. They are capable yet soft and caring. My mind relaxes - mind and body unite in relaxation. Occasionally a hand will rest on a part of my face, gently. Making me aware that it is slowing down and will eventually cease. I feel confident and happy, rested and at home in my body. I could sleep. I appreciate that the hands will stop. I appreciate the hands.*

Alice's suggestion that she might be thought of as a lunatic indicates a degree of unease with the comprehensibility of her comments on her massage experience. Whether or not Alice actually thinks of herself as a mad woman this comment - plus the modification of her original comments in her written explanation - points to her recognition of a potential lack in the communicability of her originally described experience.

One way in which to achieve a conceptual consistency with the tactile perceptual basis of the massager, from the statements of Edie and Alice, is to locate the descriptions of bodily experience in the same terms which are used for massage. The main criterion which I have used to encompass the aims and the ongoing feedback mechanism of malleable body massage is that of movement.

### **3.6 The body and movement**

Movement through space is exhibited in the displacement of an object from one point in space to another. Merleau-Ponty's comments contextualise a view of the body as a moving object by emphasising the relationship of the moving body to its surroundings:

'There is, then no movement without a moving body which bears it uninterruptedly from start to finish. Since it is in no way inherent in the moving body, and consists wholly in its relations with its surroundings, movement cannot dispense with an external landmark, and indeed there is no way of attributing it strictly to the "body in motion" rather than to the landmark' (Merleau-Ponty, 1962, 267).

I suggest that a person's awareness of their bodily movement is based on an awareness of the fixed end-points, the ambient limitations of that bodily movement. The person's sense of their location in relation to objects around them is founded on a recognition of their positioning at the point of the cessation of their own movement in combination with a recognition of the distance between their bodily position and an object.

A recognition of bodily positioning by a person who is not travelling through space of their own volition - eg. a person lying at rest whose tissues are manipulated by the hands of the massager - represents a special case of a person's bodily sense of placement in space.<sup>5</sup> In an examination of a person's awareness of their bodily positioning in terms of movement and bodily feelings, then the interconnected nature of the tissue movement during massage - unaccompanied by movement in relation to a distant and *separate* object(ive) - enters into an area of personal movement analysis not explicitly touched on by Merleau-Ponty's statement. The landmarks of the interconnected movement experienced by the massaged person during massage are part of - rather than external to - the malleable body.

### 3.7 Awareness of malleable body feelings

Becker (1986) and Gatens (1983) have noted a scarcity of references to the body in mainstream - as opposed to feminist - writing. They suggest that the body is placed against a rational, logical and empiric tradition and allied with emotions, irrationality and the domain of women. In a similar trend, material about the body has been quoted as being marginalised in writings on the unconscious. Muller-Braunschweig refers to this as 'desomatization' (1986, 18) and Merleau-Ponty alludes to the elision of references to the body within Freud's exposition of the unconscious:

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<sup>5</sup>The kinaesthetic sense is a term which describes the feeling of movement of the whole or a part of the body through space. An associated term which is more apt in delineating the experience of the whole body, whether engaged in movement in relation to an object(ive) or lying still, is coenaesthesia. This term refers to 'the general sense of existence arising from the sum of bodily impressions' (Shorter Oxford Dictionary).

'A philosophy of the flesh finds itself in opposition to any interpretation of the unconscious in terms of 'unconscious representations', a tribute paid by Freud to the psychology of his day. The unconscious is feeling itself, since feeling is not the intellectual of "what" is felt, but a dispossession of ourselves in favor of it, an opening toward that which we do not have to think in order that we may recognize it' (Merleau-Ponty, 1970, 130).

I propose using elements drawn from the concept of the unconscious, phrased in spatial terms, as a guide to investigating how a reported increase in the massaged person's awareness of their bodily feelings is associated with the actions of massage and is implicated in reports of an overall bodily effect of increased pleasure during massage. The impetus for this approach is derived from my reading of the work of Matte-Blanco on mathematical characteristics of the systems conscious and unconscious. He postulates that the system unconscious has different spatial and durational characteristics of operation to the system conscious. I suggest that reports of the feelings associated with the movement of the malleable body are distinguished by two differing modes of bodily movement, analagous to the two styles of psychical functioning proposed by Matte-Blanco. I have described these two types of movement as oriented and interconnected movement.

Given that the substance of the unconscious is derived from the individual's history of interaction with people and objects I propose that the actions of massage can assist a person to become more aware of their bodily feelings and of the connection of bodily feelings with the movement patterns discernible in engagements with object(ive)s in the person's social world.

### **3.7.1 Multi-directionality of movement and language**

The main item which acts as a signal to a discrepancy in the verbally expressed massage comments extracted earlier in this chapter, is the distorted sense of space. The management of space is one way of describing bodily movement. As the massager's hands move, the feelings associated with that movement enable the massaged person to register a distinction between one part of their body and another. The massager's

palpably derived descriptions of the degree of malleability of tissues potentially add to the bodily knowledge which the massaged person derives from the actions of massage.

In massage the massager is concerned with very small changes within the mobility of the plastic substance of the body. Such changes can be described as a displacement of interconnected tissue from one position to another. I suggest that the process whereby the massager interprets the meaning of the massaged person's bodily feelings in terms of malleable tissue movement - verbally exploring with the massaged person the possibilities of oriented action in the social world in relation to the meaning of those feelings - draws on a complex interaction of oriented and interconnected movement patterns. In addition to the dual options of movement available in bodily movement towards and away from an object(ive), the web-like movement patterns of interconnected tissues are involved.

During massage, interconnected movement of the malleable tissues provides an alternative, multi-directional focus for the massager's assessment of the directions of movement displayed in the massaged person's conversation. An interpretation of the reported feelings of the massaged person in terms of the interconnected movement of the malleable body implies a slippage from the observably linear possibilities of oriented action in the world<sup>6</sup> to a more pluralistic relationship of each person with the object under discussion.

The malleable body, which is directed and acting in relation to an object of attention, is composed of many parts which are able to orient along different directions of movement. For example, the arm can move in a different direction from the eyes, or the hand can move in a different direction to the upper arm. A multiplicity of directional options of bodily movement, when reflected in the bodily feelings in relation to an object of attention which is being discussed by two people, is constrained when each person is concerned with a singular object of attention.

In language an object of attention - when described by the person in successive and discrete units such as words - can also be conceptualised in terms of a spatial position

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<sup>6</sup>In terms of oriented bodily movement in massage there is a minimal alteration of the space between object and person in terms of the whole body movement of the person. The extensively supported position of the recumbent massaged person is incompatible with an arrangement of bodily parts along a linear pathway which is oriented to an object of attention.

which exists at a focal point afforded by the amalgamated directions of oriented movement available to the person. I suggest that the directional orientation of a person's positioning and type of movement in relation to an object(ive) is reflected in language usage which also has positional referents (eg. under, above, holding, ceasing). While the position and manner of holding the body of each conversational interactionist is different, each person has access to an identifiably directed mode of relating to the object of spoken attention - which is visible, I suggest, in the directed quality of the bodily attitude of the speaking individual.

The range of possible objects of attention in the world - expressed as the subjects which the massager and massaged person talk about - is as equally multitudinous as the range of bodily actions possible in relation to objects of attention in the world. When action is portrayed in the language of conversational interaction then the objects of attention no longer need be contained within the immediately perceptible and surrounding environment. In the massaging interaction the attention and the intent of the massager is oriented towards the tissue tightnesses and the reported feelings of the massaged person.

In the social ambience of the massage situation the bulk of anticipated and actual interpersonal contact is tactile. Both massager and massaged person seek bodily or experiential change through the medium of touch as well as speech. The massager - being the more physically active participant in the massage interaction - has a more directed mode of action in the massage. The massager focuses on the bodily condition and responses of the massaged person and any elements of conversation which specify the meaning which the massaged person associates with bodily feelings. The tactility of the interaction, which emphasises interconnected movement and bodily feelings, adds another dimension to the directedness of the object of attention of the massaged person.

The massager is working on the body step by step, bodily part by bodily part. A multiplicity of sensation for the massaged person is being encouraged by this means of stimulation of the body. That multiplicity of sensation is based on the successive awareness of bodily parts by the massaged person as they are traced by the massager. Some parts, eg. those which are sore, will be more dominant within this multiplicity



of sensations. Overall, the massager's continuation of the tactile tracing of the whole body during massage, and the successive layering of sensation associated with parts of the body over time during the massage, forms an amalgam of bodily sensation which tends towards an experiencing of the whole body.

An amalgam of bodily sensation - when expressed in words - approximates metaphorical speech, a speech which is characterised by images. The relaxation and absence of oriented movement, promoted by the environment of massage, appears to result in an overflowing complexity of bodily sensation when the massaged person reports on such experiences. Although the tactile manipulations carried out by the massager in massage are sequential, the massaged person's capacity to register a sequentiality of affect often lessens over the course of the massage. This is evidenced in the use of images which convey a feeling which has a dreamlike quality. Feelings appear to be conveyed by association with other images rather than through language which conveys linear traces of the sequenced movement of the body, traces which are then accessible to the bodily and the worded tracking of the massager.

### **3.8 Ramifications of multi-directional movement**

I suggest that an analysis of the verbal and tactile interaction within massage opens up possibilities for a re-fashioning of the meaning and the directional options of mobility which are implicit in bodily practices.

In terms of resolving the state of discomfort of a person who comes for massage this refashioning involves two aspects. One derives directly from bodily sensation ie. the individual complains of physical discomfort. In malleable body terms, the massager approaches a lack of mobility of the tissues as a correlate or precondition for pain or discomfort in the surface tissues of the body. Because the person acts in response to the perceived placement of objects in the world, then the massager seeks to obtain a sense of the bodily orientation of the massaged person in terms of the arrangement of the tightened tissues of the body. The mechanical action of massage allows for the obstructive tightness of some tissues to relax, and for flaccid tissues to fill out with the increased local circulation enabled by the mechanical mobilising

action of massaging hands on malleable tissues.

On the tissue level there is a change between two possibilities of the condition of malleable tissue. The tissue can change from tighter to looser, or, conversely, from exaggerated looseness to having more tone or resiliency. In terms of the action of the person in the world then the area become less sore in movement, or has a greater degree of mobility. The possibility exists that the person has greater freedom of movement in regard to objects in the world. Movement of the whole person through space has its own duality of movement, ie. towards and away from objects in the world. I take this duality of bodily movement through space to be an amalgam of the duality of individual muscular potentialities of movement, and a necessary consequence of the combined workings of the parts of the body during oriented movement.

An alternate aspect of bodily refashioning involves the recognition of a correspondence of the bodily attitude to the place or object of attention. If social object(ive)s in the person's life are related to the tightness and physical discomfort of the body, there are two issues which can be considered in terms of an increase in the person's bodily comfort. Firstly, does the person's disposition of bodily parts in relation to the object of attention correspond to the physical dimensionality of that object? Secondly, with a change in physical mobility of the person - eg. access to previously unacknowledged aspects of bodily use - are there also revealed previously unacknowledged approaches to the position of an object of attention?

### **3.9 Massage and bodily action in the world**

To recapitulate my argument to the present point; action in regard to objects in the world has a dual quality of movement. Any action is of the body as a whole, either through movement of the whole body through space, or through the interconnectedness of bodily parts as one bodily part moves in relation to the object of attention. The body has a rounded potentiality of movement in space (ie. can rotate by parts or as a whole) and as one part moves, so must there be a change in the relationship of bodily parts one to each other. This is a change of all parts in relation to one another and in response to the person's interaction with a focus of their action in the world,

a change in the 'disposition' of the body.

The following account illustrates the use of bodily derived imagery, and the way in which two people make sense of that experience. It also portrays the way in which the notion of bodily multiplicity is used by these women in their lives away from the massage session.

The account is from a conversation about bodily experience between myself (Catherine) and an academic colleague and friend (Charlotte). I had massaged Charlotte professionally a number of times, both for specific pain and also to aid with Charlotte's bodily response to stressful times in her life. Initially Catherine speaks about her bodily experience and her unsatisfactory pattern of relating to a friend:

*Catherine: So the only way I could stop that relating pattern was to pull away. And then I had an image the other morning of an axe chopping into my belly, and I found that very, quite, cos I was like in a tree shape, with the axe, you know, I was kind of shaking with it. It was a very physical thing. And it was very uum, it was very violent and very cutting, I mean, the image I had was of cutting through bits of myself. And it was an image that just, it just came.*

*Charlotte: Yeah, but it, it must be something to do with, with knowing about your body, trusting your body, or being able to feel that you can find, you can move from something, that you're not going to get stuck there, and that's not for ever, or that's not you, or something like that.*

*Catherine: Yeah, yeah.*

*Charlotte: You don't have to. Cos I had those awful images of, uh, that one of my body all in bits. Bits of steak, being cooked.*

*Catherine: Yeah. Interesting.*

*Charlotte: And having vegemite put on them. It was just so weird and that was the weirdest in that three weeks that I took off work. And I was really stressed out. That was the weirdest of the series of images that became progressively more together, and more understandable, but, and I never understood it in the sense that I analysed them and said that this is about this... and then the next one was images of starting to get it back together again, starting to get some more wholeness. But I didn't feel that, that nightmare, or the image - I felt that it was helpful to understanding - but it wasn't*

*me. In a sense I could kind of look at it, but not kind of feel that that's all there is to you. And I think that that, the bodywork that you do with me allows me to move through that stuff, allows it to be there, without having to get all caught up in it.*

Some points illustrated in this extract are the connection which Catherine makes between her responses within a metaphorical pulling away within a relationship and the axing image which is associated with her bodily experience. Charlotte's comments bring out her own attitude to her bodily experience outside of the massage context, showing the way in which she constructs the meaning of those experiences which are distinct from the everyday world of verbal communication, and which take on more of a more dreamlike and less spatially distinct quality. Whilst being aware of the discomfort involved in the violent images which they speak of, Charlotte and Catherine accept that discomfort as a part and not the whole of their bodily experience. The ongoing bodily experience whilst these images are being played out is one of sufficient comfort to allow both women to maintain an original bodily position - marked by stability - rather than by changing their bodily positioning in order to counteract the discomfort implicit in the quoted images. In malleable body terms, Charlotte's comment that the bodywork assisted her in such a process suggests to me that the greater awareness of the interconnected movement of her malleable tissues during massage was carried over to her engagements with feelings and images of discomfort, away from the immediate context of massage.

The subsequent chapters of Part II will analyse the movement patterns of the malleable body in order to account for reports of bodily-based spatial perceptions, not subject, during massage, to an immediately mutual negotiation of meaning by the massager and the massaged person, such as those quoted in the last portion of this chapter.

## **Part II**

### **The movement of malleable tissues**

## Chapter 4

# The movement of parts of the malleable body

In the four chapters of this Part I build up an overview of the movement of the malleable body. I view the malleable body as an amalgam of bodily tissues which can be massaged. Together these tissues make up the speaking, freely moving individual who can report on their bodily feelings and who can interact both tactually and verbally with other people. The descriptive analysis which I will present in Part II is based on my own experience of these embodied perspectives. As I switch between my understandings of such a range of differing perspectives on the malleable body there is some overlapping of concepts. In my analytical description of each perspective, the whole configuration of each role becomes effectively, although often minimally, restructured. Throughout these chapters I describe the same subject from different angles. Any reiteration of material which I have made signifies my attempt to stabilise the fluidity inherent in my own shifts of bodily positioning, in response to the tactile and verbal material with which I am dealing.

## Introduction

My main concern in this chapter is the perception of the sensed body by both the massager and the massaged person. I examine the interpersonal interaction of massage in terms of reports of bodily experience. I base my interpretation of bodily experience on the variants of observable bodily movement displayed by the massaged person.

The central underpinning of bodily movement, observable by the massager, depends on my use of the concept of the malleable body. I see the malleable body as characterised by the movement of parts of the massaged body in relation to other such parts in response to the massager's palpation. The sense of the term 'malleable' which I use in respect to bodily movement is the capability of 'being fashioned or adapted' (Shorter Oxford Dictionary). I see this fashioning as a project initiated by the massager and carried on by the massaged person after the immediate event of massage has concluded.

I subsume the types of changes sought in malleable body massage under the aim of an extension of the reported, pleasurable feeling of the massaged person. The physical movements carried out in malleable body massage by the massager are often found in more traditional forms of massage. The *manner* in which these manual techniques are used is dependent on the tactile perception of the massaged malleable tissues by the massager. I hypothesise that the massaged person - by participating in a process of sensory feedback initiated by the massager during a malleable body massage session - will be more able to assess and alter the condition of her or his own body. As a result massaged people would be positioned with a more informed access to the fashioning of their own bodily structure. I suggest that a person's ongoing fashioning of their own malleable bodily structure is a function of being able to attend to the arrangement of malleable bodily parts occurring at any one time, and of flexibly participating in the unfolding of entire bodily movement patterns with the aim of optimising a feeling of well-being.

In this chapter I shall present a descriptive account of the interaction between a massager and massaged people, from the massager's perspective.

N.B. : Errata in subsequent page numbering, therefore page 88 is followed by page 91.

## 4.1 Malleable body massage

Whilst sequential routines of massage can be found (Wood, 1974) and compendiums of very useful massage techniques are also available (eg. Downing, 1989), there are only sketchy indications in the literature of the most effective way to apply the massage movements for differing individuals. Tappan (1988, 67-68) and Wood (1974, 40) briefly describe how the massager can judge the most effective movements and combination of movements to use. These authors recognise the need for each massager to exercise their judgement in order to treat effectively the range of individuals who present for massage treatment. I was prompted by their accounts to develop a theoretical basis on which a massager's judgement of the appropriate course of a massage can be made. I define effective massage as massage which facilitates a positively evaluated change in the experienced state of the person which is accompanied by an increase in the flexibility of the malleable body.



### 4.1.1 Practicalities

Massage is always of the whole body with the exclusion of the genitalia. The genital areas are excluded because I believe that the handling of the genitalia changes the emphasis from massage to genitalised sex as a means of achieving a feeling of well-being. The reason for massaging the whole body, on a functional level, is that tightness in one area is often interconnected with tightness in another area. In everyday bodily use, the whole body is involved in any action. An involvement of the whole body's malleable tissue structure, to varying degrees, can therefore be expected. Ida Rolf offers an insight into the inter-relationships between bodily parts. She uses the image of a torso clothed in a tight-fitting garment of stretch fabric which is stretched out of shape so that the pull on a lower corner of the garment (which is representative of connective tissue) is echoed in many other and smaller distortions across the material/body (Rolf, 1977, 39).

In traditional massage, the body is divided into anatomical regions and physiological systems for the purpose of achieving specific massage effects (eg. the use of a neck massage, a calf and leg massage for a torn gastrocnemius muscle, or lymphatic drainage to disperse swelling in the tissues.) In my present approach to massage, the regional and systemic divisions of the body are treated as elements of the entire functioning body. The massager will employ a specific combination of massage movements to suit the felt quality of the tissues at each point of contact of the massager's hand and the massaged body.<sup>6</sup>

The order of massage of each bodily part within the whole-body massage sequence is determined by the massager's perception of the inter-relationship between bodily parts, based on the feel of the malleable tissues. The massager is constantly comparing and assessing the malleability of tissues in relation to non-verbal and verbal indications from the massaged person (eg. limb and eye movements or comments such as "that hurts" or "that feels great"), as she intervenes within the dynamic response of the massaged person to physical touch. For example, the massaged person may have complained of tightness in the upper arm, which limits movement. If the

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<sup>6</sup>Massage at its best makes use of specific techniques, but only by weaving them into a continuous flowing movement that remains always inventive and spontaneous' (Downing, 1989, 36).

massager is able to palpate abnormally tight muscles in that area, and can also feel an area of puffy tissue on the same side of the body at the level of the lower ribs on the back - of which the massaged person was not previously aware - then this palpated distortion of the tissues will act as a determinant of the subsequent actions of massage.

Experienced massage practitioners have developed the quality of their touching to the extent where they automatically adjust the type of movement, pressure, etc., according to their perception of the tissues which they are contacting (Chaitow, 1980, 57; Downing, 1989, 30-31; Storms, 1944, 550-551). My aim in systematising these perceptual qualities is to encourage their development and to employ them to construct a theoretical framework of the bodily understandings gained, through recourse to the perceptual perspective of the massager, by the massaged person.

#### 4.1.2 Distinctive features

The difference between malleable body massage and other forms of massage is underpinned by the way in which the body is conceptualised. I shall examine the predicted effects of some current systems of massage in the light of their theoretical grounding and contrast these with the theoretical basis of malleable body massage and some of the expected effects of malleable body massage.

The effects of traditional Western massage are primarily seen to be physiological (Wood, 1974, 48-58). Two examples which Tappan gives are of increasing the local blood flow to an area, and assisting in the movement of venous fluids to the heart (Tappan, 1988, 25-30). The varying physical movements performed in traditional Western massage take as their rationale the corresponding physical changes which occur in the massaged body. For example, petrissage or kneading is said to help stimulate the local blood flow and assist in milking the tissues of waste products (eg. lactic acid) by assisting the lymphatic flow.

Another conceptualisation of the body is found in Chinese massage theory. A knowledge of chi energy and of the meridian pathways underlies the concept of the body and the therapeutic effects of Chinese massage. I suggest that the therapeutic effects of differing types of massage are couched in terms of varying concepts of the

body, each dependent on the cultural context from which the form of massage is drawn.<sup>7</sup>

My emphasis in describing the bodily processes involved in malleable body massage is on the bodily feeling of the massaged person. When the massager is carrying out a massage which is based on a physiological view of the body, then there is a potential gap between the expression of the bodily knowledge of the massager and the manner of expression of the bodily knowledge available to the massaged person. A knowledge of the physiological functioning of the body implies a specialist rather than a layperson's expertise and training. When the experience of the body is used as a criterion for massage, then one person may be more practised and fluent in any description of bodily experience. However, an individual's account of bodily experience in terms of their own feelings has an immediacy of expression which does not strictly depend on formal training in the physiology of the body. By attending to bodily feelings, and using everyday terms such as 'pain', a 'burning sensation' etc., the person being massaged can access a language base which has elements in common with that employed by the massager to account for the perception of her own bodily feelings.

Within a malleable body massage session, the palpable quality of the tissues allows the massager to make judgements about the bodily condition of the massaged person. I suggest that these perceptual judgements are communicated to the massaged person via a process of feedback, which largely depends on the massager's adjustments of the malleability of massaged tissues. The aim of the massager's sensory feedback is to extend the massaged person's ability to attend to feelings associated with their malleable tissues during massage and to amplify their capacity to assume alternative and more comfortable physical attitudes both within and without the context of massage. An example of this is where the massager's hands act as a probing surface to delineate a knot deep within the lower leg muscles. If the massaged person feels discomfort in response to the touch, and an increased level of comfort in the area

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<sup>7</sup>Mary Douglas emphasises the integral relation between the notion of the body and a societal context: '... the human body is always treated as an image of society and ... there can be no natural way of considering the body that does not involve at the same time a social dimension' (Douglas, 1966, 98).

as the massaged tissue becomes more pliable, then the association between more malleable tissue and a more comfortable feeling would constitute a variant of tactile feedback. The massager has access to nonverbal and verbal methods to signal areas of lesser tissue malleability. An example of a nonverbal method is for the massager to let out her breath to encourage a similar exhalation by the massaged person. The massager's aim here would be to alert the massaged person to a lack of fullness in their breathing pattern. An example of a verbal strategy would be the simple instruction to "let the right buttock muscles go and relax", as the massaged person unknowingly tightens muscles in response to massage of that area.

As the massage literature shows little evidence of a systematic exploration of the feelings of the massaged person, on the basis of the malleability of bodily tissues, I anticipate that I will 'colour in' some portions of this unfilled space, through an analysis of the effects of massage on the malleability of massaged tissues and on the movement and feelings of the massaged person.

### 4.1.3 Manual techniques

The *manner* of the application of massage techniques - in contrast to the techniques themselves - is central in malleable body massage. My term 'malleable body massage' covers the way in which a range of tactile techniques are chosen and combined. The combination of movements will vary with each person massaged and also with each individual practitioner of massage. The tactile perception of the massaged tissues by the massager forms the basis for the application of massage movements. In speaking of a 'new method of massage' Kihm refers to a similar approach:

'The method is not easy to describe because it can vary between the finest touch to strong manipulation. It is the reaction to one or more holds which indicates the next step in the progression of treatment' (Kihm, 1974, 210).

Whilst the manual techniques used in malleable body massage are theoretically eclectic, traditional Western massage - often termed Swedish massage - forms the source for the bulk of my use of massage movements. Other techniques which I use in malleable body massage are drawn from acupressure (eg. Lavier, 1977). I also

use supportive touch and gentle movements to joints (eg. Feldenkrais, 1972), manual techniques where the hands have a static contact with the massaged body in order to enhance breathing and relaxation (eg. Gordon, 1978; Sills, 1989; Kreiger, 1979). The listing of malleable body massage techniques and sources given is not exhaustive. Rather it acknowledges the derivation of the tactile techniques of malleable body massage from the resources of existing systems of touch.

I suggest that malleable body massage provides a common forum for the application of the tactile techniques of theoretically divergent body therapies when they are viewed as ways of enabling the massaging hands to adjust the palpable mobility of the malleable tissues of the body. In solely theoretical terms the use of an amalgam of varying techniques creates discrepancies. To use a geographical analogy, when therapeutic systems which utilise massage techniques are regarded as maps to the terrain of the body (Kitts, 1988, 53), then some confusion results when the predominant features or terms of reference of the landscape of the handled body are varied. Analogically, and from a practitioner's viewpoint, one way around this problem is to regard the body as being overlaid with a number of maps with differing superimposed landmarks. My account of malleable body massage seeks to examine the body as a series of interconnected, palpable landmarks which gain meaning on the basis of the feelings of the massaged person and of the malleable tissue assessment of the massager.

#### 4.1.4 Application of manual techniques

The massager who employs malleable body massage uses the differing surfaces of the hands, and alters the components of this touch according to their perception of the malleability of tissues, and of the verbal and nonverbal reactions of the massaged person. Zigler emphasises the role of movement in tactile perception:

'Movement is an indispensable condition of the more complex experience of touch ... Movement is necessary for palpation of surface, for spatial touch and for mediate perception of surface' (Zigler, 1926, 329).

Wood gives a thorough listing of the physical qualities of the malleable tissues which will influence this perceptual judgement eg. felt resiliency, tautness or flaccidity of the tissues (Wood, 1974, 110).

The concept of the body which underlies malleable body massage is that of a manipulable object. I liken the malleable body to a connected series of three-dimensional tactile surfaces. In massage the superficial tissues can be partially lifted away from the underlying surfaces and handled 'in the round' (Katz, 1936, 147). The movement of the massager's hands is an essential element of malleable body massage, and is used to explore the condition of the tissues of the handled body.<sup>8</sup>

If tactile perception is dependent on the movement of the hands then massaged tissues can be said to be perceived on the basis of their resistance or accommodation to the probing hands of the massager.<sup>9</sup>

## 4.2 The massage interaction

The scene of massage, used as a basis for my analysis of the malleable body, has been the temperate, quiet and private setting of either my own private practice of massage and massage teaching, or of a laboratory room where similar conditions were present. In my private practice, I carry out massage with both men and women, and have observed the massage practice of both male and female students. The verbal

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<sup>8</sup>Gibson refers to active tactile perception (Gibson, 1962, 476; Taylor, Lederman & Gibson, 1973, 254) as the purposive exploration of the surrounding environment (Gibson, 1962, 478). Gibson's perceptual work - while broad-ranging - has been developed in relation to the perception of inanimate objects, and has, I suggest, only limited applicability to the interpersonal interaction of massage (Krueger, 1982, 30), where the massaged person's skin and malleable tissue have a unique quality of surface malleability.

<sup>9</sup>Ebner gives a detailed description of the characteristics of an unusual degree of firmness or flaccidity of the malleable tissues, which can be changed by massage: 'It will become apparent that the surface of the back very often shows areas of indentation in the neighbourhood of areas of elevation. ... These elevated areas are less important from a treatment point of view as they usually disappear when areas of increased tension are cleared. The physiotherapist's finger feels more resistance in drawn-in areas of tension: there is no fluent fold in front of the stroking finger but the skin gives the appearance of a broad block which may even arrest the progress of the stroking finger. The mobility between the different skin layers is less in drawn-in areas' (Ebner, 1956, 178). Tappan refers to similar tactile characteristics of areas of tightened malleable tissue (Tappan, 1988, 146).

comments about bodily experience emerging from massage, which have contributed to the eventual theoretical construct built around the malleable body, have all come from women. Some of this transcribed material came from the laboratory-based massage sessions, some from massage sessions with private clients who consented to audio-taping of the conversation between them and myself. Accordingly, whilst my technique as a massager has come from the massage of male and female bodies, and these techniques have been taught to male and female massage students, the comments of women about their bodily experience are the basis of my theoretical analysis of the movement possibilities of the malleable body.<sup>10</sup> The manner of working with the malleable body is a manner of working with a body, part by part. As a massager, I am concerned with the mobility of each bodily segment, relative to other areas of malleable tissue. In my description of the tactile assessment of massaged tissues I compare tissue segments in relation to other segments. The difference which is evident when two whole and separate entities are compared (for instance the separate and different outlines of female and male bodies) is a lesser element of my tactually based perception as a massager. I see the more predominant factor in massage as the degree to which the specific areas of malleable tissue participate in the interconnected mobility of the entire body.<sup>11</sup>

There are differences of role between the massager and the massaged person. The massager is someone with expertise (ie. training and experience) in the physical techniques of one or many types of massage. Massaged people often have a presenting discomfort (either specific or non-specific) which leads them to seek massage, usually in the expectation of some easing of that discomfort. If there is no specific presenting discomfort, my experience of massage is that massaged people expect that they will feel better.

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<sup>10</sup>In my descriptions of malleable body massage, based on my own experiences as a massager, I will use the denotation 'the massaged person' to indicate that my comments about the massaged person are drawn from experience with male and female massaged people.

<sup>11</sup>I suggest that the issue of male and female embodied difference becomes more crucial when the malleable body is treated as a whole entity capable of movement and speech in the world, further to my present analysis of the malleable body as parts.

### 4.2.1 Speech

The role of speech between the massager and the massaged person is important. Wood provides a cogent introduction to this aspect of massage:

'The therapist's concentrated attention to the patient, combined with the pleasant sensation which results from the massage, seem to establish a close and trusting personal relationship in which the patient often reveals to the therapist problems, worries, and facts about his health which he has thought too minor to tell the doctor' (Wood, 1974, 59).

As indicated by Wood, the massager can gain a lot of information about the massaged person's condition through such talk. Additionally, during the massage, the massaged person can obtain useful and unique bodily information. The massager has a background of anatomical and physiological knowledge and can explain to the massaged person some possibilities of what is happening at the site of bodily discomfort in these terms (eg. the way in which a muscular tear heals at the cellular and vascular level). The massager also has access to vital knowledge which is gained through the sense of touch.

This knowledge has the added advantage that it can be communicated to the massaged person in terms familiar to the person through ongoing contact with bodily obstacles, of touching bodily areas which are sore, and of verbally describing the sensations which result. The language of this experience can be utilised by the massager. For example, a sharp, piercing discomfort in response to pressure on the muscles above the shoulder blades can indicate muscular spasm. Once the massager has given an interpretation of the condition of the malleable tissues of the sore spot and demonstrated the way in which touch affects the feeling of the area, then the massaged person can generate altered bodily sensations. For example, the massaged person can touch the area, verify the level of discomfort or comfort, and then for example, use sedatory pressure point work and gentle rotational arm movements to change the condition of the malleable tissues and consequently the level of discomfort present. In contrast, a dull and lingering soreness in response to pressure on the mid-posterior calf would respond to more stimulation of the circulatory flows by



conditioning exercise or vigorous self-massage. Massaged people have the opportunity, via massage, to learn to substantiate or criticise the massager's judgement of the condition of bodily tissues and to use this increased understanding and access to their bodies as a preventative health care measure.

I am using two basic assumptions when I talk about verbal and tactile feedback. The first is that the massager can feel distortions in the quality of the malleable tissue, and is able to interpret the distortions of different parts of the body in such a way as to present to the massaged person an intelligible perception of the condition of the malleable tissues of the entire body. The second assumption is that when the person seeking massage reports discomfort, there is some physical evidence in the accessible malleable tissues of that lack of comfort.<sup>12</sup> The implication of these assumptions is that there is palpable evidence of the claims of both massager and massaged person in regard to the massaged person's bodily state.

The massager and the massaged person have a different contribution to make within the educative role of massage. The massager's more extensive experience in handling a range of bodies (and the subsequent development of her tactile skills and her anatomical, physiological and therapeutic knowledge) is balanced by the more immediate access which the massaged person has to the historical and current experience of their own body. The massaged person is also able to associate events outside their body with their own physical reactions in a way which is not available to the massager. Two examples of a chain of associations are: a) bereavement leading to depression, diminished breathing range and eventual soreness in the upper pectoral muscles and b) tiredness after a period of sustained and seated clerical work, immediately followed by gardening which involved a twisting action, all of which has contributed to spasm and pain in the sciatic region.

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<sup>12</sup>This approach to massage is directed at alleviating malleable tissue trauma and limitations to bodily movement. In the case of internal organ dysfunction therefore, the massager would aim to alleviate any bodily disturbances on the surface of the body which are co-existent with the internal diseased state.

### 4.2.2 Sensing the malleable body

When I schematically linked the bodily experience of the massaged person and the perception of the massager, a pattern of four major types of interaction within the massage session emerged. From the viewpoint of the massager's palpation of tissues, she may feel abnormalities in a segment of tissue, whilst at the same time the massaged person will or will not feel localised sensation (often discomfort) at that bodily area. From the massaged person's perspective when she feels sensation, the massager will or will not feel any corresponding change in the tissues being handled.

(Figure 2: Categories of sensing)

	Massaged person feels message-generated sensation	Massaged person feels no specific sensation
Massager feels unusual quality of malleable tissues	1. Massaged person feels a specific sensation; Massager feels unusual quality of tissues	2. Massager feels nothing specific; Massaged person feels something specific
Massager feels no unusual quality of the malleable tissues	3. Massager feels no unusual quality of tissue; Massaged person feels a specific sensation	4. Massaged person and Massager feel nothing specific at the area of massaged tissue

The situation of (1) is perhaps the easiest to deal with in terms of massage. The massager can feel unusual tissue qualities (eg. tightness, flaccidity or ropiness) at the area or approximate area where the massaged person feels discomfort. The massaged

person who feels a localised sensation has a sensory basis which she can draw on when speaking with the massager. The massager is able to use her massage skills to begin to normalise the feel of the unusual palpable quality of those segments of tissues. In this instance, there is a good chance that the massage will result in an easing of the immediate source of discomfort (ie. dysfunctional muscular contraction) and a discussion and potential resolution of possible factors in the massaged person's bodily use which led to discomfort in the form of the presenting problem.

The possibility contained in (2) where the massager can feel areas of unusual malleable tissue quality, whilst the massaged person feels no unusual discomfort or pleasure, presents more difficulties for the massager. I shall refer to the differing perspectives of the massaged person and the massager in the massage interaction in order to provide some background for the complexities of this category of sensing.

A person who goes into a situation of massage can reasonably expect some benefit from the massage. Equally, the massager has expectations about the effects to be derived from the massage. The massager, however, has a more predictable agenda of action. Fundamentally the massager wants to assist in the normalisation of the physical functioning of the person. This is done by making a perceptual judgement of the malleable tissues of the whole body. Manual movements are then used so that the condition of palpably unusual massaged tissues adjusts towards an even malleability of the handled tissues. By giving feedback to the massaged person about the state of the malleable tissues, the massager anticipates that the massaged person will have more sensory awareness of the conditions which brought about the original presenting problem if and when those conditions recur.

The expectations of the massaged person vary with differing individuals. For someone who conceptualises their problem as simply an aching calf, then with the relief of the ache they have achieved their aim in coming to get a massage. A possible assessment, based on the massager's tactile perception of the whole body, is that the aching calf muscle is indicative of a wider bodily involvement (eg. a tightness of the corresponding hip and a spongy quality of the tissues surrounding a deep and healed scar on the unilateral foot). If the massaged person feels a minimal or no amount of sensation at the associated areas of unusual tissue quality assessed by the massager,

and feels that their problem has been remedied as they sense the relief resulting from a localised boost to the circulation of the calf via massage, then any feedback which the massager gives about the connectedness of the calf soreness to other areas of palpably unusual areas of bodily tissue - having little basis in the massaged person's felt experience of their body - is of minimal practical value to the massaged person.

A part of a massaged person's unawareness of bodily feelings is linked at times with the individual's socially constructed expectations of the massage situation. The report of "I can't feel anything there" sometimes indicates that the person is not familiar with using language in a way which communicates their feelings in sufficient detail to be useful to the massager (eg. a "funny" sensation). In such instances the person is often not accustomed to verbally distinguishing the elements which make up a funny feeling (eg. "a pleasant tingling feeling which continues after the massage ceases"). Individuals who are conscious of social constraints in the massage situation can label descriptions of pain as complaining and consequently report that they feel nothing. Another example of an awareness of individually constructed social constraint is the labelling of feelings as sexual with either a withholding of verbal reports of feelings or a relegation of a range of varied feelings to the one term.<sup>13</sup>

Another possibility of (2) is that the massager's assessment of the quality of the particular malleable tissue is inaccurate. This is feasible either when the massager is inexperienced or where quite subtle malleable tissue distinctions are being made. In most instances, in my judgment as a massage practitioner and teacher, there is likely to be some physical basis for the massager's conclusion. The tactile skill is one which individuals use every day, in assessing and dealing with the objects and people in the world around them. The deployment of tactility in the context of massage is founded on an individual's life-experience of manipulating their environment. For instance a massager's discrimination of softness and hardness in their everyday perception is transferable to a differentiation of the fibrosed section of muscle on the upper arm from the flabbiness of under-used muscle in an adjacent area. Assuming, therefore, that the massager's perception has some palpable basis, then category 2 provides an

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<sup>13</sup>The range of language responses described were typical of the men who I massaged in a pilot study, in which I asked both men and women to tell me about "any unusual bodily feelings" of which they were aware during the massage.

opportunity for the massager to teach the individual how to attend to these bodily areas. Some instances of this educative approach can be found in the use of simple and repetitive movements (eg. the massager gently moves the elbow backwards and forwards until the massaged person notices the extent of limitation of the range of movement) or when the massager asks the massaged person to compare the feeling of one side of the body with the contra lateral side (eg. "Does this side feel the same as the other side?").

Instance (3), where the massaged person feels sensation and the massager can feel no indications in the malleable tissue as to the source of that sensation, requires a different approach by the massager. It is possible that the massaged person is more adept at feeling the sensations associated with fine changes in the manipulated tissues than the massager is at feeling the changes of the handled tissue. Ways in which the massager can remedy this discrepancy are by attending more carefully to their tactile perception - eg. by feeling more delicately to delineate the smallest knot, adjusting the angle of her tactile pressure at the surface of the body or working more precisely alongside or underneath the hardness of bone - in order to find the precise area of maximum sensitivity felt by the massaged person. If the massager is still not able to find any unusual conditions of the malleable tissue, then another approach to delineating a source of the massaged person's sensation is feasible. Elsewhere in the body there may be areas where a link between the areas of palpated malleable tissue disturbance and the area of sensation originally reported by the massaged person are more evident to the massager's palpation. When the massaged person feels sensation in other such areas, then this information can be used by the massager as a guide by which she can backtrack her way to find a physical source of the sensation originally referred to by the massaged person.

Category (4), where neither massager nor massaged person can feel anything specific, can be safely disregarded in terms of having an educative outcome for the massager or the massaged person for the purposes of this study.

The benefit for the massager of using an interactive approach to massage is of finding out more about the massaged tissue at the level of bodily segments as well as through the visual and auditory observation of the movement of the entire body.

When the massager has a wide range of information to draw on, she has a better chance of making a precise and accurate judgement of the observable bodily state of the malleable tissues of the massaged person. In turn, the massaged person has the opportunity of adjusting their bodily reactions towards a condition of greater and longer-lasting comfort, in response to the feedback obtained during the massage.

I am assuming here that the massaged person brings about changes in their own body with the massager participating as a facilitator in this process. My assumption is based on my own experience as a massager where one person can be massaged with an abundance of skill and sensitive judgement without any appreciable benefit, whereas another person can gain enormous bodily comfort from a similar application of massage. The style of bodily learning which I am advocating as a component of malleable body massage depends on the massager and the massaged person having expectations of the effects of massage which can be expressed in mutually acceptable terms. As the massager palpably explores her perception of the geography of the malleable body, so the massaged person can benefit by experiencing their bodily sensations as mediated by the massager's actions, and by making sense of these feelings.

The initial benefit of this approach to massage for the massaged person is in the easing of discomfort in massage. The longer term benefit is in learning to recognise and adjust those bodily reactions which lead to muscular pain, discomfort or a diminished range of bodily functional effectiveness within an ongoing program of activity.

### **4.2.3 Sensory and verbal feedback**

During massage the massaged person has access to a heightened experience of those bodily sensations which are generated by tactile contact. Similar sensations can be generated by the massaged person through self-touching. Within malleable body massage, the massaged person and the massager, through their verbal communication, can come to an agreement about the meaning which is to be assigned to these sensations. The massager can use their physiological knowledge of the body to explain her own perception of the tissues. For example the massager may explain that

to her, hard or tight muscles mean that the nervous and circulatory systems have less chance of functioning efficiently in that section of the body. Everyday terms such as 'tight' provide the link towards a mutually accessible language which is based on the separate bodily experience of massaged person and massager. For example, an area which was painful to the massager's touch, and of which the massaged person was previously unaware, can indicate that the massaged person's muscles are more contracted in that spot than the massaged person realised. The massaged person can learn to palpate those muscles and, if pain is present, to change their behaviour (eg. to adjust an exercise program) until that sensation can no longer be generated by touch.

On the level of entire bodily experience, the massaged person may not have previously experienced the level of whole body relaxation which can occur during malleable body massage. One remedy would be for them to adjust their behaviour by increased periods of rest to mimic that experienced intensity of relaxation.

The talk during malleable body massage has an important function in terms of sensory feedback. Individuals seeking massage may have varying ideas about the reasons which have caused them to seek massage. The massager has the opportunity to give the massaged person verbal feedback - in everyday language - about the condition of the sensed tissues. The two people can negotiate between themselves as to the most acceptable interpretation of the sensations which the massaged person feels, in the light of the massager's description of the bodily tissues. Ideally, the massaged person gains both a familiarity with the experienced body, and a way of making sense of bodily feelings in terms of everyday routines. In order to maximise preventative care, the person can then adjust the movement patterns of their ongoing activity to optimise the pleasantness of physical sensations.

If the massaged person feels discomfort in response to the touch and an increased level of comfort in the area as the massaged tissue becomes more pliable then the association between more malleable tissue and a more comfortable feeling would constitute a variant of tactile feedback. The massager also uses nonverbal (eg. letting her breath out to encourage the massaged person to imitate that exhalation with the aim of alerting the massaged person to a lack of fullness in their breathing pattern)

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and verbal methods (eg. a simple instruction to “let the right buttock muscles go and relax”, as the massaged person unknowingly tightens muscles in response to massage of that area) to signal areas of lesser tissue malleability.



# Chapter 5

## The massager's approach

### Introduction

In this chapter - based on my own experience as a massager and teacher of massage - I shall expand on the massager's perspective and conceptual aims. My use of the third person to refer to the massager underlines my personal distancing from the complexity of the interpersonal interaction of massage in order to abstract some relevant movement principles. I will link the notion of sensory feedback to the massager's use of bodily mimicry. My aim is to show how the overriding emphasis on tactility in massage influences the massager's use of her own body and her understanding of the entire bodily use of the massaged person.<sup>1</sup>

### 5.1 Loosening malleable tissues

'Attention to life is the awareness we experience of "nascent movements" in our bodies' (Merleau-Ponty, 1962, 78).

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<sup>1</sup>A section of transcript relevant to this chapter is appended in Appendix A. In it I report on a session of massage which I carried out in the setting of a massage class. The appendix is intended to illustrate the type of movement-based decisions which accompany my massage work and which serve as a basis for my analysis of the malleable body. Comments by members of the class on their perceptions of observable changes in the massaged tissues illustrate the particular way in which I interpret observable changes of the massaged tissues and also highlight the fact that alternative meaning can be assigned to textural qualities of the malleable tissues.

The massager's tactile interaction with the massaged person has the aim of facilitating an extension of the massaged person's knowledge of their experienced and malleable body.<sup>2</sup> I suggest that the massaged person's registration of the sensations associated with an increased mobility of interconnected bodily parts - achieved through the massager's tactile intervention when the massaged person is recumbent during massage - is accessible to the massaged person outside of the massage session. It is then feasible that the massaged person's sensory awareness combines with the massager's verbal account of the sequence of relaxation of particular patterns of bodily tightness, to make more available a whole bodily mobility during the massaged person's post massage actions.

The massager traces the palpable evidence of bodily tightness which are either described by the massaged person or observable as hesitations in the smoothness of their patterns of upright movement. Patterns of muscular tightness often hold the body in a constrained position which results in a restriction of the ease of actions.<sup>3</sup>

My use of the term 'awareness' presupposes an awareness based on sensation. Carlton outlines a tangible basis for sensory awareness:

'a process that helps one actively explore these nonverbal levels of feelings, emotions and sensations... experience[d] ... on the level of the weight and movement of our muscles and bones' (Carlton, 1978, 266).

Ehrlich states that:

'Discovering the language of the body ... entails a heightened awareness of proprioceptive sensations' (Ehrlich, 1976, 182).

A tactile approach to the stimulation of bodily awareness, analogous to that used in malleable body massage, is described by Masters & Houston: 'A teacher, working with his hands, provides the sensations and organization of the [student's] body...' (Masters & Houston, 1978, 58). Alperson links an enhanced bodily sensitivity brought about

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<sup>2</sup>Hanna emphasises the role of awareness in bodily education: 'Somatic educators ... speak ... of the function of awareness and paying attention' (Hanna, 1977, 52).

<sup>3</sup>'[Muscular] tension can be maladaptive if it increases to the point that our performance is decreased rather than increased or we are prevented from engaging in physical activity in the behavioural sense' (Budsynski, 1977, 433).

through attention to bodily movement patterns to the use of a person's body as a personal 'instrument for experiential feedback' (Alperson, 1976).

In malleable body massage, the massager commonly observes differences in skin texture and tone, differences in density of muscle fibre, postural habits, and varying pain thresholds of differing areas of the body. The massager's tactile responses include the manipulation of muscle fibre, the application of pressure to bodily surfaces, a stimulation of the blood flow to an area by rubbing the surface of the skin or the mobilising of joint structures through rotational movements. Pain of differing degrees and kinds (eg. sharp, dull) reported by the massaged person can indicate to the practitioner the extent of structural imbalance within the body and suggest a subsequent pattern and combination of touch techniques to be employed in the massage session.<sup>4</sup>

In my experience as a massager, massaged people have reported bodily feelings ranging from localised - eg. heaviness or tingling in the limbs - to a general feeling of relaxation. In malleable body massage, the massager checks whether the massaged person has labelled accounts of bodily sensations as pleasant or unpleasant. This initial stage of evaluation allows the massager to adjust the area and the pressure of her work in order to re-establish a pleasant feeling - if the immediate effect of massage is unpleasant - or to enhance an already existing pleasant effect in massage. The massager is also concerned with enabling the massaged person to feel a sensory delineation of specific bodily areas via the mechanical effects of the pressure of the massager's hands.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup>Wood alludes to a similar concern: 'Thoughtful observation of the reaction of the patient and of the local effects produced must be constant, and the type of movement and the pressure regulated accordingly' (Wood, 1974, 40).

<sup>5</sup>Two examples of the reported sensations which accompany massage are given by Alice, in a commentary which she wrote after I had massaged her. The first refers to an effect of the deformation of the tissues:

"At first, I feel like dough being kneaded and worked. Muscles that are tense can be felt as hot, hard, almost painful resistance. The hands are gently persistent and smooth the knots away."

The second comment refers to the warmth of the massager's hands:

"The hands become heatfilled as they continue working and the heat can be felt by me as a cushion between my skin and the hands. This is enjoyable friction."

The massager aims to manually loosen tightened tissues so that the massaged person can feel a greater degree of movement in the massaged tissues whilst maintaining an optimal degree of overall bodily relaxation and comfort.<sup>6</sup> Namikoshi describes the sensation of the massaged person which accompanies an appropriate modulation of the massager's pressure as being midway between pleasure and pain (Namikoshi, 1972, 15).

Whilst the overall aim of the massager is to induce pleasure rather than pain Feibleman points out that:

'Although pleasurable experience is always basically the same, a certain amount of novelty is necessary to produce it' (Feibleman, 1964, 253).

Bodily feelings described by the massaged person as *tending* towards discomfort introduce a disturbance to the equilibrium of a relaxed, pleasant feeling in massage. The malleable body massager - given a situation where a tolerable sensation is reported as verging onto the border of being noxious rather than pleasant - uses a lessening of the reported discomfort of the area she is massaging as a guide to the effectiveness of her pressure.<sup>7</sup> The massager interprets a normalising of sensation as an indication of an increasing malleability of the tissues. The provocation of unusual sensations within the massage has a useful function in allowing the massaged person to feel the sensory accompaniments of areas of distorted tissue which - until the massager has worked on them - have been outside of the massaged person's bodily awareness. The massager's skill lies in altering the place and pressure of her massage, in order to alert the massaged person to the sensations accompanying areas of less mobile tissue, whilst encouraging a maximum degree of relaxation of the interconnected tissues of the remainder of the body.

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<sup>6</sup>Tappan cautions that inappropriate pressure in massage can lead to a tightening, rather than a relaxation of the muscle: 'As the depth of the stroke increases, the operator should watch the patient carefully to be sure that the pressure is not greater than can be tolerated by the patient. If a muscle tightens under the touch, it has probably been treated too severely or touched so lightly that it 'tickles' (Tappan, 1988, 16).

<sup>7</sup>An exacerbation of tissue discomfort at the site of massage can indicate contraindications for massage. A major cause is tissue damage sustained prior to the massage where visible signs of tissue pathology such as lesions, bruising or the reddening of inflammation may be present.

## 5.2 Mimicry

I suggest that a mimicking of the bodily condition of the massaged person by the massager occurs as the massager is concentrating on observing the bodily reactions of the massaged person. A description of the sensory awareness and touch based work of Francois Mezieres, by Bertherat & Bernstein, describes the way in which the massager's breathing rate tends towards that of the massaged person and the massager's bodily arrangement varies in accord with that of the massaged person:

'But to fully appreciate Françoise Mezieres, you must see her at work, body to body, with a patient. Throughout the entire session, she lives the body of the other person. She captures it in her gaze. She absorbs it through her concentration. She adopts its breathing rhythm' (Bertherat & Bernstein, 1989, 91).

Wyschogrod points to a way in which a tactually-based bodily use - which she suggests has 'structural affinities with the feeling-acts of empathy and sympathy' (Wyschogrod, 1981, 26) - takes on the quality of imitation:

'The active deployment of tactility is expressed in such colloquialisms as "I feel for you", by which we mean my body substitutes for yours ... In empathy I do not merge with the other but retrace the lines of the other's affect' (Wyschogrod, 1981, 40).

She quotes Martin Buber:

'Empathy means to glide with one's own feeling into the dynamic structure of an object, ... and as it were to trace it from within, understanding the formation and motoriality of the object with the perception of one's own muscles' (Buber, 1955, in Wyschogrod, 1981, 40).

I suggest that as the massager works towards increasing the malleability of the massaged tissues she uses her own feelings as a guide for her choice of massage movements in order to facilitate an increase in the massager's state of overall relaxation. The bodily arrangement of the massager - when she is using her own bodily feelings as

a tool within massage - will at times be affected by the pattern of tissue malleability of the massaged person whilst the feelings associated with that bodily arrangement remain a unique construction of the person - either the massager or the massaged person - who feels the feeling.

An exact reflection by the massager of the conformation of the massaged tissues is unlikely, given the varying embodied histories and structural variations of any two people. Additionally - in the immediate context of massage - the massager is standing and can move freely whilst the massaged person is lying down and limited to movement where the massage table is the supporting surface. I suggest that the massager's mimicry of the massaged person's bodily array involves a shift of the *relative* spatial positioning of tissue segments within the interconnected tissue array of the massager. The massager traces the unfolding of contracted areas of the massaged body using as her reference the sequence and rate of the movement of her own bodily parts.<sup>8</sup>

In a mimicry which uses touch to provide the substance of information about the massaged body, the massager depends more on the feel of her own body than on a precise moulding of her own shape to the visibly observable outlines of the massaged body. The massager draws on her experience of tightening and relaxing areas of her own body - her personal knowledge of bodily use - to contract an area and to feel the effect which that particular contraction has on the rest of her body. The massager's use of her own body acts as a resource for her perception of the massaged person, adding to her visual and tactile observations of the movement of the massaged tissues.

The massager rehearses her own enactment of the positional arrangement which she had observed as implicit in the movement of the tissues of the massaged person.

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<sup>8</sup>An anecdote of Bertherat & Bernstein, originally narrated by Françoise Mezieres, graphically describes how the unfolding of the body is largely a function of muscular contraction: '...she told us the story of a very old woman who had lived in her village. She had Parkinson's disease with numerous complications and a severe scoliosis. Her body was bent in two, her head held always at the same angle. She slept bent, had not stood up straight for years. The day the old woman died, Françoise Mezieres passed in front of her house. She went in and found the dead woman stretched out on her bed. Perfectly straight!

"Once she was dead, her muscles, of course, had released their hold on her bones and she could be stretched out without difficulty. In the cemetery, you know, all skeletons resemble each other" (Bertherat & Bernstein, 1989, 78).

Rather than taking on the exact configuration of the massaged body, where the location and intensity of tissue tightness would correspond with the massaged body, I suggest that the massager assumes an approximation of the position of the massaged person, whilst retaining her own bodily flexibility. The massager's flexibility depends on her ability to reverse the direction of movement of the muscular contractions, by which she engages in a mimicry of the amalgam of muscular contractions, which also mark the perceived whole bodily attitude of the massaged person.

The unique quality of the observational strategy of mimicry derives from the massager's attention to the ongoing interconnected movement of the whole body arrangement of the massaged person and of herself. As a massager I note the pattern of palpably delineated tight spots of the massaged body as part of my kinaesthetically sensed register. My perception of a certain arrangement of tightness in the massaged tissue forms into an overall bodily web-like pattern. Sites of tightness serve as the nodal intersections of the web whilst the lines which connect intersections are formed of variations in the direction of movement caused by contracted areas of interconnected tissue. The massager mimics her own sense of the trajectorial direction of these lines of strain within the more extensive interconnected feeling of her rhythmical bodily movement. The direction of movement of trajectories which show relatively less movement exhibits the pull of areas of muscular tension on surrounding interconnected bodily tissue. The visual and palpable evidence of these vectorial lines between nodal points of tightness becomes less pronounced with an increasing distance from sites of sustained muscular tightness.

As a massager I have used the preceding diagrammatic schema as an overlay to superimpose a movement-based meaning onto the complexity of the interconnected movement of the entire massaged body. Such a pattern allows me to extract directions of movement which are replicable by my own patterns of muscular contraction.

The massager's maintenance of the interconnectedness of her own bodily tissues, via her own relaxed attitude, allows her to test - either in a large movement or a smaller movement using a more circumscribed area of muscular contraction - the effect which a specifically placed area of tightness has on the generalised feel of her own body.

A massager's mimicry of the massaged body takes the form of an exploration of the possibilities for whole bodily movement which the web-like pattern of nodal tightness implies. A visually expressed analogy of the palpable feel of the nodal points, of deliberately enacted muscular contraction, is that of a tactually accessible map. The massager relies on her observations of a formed network of tissue tightness to decipher the malleable body patterns of the massaged person. She enacts selected elements of sustained bodily contractions observed within the massaged tissues to the arrangement of her own bodily positioning, in order to have access to her own felt version of the significance of the malleable bodily patterning of the massaged person.

As the tissues loosen during massage the massager feels the changing configurations of altered landmarks in the map which correspond to the nodal points of palpable tightness and the trajectories of observable movement linking nodal points. She uses her sense of her own bodily arrangement to adjust her massaging sequence and technique.<sup>9</sup>

### 5.2.1 Sensory feedback and mimicry

I use the phrase 'sensory feedback' to describe a process in which the massaged person attends to the feedback provided by those sensations of their own body, generated in conjunction with the action of the massager's hands. I envisage that the massaged person uses these sensations as a basis for a change in their awareness of their entire body, as well as those specific areas being worked on by the massager. My use of the concept of sensory feedback derives from, and extends the notion of biofeedback, to fully embrace the tactile interaction of massager and massaged person.

The premise of biofeedback is that a person can regulate aspects of their physiological functioning once analogues of those functionings are accessible to the person (eg. an auditory signal which speeds up as a person's heart rate increases). The

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<sup>9</sup>Throughout the massage, I suggest that the massager continues to vary the overall felt arrangement of her tissues on the basis of her observations of segments of massaged, tightened tissue. She does this with the aim of maintaining her own (entire) bodily feeling of relaxation by incorporating the maximum degree of malleability - with an associated optimal spatial distancing of the tissue segments - of a maximum number of segments of her entire interconnected bodily tissue, whilst she massages.



use of the principles of biofeedback as an aid to learning more about the body is foreshadowed by Seem (1987, 135) and Cohen:

... 'autonomic self-regulation learning may be a process that involves the differentiation of stimuli that were previously outside of awareness: a process in which the individual is able to make finer and finer sensory discriminations with respect to internal stimuli' (Cohen, 1985, 190).

Peper, Ancoli & Quinn extend the concept of biofeedback to include 'the use of human beings as sensitive feedback (either for oneself or another)' (Peper, Ancoli & Quinn, 1979, 559).

Beatta Jencks (1977) in a book titled *Your Body, Biofeedback at its Best* also applies the notion of biofeedback without machines. She analyses the ways in which an individual can use techniques such as yoga, voluntarily controlled breathing, meditation, etc. to monitor their own bodily sensations and to adjust the bodily functioning associated with such sensations.

I liken the role of the massager to that of a human biofeedback source. The ability which actors and dancers develop, that of mimicking the non-verbal presentation of another individual in order to convey an impression of the complex psychological functioning of that individual (Mixon, 1983, 102) is - I suggest - akin to the characteristic functioning of the massager in malleable body massage. The massager is concentrating her distance-based (Straus, 1966, 162) and her contact-based senses on the observable movements of the massaged bodily tissue. I view the experience and training of the massager in tactile perception as a form of perceptual learning. Gibson describes perceptual learning as an: 'increase in the ability to extract information from the environment, as a result of experience and practice with stimulation coming from it' (Gibson, 1969, 3). The massager's tactile experience allows her to detect 'small differences' (Gibson, 1982, 169) in the comparative ease-of-malleability of various massaged bodily segments.

Gibson points out that the person's sensitivity to a region on the bodily surface is derived from 'the set of differences between it and other possible loci', and further, in relation to perceptual learning, that:

' It is not that the location of each spot on the skin has to be learned, but that parts of the skin have to be separated from one another by a joint process of maturation and learning' (Gibson, 1966, 114).

Initially, in massage, the massager visually and tactually identifies variations in the mobility of the malleable tissues. In the process of carrying out this identification the massager traces the palpable evidence of any perceived differences. I suggest that the action of the massager's hands makes available to the massaged person an amplified sensory impression of the malleability of their bodily tissues which accompanies the massager's tactile mapping of the malleable body.

The overarching aim of the massager is to use the movements of massage to encourage an evenness of the malleability of the massaged tissues of the whole body. This even quality of resilience allows the malleable tissues of the massaged person to participate more fully in the rhythmical quality of interconnected bodily movement. The task of the massager - in relation to parts of the body - is to assess the differences in malleability across specific areas of tissue. In relation to the whole body her task is to minimise such differences, as they are represented by tightness in the tissue, and which can be loosened by the actions of massage.

The notion of sensory feedback operates from the perspective of the massaged person's sensing of particular segments of their bodily tissues as handled by the massager. The concept of mimicry applies to the way in which the massager perceives the body in parts and as a whole. There is a discrepancy between the terms of the two concepts which highlights the separate positions of massager and massaged person. I suggest that the discrepancy between the respective positions of the massager and the massaged person is linked to the way that the sensory feedback of massage is enacted via tactile stimulation. The massager's mimicry of the directions of movement implicit in the pattern of contraction of massaged tissue is based on tactility. It also involves the perception of the entire body and of parts of the body from a distance (eg. looking at larger and smaller portions of the bodily tissues). The massaged person's perspective, by contrast, involves access to the sensations involved with the parts of the body touched by the massager as well as to feelings associated with that feeling of their entire body which is *not* mediated by the touch of the massager's hands.

I suggest that the massager's assessment of the mobility of the entirety of the malleable tissues refers back to her perception and awareness of her own body<sup>10</sup> which she uses as a resource to create her own bodily analogue of the whole bodily experiencing of the massaged person. The conceptual necessity for a process of mimicry is created by the extent of the occupation of space by two, separate people. The extent of the massager's contact with the massaged tissues is limited by her aim of tissue malleability assessment. The act of palpation requires a certain degree of spatial 'room' so that one area of malleable tissue can be manoeuvred against another. Spatial distance between the massager and the massaged tissues limits the area of interpersonal bodily contact and increases the spatial displacement of bodily tissue involved in the actions of palpation. The act of contact effectively relies on a gap between non-contacting bodily parts of the massager and the massaged person so that the assessment and loosening effects of massage can proceed. The massager's perceptual assessment of the massaged tissues relies on both tactile contact and distant observation.

### 5.3 Touch and vision

Kwant's reading of Merleau-Ponty emphasises the link between touch and vision and applies to perceptions of the massaged body which the massager gains at a distance and to those which she obtains through tactile contact:

'When my hand touches something which surprises my feeling, my eyes immediately turn towards the thing I touch, and my vision foretells me the touchable qualities of that which I am going to touch. There are many registers of perceptive experience, and my body continually translates the one into the other' (Kwant, 1968, 126).

In the case of massage - in contrast to the instance referred to by Kwant where 'vision foretells me the touchable qualities of that which I am going to touch' - contact with the malleable tissues is the predominant source of perceptual information. As

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<sup>10</sup>Kwant's commentary on the work of Merleau-Ponty refers to the consciousness of the body as a whole: 'What we call "awareness" or "consciousness" is not one single reality, concentrated in one point. It is spread all over the body and it is multiplied in my different organs' (Kwant, 1968, 126).

the massager's hands delve into the malleability of interconnected tissue, the effects of her manipulations act both below, and at the surface of flesh. The more focussed use of the visual system is limited in its perceptual range to the bodily surface, that integument bounded region where the visually observable movements of the massaged person become perceptible. The massager's hands continually move over the malleable tissues comparing one contiguous segment to another.<sup>11</sup>

Whilst the massager's hands work in concert with her eyes, I suggest that the style of bodily action available to a person, who is emphasising the use of the visual system, differs to a bodily use where the tactile system is dominant. The massager who is using both the visual and the tactile-based exploratory mode shifts in her perceptual focus from hands-on contact with the massaged tissues to a visual check of a larger area of the massaged tissues which are at arm's length from her eyes. She uses this modulation of perceptual distance - from the close to the far - to check her reading of the massaged body throughout massage.

The visual system - via the dual focussing ability of the eyes - momentarily fixes on one region of bodily tissue, and then quickly changes focus to compare the observable movement of another area of tissue, distant to the first. The fine focussing movements of the muscles of the eye are in contrast to the larger bodily movements involved in the manual actions of massage. The whole body can remain much more still during predominantly visually based perception whilst this is not possible when the massager is using the potential strength and co-ordinated agility of her entire body - via manual contact - to press into the tissues as she distinguishes the contours of an area of tightness from surrounding tissue.

## 5.4 The massager's tactile cues

The following section indicates the ways in which the massager chooses which bodily signals to react to in her tactually based reading of the massaged person's physical

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<sup>11</sup>Katz highlights the foundational role of manual movement in massage: 'Movement is of the highest importance in the sensation of touch; its importance, in fact, cannot be overestimated. Palpation is done by the moving hand, so is percussion, and I need not say that the whole secret of successful massage is to be seen in the trained movements of the skilled hand' (Katz, 1936, 147).

state. As in Downing's likening of massage to a dance, the massager relies on the poised use of her whole body to gain the maximum reach and sensitivity of touch in combination with strength where it is needed.<sup>12</sup> The massager assesses the overall state of the tissues after all areas accessible from the bodily surface have been worked on.

An input to the decision as to which particular technique of touch will bring about greater malleable tissue integration is reinforced by the massager's own bodily feeling. I suggest that sensory information is not always registered in reference to localised areas of bodily feeling. After a massage session a general feeling of well-being, rather than the specificity of a particular outcome, is a common reaction. A loosening of tissue tightness via massage may result only in a feeling of bodily well-being for the massaged person where no particular pain or ache stands out within a diffuse feeling of bodily ease.

An aim of malleable body massage is to enable the massaged person to experience the sensations associated with a reduced mobility of contracted tissues, and the ease of movement associated with optimally malleable interconnected tissue. Ideally, malleable body massage allows the massaged person to balance on a fine line between awareness of the sensations associated with the ongoing rhythmical movements of their body, and a receptivity to sensory material which is unfamiliar and provoked by the actions of the massager. The aim of the massager in malleable body massage is to alert the massaged person to imbalances of whole bodily movement. I suggest that the effectiveness of her loosening actions during massage - in terms of increasing the bodily awareness of the massaged person - is strongly linked with the verbal and

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<sup>12</sup>Downing points to the whole bodily involvement of massage: 'Do massage with your entire body, not just with your hands. . . .your hands will be most alive when their movement is an extension of a more general movement coming from the rest of the body. This movement of the body need not be great; at times it may be so slight that an observer would scarcely be aware of it. Visible or not, however, you yourself should be able to feel it present as a sort of core from which the more exact movements of your hands are emerging. In some respects the experience of giving a massage is like that of dancing. As with dance, the more total the involvement of the body, the better the massage' (Downing, 1972, 31). Rubinfeld - speaking about the hands on component of the Alexander technique - points to the way in which the degree of the tactile interaction is determined by the loosening of areas of tightness of handled tissue in response to touch: 'Touching, in this work, is a very special skill . . . It is a unique kind of touching, waiting to see where the person is. I do not push through resistances. . . '(Rubinfeld, 1978, 209).

tactile associations which she, in company with the massaged person, makes about the manner of restoration of less malleable tissue to greater mobility.

## 5.5 Awareness of feeling

The massaged person has only a certain level of movement based tactile vocabulary connected with their body. For instance - in a postural sense - the massaged person may not be aware that their head is angled forward. When shown in photographs, for example, that this is the case, the massaged person still may have no physical means of achieving the integration of bodily parts which will allow a relaxed achievement of a balanced carriage of the head in complex, ambulatory movement functions. By recourse to a system such as malleable body massage, the massaged person is able to identify, bodily part by bodily part, a sequence of sensations which reduce complex and difficult movement patterns to an amalgamation of simpler steps.

I suggest that awareness is the action of the unfamiliar becoming recognisable. For example, a vagueness of sensation such as unease in the body may differentiate into discrete signs of the malleable state of particular parts of the body. If an individual is preoccupied with the intensity of sensation (eg. pain or discomfort) the strength of this feeling can override any understanding of the mechanisms whereby pain is generated. If emotions associated with pain emerge strongly, the same effect may emerge. The massager's role is to regulate the input of sensory feedback to the massaged person so that the sensations associated with tactile deformation of the malleable tissues are generated at a rate which allows the massaged person to maintain receptivity to those cues. In this way - while the massager observes any imbalances of functioning in the massaged person - the massaged person combines a state of relaxation with a fairly indistinct registration of unfamiliar sensation.

Effectively, the massager is acting one step ahead of the bodily awareness of the massaged person. The physical signals of malleable tissue immobility draw the massager's attention. The use of touch brings the massaged person's attention to the tissue anomaly. The rate at which the massager carries this feedback process out is dependent on the readiness of the massaged person to become aware of successive,

discrete components of the bodily sensation associated with the massager's touch.

## Chapter 6

# Interconnected movement of the whole body

### Introduction

The emphasis of this chapter is on the way in which malleable body massage affects the massaged person when that person is viewed as an assemblage of interconnected, malleable tissues. My treatment of this effect is taken from my perspective as a massager. In contrast to the perception of the massaged body by the massager - who can move from contact with bodily surfaces and a piece by piece perception of these to a more distant, unified, visual view of the massaged body - the massaged person's perception of bodily tissues remains more directly allied to a sense of the whole body.

Whilst the massaged person is able to view segments of massaged tissue at a distance, the feeling associated with more distant bodily segments will invariably be filtered through the flux of those more immediately sensed segments of tissue which contract to allow the action of looking from a distance. The massager can move so that she does not hold, view or hear the movement of massaged tissues, removing them from her perceptual field. By contrast, the massaged person is more closely tied to the authorship of her sensing of bodily parts, through the interconnected movement of her whole body, whilst in a recumbent position.<sup>1</sup> The massager's palpation of individual

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<sup>1</sup>Pols' comments allude to a similar relationship between the body as parts and as a whole:



segments of malleable tissue has the aim of making these parts more mobile. Given that the massaging hands can only work on one area at a time, the massager's actions are marked by a successive order.<sup>2</sup>

## 6.1 Bodily markers

From the perspective of malleable body massage, a massager's choice and sequencing of massage movements is dictated by the meaning assigned to a network of bodily sites, within the prevailing conceptual framework applying to the entire body. Massage traditions other than that of malleable body massage can be analysed in this way.<sup>3</sup> A description of massage based on the malleable body offers a foundation for comparability, in an assessment of the meaning assigned to malleable tissue markers which are used throughout a range of differing massage systems. The way in which the massager uses her hands during malleable body massage is specifically oriented to the use, or recombination of the order of use, of tactile techniques found in many forms of massage. The conceptual model of the body employed in malleable body massage derives solely from an analysis of bodily movement.

The use of malleable body sites or 'markers' can supply a palpable context for the massager's diagnostic judgement. When the massager can point to the palpable evidence of those unusual tissue qualities which are linked by her investigative touch with unusual sensations felt by the massaged person, a system of mutual confirmation of the bodily meaning of the feeling of these sites becomes available to both the

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'Analysis of our knowledge of any entity may reveal a multitude of discrete sensory experiences, impressions, sense data, qualities and the like, the terminology depending upon the bent of our epistemology. But no such assemblage can be equivalent to the cognitive awareness in which we recognize that these data signalise the presence of an entity...' (Pols, 1969, 292).

<sup>2</sup>Wyschogrod - speaking of the tactile perception of objects - refers to the successive registration of handled objects: 'If we examine the data of touch, we see that they occur successively rather than simultaneously since, by and large, one feels only one thing at a time' (Wyschogrod, 1981, 39).

<sup>3</sup>For example in Swedish massage - where the body is conceptualised as an orderly assembly of cells - massage is used at the area surrounding a non-recent bruise to achieve the dispersal of localised metabolic waste products (Tappan, 1988, 77). In malleable body terms, localised areas which have become hardened as a result of reduced flows of fluid in that area as a consequence, for example, of bruising, can become more malleable through massage. In the system of manual pressure to acupuncture points, changes to the flow of chi energy in its passage through the meridians at those pressure points can be said to correspond to palpable tissue changes (Tappan, 1988, 133 & 146).

massager and the massaged person.

## 6.2 Malleable bodily learning

The traditional view of massage is as therapy rather than as an educational process.<sup>4</sup>

When the aim of massage is a change in the way a person feels, rather than the repair of a pathological symptom, then the procedure of massage assumes a dynamic quality which is at odds with a traditional manner of massage prescription.<sup>5</sup>

In my experience, a number of people use massage to enhance their bodily experience, in addition to its remedial value.<sup>6</sup>

The feeling of physical well-being is a judgement made by the massaged person on the basis of their own background and understanding of what counts as pleasurable. Kitts emphasises the massager's need to be aware of the preference of the massaged 'patient' in the light of their 'cultural and societal attitudes' to touch (Kitts, 1988, 54-55). Tappan also speaks of the importance of the massager's observation and reaction to nonverbal feedback, such as a change in the breathing pattern, which can be observed in the massaged person (Tappan, 1988, 15).

The deliberate utilisation of massage by the individual in order to feel better has

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<sup>4</sup>Tappan refers to a range of therapeutic effects of massage: 'There are innumerable situations that cause a metabolic imbalance within the soft tissues. Most of these can be treated with massage. The purpose of massage is to bring about any of the physiologic, mechanical or psychologic effects attributed to this type of treatment. Relaxation, relief from pain, reduction of certain types of edema, and increased range of motion can be accomplished through the use of massage. Massage is usually combined with other therapeutic measures, and often provides a form of passive exercise when stretching techniques are used' (Tappan, 1988, 3-4).

<sup>5</sup>The more traditional approach is outlined by Gertrude Wood: 'If adequate and detailed prescription for massage has not been given, it is the responsibility of the therapist to consult with the physician and to ascertain his wishes in regard to the treatment' (Wood, 1974, 37).

<sup>6</sup>Brahler makes a relevant distinction between two differing approaches in health care. One emphasises bodily experience whilst the other employs a more symptom-oriented approach: 'Body experience is the indicator reflecting one's state of physical wellbeing; discomfort and bodily complaints are feelings which make us aware that there is something wrong. When a certain level of discomfort has been reached, one feels ill. The doctor in iatrotechnical medicine, however, makes his diagnosis according to functional disorders and organic findings - he is symptom-oriented. The patient's body experience is of interest only insofar as it offers information about symptoms' (Brahler, 1986, 8).

been described as a process of experiential bodily learning. Levy, in speaking of somatic education, refers to the goal of: 'healthy, powerful, easy, pleasurable movement' (Levy, 1986, 188).

From the massaged person's viewpoint, the individual says what they want to be able to achieve in terms of bodily use and the massager - giving an opinion based on the manipulable qualities of the assessed tissues - states the condition of the tissues in relation to the aim of the massaged person. The massager's function, in the instance of malleable body massage, is to provide feedback as to the effectiveness of those movement patterns which are encoded in the malleability of the soft tissues of the massaged body, *in relation to* the ongoing projects of the massaged person. I take the massager's own analysis of their patterns of bodily movement to provide a sensate basis from which the individual can assess their own spatial relationship to the objectives of their movement in the world.

Whilst the project of bodily education within malleable body massage is initially carried out in the company of the massager, the wider aim of the massager is to encourage and participate in an extension of the massaged person's access to a process of personal bodily re-formation. The massaged person's bodily reshaping is to be carried out by the massaged person both within and away from the specific context of massage, and its aim is an increase in the directional options for bodily movement, and a maintenance of the pleasurable sense of interconnected bodily movement.

Conversation between the massager and the massaged person ideally assists both people to come to an understanding about the meaning of the bodily experience of the massaged person. The actions of massage - by potentiating the sensory experience of the massaged person - provide that person with an opportunity to focus on their body. Through talking to the massager, and comparing the two perceptions of the massaged body the massaged person has the opportunity to make sense of the experience gained within the massage session.

The physical actions and the talk of the massager during massage are aimed at a beneficial change in the massaged person's experiential bodily knowledge. I contextualise this type of learning as a function of the movement possibilities of the body. The aims of malleable body massage extend outwards from the specific massage

context to the world of the freely moving person. I see the project of the massaged person as involving a transfer of sensory understandings of the body gained during massage into their everyday use of the body.

The reasons for which people seek massage vary. Some descriptions of desired changes in bodily experience which I have heard from massaged people are: from more painful to less painful; from less mobile to more mobile; from lethargic to energetic; or from tense to relaxed. The factor of pain or discomfort obviously has an immediate sensory value for the person. The massager may need to query and probe in order to localise a bodily concomitant of pain which matches the degree and type of painful sensation reported by the massaged person. With a limited range of motion of a bodily part the limitation of movement itself can be sensed by the massaged person and located by the massager. There is a more diffuse connection between the bodily feeling of the massaged person and an associated bodily locale perceived by the massager in relation to feelings associated with tension and stress, which involve a *lack* of relaxation or of feeling good. I am particularly interested in specifying the genesis of the last factor.

A feature of malleable body massage is the goal of change from a negatively valued bodily experience to a positively valued one.<sup>7</sup> A re-interpretation of the goal of massage from that of a therapy which is specific to a particular problem to a more generalised beneficial effect, allows for a number of interpretations of what constitutes those beneficial feelings. Ideally this situation allows differences of attitude between massage participants to be included within a bi-partisan construction of the meaning of bodily feelings during massage.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>7</sup>Downing emphasises the pleasurable goal of massage: 'To articulate your friend's body for him or her ... is one of the most important aspects of massage. The more precisely you achieve this, the more your friend's pleasure in his or her massage will take on a deep, almost magical quality' (Downing, 1972, 31).

<sup>8</sup>The place for the negotiation of the meaning of bodily experience in massage is highlighted in an instance taken from the transcripts of a massage session where Alice was the massaged person. She was lying face-up with her upper arms resting on the massage bench and with her forearms and hands pointing up to the ceiling. When I asked whether that position was comfortable (I was assuming that a position where the whole length of Alice's arms were resting on her body or on the massage table would be more relaxed, and therefore more comfortable) Alice emphatically replied that resting her arms down on her body or by her sides made her feel as if she were dead, and the massage went on with her forearms in an unsupported position. In this vivid example, the massager

When massage is considered in terms of bodily education then the type of bodily arrangement of the massaged tissue which is considered by the massager to be beneficial becomes an issue. I suggest that the projects of the massager and the massaged person are framed within differing discourses. The massager is concerned with palpably derived knowledge and the massaged person with a sensation and feeling-based discourse of pain, lack of well-being, limited mobility etc.

### 6.3 Bodily feelings

In the context of bodily movement I take the massaged person's feelings to be the registration of the movement of the rearrangement of segments of bodily tissue.<sup>9</sup>

In malleable body massage, the maintenance of a feeling of pleasurable well-being for the massaged person by the actions of the massager occurs as the massager ensures that the localised sensation generated by the massager's touch remains at a level which does not disturb the massaged person's overall comfort.

From the massager's viewpoint, the information which is accessed from the malleable tissues of the massaged person, and which is then used as a basis for determining tactile responses during the massage, invariably has the characteristic of movement. Although the massaged person is resting in a horizontal position, the action of the massager's hands is provoking a response from the malleable tissues of that immobile body. The body is immobile in relation to movement from place to place. However, as a person who is still and sleeping can be said to be immobile, and yet still exhibits

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and the massaged person would ultimately need to find ways to match the aims of the massager for a fuller bodily relaxation which allowed the arms to be fully recumbent, with the massaged person's desire to feel good.

<sup>9</sup>Juhan and Hanna both speak of the link between movement and feeling: 'It is the motions and pressures of the muscles which create sensations, and it is the selection and repetition of specific sensations which condition the learned patterns of motor activity' (Juhan, 1987, 190). 'Touch receptors in my skin, pressure sensitive Pacinian corpuscles in my deeper tissues, and Ruffini end organs in my joint capsules all provide sensory responses to every distortion of tissue caused by muscular activity . . . I cannot move without touching myself internally and externally; these internal and external pressures and frictions inform me about my own body and its activities in exactly the same way that my sense of touch informs me about external objects' (Juhan, 1987, 185-186). 'Muscles that do not move are muscles that are not sensed. There must be movement in order to stimulate the sense endings within the muscle and in the joints' (Hanna, 1980, 54).

the slight movements of breathing, etc., so a person who is being massaged is not moving in space and yet the bodily tissues have their own responsive quality. The malleability of surface soft tissues of the massaged person's body is a determining factor in the choice of massage procedures.

Whilst the hands of the massager are occupied with finding and working on areas of malleable tissue tightness, the massager maintains a state of readiness for any other signals which are presented by the massaged person. Sighs, small movements, random trains of thought emerging as an anecdote about some of the day's happening, a reddening of the massaged skin, flatulence, all act as signs of the way in which the massage is progressing.

The changing combination of massage movements used by a massager who is observing and tactually responding to slight changes in the massaged person's tissue malleability and behaviour is a continuous process. Rather than being a planned sequence of movements, the massage process becomes an ongoing, whole-body reaction by the massager to the bodily signals of the massaged person (Kitts, 1988, 56).

According to the reports of massage students, and my own practice of massage, there is often a pervasive feeling of relaxation which both the massager and the massaged person progressively feel throughout the massage. The massager's attitude in attending to a range of bodily signals from the other person is one of constant readiness for bodily change in response to the changing state of the massaged person. As one part of the body is massaged, then the palpable qualities of the remainder of the body change, as the massaged person relaxes. Relaxation may be due to the pleasure of relief from discomfort or the simple pleasantness of attending to the body rather than to the narrowed focus of everyday concerns or the overriding sensation of an ache or pain. In carrying out a full body massage and looking for bodily patterns of tension the massager is, area by area, attending to the whole body.

Often in massage the massaged person is largely silent and the massager will look towards non-verbal indicators for evidence that the person is feeling good. The massaged person is lying relatively motionless whilst relaxing. The movement which the massaged person does carry out is within a circumscribed sphere. The massaged person is acting *without* the intention of moving the whole body towards or away from a

distant object. The observable movements of the massaged person - in contrast to the more expansive movements of oriented movement - have a predominant characteristic of interconnectivity. Interconnected movement can be observed in massage in the interplay of small positional adjustments of the lengthening muscular tissue which occur during bodily relaxation and changes in the relative positioning of non-muscular tissues which are attached to muscular tissue.

### 6.3.1 Interconnected movement

The bodily tissues of the recumbent massaged person move relative to other interconnected bodily parts. Segments of tissue initially move under the mechanical pressure provided by the massager's hands. The type of tissue which most rapidly extends in length is voluntary muscular tissue which has previously been contracted.<sup>10</sup> Muscular tissue is embedded within a complex of other tissues such as nervous, vascular and connective tissues.<sup>11</sup>

I suggest that the lengthening of voluntary muscular tissue in response to the action of the massager's hands is accompanied by a readjustment of the positioning of other types of tissue which are connected to that muscular segment. Secondly - in a chain-like effect - tissues which are contiguous with the tissues connected with the original muscular segment will also be repositioned in indirect response to the original muscular lengthening.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>10</sup>Morton differentiates the highly extensile nature of contractile muscular tissue from the less extensile elasticity of fibrous (connective) tissue: '...fibrous tissue is employed for a restrictive or static type of tension, and possesses a greater or lesser degree of elasticity according to the purpose of its use. Muscular tissue is characterised by its contractile quality, and in having the power of varying or releasing internal tension during lengthening, or while in a stationary state, or in the act of shortening' (Morton & Fuller, 1952, 240).

<sup>11</sup>Juhan, whilst emphasising the role of connective tissue, highlights the connectedness of all bodily tissue: '...connective tissue binds bone to bone, attaches bone to tendon, and ties tendon to muscle... [It] forms the fibrous bed for all the lymph vessels, blood vessels, and nerves, supporting them and keeping them in their appropriate channels... [It] is the connective network which synchronizes the motion between muscles, vessels, nerves, and viscera, as well as transferring muscle action to the bones' (Juhan, 1987, 187).

<sup>12</sup>I am interested here in the way in which bodily parts re-establish their positioning during the process of a muscular relaxation which spreads throughout the felt body. I view activity which is directionally related to an object(ive) as the obverse of relaxation. I suggest that directed activity and relaxation are both enacted within the context of the interconnectedness of bodily tissues.

To the massager's eyes and hands, the relaxation process experienced by the massaged person is reflected in the ongoing and active reorganization of the massaged tissues of the whole body.<sup>13</sup>

As the massaged person verbally describes their feelings during massage and as the massager describes the textural qualities of the massaged tissues the aim of my construction of a movement-based rationale for bodily feelings is to open up a meeting ground for the verbalisation of both people's perceptions of the massaged tissues. The goal of the discussion of the meaning of the feelings evoked during massage is to equip the massaged person with personal skills in matching their bodily feelings with their reading of the relative positioning of bodily parts in relation to an entire bodily attitude, both outside of, and within, the massage context.

From the perspective of my own extra-massage bodily use my aim is to extend my knowledge of the extent of the spatial occupation of my own interconnected bodily parts. With this bodily awareness as a basis, I would aim to increase the interconnected mobility of bodily parts in order to bring about a shift in my bodily feelings from discomfort to comfort. I take the massaged person's spoken report of their bodily experience to be an indicator of the bodily awareness of that person within the massage situation.

### 6.3.2 Bodily awareness

There is a substantial tradition which refers to the educational value of bodily awareness. Hanna (1977, 1990) gives a detailed overview of a number of teachers who work within a framework which utilises the notion of bodily awareness. Notable amongst these are Mathias Alexander, Mable Todd, Lulu Sweigard and Moshe Feldenkrais.

Massage has been cited as instrumental in the experiential bodily learning of the individual by Georg Groddeck:

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<sup>13</sup>Wood cites Mennell in relation to the interconnected quality of tissue response to the massager's touch: 'Of pressure he stated that the amount is dependent solely upon the relaxation of the musculature. When the muscles are relaxed throughout the treatment, even a light pressure must influence every structure throughout the part being treated. . . His reasoning was that if the muscles are relaxed they offer no more resistance to the movement than so much fluid, and any pressure applied on the surface will be transmitted freely to all structures under the hand' (Wood, 1974, 9).



'As day by day he [the patient] is faced by new problems arising out of changing sensations in massage, his awakening desire to learn then becomes so intense, that generally, after a very short time. . . he is exploring new physical and mental fields' (Groddeck, 1977, 237).

Harre refers to the use of the term 'awareness' to report the immediacy of bodily feelings (Harre, 1983, 150). In this project - where I gain access to reports of other people's bodily feelings through their use of language and express my own bodily feelings via language - my use of the term 'awareness' denotes a massaged person's verbal reference to a bodily feeling. There are two main phases which I have observed in massaged people's reports of their bodily experience during a malleable body massage session. At times the experience is described in terms of a global bodily state, eg. the person feels good, excellent, relaxed etc. Alternatively massaged people describe a distinction between the feelings associated with massaged bodily parts. I take the experience of the body in parts to provide a sensorily-based bodily awareness that the massaged person can use to initiate changes in the malleability of their bodily parts. As the person distinguishes the difference between tight and relaxed muscles or a less or more mobile joint then they are potentially able to alter the mobility of those specific bodily areas by voluntary contraction or relaxation. I am interested in the relationship between the global and the discrete experience of the body during massage and what this means in terms of learning about bodily experience for the massaged person within and outside of the immediate context of malleable body massage.

## 6.4 Bi-phasic bodily use

The differing spatial perspectives of the massager and the massaged person contribute to the massaged person's acquisition of a particular style of bodily learning. I propose developing an account of bodily practice which draws on the disparate modes of spatial orientation characteristic of the positions of massager and of the massaged person.

From the viewpoint of the massager a simultaneous physical occupation of the positions of massager and massaged person is not feasible. In order to recall these two

positions and to have access to the alternating modes of bodily movement implicit in the differing discourses of both massager and massaged person, I take my self-observed patterns of bodily experience to be contextualised within a discourse which calls on distantly-oriented and contiguous bodily use. This discourse is based upon the activity and observation of my own movement patterns. It is also based on my own experience of being massaged.

Movement is the pivotal concept which supports the possibility of my descriptive access to the perspectives of the massager and the massaged person. The massager's most immediate interest is in a change in the malleability of massaged tissues. The massaged person often expresses a desire for an increased feeling of well-being, or else a more specific change from a feeling of pain to one of the absence of pain.<sup>14</sup> The project of the massaged person can also be expressed as an increase in the *relative* mobility of bodily parts.

The convention of the massage situation is that the massaged person lies still or moves at the direction of the massager whilst the massager can move through space around the massaged body. The massager is participating mainly in movement oriented to a point separate from her body. The massaged person, in contrast, is participating in the sensations associated with the movement of their tissues whilst their body remains at rest in relation to their surrounding environment. My analytic viewpoint is derived from the disparate bodily perspectives of the massager and the massaged person. I anticipate that an appraisal of each separate position will coalesce into an explanatory system which accounts for the bodily feelings of a freely moving individual. Such a system combines the interconnected bodily use of the massaged person with action in the context of distance-oriented movement, the latter being based on the distantly directed movement of the massager. I suggest that the freely moving person has access to an alternately bi-phasic use of the body in the world in a manner analogous to my exposition of the dual positionings of massager and

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<sup>14</sup>For connections between pain and the immobility of bodily tissues (sometimes associated with lessened blood flow or ischaemia), see Draspa (1959), Keele (1956-7) and Travell & Bigelow (1947). Hendler refers to the muscular and fascial components of sustained soft tissue immobility as: 'adhesions between fascial planes' (Hendler, 1981, 218) and Jensen to the 'sustained reflex contraction of muscle with attendant ischemia' (Jensen, 1976, 357).

massaged person during the massage interaction.

### 6.4.1 The massager

In the massager's terms, an expansion of the mobility of the body via movement through space, is an explicable and straightforward aim. This aim corresponds with the perception of the massaged body by the massager - based on her distancing from that object. The massager is able to move from one point to another in space, is always able to lift her hands from the massaged body, to walk to another point of access to the massaged body, to vary the rate of movement of massaging of bodily tissues, to stop the action of massage etc. To the extent that the massager extrapolates from her own projected bodily experience - eg. in registering the arrangement of her own body and, via the medium of mimicry, feeling the bodily consequences of the arrangement of relative mobilities and immobilities which she observes in the massaged body - she is dependent on her own sensory cues. Her main focus, however, is on bringing about changes - via physical contact - in a malleable object which is separate from her own body.

The mode of action of the two major sensory systems which are utilised by the massager - the visual and the tactile - are oriented to an object of perception. The massager's actions enable her to reach out manually or to adjust the focus of her eyes in order to fix on the distant surface of the massaged tissues. In this sense the massager is following a *route* in her coverage of the manipulable surfaces of the massaged body. In terms of her verbal assessment of her positioning at any point along that route she is able to describe varying palpable characteristics of the tissues in relation to a particular system of the body (eg. the muscular system, the circulatory system, the meridian system of acupuncture theory). Metaphorically speaking, her route about the massaged body is signposted by a relation to *varying* maps of the body, which I view as being overlaid as though on transparent sheets. Varying explanations for the type of connection between one bodily marker and another are provisionally chosen as the observed sequence of palpable bodily markers unfolds.

In the context of massage, the employment of the visual system allows a focussing on one segment of the whole body in *relation* to the remainder of the visible movement

of the whole body. For example, a light rocking carried out by the massager at the top of the head is often observed to result in a similar rhythmical movement at the toes, as the tactile force is transposed through intervening segments of the body. The massager is continually able to observe, from a distance, the effects of her tactile interventions on parts of the body which are distant from where she is working. This allows a comparison of one point in relation to other points on the body. Bodily markers observed by the massager can be ordered into an identifiable sequence which serve as a tactile route through the map of the malleable tissues.

### **6.4.2 The massaged person**

In the massage scenario the massager is the major initiator of movement of the massaged body. The massaged person is potentially able to observe a manner of connection which corresponds to the evocation by the massager's hands of sensory markers in the malleable tissues of the body. The massaged person does not initiate the activation of these sensitive areas. The massager can mimic the bodily state of the massaged person and thereby have some acquaintance with a simulacrum of the feelings of the massaged person (ie. by considering the feelings which that bodily state evokes for the massager herself). However, the massager's body is not unfolding (participating in muscular relaxation) in accordance with the action of the massager's hands as is the massaged body. I suggest that the ramifications of emerging patterns of bodily interconnection - as the spatial extent of one section of tissue changes, so this affects the succeeding and contiguous section of tissue - become ultimately unpredictable to the massaged person, as the feelings of the entire massaged body become too multitudinous to follow in a step by step sequence.

### **6.4.3 Individually initiated movement**

On an individual level, I suggest that by combining my own feelings and assuming combinations of bodily positions in relation to those feelings, then I can also assess changes in the quality of my feelings. The resulting framework forms a guide to one way in which feelings are constructed in terms of the malleable and moveable

body. Whilst in my own experience principles of bodily movement are derived from qualitative changes in my own bodily feeling states, the construction of these feelings, in relation to the extra-bodily world - the range of objects and people separated in space from my own body - is characterised by flux and fluidity. Having achieved my own object of feeling good, then the mechanism of achievement of this change in feeling is useful when it has a similarly efficacious effect in the next set of circumstances which provokes a discordant bodily feeling in me. In the next chapter I shall examine a schema for describing movement in the world in relation to the individual's feelings.

# Chapter 7

## Malleable body movement practices

### 7.1 Oriented and interconnected movement

#### 7.1.1 Oriented movement practice

This chapter consists of an analysis of the movement possibilities of the malleable body outside the context of massage. I shall utilise characteristics of the malleable body - taken from my observation of massage practice - to form a schema of malleable body movement in response to an object(ive).

I distinguish three fundamental stages of this type of movement. The first is an *orientation* of the body in relation to a perceived object. This involves an adjustment of bodily segments in regard to each other and to the object(ive). The centre of the person in relation to gravity - their spinal axis - remains in a stable relationship with the person's external source of support.<sup>1</sup> For example, the person might be alerted to an unusual facet of the environment which is within reach of their senses and turn towards that object. This orienting action involves the distance sensors of the head which are symmetrically and bi-laterally placed in relation to the spinal axis and

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<sup>1</sup>The person's external source of support is formed of a solid surface on which they are sitting, standing, lying etc. and which is external to the intrinsic bodily boundary formed by the skin.

which focus on the unusual object.

Rotational movements and movement of the body away from, and towards the object(ive), are possible in these bodily orientations, as long as the extent of any of these oriented movements is compensated for by a corresponding intensification of the effort of the stabilising and counterbalancing bodily segment.

The second stage of oriented movement involves a departure from one external surface of support, in favour of another. Here there is a greater *degree* of bodily orientation. The person's relationship to gravity shifts to a new position of stability which is bounded - not only by the spinal axis and the external supporting surface - but by the leading edge of the body which is extended or withdrawn in response to the object(ive). The person thus keeps their balance as a function of a 'three-cornered' bodily interaction with their surroundings and expends muscular effort in order to maintain this new position of dynamic stability.

One bodily part reaches or retracts in regard to an object(ive) whilst another bodily part - contralateral to the orienting segment - simultaneously enacts the opposite of the oriented reach or retraction. The effect of this dual action of bodily parts is to maintain a sustainable relationship between the central spinal axis and the person's external surface of support. Such a correspondence between the central spinal axis and an external surface of support allows the whole body to remain in its current position in response to the downward pull of gravity.

The third aspect of oriented movement is a shift by the person from one external surface of support to another. I shall examine the three-fold sequence of oriented movement in more detail in the following section, incorporating more explicitly the role of interconnected bodily movement which is a fundamental characteristic of the malleable and massaged body.

### **Bodily orientation in relation to an object**

The massaged person - when in situations other than that of being massaged - retains the capacity for having the contours of their bodily shape altered by contact with other surfaces (whether they be people, people's hands, inanimate objects, animals, plants etc). The bodily outline of the person maintains the attribute of malleability. Away

from the massage situation, the malleable body reverts to a form of mobility which is oriented in relation to a desired object(ive). The person can move from one place to another, orienting in regard to specific objects and - through movement - changing the ratio of the distance separating their interaction with distant objects.

In oriented movement the role of the distance senses is emphasised. I take the distance senses to be sight, hearing and smell. These senses register facets of an object(ive) whilst the whole body is able to move independently of that object. The contact senses of touching and tasting - by contrast - affect, and are affected by, any bodily movement of either the object or the perceiving body during tactile or gustatory perception of the contours of the object.

In the following section I shall use the example of sight to examine some features of the distance senses which relate to movement which is primarily oriented or primarily interconnected. The action of sight in relation to an object(ive) functions in contrast to the multiple possibilities of connectedness of the malleable body as it contacts adjacent surfaces.

The eyes are symmetrically placed equi-distant from the spinal axis. This equi-distance from the longitudinally central, spinal axis of the body also applies to the other distance senses. When the perceiving body is at its furthest distance from an object the eyes lead the orientation of the body. I suggest that visual registration of the contours of an object - the 'wandering glance of attention' (Jonas, 1970, 321) - is dependent on a sequence of discrete bodily focussings.

### **Oriented movement**

I take oriented movement to commence in response to an alignment of the directional focus of the eyes with selected facets of an object(ive). The head and the remainder of the spinal axis accommodate to those perspectives of the object(ive) which are fixed on by the focussed eyes. The placement of the two eyes as they focus and fix across the varying perspectives of an object(ive) is equi-distant from the spinal axis. The movement which constitutes the convergence of their focus is enacted in relation to the central spinal axis and to the characteristics of the object(ive) which are focussed upon. I suggest that the ears, as the organ of hearing, and the nostrils of the nose,



as the external aspect of the olfactory organ, also involve the central spinal axis in this way. The focussing of the external organs of the distance senses on a distant object incorporates an orienting of the spinal axis of the body and is the first stage in oriented movement.

In the next stage of oriented movement, the relationship of the body to an external surface of support, determines the extent of interconnected bodily orientation in relation to a line of distant focus on the facets of an object(ive). The body can twist, turn, reach or withdraw from an object(ive), whilst retaining the same basis of support, for only a limited period of time before overbalancing and involuntarily moving to a new external basis of support.

When oriented movement is undertaken in the context of the interconnected body then a prime consideration - given the inertial force exerted by the effects of gravity and the employment by the person of many interacting parts to shift the whole body from one point to another - is the comfortable alignment of those bodily parts.

Bi-pedal movements, where both sides of the body are used alternately to engage with new surfaces of external support (for example, as in walking) require the orientation and fixation of a pair of distance senses to judge the aim of the succeeding placement of bodily surfaces. This orientation is carried out from the site of previous external support, focuses on the new point of placement, and effectively leads the arrangement of bodily parts of the interconnected body.

Contact with an object(ive) - in addition to proceeding step by step as I have outlined above - more often involves a sequence of movements from or to a succession of points of external support. In this case, a procession or pattern over time of triangulations of effort occurs during the orientation of the body.<sup>2</sup> There will be a series

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<sup>2</sup>O'Connell & Gardner refer to the concept of a kinematic chain, which is 'the transmission of force in positive predetermined ways in a closed system' (O'Connell & Gardner, 1972, 4). I am more concerned here with the trajectories of movement implied in orientations of the body, and the reactions which the person makes in response to changes in the environment, rather than with the application of mechanical force to objects. The example which O'Connell & Gardner take from Steindler (1964) shows a standing person supported by the floor and pushing against a wall. This instance displays a closed kinematic chain which is also an example of a triangulation of the directionality of the body in relation to an object(ive) (the wall), an external supporting surface (the floor), and the alignment of the central spinal axis of the body in relation to the supporting surface.

of triangulated chains of interactional effort to support each succeeding orientation of the body in response to the number of changes of direction needed to carry out the desired amount of contact with, towards or away from, an object(ive). This series of adjustments of bodily parts traces the trail which the person employs as their own individualised movement response to an object(ive).

In the following section I shall examine a way in which the action of transfer from one surface of external support to another has implications for a schema of the malleable body.

### **Moving from bases of support**

Merleau-Ponty delineates the body as 'the system of all my holds on the world' (Merleau-Ponty, 1964, 18). I interpret 'holds' as the linkages of the person - in terms of distantly oriented bodily action - with a) their basis of support and b) the object(ive) to which they are oriented.

In oriented action viewed from an interconnected perspective, bodily parts extend in an oriented fashion towards or away from an object(ive) until the desired point of contact with, or distance from the object(ive) is reached. In concert with this oriented movement, other bodily parts act to stabilise the central spinal axis in relation to an external surface of support. The oriented actions of extension or withdrawal, whilst more visually obvious at the peripheral outline of the body, concurrently occur alongside the more axially situated actions of bracing or stabilising. Whilst the amount of extension or retraction of tissues is less obvious at the axial region of the body, the effects on the contralateral side of the body are extensive. That is, as the relationship of the central axis to the external supporting surface changes, quite large changes are necessary in the opposite side of the body to that where oriented action is initiated, in order to maintain the person's balance over one point of external support. The counter-poising of the contralateral movement tendencies, of orientation and stabilisation, creates a bi-directional vectoral tension which crosses the central axis of the body.

These dual directional options of movement see-saw the trajectories of action of bodily parts, in relation to the central spinal axis of the body, in a dynamic rhythm

during activities in which the body moves by means of gaining a succession of sites of external support (eg. walking and running).

There is a time when the person comes to rest at a new point of supported stability. The person has achieved another stable relation to gravity via a new external surface which is placed at a distance to the preceding surface in time and in space. In this newly attained position, all those bodily parts which were previously extended out towards an object(ive) from the sphere of a resting bodily positioning - and equally, those contractions which were embedded within the texture of the body and acted as stabilising vectors for those vectors of movement extended towards an objective - accommodate themselves to the newly emergent position of fully *externally* supported stability. Additionally, those bodily parts which withdrew from the object(ive), and were stabilised by bodily parts contained within the more central part of the body and more closely aligned with the object(ive), return to a more centrally supported position.

These manifold actions of bodily parts can be described as a process of return to a fuller measure of the bodily interconnectedness of tissues. I take the full extent of tissue interconnectedness - given my framework here of the malleable body - to be an optimising of the range of movement available to each movement-initiating segment<sup>3</sup> of the interconnected body. This optimisation comes about when all elements of the tissue of the malleable body - after contracting (in the case of muscular tissue) or changing their placement in response to the contraction of muscular tissue (in the case of connective tissue such as tendon, or superficial fascia) - return to a resting length which is consonant with a maximisation of the resting length of contiguous tissues.

The preceding analysis of oriented movement within the context of the malleable, interconnected body is one which has been abstracted from the context of increasing the personal effectiveness and comfort of bodily use. My aim was to outline general principles of appropriate movement. In order to apply these principles to the more particular cases and sequences of individual movement, where opportunities exist for

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<sup>3</sup>I take a movement-initiating segment of the malleable body to be equivalent to the functioning of a muscle motor unit as described by Basmajian (1974, 6-18).

an extension of those bodily learnings associated with massage, I shall examine the way in which the possibilities of oriented movement are affected by the *quality* of movement of the interconnected body.

Here I am interested in that phase of the movement of interconnected tissue which is associated with a return to a position of rest. The position of rest of muscular activity, which is the aim of a process of return, is characterised by interconnected mobility rather than immobility. That is, whilst the attainment of this position results in the lessened activity of specific initiating and participating segments of malleable tissue, the type of mobility of a segment of malleable tissue, in relation to the entire body at rest, is determined by the rhythm of such ongoing bodily activities as breathing, and the pulsations of bodily fluid flows.

The oriented body, and bodily participation in oriented movement, can be assessed according to the quantity of directional movement which is undertaken by the person.

#### **Interconnected movement within the context of directed movement**

Interconnected movement, by contrast, is simultaneously multi-directional. The pushes and pulls of oriented movement, exhibited within the malleable body as bunched areas associated with the contractions of muscular tissue, and which are linked with changes in the positioning of malleable connective tissue are, at any one time, multi-directional.

A trail of the varying combinations of tissues oriented to or away from an object(ive), as well as to a corresponding direction of stability, is formed by the overlaying of sequential orientations of the distance senses in relation to successive object(ives) or successive views of one object(ive). The spatial arrangement of the malleable tissues which is achieved in the action of oriented movement is retraced within the action of return. The successive adjustments of the malleable tissue, which are encompassed by any particular process of return are made in order to come closer to an intra-bodily object(ive) of the alignment of the central bodily axis with the external supporting surface.

The extent of the process which I term 'return' is distinguished by the proximity of the malleable tissues to the central spinal axis, itself tending towards a close

conjunction with the external supporting surface.

The positionality of tissues will also be predominantly determined by the placement of bony, jointed structures and the relative degrees of movement represented at the central aspects of the body in relation to peripheral bodily parts.

Interconnected movement depends upon the degree of synchronous movement of contiguous tissue. The rhythm of the whole body's breathing, for example, can readily change as additional segments of malleable tissue participate in a greater bodily 'expanse' of interconnected movement. The massager acts as both observer and 'assistant modulator'- alongside the bodily adjustments of the massaged person - of this process.

## **7.2 Considerations within a process of return**

The notion of return combines aspects of both oriented movement and interconnected movement. In order to tease out the mutual interaction of these two opposite poles of movement, I shall use the concepts of quantity and quality as representative of oriented movement and interconnected movement respectively. One aim of this analysis is to provide a groundwork for my examination of intersubjectivity and pleasure later in this project. By considering these two areas, I will expand on some uses which can be gained from the bodily learning potentially present within massage, when massage is viewed from the perspective of the malleable body.

### **7.2.1 Quantity of touch**

#### **Quantity of touch from the massager's perspective**

Any tactile manipulation of the body can vary in terms of the quantitative aspects of touch. Some examples of these amounts are: pressure, distance travelled before contact, speed of travel before contact, angle of approach to the body, duration of touch, number of repetitions of touch, amount of bodily surface of massaged body which is contacted, etc. These variations can be regulated and the touched person can assess their response to that amount of touch. Theoretically, these quantities can

be measured by an objectively validated instrument. I see *quantity* of response as marked by the amount of movement in one direction, or directionality.

I take directionality to be implicit within a massage interaction where touch is viewed as the superimposition of one freely moving surface (the contacting surface of the massager's body) onto another surface. The two surfaces, whilst they can come into contact with each other, also have the potential of becoming separate from each other. The possibility of separateness means that contact is kept by means of muscular effort. The massager's contacting surface (which is usually the hands) forms the leading edge of the body of the massager. My notion of the leading edge of the body applies to both the massaging and massaged body, and I will briefly expand on the movement attributes of the leading edge of the body and some related implications for massage and bodily practice. The leading edge of a body which is involved in movement *towards* a spatially separated object(ive), extends towards the object(ive) and becomes the closest bodily part to the object(ive). A bodily leading edge is directed in concert with those sensory systems whose range extends beyond the contactable surface of the body and is aimed to intersect with that surface of the object which the person holds in distant focus. Muscular effort is used to propel the leading edge of the body towards an object(ive) (eg. an extension of the forearm to reach out the hand) whilst the contraction of the paired and *oppositely acting* muscles (eg. a flexion of the forearm to retract the hand), brings the leading edge of the body back within the circumference of the body.

Within the massaging context, the bodily part which the massager uses as a contacting surface has a greater degree of quantitative mobility than the contacted surface of the massaged body. The massager can choose to vary any one of a number of angles, amount of pressure, duration of touch etc.<sup>4</sup>

The massager's contacting surface is also her leading bodily edge. In my schema, any body which engages in translatory action is characterised by a duality of bodily

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<sup>4</sup>Sandra Wiess (1974) has ably catalogued what she terms qualities of touch, and what I would term quantities of touch. She states that touch as a communicative language is influenced by factors such as duration, location, action (rate of approach to the body surface), intensity (amount of deformation of skin) and sensation (of comfort or discomfort). I do not see any conflict of terminology here, as Weiss does not address the issue of a distinction between tactile quantity and quality.

use. Wherever there is a leading edge there is also a more stable and supported region of the body which enables particular bodily positions to be maintained in response to the pull of gravity. The contiguous nature of all bodily tissues brings about this amoeba-like extension of leading bodily parts and anchoring of stable bodily parts. The remainder of the body is inextricably harnessed to any leading edge of the body. As the massager's hands work with the massaged person, the rest of her body is also implicated in terms of directionality and the effort of the massaging act. The massager changes the areas where she is working at the massaged bodily surface, as well as changing the quantity of the touch applied at a particular point. The massager is alternately oriented to specific portions of the malleable tissues through her tactile contact and to more extensive areas of the massaged tissues by the use of her more distant perceptual activity.

The massager uses all of her own body to respond to changes in the textural tissue of the massaged body, by maintaining both her uprightness and her investigative posture in relation to that body. Massaging is marked by the dynamism of the massager's tactile manipulations of tissue, her visual and tactile assessment of the effects of that contact on surrounding areas of the massaged body, and her own bodily changes of postural attitude in order to recommence her massaging actions with an adjusted tactile input, in response to changes in the malleability of the massaged tissues. The massager, in short, is continually changing her stance to allow her leading edge the greatest range and degree of flexibility of directional approach to the massaged body. At the same time, in order that her own bodily weight does not interfere with the extensibility of her leading edge, the massager maintains her centre of stability - in relation to gravity - so that she can alter her directional approach to the massaged body, or shift her centre of support so that she can freely access a different part of the massaged body. The massager's bodily adjustments are undertaken in response to changes in the malleability of massaged tissues. She shifts her bodily arrangement to maintain an optimal freedom *and* stability of movement, whilst massaging differing bodily areas and differing degrees of tissue malleability, which have altered in response to her previous massaging actions.

### Quantity of touch from the perspective of the massaged person

The situation of the massaged person is unlike that of the massager in that there is no particular object (the massaged body) or part object (sections of the massaged body) which provide a directional focus for her bodily movements. In lieu of the multiple options of externally directed, oriented movement which are available to the standing massager, the massaged person assumes an extensively supported position (eg. lying or sitting, supported by massage table, floor or chair etc.).

The massaged person's more extensive basis of support encourages a ready adjustment of interconnected bodily tissue in the direction of a return to an arrangement of maximal *intrinsic* bodily stability. By intrinsic bodily stability I am referring to the relationship of the entire bodily tissues to the centrality of interconnected bodily support provided at the central spinal axis of the body. In movement terms, the operation of support at this region is due to a minimal movement of interconnected bodily parts. There is a preponderance of connected, rigid bodily tissue (bones of the vertebra) along the spinal axis which stabilises the whole body along a vertical axis in the upright position. This area of greatest stability supports the soft tissues of the body in conjunction with the muscular maintenance of position in relation to gravity, by the reciprocal and antagonistic action of muscles, which involves a minimal expenditure of muscular effort.<sup>5</sup> The central vertical axis is supported by an external basis of support, in turn providing a columnar support for transverse sections of the trunk and, via the shoulder and pelvic girdles, the arms and legs. These appendages are then able to act with the greatest degree of independence in relation to the downward pull of gravity. The malleable tissues of the body refer back to the mid-line in that they take up a supported, resting position.

The contacting surfaces of the massager's body and the massaged body can be viewed as providing two extensible end-points of a line which designates a trajectory of movement between the two people. I take quantity of touch to denote the rate of

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<sup>5</sup>'Muscles whose action is opposite to and so may oppose that of a prime mover are called antagonists' (O'Connell & Gardner, 1972, 30). '[The] only important application [of] antagonists is in their acting against gravity' (Basmajian, 1974, 95). 'The support of the body, for instance in the upright position, utilises the "most economical of anti-gravity mechanisms"' (Basmajian, 1974, 175).



directed movement along the distance between the anticipated point of contact of two, separated objects. In the case of the quantity of bodily surface which is contacted, the larger the amount of tissue which is contacted, the more reduced will be the rate of movement along the trajectorial line which is being followed by the massaging action. Where two objects are already touching the new dual end-points of directed action can be observed at the point where the effects of the massaging action appear to stop within the bodily tissue of the massaged person, and at the point where the initiation of the impetus of the massager's action can be observed in the massager's body.<sup>6</sup>

When two surfaces are in contact a potentially discrete and measurable *quantity* of touch begins to take on characteristics which incorporate both the tactile intention of the massage participants (eg. for the massager: "I am going to touch the person in this place with this amount of pressure" and for the massaged person: "I will invest my bodily tissues with this degree of malleability in response to the touch of the massager") as well as a more extensive bodily involvement of massager and massaged person. In the following segment I will look at another option for describing bodily movement in other than quantitative terms.

### 7.2.2 Quality of response

I suggest that a qualitative bodily response, in a study where material is verbally elicited and given, denotes *interconnectivity* between bodily parts which move in a directionally determinate way. This interconnectivity is not random. Rather it is marked by the presence of intervening passageways of fluid containers, air containers,

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<sup>6</sup>In massage, the relationship of the two objects is constrained in terms of the acceptability of the anticipated contact of surfaces with each other. It is usual for the massager and the massaged person to explicitly agree on what will be touched and in what manner. At times this is done using the conventions of massage practice, for example for the massaged person to ask the massager what clothing needs to be removed. Some examples of limitation on the type of contact given by the conventions of general massage practice are the exclusion of the genitalia from the massager's touch, the exclusion of an intensity of touch which leads to unacceptable levels of discomfort for the massaged person and the exclusion of the use of bodily surfaces by the massager which are used primarily as a source of localised pleasure by the massager. Examples of the latter would be rubbing external genitalia against the massaged body. This last point would be less than useful for the massaged person when massage is framed in the context of a contractual arrangement where the action of rubbing is paid for by the massaged person and relates to the comfort of the massaged, rather than the massaging person.

membranous tissues, etc. These spaces allow for a time differential between the initiation of directionally determinate movement and the effect of this movement on contiguous, and then successively surrounding, moving bodily parts. The intervening spaces are characterised by movement as well. These are the rhythmical pulsations given by the muscular linings of vessels, heart muscle, etc., whose contractile basis is marked by a predictability of action. This action is predictable in reference to the gradations of oscillatory movement of contiguous tissues.

In the terms which I have described, any action of the body which can be described quantitatively is embedded in a structure of interconnected, qualitative movement.

An analysis of reports of bodily experience - and the bodily actions which accompany those experiences - implies facets of movement which are sequenced in ongoing phases of distantly directed and interconnectively experienced movement.

For movement to be obvious to an observer, some quantity of directionally focussed, quantitatively measurable movement is present. This observability of movement allows the massager to make a descriptive assessment of that movement. An evaluation of the social meaning of the massager's judgement can then be made in conjunction with the massaged person. The massager's and the massaged person's respective judgements about the meaning of observable quantities of directionally determinate movement made in massage, can be traced, through the talk of the massager and the massaged person, to bodily feelings. In a bodily context, the agreed upon meaning of these feeling based judgements relates to a sense of the appropriate placing of a particular movement or set of movements within the wider context of those actions which are possible in the world.

I suggest that feelings of the body imply a qualitative use of the body. In massage the hands of the massager help make more regular the malleable tissue textures of the massaged body. At the same time, these areas of irregular tissue often are sore or have discomfort on being touched. The process of loosening of the malleable tissues is often accompanied by a feeling of global pleasure for the massaged person. A sense of the entire body, and a registration of the avenues whereby a stronger feeling of the intrinsic movement of whole body interconnectedness can be gained, implies incremental changes in the arrangement of the tissue structures of the entire body.

The bodily movement which takes place in a rearrangement of the relative length of contiguous sections of tissue is an agglomerative, as well as an additive change in the distance travelled by each segment of tissue. Feelings experienced successively are distinguished from each other in a way which is similar to the qualitative difference between successive arrangements of the relative malleability of interconnected bodily tissues.

## **Part III**

# **Feeling-based options for bodily movement**

## Chapter 8

# Significance of malleable body experience

### Introduction

My purpose in pursuing the importance of bodily experience in massage is to point out ways in which the person can learn about their bodily tissues. With the assistance of the massager, this can be done in a manner which aligns with the massaged person's particular construction of the meaning associated with discomfort and with the particular arrangement of interconnectivity of bodily parts exhibited by the person.

The focus of this chapter - emerging from the massage interaction - is on how the meaning of bodily feelings is constructed. The malleable body and the ways in which the movement options available to this body are expressed are important elements within this framework. In this chapter I shall utilize my own memory of the processing of phases of my bodily movement to access information about an individual level of action which is outside the immediate massaging context. A major part of this processing was carried out at a sensory level and consisted of allowing a return of areas of bodily tightness to a more integrated and interconnected level of bodily activity. I suggest that the culmination of bodily sensing is an increase in the coherence of the movement of bodily tissues, rather than an increase in the differentiation of segments of the malleable tissues, and is thus not readily observable by the massager.

## 8.1 Directional movement outside massage

Just as the massaged person frequently seeks a feeling of well-being via the process of being massaged, so my aim in applying principles of movement to my own feeling state was to feel more comfortable. My method of personal analysis derived from observations undertaken during massage and I will allude to similarities between the undertaking of massage and the scene of individually initiated changes in feeling states.

The impetus for self-initiated change in bodily feeling comes, I suggest, from a registration by the person of physical discomfort. This can range from localised soreness or stiffness to a more diffuse whole bodily sense of ill-ease and/or distress, which can be flavoured by emotional overtones such as anger, sadness, jealousy etc. In order to initiate a process which will result in a more comfortable bodily feeling then a first step - in terms of the malleable body - is to the diminish the person's level of involvement with whatever bodily activity the person is carrying out in relation to a tangible, distant object. In effect the person physically and visually disengages from an object of attention. A lessening of engagement means that the person's arrangement of bodily parts gives up an orientation which signifies a uni-directional relation to a distant object. The person's bodily orientation to a distant object involves the movement of bodily parts away from the resting attitude assumed by the linked parts of the whole body. As in the massage situation the person becomes relatively more still to achieve a disconnection from orientation in regard to a distant object. As in massage, available supporting surfaces provide the means of being still whilst in varying positions.

By reverting to a stable, supported and comfortable position the person is initiating a change in the sequencing and directionality of bodily movements. Such a change is based on the initial stimulus of a feeling of localised or generalised discomfort. The direction of anticipated change - in my experience - is away from discomfort and towards comfort.

In the following section I shall examine some implications of a transition towards bodily comfort in terms of the sequencing and orientation of bodily movements.

### 8.1.1 Disengagement

A spatial implication of disengagement in relation to the palpable and *interconnected* body is that bodily movement becomes more directionally obtuse. I suggest that the person - in seeking to adjust a felt lack of comfort - moves away from an orientation with distant objects in which their bodily posture diverges from a position of maximised and available bodily comfort.<sup>1</sup> By an examination of the nature of the movement towards comfort, I propose that an understanding of the relationship between the person's current activity and felt discomfort can also be established.

At the level of the palpable body, active engagement with objects at a distance requires the mobilisation of some segments of the body and the quiescence of others. For instance in the action of picking up an item from a seated position one part of the body will act as a leading edge whilst the rest of the body extends towards the object(ive) to lessening degrees. From a perspective of bodily movement the role of the centre of stability of the body becomes more heavily emphasised as distance from the object(ive) increases. The spinal axis of the body forms the central bodily region in upright positioning in relation to gravity and is the region of bodily stability from which interactive acts with distant object(ives) are initiated. This region of stability is characterised by movement which is expressed in terms of interconnected bodily space.

Like an amalgam of parts linked through an elastic medium, the malleable body yields to the touch in some areas and resists the touch of the massager in other areas. Some areas are differentiated by inalienably different tissue malleabilities, for example the hardness of bone versus the serous, sliding quality of the abdominal viscera. In a full degree of interconnected bodily use, palpably different bodily segments are positioned in relation to adjacent bodily segments, so that an optimum range of motion of each segment is assured.

In the following section I shall expand on the way in which forms of possible movement change as the person's orientation shifts *away from* a distant object(ive) to

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<sup>1</sup>The availability of a desired degree of comfort will be influenced by the degree to which the environment of the person matches with their accustomed and habitual comfort requirements, eg. temperature, softness or hardness of surfaces, current social norms of acceptable bodily use, etc.

become absorbed by interconnected bodily movement. I shall also trace an analagous patterning of the person's style of movement in the transition from a feeling of discomfort to one of comfort.

### 8.1.2 Return

#### Return in relation to malleable tissues

The particulate sections of malleable tissue which initiate change of the relative mobility of contiguous bodily segments are the muscles. Spatially, muscular tissue has the movement property of shortening in length. Whilst this characteristic allows movement of a bodily part in one direction, an associated muscle - described in anatomical nomenclature as the antagonist - must lengthen and then subsequently contract, shortening in its turn to allow subsequent movement in the *return* direction. Concomitantly, muscular tissue of the bodily part which has moved in the original direction will increase in length as the antagonist shortens. As the person disengages with distance-oriented action, then many segments of muscular tissue act to allow bodily parts to return to a more predominantly stable and supported state. Ideally, each segment of muscular tissue enacts this movement process to that extent which will enable linked neighbouring segments to participate in the maintenance of the stability of the whole body. This latter state is ideal in terms of malleable body massage and is what the massager works towards as she successively mobilises areas of tightened soft tissue. Whilst the attainment of an optimum degree of tissue flexibility forms the tactile agenda of the massager, it does not necessarily comprise the whole agenda of the combined efforts of massager and massaged person.

From the massager's tactile perspective, a linked series of maintained muscular tightnesses shows the way in which the massaged person patterns their postural adjustment as they move in relation to an object(ive).

### 8.1.3 Palpation

A major objective of malleable body massage is that the massaged person learns about their body. Information which is noted by the massager is predominantly



tactile. For the massaged person, access to a tactile-based type of bodily learning is by *feeling* the bodily sensation which accompanies the touch of the massager's hands. In the following section I shall outline a schema in which the level of feeling provides an intersection point for the tactile knowledges of massager and massaged person. Feeling also provides a point of linkage with the interconnected bodily context of distance-oriented action. The massaged person, I suggest, can monitor their own feelings at times during distance-oriented activities with the aim of testing the degree of access which they have to a pleasurable bodily sense akin to that obtained during massage.

In the context of the massaged body, the intersection of feeling for massager and massaged person is most immediately evident at a point where distortions of the smooth interconnection of adjacent areas of soft tissue are palpated by the massager and registered along a continuum of comfort or discomfort by the massaged person. These areas are variously described by the massaged person as, for instance, "sore", "tender", "I can feel it", "ticklish" or "touchy".

For the massager, a concomitant malleable characteristic of discomfort as described by the massaged person, is a localised bulking of the soft tissues. This bulking of the malleable tissue is maintained by the contractile movement of muscular tissue in relation to contiguous tissues.

Muscular tissue remains in a contracted state to the degree that contiguous and surrounding areas of soft tissue are also drawn in, held in place and consequently reduced in mobility.<sup>2</sup> Whilst from the massager's perspective some malleable tissues can feel distorted in their quality of sustained immobility and provide evidence of areas which hinder the relaxation of all segments of the malleable body, these same tissues also provide evidence of the capacity of the massaged person to fix the position of bodily parts in regard to a distant object(ive). The quality of immobility provided by contracted muscle is, in effect, one way of enacting a variant of distance-oriented

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<sup>2</sup>The effect of the stiffening of connective tissue is noted by Juhan: 'Both chronic pressure and chronic immobility facilitate this bunching and gluing process, so that areas that are under constant stress and areas that have fallen into disuse both tend to fall prey to it. In this way structures that were originally designed to be functionally separate - such as two muscle bellies lying side by side, or a tendon within its connective tissue sheath - begin to form adhesions which impair their ability to glide freely over one another' (Juhan, 1987, 74).

movement.

I suggest that the massager's judgement of tautened tissue as something which will benefit by an increased degree of mobility is reinforced when the massaged person feels soreness or lack of flexibility in that area of malleable tissue.

#### 8.1.4 Feelings of discomfort and a process of return

From the massaged person's perspective, the feelings generated by linked and successive muscular tightenings of the massaged tissues can be linked to engagement with an object(ive). The process of muscular fixation which initiates a palpable bunching of malleable tissues is in the service of distance-oriented movement consisting variously of; approach to a goal, stasis in regard to that goal, or increasing distance from that goal. I shall expand on the style of feeling which is generated as specific muscles - contracting to achieve a uni-directional movement - subsequently lessen their degree of contraction to the point whereby the action of a complementary muscle then enables movement in the reciprocal and *opposite* direction. The action of return is one where the moving tissues return to positions which are marked more by an extensive degree of interconnectivity than by a uni-directional orientation to an object(ive).

In relation to the complementary dual muscular action of agonist and antagonist implicit in any uni-directional activity,<sup>3</sup> then tightened muscular tissue provides palpable evidence to the massager of sustained contraction in either agonist or antagonist muscle. Sustained contraction will limit the extent of directional movement available to the person as they finalize their anticipated spatial positioning in relation to their object(ive). From a perspective of the *usefulness* to the person of sustained contraction of muscle, the person is actively limiting the degree of their whole body involvement with their object(ive) along the direction specified by the leading edge of the body.<sup>4</sup>

In order to align with a desired end-point in regard to their object(ive), the person

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<sup>3</sup>The alignment of the entire bodily tissues or sections of tissue which project out from the body propels the person towards or away from an object(ive) in only one direction at a time.

<sup>4</sup>I take the leading bodily edge to be that part of the body which projects furthest away from the major bulk of the bodily tissues and also represents the most extended point of bodily movement in relation to (either towards or away from) an object(ive).

orients away from a previous line-of-action by employing one or a series of actions which are drawn from the interconnected movement possibilities of the entire body. The attainment of a specifiable orientation and distance from an object(ive) is dependent upon the cessation of a sequence of directional movements which were employed in relation to a previous object(ive). Contraction of a group of muscles *other* than those which initiated the original direction of movement in relation to an object(ive) occurs to allow a reversal of direction. In my interpretation of bodily movement the leading edge of the body must reverse its directionality to return to a more fully interconnected bodily arrangement prior to any assumption of action in relation to another object(ive). This resumption of a fuller extent of bodily interconnectedness allows another arrangement of the entire body to occur, one which is now oriented to an object(ive) which is spatially distinct from a previous object(ive).

I suggest that the feelings which accompany action involved in aligning oneself with an object(ive) can be portrayed in terms of oriented movement and interconnected movement within a movement schema derived from the malleable body. In my experience of the malleable body I hypothesise that the most accessible dovetailing of feeling and movement occurs when the lengthening of contracted tissue occurs and a corresponding reversal of movement is initiated by the antagonistic muscular tissue. I take this movement to be most accessible to feeling because the self-initiated action of lengthening is similar in its occupation of space to the lengthening achieved at areas of recurring contracted tissue by the pressure of the manipulating hands of the massager.

As the project of the massager is more readily explicable to me than the interconnected bodily feelings of the massaged person, I will use a description of the spatial placement of malleable tissues to guide my analysis of the feelings which accompany self-initiated changes in the patterns of interconnectedness of those same malleable tissues.

At this point, I shall bring my discussion back to a consideration of a person who is initiating their own response to experienced discomfort in terms of the *interconnected* body. I am assuming that the person's whole body is supported and stable, thus allowing a maximum effect of the lengthening of bodily tissues. Each contiguous

section responds to a bodily disengagement with distance-orientation of the body by taking up the space allowed by the degree of lengthening of a neighbouring, and linked, section.<sup>5</sup>

Where the individual is allowing a process of optimum lengthening of interconnected tissues to occur then discomfort is often provoked when sustained immobility in a particular area of contractile tissue and its associated surrounding tissue limits the degree of ongoing lengthening of interconnected tissue. I view these instances of discomfort which are caused by the immobility of sections of tissue as temporary.<sup>6</sup> I suggest that the transient nature of discomfort experienced by the person is due to the pressure exerted by the ongoing lengthening process of sections of interconnected tissue at the intersecting surfaces of tissue segments which are characterised by a sustained immobility. A person who has experienced the overall pleasurable context associated with increasing tissue malleability during massage, has some experience of the way in which feelings of discomfort can be subsumed and dissipated, by an awareness of the feelings associated with an increasing extent of bodily interconnectedness.

### Comfort and a process of return

From my observations as a massager, the most pleasurable comments after a massage come when the interconnected movement of segments of a person's tissues is at a maximum. In terms of bodily movement a prime example is the observation of the movement of breathing as reflected throughout the entire body rather than being solely visible at the region occupied by the muscles of breathing. The movement

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<sup>5</sup>I am deliberately dealing here with the phase of lengthening rather than contracting in an effort to get away from a schema of movement which derives from a model of distance-oriented movement. A major application of muscular contraction is to initiate distance-oriented movement. In a distance-oriented perceptual approach, successive shortenings of muscular tissue manoeuvre the entire body or bodily parts in relation to a distant object. Lengthenings of muscular tissue, by contrast, indicate a successively more precise re-arrangement of the interconnections of the body which is stably supported by a surface which is external to the body. Another reason for my preference for the lengthening of muscular tissue is that the degree of tissue pliability is utilised by the massager as a feedback source within malleable body massage, ie. as a means of satisfying herself about the degree of mobility which has been attained by the malleable tissues.

<sup>6</sup>My assumption is that the tissues available for massage have a high degree of interconnected integrity, ie. they are not damaged.

of breathing is initiated by a contraction of one group of muscles, and the body is subsequently returned to its original position by a complementary group of muscles (eg. the antagonistic action of external and internal intercostal muscle groups.<sup>7</sup>)

If the person is not engaged in directing their bodily actions towards a particular and distant object(ive), then alongside the rhythmical action of breathing a fuller process of return is occurring. This type of return - whilst the person is in a resting, supported position - is marked by a dynamic quality. Muscles act to allow a progressive adjustment towards a state of rest which becomes more precisely attuned to an evenness of the interconnected bodily rhythm. Whilst the body is at rest in relation to a distant object(ive) and in a situation of supported stability,<sup>8</sup> the process of lengthening of contracted areas of tissue is reinstated. When the person has attained a position which feels comfortable, there is no longer any requirement for the muscles to act to sustain that position.<sup>9</sup>

My analysis of the initiation of a self-initiated process of becoming-more-comfortable in response to noticeable discomfort, also depends on some prior experience, by the person, of a deliberate manipulation of the malleable tissues, where a major aim of the manipulation is an enhancement of the person's self-expressed and immediate comfort. Such a system of touch, which I have denoted as malleable body massage, has the advantage of linking the massaged person's experience of comfort and discomfort with a description of the malleability of the palpated textures of the body provided by the massager, itself verifiable by the self-touching of the massaged person. The

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<sup>7</sup>Basmajian, 1974, 359.

<sup>8</sup>With the phrase 'supported stability' I am referring to a situation where parts of the body remain supported either by other sections of the body or by surfaces external to the body. This supported stability is in contrast to translatory movement where parts of the body leave their supporting surface (or suspension from a bodily part which is in turn supported) in order to change that external basis of support.

<sup>9</sup>My comment is from the standpoint of the massager, where the feeling of comfort can be approached solely from the perspective of malleable tissues which have come to their optimum degree of lengthening in relation to surrounding tissues. Effectively, the massager acts as a guide to the degree of comfort which can be attained. The massager is applying movement to areas of the massaged body with the associated beneficial effects of warmth created by friction, enhancement of localised blood flow, etc. Whilst the massaged person can massage themselves to access this degree of localised comfort, the sustained application of the massage, and the range of bodily access provided by the fact that the massager is working on someone other than herself, will give an additive and overlaid quality, an intensity to the feeling of massage which is rarely available in self-massage.

importance of exposure to a tactile system which matches these criteria lies within the interaction which has gone on between massager and massaged person, where both people combine to verbally assign a meaning to the palpation-based feelings of massager and massaged person, a meaning which is acceptable to both people and tactually verifiable by either person. The massager is able to link together and verbally describe, from her more distant perspective, a structure which refers to a pattern of the key elements of her tactile assessment of the body and the spatial relationships between these elements. A bodily analogy, based on tissue textural markers, draws on the available templates of bodily interconnections. For instance, the massager could assess the implications of palpated textural markers in terms of deviations from the optimum length of adjacent muscle groups. Otherwise - if the assessed pattern of regions of tissue tightness has a form which is outside that offered by muscular relationships in the body - the massager may well draw on the explanatory resources of an alternative system which denotes a differing pattern of the interconnections between palpable sections of the body (eg. pressure to acupuncture points).

In a case where the massager's assessment of the palpable markers of the textural quality of the soft tissues is unmatchable by any current systematic description of bodily interconnections, the massager reverts to her understanding of the meaning of her own bodily experience to bring some sequential analysis to bear on localised, spatially disparate sections of immobile malleable tissue.

The usefulness of a sequential analysis of bodily patterns of tightness can be viewed within the larger context of enhanced movement by the massaged person outside the massage context. I take the movement of parts or the whole of the body - in relation to a distant object(ive), and which involves bodily areas moving from their basis of support - to be dependent on a linear relationship with an object(ive). I envisage bodily parts as moving sequentially from a region of support and consequently lessened mobility - through a region of greater mobility and lessened support - and towards a point of greater stability, as the entire set of bodily tissues comes closer to an anticipated stability of position in relation to her object(ive). Whilst distance-oriented movement can deviate from the upright position where the feet act as a support, and bodily movement can be carried out using various bodily surfaces, eg. shoulders,

rump, as a means of bodily support, I conceptualise the distance orientation of the ambulatory body as moving along a pathway which is linear in relation to aspects of the object(ive) of movement. Organs of the body which guide the movement of the body in response to non-contacting object(s) do so by a convergence of lines of bodily action (eg. the focussing of the eyes and the movements of the head to orient the ears towards a particular sound) which, in turn, orients bodily parts so that a *line* of bodily action in relation to the object or aspects of the object is delineated.

In order for the person to move with ease towards, away from or in concert with, a stationary or moving and distant object(ive), the movement of parts of the body will proceed sequentially with no hesitation of movement. As the goal of the massager is to loosen the tissues so that they have maximum flexibility in relation to contiguous tissue, then a simple application of this aim to movement in the world would signify ease of movement for the person. The ongoing reactions of the person to objects in the world around them, and the way in which malleable tissues are reinvested with residual tightness and discomfort, are factors which limit the attainment of ease of movement in the world. It is not usual for all tightnesses in the body to disappear following massage, leaving the person as a metaphorical blank slate as they recommence oriented activity. In the next two chapters I shall explore some theoretical avenues emerging from my analysis of massaged women's use of the negotiated meaning which is assigned to patterns of bodily tight spots within the massage interaction. One application of my analysis is to alter patterns of oriented action outside the massage context in the interests of an increase in bodily comfort.

## Chapter 9

# Pleasure and malleable body learning

### 9.1 Pleasure as a parameter of massage

Drawing on my own experience as a massager, as well as the reports of students of massage, I have found that one of the most satisfying aspects of massaging other people is to hear such gratuitous comments as “Oh that feels so good”, or simply “I feel great”. In the following section I will expand, on the basis of these comments of well-being as a product of massage procedures, into the more generalised area of bodily pleasure as a useful aim of massage.

My recourse to the *Shorter Oxford Dictionary* illustrated a distinction between well-being and pleasure. Whilst well-being is a ‘state of being or doing well in life’, pleasure is defined as ‘the condition of consciousness induced by the enjoyment of what is felt or viewed as good or desirable’. I am interested in the component of attention to a feelings stated implicated in the notion of pleasure. I suggest that when a person speaks of their pleasure, thus turning the attention of speaker and listener to a state which has some common meaning for both of them, there may well be traces, embedded within that account, of her way of attaining a pleasurable state.

I suggest that the usefulness of such a definition of pleasure in the context of massage practice lies in its acknowledgement of the *awareness* of a particular bodily



state. Being aware of what makes a person feel a state of well-being may provide a basis for enabling the person to replicate that state which is viewed as good or desirable.

The preceding definition also distinguishes the constructed nature of what is good or desirable. An influence which is separate to the person has determined which feeling is, or is seen to be, desirable by the enjoyer of that feeling. In terms of the negotiated stage of the massage interaction described earlier, whilst there is no certainty that the massager and the massaged person are able to experience the exact quality of the described pleasure of the other person, they do have the opportunity of acknowledging their position in relation to the stated terms of the experience of pleasure.

An issue which emerges when speaking of the tactile manipulation of massage and the concept of pleasure is the conflation which exists in popular conceptions of massage, between massage used as a remedy or therapy for bodily disorders (Wood, 1974), and commercial sexual transactions which are also described as massage. Both these uses of massage imply the notion of physical pleasure. Massage therapists do not touch the genitalia in massage and are concerned that therapeutic massage is not promoted as a sexually based activity.

If massage is viewed as the manipulation of the malleable tissues of the body and additionally, if it is seen as promoting a sense of well-being then some remaining factors which distinguish massage from sexual activity are: a) the lack of contact with the genital organs and b) the respective physical positionings of the massage participants.

### 9.1.1 Pleasure, pain and the malleable body

Ricoeur, in his reading of Freud, raises the question of Freud's interpretation of the 'meaning of pleasure itself':

'Pleasure and unpleasure, therefore, cannot be referred to an increase or decrease of a quantity (which we describe as "tension due to stimulus"), although they obviously have a great deal to do with that factor. It appears

that they depend, not on this quantitative factor, but on some characteristic of it which we can only describe as a qualitative one. . . *Perhaps it is the rhythm, the temporal sequence of changes, rises and falls in the quantity of stimulus*' (Freud, 1984, 414 in Ricoeur, 1970, 320, my emphasis).

By extending Freud's comment, I take rhythm to be the relationship between the increase or decrease of a quantity. In terms of the malleable body, I suggest that rhythm is dependent on variations in the amount of contraction of the malleable tissues, as reflected in the movement of bodily parts and of the entire body.

The massager is most concerned, on a tactile level, with variations in the continuity or evenness of the malleable surface(s) of the massaged body. The massager seeks to manipulate the accessible malleable tissues of the body so that there is a continuity of bodily textures, with the result that the malleability of one area of tissue is not sharply discontinuous with the surrounding areas of malleable tissue. The effect of this smoothing for the massaged person, on localised body areas, is that one section of accessible bodily tissue has a maximal range of movement (given the constraints of differing types of tissue and the degree of fixity of any one part of the whole body). During malleable body massage, the whole body is massaged. The cumulative effect of sequential portions of the body being massaged and made more malleable is of the whole body becoming relatively more malleable.

I shall examine the implications of an increasing bodily malleability, sustained through massage, on the perception of the sensed body. My notion of pleasure, based on my experience in massage, has a strong sensate quality. The massaged person is inundated with malleable tissue movement which is supplied by the massager. The massaged person is not engaging in oriented action. My analysis of pleasure of the malleable body is based on sensing rather than acting.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>This is not to say that pleasure cannot be experienced whilst the person is acting. The examples of sexual pleasure as well as pleasure experienced during, for instance, running or swimming over long distances, are cases where action and the experience of pleasure can go hand in hand. A common denominator of these last examples is the repetition of a sequence of physical actions. Bodily parts, though they are not at rest, still have a constancy of spatial relationship with each other. For example, in running, the trunk and head have a certain relationship to the place to where the person is directed, and the limbs move in a repetitive pattern to cover the distance towards that object(ive). The quality of rhythmicity associated with sexual interplay forms a more complex

Pain also has a highly sensate quality. The person's awareness of pain becomes highly focussed on that bodily part which is painful, and can result in the exclusion of any attention to object(ive)s in the world which surrounds the moving body. In the situation of the massaged and resting body, where the emphasis on relaxation and associated sensate qualities would tend to enhance the sensed intensity of painful bodily areas, why is pain often reported as decreasing during massage?

## 9.2 Rhythm, pleasure and massage

A useful initial step in answering this question is provided in Freud's reference to feelings which are not pleasure by the use of the term 'unpleasure'. I will take unpleasure to be a synonym for pain.

In terms of the massage situation, as a massager I take the easing of a person's pain to warrant priority over any other needs or wishes expressed by the massager or the massaged person. Pain has an immediacy which evokes a response in the person who is feeling that sensation. I will analyse the evocation of this response in terms of the role of bodily mimicry deliberately assumed by the massager.

Whilst I am not suggesting that the massager participates in any bodily pain which is experienced by the massaged person, my analysis of the movement pattern of the malleable body suggests a way of interpreting and dealing with the experience of pain. The massager, by mimicking the directions of movement which she observes in the malleable tissues, is able to gain a sense of the location of the feelings of the massaged person *in terms of* a schema of malleable bodily movement.

I suggest that a massaged person's experience of a feeling of pleasure can be constructed as the rhythm of interconnected movement gained through the lengthening action of interconnected segments of the body at rest. I visualise these movements as the return of the musculature and associated tissues of the body to a state of more extensive interconnectedness. I propose that a return to a positioning of stability is both consequent and prior to re-establishing patterns of muscular contractual effort

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agenda, one factor of which is the multiple sites to which bodily movement may be aimed in the pursuit of sexual pleasure. I suggest, however, that rhythmicity can be said to characterise many sexual pleasures.

which are utilised during oriented bodily movement of the body in relation to the observed patterns of movement of objects in the world. Massage serves mechanically to loosen areas of contracted muscle.

### 9.2.1 Pleasure as feeling in the context of movement

I shall outline a schema of the way in which predominantly interconnected and predominantly oriented movement patterns can be used to describe feelings. Feeling is a characteristic of interconnected movement. In order to register a feeling, in malleable tissue terms, there needs to be movement of one segment of bodily tissue against another. The person registers the differential movement of a portion of tissue which has greater range of movement in contrast to a contiguous portion which has a smaller range of movement.<sup>2</sup>

From the viewpoint of the person who is aware of bodily feelings outside the context of massage, the feelings associated with a differential in the tightness of contiguous regions in the body also exhibit a differential in the rhythmical sequence of breathing, fluid flows etc. at that bodily area. The person's registration of feeling then becomes one of a differential in the rate of movement, because of the interconnected nature of all bodily tissue, and the rhythmical movement of the fluid flows of the entirety of sections of contiguous tissue.

A feeling which results from a direct impingement of a surface of the body with a surface external to the body serves to highlight the malleable status of that segment of the body in contrast to the malleable quality of the external surface which the person contacts.

#### Feeling and return to a fuller extent of interconnectedness

In order to come to a movement-based description of those reported feelings of massaged people which tie in with an overall pleasurable sense of the body, rather than

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<sup>2</sup>This analysis is in terms of the malleable body. It is based on reports in massage where indications of pain by the massaged person are accompanied by a registration of tightness (ie. a small range of movement) in the tissues by the massager. The massager's registration of tightness is dependent on comparison with more mobile adjacent tissues.

any specific feeling which is localised in an area of the body, I shall examine the role of feeling in the context of oriented action. Oriented action provides a contrasting movement possibility to that of interconnected movement.

My argument here is that oriented action does not lend itself to the registration of the differential movement of bodily parts which I have assessed as being crucial to feeling. A registration of the differential rates of movement of sections of contiguous tissue, moving relative to each other, is not possible in oriented action because the bodily tissues themselves are aligned in relation to an object(ive). All sections of tissue then participate in rhythmical, interconnected bodily action on a basis of their fixity of position, maintained by muscular action, enacted in order to hold the person at a chosen distance from an object(ive). There is a gradient of relative tension of tissues which is marked off by proximity to an object(ive), to the sequentially formed patterns of extension and stabilisation of the body in relation to a desired position and perspective on that object(ive), and which is related to the trajectory of projected movement which links the distance senses, in their role of guide for bodily movement, with the possible line of action of the whole body. In terms of the malleable tissue, a massager can quantify the rate of movement of all sections of the interconnected body in relation to an object(ive). I have linked the massager's style of assessment with the degree of tightness felt in the soft tissues. An alternative way of speaking about the quantity of movement in the tissues would concern the amount of connected movement, that is, the resiliency of the tissues due to the movement of fluids through an area, and the indirect effect of the to and fro action of breathing transmitted, through intervening tissues, to the area being massaged.

In examining feelings from the perspective of the person experiencing their own body, I take feelings to be based on the person's registration of the movement of the malleable tissues as those tissues change position relative to each other. Juhan (1987) emphasises the pre-eminence of movement in the process of sensing.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup>'It is the motions and pressures of the muscles which create sensations, and it is the selection and repetition of specific sensations which condition the learned patterns of motor activity' (Juhan, 1987, 190). 'Touch receptors in my skin, pressure sensitive Pacinian corpuscles in my deeper tissues, and Ruffini end organs in my joint capsules all provide sensory responses to every distortion of tissue caused by muscular activity...I cannot move without touching myself internally and externally; these internal and external pressures and frictions inform me about my own body and its activities

A registration of interconnected movement occurs alongside a return from the positioning achieved by oriented movement. It is also a characteristic of adjustments in the quality of interconnected movement when the person is at rest (ie. when any activity is stably supported by an external surface and movement is diffused and distributed equally into all bodily parts). In the process of a return to a more interconnected and stable state of bodily activity, bodily segments pass each other as layers of muscles act to release the varying directions of muscular action which have maintained the bi-directional locus of stability and extension of the body, in relation to an external surface of support, during oriented action.

In oriented action, because the alignment of the body in relation to a distant object relies on a focussing and a fixing in space and in time of the distance senses, the movement of the interconnected bodily tissues as a whole is either towards the object(ive), in which case the focus on the object(ive) fixes the *direction* of bodily movement in relation to the anticipated point of contact; or of a static orientation to the object(ive), in which instance the parts of the interconnected body are held in an arrangement which delineates the person's attitude towards that object(ive). In both situations, the person is fixating their movement in relation to something which is external to the web of interconnected bodily tissue.

The malleable tissues, being fixed in place in relation to each other during oriented movement, or, during such repetitive actions as walking and running, being fixed in a predictable sequence of positionings in relation to each other, are not at liberty to slide back into any alternative mode of positioning which is dictated by the intrinsic degree of movement possessed by varying densities of the web of interconnected tissue.

Feeling and oriented movement become two mutually exclusive uses of bodily action. This is not to say that a person is not able to feel while they are carrying out actions which are directionally responsive to items within their surrounding environment. Rather, the person's style of acting, as reflected in the relative contractions of the malleable tissues (which are accessible and describable by the massager in terms of the relative malleability of palpated tissues) will shift from one of movement in 

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in exactly the same way that my sense of touch informs me about external objects' (Juhan, 1987, 185-186).

relation to an object(ive) to one of movement involving an extension of the range of the interconnected movement of the tissues of the whole body. I suggest that the latter style of bodily action can be felt.

The feeling of a person in relation to an event which impacts from the environment external to the interconnected body, in, for instance, the act of kicking a toe on a stone whilst walking, requires a registration of the interconnected movement response of the region of the affected bodily area. This involves a change in the direction of movement from the person's prior orientation to the object(ive) involved in walking, which is guided by the distance senses, to a recognition of the bodily sensations which occur as the tissues of the kicked toe move in a tissue rearrangement which accommodates to the painfulness associated with the injury which has occurred at the toe. As the 'raw edges' of damaged tissues rub together, pain will characterise the feeling associated with this movement of interconnected tissue. A minimisation of movement at the painful area will also limit the feelings generated at that area.

The localised feeling of injury to a bodily part, lies at the end of a spectrum of feeling which links to a particular event, and a regionally specific response of the bodily tissues. The opposite end of this spectrum describes diffuse bodily feelings which take on the generalised nature common to, I suggest, a more fully interconnected bodily functioning. An example of this extreme is the feeling of well-being which can come with rhythmical bodily use. In swimming, for example, the repetition of a sequence of actions (stroking with the arms, kicking, turning the head etc.) allows a repeated return to an arrangement of the body in which bodily segments are placed in a position of maximum flexibility in relation to one another. Whilst the limbs extend away from a position of intrinsic stability in the direction to which the motion of swimming is aimed, they are regularly repositioned, in a way which encourages a feeling of expansiveness of the bodily tissues one in relation to another. I suggest that the feeling associated with oriented rhythmical bodily activity which is moving towards an object(ive) and yet in which the person is still able to feel the fullness of the movement of interconnected tissue, at regular intervals, is one of a generalised feeling of comfort and of pleasure.

### 9.2.2 Pleasure in massage

During massage, the massager follows the traces of tightness in the massaged body. Her aim is to smooth out the palpable evidence of those muscular contractions which have been retained as a pattern of tightness - are distributed across the malleable tissues - when the action of directional bodily displacement no longer accompanies the person's oriented movement practice. As these traces of tightness are smoothed out, then the amplitude of the rhythmical range of movement available to the interconnected tissues, initiated by the muscular actions of breathing and the pumping action of the heart, increases. Bodily feelings - which I have taken to be dependent on the differential action of sections of previously contracted, contiguous tissues as they lengthen and assume different positions in regard to one another - come to be distinguished less and less by differences between neighbouring tissue segments. Feelings associated with the body become more global. Regional differences are more indistinguishable, and the repetitive rhythmical action of non-oriented muscular actions of the body (such as breathing and fluid flows) becomes a predominant factor in the person's bodily sensing.

During massage a tendency towards an increase in interconnected movement is compounded by the fully supported position of the massaged body, where a particular bodily position can be maintained without the activation of the musculature of the body. This lack of restriction in the rhythmical movement of the interconnected tissues appears to me, as a massager, to form a large part of the bodily activity of the massaged person, and would also seem to have a strong bearing on the feeling of well-being reported by massaged people.

### 9.2.3 Pleasure as a quality of feeling

Whilst a sense of undifferentiated pleasure is a useful accompaniment to massage, my overriding thesis is concerned with the use of massage as a feedback tool, as a means of providing a way for the massaged person to learn more about their body via an increased malleability of bodily tissues. Whilst this learning also applies to bodily use in oriented action, I am much more interested in learning about feeling aspects of



the body. To this end, I am concerned with the notion of a movement sequence in the body which alternates between acting and feeling; between a unified and distantly oriented contraction of the malleable bodily tissues in contrast to a lengthening and successively kaleidoscopic repositioning of these tissues as the body returns to a more neutral state in relation to the previously prominent object(ive). A massaged person's understanding of the latter phase of *return* to a more fully interconnected positioning of the bodily tissues conceivably opens up an increase in the possible options for oriented movement in relation to object(ive)s in the person's world.

The style of bodily learning, which I see as available from the process of massage, is a learning about the oriented and sensing actions of the body as they influence the magnitude of the interconnectedness of bodily tissues. This learning uses the feelings which accompany the placement of moving bodily tissues as a mirroring of any patterned fixations of malleable tissue which have accompanied prior phases of oriented action. One possible outcome of such a felt identification of the bodily movement processes is a facilitation of the inclusion of more sections of the malleable bodily tissue into the rhythmical interconnectedness of bodily tissues. The rhythmicity of interconnected movement is based on the bi-directional action of all muscular tissues. The action of contraction in a muscular motor unit is followed by that of lengthening. The ongoing muscular actions of the body, such as breathing and the propulsion of fluid flows, functions in a see-sawing motion. Sustained contraction of any muscular part of the body will limit the length (of distance or of time) of this oscillatory movement. The oscillation can be described either in terms of the distance which the muscular tissue displaces in its progressive contraction and lengthening, or as the period of time which this process takes.

The aim of the massager is, by working on accessible tissue so that it becomes more malleable, to increase the range of movement of interconnected tissue. The effect of this change, when encouraged across the whole body, is an evening out of the rhythmicity observable as an effect of breathing and the action of the heart.

As a bodily rhythm becomes more extensively integrated across the bodily tissues, the feeling associated with the movement of contiguous tissues against each other will become more homogeneous. A lack of differentiation in the malleability of tissues is

accompanied by no discernible disturbance to the ongoing rhythmicity of the body. With a lessening of tightened areas which can pull on and restrain neighbouring tissue the characteristic absence of interconnected bodily feeling associated with going towards, or going away from, an object(ive), transmutes into a dominance of the feeling associated with an ongoing and repetitive reversibility of action.

This type of bodily arrangement appears, from a massager's viewpoint, to corroborate with the descriptions of bodily pleasure in massage which massaged people give. In the following section, I will use this analysis of interconnected bodily movement to inform a schema whereby the massaged person can utilise the feeling of pleasure, gained through an increase in the malleability of tissues in massage, to identify and allow an extension of the pleasurable feeling in relation to oriented action.

### **Bodily Pleasure and Oriented Movement**

Recognition of body positionality in relation to feelings requires an attention to qualitative change. The action of sensing the possible range of movement of contiguous tissue, following distantly oriented action, involves a complexity of orientations of muscular and soft tissue fibres. The action of sensing is based on the pull and the contraction of muscles which act to stabilise the movements of oriented action. Bodily tissue has an active directional movement towards a position of central support (in the interests of a stable alignment of the central axis of the body with the person's external supporting surface) and this is the movement which the person senses. Muscles which have carried out the orienting action lengthen to allow the muscles of stabilisation to draw bodily parts closer in, to a position where the central supporting axis of the body is sufficiently near so that minimal muscular effort is needed to maintain the position of bodily parts in relation to gravity. Any contraction of the originally extended bodily parts which limits the degree of lengthening of those areas will also be sensed by the person as it affects interconnected movement.

I suggest that a change in the amplitude of the rhythm of interconnected bodily movement is a qualitative change. The arrangement of many tissue elements, which have been caught up in a succession of varying orientations, into a pattern whose arrangement is dictated by proximity to the central supporting axis, will be renewed

each time the body returns from oriented activity to a position of rest. The means of this return, expressed metaphorically as the route which retraces the direction of movement of oriented action, and which involves a sequence of lengthenings of muscular contractions, comes to a point where the rhythmical identity of one section of tissue with the next becomes so close that a distinguishable feeling between the tissue segments is no longer recognisable. Each new orientation of the body calls for a new arrangement of the malleable tissues. A correspondingly unique pattern of integration of this new use of the body will accompany the action of return to a centrally supported position of support. Each time the person feels their bodily arrangement, which is an *action* of return, after incorporating an added degree of malleability of bodily tissues, I anticipate that there will be a qualitative shift in subsequent bodily feelings.

#### 9.2.4 Linking pleasure and intersubjective movement

When a feeling of pleasure<sup>4</sup> associated with a maximum degree of bodily flexibility and malleable tissue interconnectedness has been gained during massage, the massager's task in relation to the massaged person shifts into the realm of bodily education. Levin & Soloman make a link between the enjoyment of bodily feelings and the person's ability to learn more about those feelings:

'...medicine's success ... also depends on the ability of patients to fine-tune their embodied awareness, their sensitivity to processes of bodily experiencing, and their skillfulness in carrying those processes forward

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<sup>4</sup>Norris graphically describes a progression from the experience of localised discomfort to that of generalised bodily comfort: 'Most people cannot ignore sensations of being nauseated, feeling icy cold, having a growling colon, or being itchy. Once a person responds to these physiological warning signals and takes action, the signals usually disappear. After these sensations are gone, feelings of ease, pleasure, sensual delight, enjoyment of bodily sensations, gratification, or voluptuousness often follow' (Norris, 1985, 26). In recounting the dance therapy procedures of Marion Chace, Levy describes pleasure as a function of an increase in small localised increments of increased flexibility of tissue towards whole bodily flexibility: '...simple rhythmic movements such as swinging, pushing, or shaking were also used by guiding small movements into total body activity ... The movements aroused in the patients a sense of pleasure and enjoyment of body action. In addition, they helped to loosen the body and release excess tensions that could impede both the group process and the surfacing of emotional material' (Levy, 1988, 30).

into more articulate, more discriminating meanings. For many centuries, Western culture has denied recognition to this ability and consequently made it very difficult for people to *enjoy* contacting and working with their body's felt meaning - the intricate meanings carried by their bodies in co-responsiveness to particular situations and circumstances' (Levin & Soloman, 1990, 533, my emphasis).

The skills which the massager brings to the massaged person's process of learning about bodily movement, are based on a mutual recognition and negotiation of the meaning of the condition of the malleable tissues. The bodily feeling of the massaged person which accompanies the tissue movement at a specific bodily part can be equated with the degree of malleability palpable at that location by the massager. I suggest that a judgement as to the degree of malleability of circumscribed areas of malleable tissue is made possible by the presence of points of greater fixity provided at the sites of attachment of more malleable tissues to less malleable tissues. The massager's observation of the interconnected movement of the whole body - when unaccompanied by a report of the location of a specific area of tissue palpable by the massager - offers no opportunity for the bodily feeling of the massaged person to be located in regard to points of tissue fixity.

In order that the massager can assist the massaged person to re-establish - outside of the massage situation - whole bodily feelings characterised as pleasurable, a mutually acceptable basis for an interpretation of the meaning of whole bodily feelings is needed. The massager's perspective enables her to negotiate with the massaged person as to a bodily arrangement and set of oriented bodily movements which will allow the massaged person to transliterate a maximum degree of the pleasurable feeling attained in massage to activities which are separate from the direct action of massage.

I will refer to a comment by Freud - along similar lines to that which I quoted previously in this chapter (Freud, 1984, 414) - to extend my theoretical linkage of bodily feelings and the spatial use of the malleable body, from the perspective of the massaged person, in their engagement with bodily activities outside of the massage context:

'In consequence of the pre-established connection between sense perception and muscular action, the ego has voluntary movement at its command ... It is guided in its activity by considerations of the tensions produced by stimuli, whether these tensions are present in it or introduced into it. The raising of these tensions is in general felt as *unpleasure* and their lowering as *pleasure*. It is probable, however, that what is felt as pleasure or unpleasure is not the *absolute* height of this tension but something of the rhythm of the changes in them' (Freud, 1986, 376).

Freud's comment carries useful signposts to a link between feelings and movement which can be applied to malleable bodily functioning. Firstly voluntary movement is seen as the basis for an account of the feelings which accompany greater and lesser degrees of tension. Secondly, the overriding role of rhythm in feelings of pleasure or unpleasure is acknowledged. Freud concedes that a fixed level representing raised or lowered tension is less central to the identification of a feeling than the rhythm of the changes between varying levels of tension.

Freud's inclusion of rhythm as a criteria of a feeling of pleasure *or* unpleasure suggests, in terms of the malleable body, that feeling is associated with interconnected bodily movement. In order to reconcile Freud's nomination of pleasure as a lowering of tension with his treatment of feeling as a rhythmical alteration in levels of tension I shall extrapolate further on the links between the spatial use implicit in rhythmical, interconnected bodily action and the spatial possibilities of oriented movement.

### 9.2.5 Rhythm, feeling and bodily movement

Freud's reference to pleasure as a lowering of tension is phrased in terms of the magnitude of tension. I suggest that a quantity of tension, as an element of oriented movement, is displayed in each of the number of contractions of muscular tissue which make up the additive use of many bodily parts during oriented action. Each contracting element of malleable tissue in turn exerts an associated effect on adjacent connective tissue during interconnected movement. Muscular contraction acts to stabilise bodily parts in relation to each other, thereby fixing the movement of the

entirety of bodily parts in relation to a distant object(ive). In effect there are two observable aspects of a quantity of tension of the malleable body. One is the spatial displacement effected by the contraction of portions of the malleable body and the other is the amount of spatial displacement of the body as a whole along a trajectory of movement in relation to a separate object(ive).

An increasing magnitude or quantity of tension is reflected as an inhibition of the directional movement - a movement interpretable as spatial displacement - displayed by the alignment of bodily parts, in relation to a person's point of most distant visual focus on the perceived perspective of a distant object. A point of visual focus allows a person to locate their bodily position in relation to the movement of distant objects in the sense that a person can utilise bodily tension to fix on an item in their visual field and place themselves in a position of bodily stability in relation to that point of visual fixation. During asymmetrical, oriented bodily use - where bi-lateral bodily parts act in relation to each other, successively losing and regaining a stable basis of support in relation to gravity - the person's point of visual focus is also alternately lost and regained. In abandoning their fixation on a specific object(ive) the person exhibits a lessening of their degree of bodily tension. A person wishing to maintain their bodily position in relation to gravity when the stability afforded by muscular tension is lost to them will revert to the use of their central bodily axis of stability as a major support. When the malleable body is supporting itself through the interrelationship of skeletal parts with each other and with gravity, then the rhythmical action of the interconnected movement of the malleable bodily tissues becomes characterised by a more even interval between the extent of the spatial displacement of portions of interconnected bodily tissue.

In predominantly rhythmical interconnected movement the absolute value of the tension spatial displacement of bodily parts is continually negated as the distance travelled in one direction is matched by the distance which segments of malleable tissue travel in the opposite direction. I suggest that the additive effect of the spatial displacement involved in interconnected movement is not assessable in terms of the quantity of distance from an object(ive). The degree of spatial displacement of portions of malleable tissue *is* assessable during interconnected movement according

to the degree of mobility exhibited by those segments of tissue. Variations in tissue malleability affect the extent of the symmetry - across segments of malleable tissue - of the rhythm of interconnected movement. The intrinsic bodily movement lent by breathing and the action of the heart will be more or less evenly distributed across the malleable tissues of the body according to the degree of malleability of the tissues of varying bodily areas.

Freud's statements about feelings of pleasure and unpleasure bear closer scrutiny when rhythmical, interconnected movement is included as an integral part of the means of spatial occupation available to the individual. As quoted earlier Freud describes voluntary movement as being regulated by a fixation of movement in the form of tension: 'the ego has voluntary movement at its command ... it is guided in its activity by considerations of the tensions produced by stimuli'. Similarly a later allusion to rhythm is phrased as a function of an incremental change in the level of those moments of fixity represented by tension: 'It is probable, however, that what is felt ... is not the *absolute* height of this tension but something of the rhythm of the changes in them'.

Freud's overall focus quickly shifts from a discussion of voluntary movement to a treatment of the feelings associated with alterations in the levels of tension. He assigns a univocal correspondence between polar extremities of feeling and levels of tension (eg. pleasure equates with lessened tension, unpleasure with heightened tension). I suggest that his conceptual shift from movement as a main term to that of a *lack* of movement points to an elision within his discussion of feelings. The concept of movement is reintroduced at the end of the section quoted above as, 'something of the rhythm of the changes' (in levels of tension). It is however, a different kind of movement which is associated with a different version of feeling. There is no longer any assigned connection between the direction of tension and a value of feeling ie. 'what is felt as pleasure *or* unpleasure'. At the same time the directionality implicit in a raising or lowering of tension has collapsed into 'the rhythm of the changes' in levels of tension (Freud 1986, 376, my emphasis).

Freud's comments have provided me with a useful set of observations about feelings and movement. I suggest that his slippage into the use of *fixity of movement* as a

main descriptor of feelings alerts a reader to the possibility of a more complex network of relationships between feelings and bodily movement. Whilst his account is written from the perspective of voluntary movement, the difference in quality of the second type of movement referred to, suggests to me the need for a fuller treatment of this aspect of voluntary movement.

I have attempted such a project in this thesis. When undifferentiated feelings are viewed as being registered on the basis of changes in the rhythmical movement of the person then a situation where rhythmical bodily action is pervasive will result in a lack of differentiation of the person's felt spatial parameters. Bodily feeling in this case would be characterised by a symmetry, a lack of distinction between one bodily locale and another. The duration of intervals of time experienced as endpoints during pervasive rhythmical movement would also be undifferentiated.

As the person initiates a change from rhythmical, interconnected movement to movement characterised by an asymmetrical use of bodily parts in relation to an object(ive), then the fixity of each position of bodily stability which the person assumes on their way to or from that object(ive), lends an endpoint to each movement initiated by the person. Such a succession of stops allows a sequenced registration of the person's bodily location in relation to ambient objects of perception. In this context Freud's identification of unpleasure as a raising of tension and pleasure as a lowering of tension is appropriate. From that point of bodily tension utilised by the person as one of a sequence of halts which enables them to progress along a chosen direction of movement in relation to an object(ive) a diminution of tension is pleasurable.

Given that a lessening of tension is contextualised by the rhythm of the changes in the magnitude of tension, then a lessening of tension in bodily parts, enacted where the rhythm of interconnected movement is markedly different to the rhythm of the interconnected movement of the remainder of the whole body, will no longer be felt as pleasurable. Along similar lines, an increase of tension during the asymmetrical movement of bodily parts engaged in oriented movement will be characterised by a feeling of discomfort, unless the rhythm of the increase is consistent with the rhythm of the interconnected movement of the remainder of the entire body. Malleable body massage has the aim of increasing the symmetry of the interconnected movement of



the entirety of the malleable tissues, thereby increasing the extent of the massaged person's bodily area which can be characterised by a feeling of pleasure. A desirable effect on oriented movement of a magnification of the bodily area experienced as pleasurable during massage is that degrees of pleasure and displeasure are accessible in terms of alterations in the extent of the rhythm of interconnected movement, as well as in terms of the increase or decrease of the tension due to a fixity of individual position in relation to object(ive)s, which are distant from the body of malleable tissues.

In the next chapter on intersubjectivity, I shall look at the ways in which the person can refine their registration of bodily feelings in order to ensure the maximum extent of interconnected tissue (and a consequent maximisation of the pleasurable rhythmicity of interconnected tissue mobility) during engagement in oriented movement and in the disengagement phase of oriented bodily use.

# Chapter 10

## Intersubjectivity as interpersonal movement

### 10.1 The massage perspective

An important focus for discussion about the malleable body refers to the possibilities of movement presented to the massaged person, by the massager, within and outside the physical setting of massage. In this chapter, I will examine these varying options of movement in terms of the differing spatial parameters available to the body at rest, and to the body during movement through space.

#### 10.1.1 Intersubjectivity and the body

‘Just as my body, as the system of all my holds on the world, founds the unity of the objects which I perceive, in the same way the body of the other - as the bearer of symbolic behaviors and of the behavior of true reality - tears itself away from being one of my phenomena, offers me the task of a true communication, *and confers on my objects the new dimension of intersubjective being or, in other words, of objectivity*’ (Merleau-Ponty, 1964, 18, my emphasis).

In this quote, Merleau-Ponty transforms the quality of objectivity in perception to one of *intersubjectivity*, where the perception of objects is formed in conjunction with the 'other' who is the bearer of symbolic behaviours. The socially constructed nature of the objective perception of quality of objects in the world is emphasised. No longer are objects viewed as fixed and obvious. Merleau-Ponty's work also brings out the embodied nature of perception.

I shall investigate the relationship between the person viewed as a moving body and other people and other objects in the world. I characterise this relationship as one of intersubjectivity. Commencing as I do from a perspective of the mobile and malleable body, I shall analyse this relationship in terms of the possibilities of movement which are displayed by the moving body.

### 10.1.2 The malleable body and intersubjectivity

#### The massager

I shall examine some limitations and possibilities of movement which characterise the relative positions of the massager and the massaged person, which are two very definite and separate positionings in this message-derived discourse. Whilst this analysis derives from a massaging milieu I will also examine the social interconnectedness exhibited initially in the dyadic interaction of massager and massaged person, and secondly in the bodily traces of social interconnectedness which the participants bring to the message. I describe this social interconnectedness as intersubjectivity.

The massager has visual access to the interconnected body. She can observe the effects of manipulation of one section of bodily tissues on adjacently successive unmanipulated parts of the body. A visually observing massager can see a pattern of interconnectedness of the isolable parts of the massaged body, through the relative change in position of successive bodily parts, which radiate out from the point of her manipulating hand contact.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>By *isolable* I am referring to a characteristic of bodily parts which can be seen to move with a different speed or extent of displacement in space from adjacent parts. Although these bodily parts cannot move without some degree of corresponding movement in adjacent bodily parts, the individual can *initiate* movement towards other objects within reach so that a bodily part or set of

One important distinction, therefore, between the massager and the massaged person is their access to a visual monitoring of the movements of the massaged person. The massager is positioned so that she can look at the body of the massaged person from a multiplicity of angles and a multiplicity of distances.<sup>2</sup> By the use of visually based perception the massager has a means of linking together the observed movement patterns of the massaged body. She can make judgements about the beginning and ending points of the observed movement responses to the tactile intervention of massage, by the massaged person. In terms of the degree of movement observed in that body and the adjustment of the malleability of the tissues in response to massage, then the massager also has grounds for making judgements about the initial immobility of specific areas of the massaged body. In this way the massager can begin to make statements about the set-up of the massaged body in terms of the initial location of tightnesses, in what manner these tightnesses link together, which are the most tight, the least tight, etc. and how these variations changed over time in response to the massage. The massager has access to a visual overview which broadens the *specificity* of sensation (in regard to the relative mobility and immobility of adjacent bodily parts) available to her via the action of her hands, continually engaged as they are in a surface to surface contact with the massaged tissues.

Whilst the massager has access to a visual overview of the interconnectedness of tightnesses of the massaged body which enables her to make judgements about the appropriate next movement of massage and to ascertain an overall picture of the massaged body, she still predominantly and implicitly uses as a perceptual base, the massage movements which lead to a tactually-based sensing.

### 10.1.3 Massage and intersubjective movement

#### Vision, touch and movement

Kwant gives a particular interpretation of Merleau-Ponty's writing on intersubjectivity and the body which alerted me as a massager to an important use of the distinction parts form the *leading* edge of movement.

<sup>2</sup>Her actions are constrained in the last instance, however, by her need to maintain a distance which allows manual access to the massaged body.

between the visual and tactile modes of embodied perception:

'...the human body is a visible reality which sees. The body could not see if it were not visible reality itself. Vision always takes place from a certain distance; if we are too close to an object we can no longer see it. ... We must make a distinction, then, between visible reality which sees and visible reality which is seen. We can call the seeing body a subject, and the surrounding world the object of our vision. But the seeing body itself remains included in what we call the object of vision... The body is a seeing visible, a perceiving perceptible. Although it continues to belong to visible and perceptible reality, it individualizes itself, it isolates itself from the rest, because it transforms everything into its field of observation. This is a kind of dualization, because now we can and must distinguish subject and object. But this distinction is realised by the fact that a perceptible reality begins to perceive. The unity continues to exist within the unity of Being' (Kwant, 1968, 123-124).

Without going into the complexity of the phrase 'unity of Being', I will look at some of the implications of delineating embodied perception and intersubjectivity in terms of the visual. A number of feminist writers, notably Luce Irigaray, have taken an emphasis on the visual mode of perceptual functioning to be characteristic of traditional discourses where other forms of bodily perceptual functioning (in this case, the tactile) are obscured. Irigaray, in discussing the 'style' of women wrote:

'This 'style' does not privilege sight; instead, it takes each figure back to its source, which is among other things *tactile*' (Irigaray, 1985, 79).

Rather than taking an oppositional gambit in the question of vision versus touch,<sup>3</sup> I propose examining both sensory systems in the light of bodily movement.

<sup>3</sup>For an instance of the debate between the 'supremacy' of visual versus tactile (sometimes termed the haptic) within a psychological perceptual framework, see Lederman & Abbott (1981).

### 10.1.4 Vision and distance

Leder (1990, 15) refers to the phenomenological tradition which analyses the way that vision allows for a greater distance from the object of perception than does touch. In terms of a study based on massage practice, such a spatially-based analysis is useful in suggesting some possibilities of directed action which the massaged person can engage in, both within and apart from, the massage context, based as it is on a context of movement in the world in relation to distant objects which act as the foci of attention. The ambulatory person would, in this schema, act in response to objects, including people, in the world. In sum, this perceptual stance is relevant in the orientation of an individual's variations of movement in relation to static or moving objects in the world.

I wish to draw out a distinction between a person and an inanimate object as the focus of both perception and movement in the world. The intersubjectivity between people has a complexity dictated by the manifold options of self-propelled movement available to the animate body<sup>4</sup> as opposed to the static quality of most objects. The notion of intersubjectivity, as delineated in terms of oriented movement, is further diversified by consideration of the interconnected movement of the massaged body whilst that body is at rest. In the following account of intersubjective movement patterns in a distantly based perceptual mode, I shall concentrate, for the sake of narrative clarity, on a simple order of interaction between two people who are operating in explicit response to the actions of the other.

Given a dyadic social interaction, it is common for each person to have a perceptual judgement of the initiation of movement as coming from one person or the other. In the use of the visual system (Gibson, 1966, 47-49), a central feature is a convergence of the visual directedness of each eye at the point of visual focus. This results in an often momentary fixity of the relationship between the gazer and the object of the gaze. Whilst this fixity is promptly undone at each moment in time, as the person shifts their focal distance (either to look at something else or to examine another facet of the same object) that momentary fixation allows the person the opportunity

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<sup>4</sup>For analyses of the sophisticated complexity of human movement patterns as exhibited in the context of dance see Gates (1968) and Bartenieff (1980).

to collect themselves in response to that object.<sup>5</sup>

An assessment of the source of the initiation of movement is important to the reading of the massage interaction, and also important to the options of movement which are presented, via the massage interaction, as being available to the massaged person in their interactions in non-massage dealings. I suggest that when there is an imprecise quality to the allocation of primacy in dyadic movement patterns, then the patterns of leading and following in the movement of social interaction become unclear. It becomes difficult for the person to locate their bodily position in relation to another person and, I suggest, a basis for choosing an appropriate next action becomes indistinct. I shall examine some of the elements which affect, and can be used to clarify, the relationship of moving interactions between two people.

The two moving bodies need to be within a distance which allows a registration of information appropriate to the current bodily use, implied in the direction of the leading edge of each person's body. This distance varies with each major modality of sensing.<sup>6</sup>

Some categories of movement in situations where movement is perceived as initiated by the person are towards, away from, no movement, and rotational or pivoting movements in relation to the object of attention. The implications for a spatial relationship between the person's central bodily axis and specific objects of attention are respectively of: decreasing distance; increasing distance; no voluntary interaction in terms of spatial distance, or a maintenance of the same spatial relationship. Similarly, the person can respond, when movement is perceived as initiated by other objects

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<sup>5</sup>The person is constantly re-orienting their physical position and the postural arrangement of that position. This is carried out through eye movements in relation to the object of gaze as well as the responses of the whole body which are aimed at accommodating to the visual adjustments. In a similar way, the use of touch in relation to an orientation to distant objects relies on a convergence of hands, or of fingers working from differing positions to evaluate the contours of an object (Gibson, 1962).

<sup>6</sup>For example, whereas the information available from the auditory sense - when two people are speaking on the telephone - can traverse a large portion of available geographic space, the response of one person's movements to the perceived movement of the other will be dictated by the particular localisation and directional sensing capabilities of the leading edge of bodily movement. This is characterised, in turn, by the relationship of the major organs of hearing, the ears (which register information from the sides of the body, and act peripherally to the placement of the visual, tasting and smelling organs) to the remainder of the body.

in the world, by themselves moving away, by staying still, by moving towards or by using a pivotal action (or a combination of these types of movement).

### 10.1.5 Movement in response to other people

I will go on to look at some ways in which the person who has been exposed to massage can use an understanding of the movement principles which are associated with the malleable body to enhance the rhythmicity of their bodily movement. This type of learning about the malleable body has implications for the feelings of the massaged person and the distance-oriented actions which are undertaken by that person.

Rather than examining the movement of the massager in relation to the resting, malleable body of the massaged person, as in my earlier analysis of malleable body massage, or looking at the way the person of the malleable body moves in relation to a fixed object(ive) in oriented movement, I am interested here in how the segments of the malleable body take on the shapes of people around them. The situation is one where the person is one of a community of similarly malleable bodies which are also able to move in relation to object(ive)s.

I'll start my analysis from the perspective of an extensively interconnected body, one that has access to the large degree of tissue mobility, and access to a precise action of the extension of bodily parts in relation to the person's central axis of support. Probably the commonest occurrence of this extensive interconnectivity of the body is when a child with a large degree of bodily plasticity is learning to move towards object(ive)s.

I have equated an extensive interconnectivity of bodily tissues with a feeling of bodily rhythmicity characterised as pleasurable. I will put forward a theoretical programme in which the person seeks to maintain that pleasurable feeling which has been associated with a fullness of bodily rhythmicity during the course of action which is oriented towards another person. By setting out a schema whereby the person moves towards a feeling of interpersonally generated pleasure, some ways in which these steps can also act, via interruptions to and distortions of the sequential progression of movements towards bodily rhythmicity, are also available for examination.

One of the most emphatic instances of interpersonal interaction, in terms of the



use of the malleable body, is that of direct physical contact. The intrinsic malleability of bodily tissues means that any contact involves a deformation of the bodily surfaces of both people and an accommodation of one body to another. Assuming that both people are interested in the availability of a pleasurable feeling, the aim of contact is for a maximum exposure of the bodily surfaces of one person to the bodily surfaces of another. As the accessible surfaces of one body are always dissimilar to the entirety of the accessible surfaces of another, there will be an interval in which the action of accommodation, which involves an assimilation of the surface planes of one body to that of another, is postponed.

The movement of accommodation is one of increasingly fine, muscularly initiated adjustments, in order that the distance between all interconnected bodily segments maintains a maximisation of the range of movement between each interconnected segment. The action of accommodation is in the interests of a greater fullness of the interconnected bodily tissues. An expansion of the range of movement between sections of interconnected tissue can also be described as an increase in the interval between the oscillating end-points of any section of interconnected tissue, and is influenced by the ongoing rhythmical actions of the body.

According to my prior analysis of a feeling of well-being, a maximization of the possible movement between contiguous sections of bodily tissue and an extensive feeling of bodily rhythmicity can be associated with a feeling of pleasure.

### **Tissue tightness and oriented movement**

Before continuing to build a structure of the effects of interpersonal movement on the malleable body, I will parallel my analysis with the effects of tissue tightness on whole bodily movement. There are two aspects to this analogy. Firstly I am taking as a model an idealised malleable body. An example of this is the person who is learning to use their body in unaccustomed ways, and who has free access to the interconnected possibilities of movement. One application of an idealised model is as a tool to assess ways in which tightness in the tissues acts as a limitation on the possible range of personal actions in relation to object(ive)s, as well as to the person's access to the pleasurable feelings which I have previously linked to a full

degree of interconnected tissue mobility. I anticipate that my construction of a model of the movement options of the idealised malleable body makes available a template by which the observational and tactile intervention of the massager can be guided. Discrepancies in the full malleability of tissues can also be read, in terms of oriented movement, as hesitations in the person's oriented movement patterns.

Through recourse to a model of the idealised malleable body, the massager has access to a means of directionally assessing the spoken preoccupations of the massaged person, ie. whether that person is oriented towards or away from any particular object(ive) which is the subject of their speech. The massager is then able to make her own judgement about the way in which any remnant evidence of the person's oriented activity, as exhibited in tissue tightness, retains the characteristic relative positioning, in relation to other tightnesses in the body, of having acted as either a leading bodily edge or as a focus of bodily tissue stability. Parameters of oriented activity will remain as sustained muscular contractions, if the process of return to a more optimally integrated condition of the interconnected tissues, does not fully occur. A full amount of return would be that which allows the interconnected bodily tissues to arrive at an intrinsically supported condition where the central axis of the body possesses most stability and the perimeters of the visually observable body have a maximal amount of flexibility.

An equation of the directionality of oriented movement with specified areas of tightness of the palpated tissues by the massager is only ever analagous. The massager palpably identifies a *series* of tightnesses of the malleable tissues. Her means of judging which area to work on so that another area will most extensively participate in a loosening of the whole body depends, I suggest, on her observation of the trajectory, composed of relatively unmoving tissues, which connects one predominantly tight area to another. The residual effects of oriented movement on interconnected movement - where one bodily area is contracted in order to extend towards an object(ive), whilst being counterbalanced by another bodily area which acts to stabilise the body in relation to gravity - are reflected in any lingering tightness which is observable as localised areas of restricted interconnected movement.

Over time, as successive combinations of bodily areas are used in the course of

varying oriented actions, a network of residual tightnesses of the tissues often forms. Dominantly used areas, ie. those associated with habitual modes of bodily use, or those associated with actions where the relaxation of the muscle fibres following the completion of an oriented action is never fully resolved, are felt by the massager as more palpably intractable areas.

As more obviously tight areas are loosened through the massaging movements of the massager, finer and finer degrees of tightness will then become the focal point of the massager's observation and manipulatory action. Rather than having the solely dualistic character suggested by my model of oriented action in relation to an object(ive), the traces of oriented movement, where they are retained as contractions of interconnected tissue, have a web-like character.

The overriding factor in the linking of areas of tightness is the contiguity of bodily tissues. Within a matrix of interconnected tissues, oriented movement utilises the contraction of muscular tissue and the consequent movement of attached malleable tissues in a reversible fashion. A range of manners of oriented movement (eg. rotation, reaching, bending) are all countered by a conversely directed action. This reversal allows the body to return to a position where it is predominantly supported by the central spinal axis of support in response to the effect of gravity. Any muscle group, acting as it does in synergy with a muscle group which allows a countering of the original oriented action, participates in an ongoing process which links moving bodily parts in relation to the bodily centre. I see the bodily centre as an axial area from which the degree of oriented movement is initiated and which marks the limit of the diminishing range of movement of the reverse of any previously initiated oriented movement. From the massager's perspective, as successive areas of tightness loosen, an altered pattern of linkages between areas of tightness will emerge. This is a network of successively diminishing tightnesses in bodily areas and relationships of tightness whose pattern the massager can only manipulate and trace, rather than precisely predict.

### Oriented Movement and contact with an object(ive)

My analysis of movement to this stage has been occupied with making a distinction between oriented and interconnected movement. Working from this demarcation, I have looked at the role of malleable body massage in locating areas of tightness of the massaged person, and in bringing about a loosening of malleable tissues. It was an analysis concerned with the consequences of restrictions of oriented movement on the tissues of the massaged body. In this section, I shall examine some ways in which the actual contact of massager and massaged person can act as a variant of the contact between a person and an object(ive). This case forms a situation where there is a re-engagement of the feelings associated with interconnected movement, subsequent to the person's use of a distantly directed mode of oriented action.

I take the goal of contact with an object(ive) to be a maximising of the contact of the bodily surfaces of the person with those of the object(ive). In terms of my previous analysis of pleasure, this would facilitate a maximising of the feeling of interconnected rhythmicity for the contacting person. The bodily surface of the person - that region which in situations of no interpersonal contact demarcates a boundary between the malleable tissue of one person and another - is, during interpersonal contact, now in a contiguous relationship with other tissues which also manifest the rhythmicity of interconnected movement.

The process of interpersonal contact is also one of accommodation to the contours of the object contacted. My understanding of the object(ive) from this point on, will be an object(ive) who is also another person. In this way, my idealised model of the movement of a person who is engaging in oriented movement can be explored in relation to an object(ive) with a similar capacity for complex directions of movement.

By reverting to an analysis of the interconnected movement which takes place as a result of contact with another person, which in turn involves the displacement in space occasioned by oriented movement (so that the two people can contact each other), my purpose is to extricate an understanding of how people can revert to a feeling of pleasure after the actions of oriented movement.

### Effects of adjustments to oriented movement

Bodily adjustments made by either person during interpersonal contact can extend the time in which a pleasurable feeling, associated with that contact, is experienced. These bodily adjustments are variants of oriented movement. The upright, ambulatory person has the most options available to them in terms of distance from an object(ive). I have taken the position where a person can walk and move around as a basis for this analysis of interpersonal contact. One example of this contact would be an embrace.

The type of oriented movement which allows the greatest degree of bodily interconnectedness to be maintained between people in contact is one of rotation. Here either person turns their body to adjust to the contours of the other. Rotation is an adjustment of the central axis of the body to allow one person to contact the outlines of the other's body whilst at the same time maintaining a strong correspondence between a central spinal axis and the person's external surface of support.

Another type of movement which occurs during a phase of interpersonal contact, and which involves more movement away from the intrinsic interconnectedness of the body than rotational adjustment, is a reaching out towards the other body, an enfolding movement; the opposite of which is a movement away from the other body, one of retreat. In this instance, either person deviates from a position of maximum stability in order to increase the amount of surface area of their body which contacts the other person.

There is a limit to the degree of rotational, enfolding and/or retreating movements which the person can undertake before one person's sense of pleasure, gained from the enhanced interconnectedness of the bodily tissues during interpersonal contact, is counteracted by the loss of fullness of tissue interconnectivity which occurs when the person no longer has a well-supported relationship between their supporting surface and their central spinal axis. When the degree of felt rhythmicity of the body diminishes, then several options of movement are available to the people in contact with each other. One obvious possibility is for the two people to break contact, when there is a lessening feeling of pleasure associated with the contact.

I am interested in exploring the scenario where two people stay in contact, and

undertake additional oriented movement manoeuvres from this position. One option here is for the two people to utilise a common basis of support, ostensibly maximising their interpersonal degree of contact whilst maintaining a fullness of the interconnected rhythmicity which is associated with a well-supported central (spinal) axis of support. Two cases in this instance are, firstly, where one person is drawn away from their external basis of support by the other person, or where that person's external basis of support serves for both people (ie the person is leaned on).

There is, I suggest, for most people, a feeling of pleasurable comfort provided by a large degree of bodily surface contact. Something of a dilemma comes about, however, in relation to the degree of interconnected tissue fullness (and any associated degree of feeling of pleasure) which is available to the participants who share a common base of external support. The person who reaches, and the person who is reached for, within the process of interpersonal contact, both use muscular effort to achieve this deviation from a close relationship between their locus of intrinsic, central support, and the external surface which supports them.

The person has a feeling of pleasure which is supplied by the reinforcement of the rhythmicity of bodily surface by the rhythmicity of another, contacting bodily surface. I suggest that when one person moves away from a two-person manner of support, then each individual has the opportunity to explore ways in which bodily stability, in combination with a flexible extensibility of bodily parts into the world, can be retained in the singular mode.

In the following section, I shall extend my discussion to some generalised principles of movement which I see as underlying oriented movement and a feeling of pleasure. I see this as an investigation of a general source of the fixity of muscular action, which acts as an overlay for the peculiarly individual tension associated with learned patterns of muscular tightness in interpersonal contact. In the instance already given, the person is learning to function and to assume a bodily arrangement which is the opposite - in terms of movement and the reciprocal bodily arrangement - of the person whom they are contacting in order to maintain a position of stability in relation to their surface of support.

### Relationship between oriented action and pleasure

I have earlier taken pleasure to be a function of the fullness of interconnected tissue movement. However, with the possibility of an extension of a pleasurable feeling into the context of interpersonal contact, a space is opened up for an examination of the pleasures of oriented action.

I have characterised oriented action as being led by the focus of the distance senses. The person engaged in oriented action can be said to be motivated, in terms of pleasure, by the anticipation of an extension of the feeling of interconnectivity which will be brought about by an increase in the rhythmicity of bodily boundaries when their surface meets another bodily surface. The action of oriented movement towards an object(ive) means that the musculature of the body is also oriented towards an object(ive). Oriented movement in relation to an object(ive) implies a certain fixity in the conformation of the body. Whilst ever this fixity is maintained, the person experiences that arrangement as denoting the feeling associated with the interconnected movement of the entire body.

Whereas the person's oriented action is drawn by the possibilities of an extension of the pleasurable feeling of interconnectedness of the bodily tissues as the bodily boundaries come in contact with the rhythmicity of another surface, a limitation of this possibility of pleasure can occur when the person's projected *use* of their body, which can be distorted by habitual ways of holding the body, ie. by tension retained in the body, does not allow an exact docking with the surfaces of the object(ive). A space then remains where the gap between the person and the object(ive) narrows. This gap is formed by a lack of conformation between the contours of the person and of the object(ive) and can be remedied, I suggest, by a return of the person to a more extensive state of interconnected movement, rather than by an increase in the fixed intensity of oriented movement.

In the context of early education about interpersonal contact, I suggest that a person learns to carry out a reversal of an original action in order to regain a feeling of bodily pleasure, after contact with another person has resulted in discomfort. In an additional sense, derived from the overarching knowledge that increased bodily pleasure can be gained from interpersonal contact, the person mimics and strives to

conform to the *perceived* contours of a desired object(ive). However, until early, learnt patterns of the means whereby the person's bodily arrangement in relation to a basis of central and external support allows a fullness of interconnected tissue mobility, the pleasure associated with conformation to an object(ive) will be limited.

I anticipate that the preceding outline of oriented movement and pleasure can be used by the person, who has some massage generated knowledge of connections between the feeling of tightness in their tissues and the everyday feel of that bodily area, to contextualise bodily stiffness and/or soreness in relation to their everyday oriented activities. A useful outcome, in terms of such knowledge, would be the attainment of ease of movement in the world.

In the succeeding, and penultimate chapter, I will present a summary and overview of the main conceptual elements - in relation to bodily feelings - which I have derived from my massage-based analysis of movement.



# Chapter 11

## Conceptual overview

### 11.1 A conceptual position

In this chapter I shall present an overview of my conceptual position in regard to the feelings of bodily movement.<sup>1</sup> My theoretical structure is built around three distinctions which I see as characterising the massager's perceptual assessment of the massaged tissues.

The first and predominant factor is that of movement as opposed to fixity. The second is the perception of the tissues as being distant or contiguous in relation to the perceiving person. A third perceptual distinction is of the massaged tissues as comprising a part or the whole of the massaged body.

My analysis has been based on the dyadic interaction of a massager and a separate massaged person and I relied on the comments of massaged people and my observations of the degree of mobility of the massaged body. These observations were based on tactile assessment of the malleable tissues during massage - part by part - and the movement of the entirety of the malleable body which I observed visually before and after massage as the person returned to their upright position in walking, sitting etc.

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<sup>1</sup>Smith & Smith have developed an analysis of space-structured behaviour in which perception depends on bodily movement: 'Here we are studying perception and motion not as two separate forms of adaption, but as one mechanism, adapting the movements of the body to the gravitational and three-dimensional characteristics of space' (Smith & Smith, 1962, 2). In contrast to my study of the touching of a body composed of malleable tissues their theorising is based on the study of spatially and temporally displaced vision.

As massaged people can also touch and massage their own tissues, I have extrapolated in Part III from a consideration of a massager's perception of the malleable tissues of another person to the case of a person's perception of their own malleable tissues.

The issue which underlies this project came from the question: 'Given that massaged people say that they feel better after massage, can the predominantly tactile elements of the massage interaction be considered as a basis for bringing about such a change in bodily feelings?' This question can be broken into two distinct propositions. One - taken as axiomatic in the literature on massage - is that the tactile manipulations of massage alter the quality of massaged tissues. The second is that massage is a venue where people talk about their feelings (this is borne out in the transcribed reports of people whom I massaged within this project).

The discursive terms of the first proposition are concerned with the manipulation of palpable bodily tissues. Those of the second are to do with the feelings of the massaged person. Whilst the two propositions are related by their occurrence during the context of massage there is a disparity between the tactile actions of the massager and the massaged person's verbal descriptions of the feelings evoked during massage. I offer a solution to the discrepancy between tactile and the verbal positions through an analytical description of my tactually-based acts as a massager.

So that I can speak of a causal relationship between the tactile actions of the massager and the feelings of the massaged person I have used the concept of movement as an interlocutory device. An equation of the discursive positions of the massager and the massaged person using movement as an intermediary is a circuitous project. I suggest that any perceived complexity in the result is a function of my attempt to anchor the concepts of discourse and feelings to the palpability of bodily tissues by using the motif of movement. According to my reading of existing literature this approach to a conjunction of the abstract and the malleable is largely uncharted.

### **11.1.1 In terms of movement**

The discursive positions of the massager and the massaged person are marked by the intervening distance between the two palpable bodies. One person or the other must move towards the other person in order to touch that person. In the setting of massage

the massaged person lies still whilst the massager moves freely within the touching ambit of the other. The massager has extensive access to the malleable bodily tissues of the massaged person and to the massaged person's verbal reports of their feelings when this interpersonal contact is occurring. As the massager directs her movement towards the massaged person she narrows the gap between her tissues and those of the massaged person. She does this by reaching out a bodily part - most often her hands - in order to have room to freely manipulate the other person's tissues. By using her hands to work at a distance from the rest of her body the massager can use to her perceptual advantage a multi-directional tactile access to the tissues combined with the employment of additional aspects of her sensory capabilities (eg. her visual, auditory and olfactory receptors) which function optimally at a certain distance from their object of attention. The massager trades the perceptual overview loaned by her distance from the person for a limitation of the area of her contact with the massaged tissues.

As the massager palpates, her actions displace the malleable tissues at any one locale. I suggest that the massaged person's bodily feelings are affected by the movement transmitted throughout tissues which are contiguous and interconnected with the area circumscribed by the massager's touch. At any instance of tactile contact during massage the particular segments lighted on by the massager's touch are intrinsically linked to neighbouring and successively contiguous segments of the body. The interconnected nature of the malleable body implies that the massaged person has potential access to the feelings associated with massage-generated tissue movement and the transmission of that movement throughout the tissues of the entire malleable body. In contrast the massager has access to parts of the entirety of the massaged tissues.

The discrepancy between the massager's perception of *parts* of the massaged tissues and the massaged person's access to the movement of the *entirety* of interconnected tissues works against an equation of the massager's report on the state of the massaged tissues with the massaged person's account of their bodily feelings during massage.

My solution to this apparent impasse - based on my experience as a massager -

was to treat the construction of the massaged person's bodily feelings as analogous to that of the massager. I derived my understanding of a change in reported bodily feelings from alterations in the relationship between the movement of the malleable body perceived as parts and the movement of the malleable body perceived as a whole. My claim for a correspondence between the means of construction of the movement-based bodily feelings of the massager and those of the massaged person relied on a similarity between the tactile access to malleable tissues available to the massager and to individuals in everyday life.

I based my tactually-based tracing of the development of feelings on a co-incident relationship between the movement of tissues at the region which is touched and at the locality where a bodily feeling is registered. I proposed that the massager's understanding of the way in which she touches her own body informed her manipulation of the tissues of another. In this way the massager has a basis for assessing the effect of her touch on the feelings of the massaged person.

The massager has recourse to her own experience of a bodily feeling which was associated with a particular tissue texture, to reports of previously massaged people whose tissues had a similar tactually sensed quality or to a self-enacted mimicry of the feel of the restricted movement of one portion of tissues against adjacent tissues. The massager mimics by duplicating some degree of muscular contraction (which when sustained is a factor leading to tissue tightness) in parts of her body. The massager's hands are involved in massaging tissues which are distant to her own body and she is particularly concerned with areas of reduced tissue malleability. Her opportunities to touch her own body are restricted by her massaging activity. The massager does not necessarily have tightened areas on her body which correspond with the massaged person's reports of a feeling of discomfort. From the massager's viewpoint, tightened tissues often equate with reports of discomfort by the massaged person. I suggest that the massager is able to mimic - not the actual tissue texture of the massaged area - but rather the effect on the feeling of her whole body of an alteration in the relative mobility of her bodily parts.

A large number of the malleable tissue segments of both the massager and the massaged person are similar in form. I suggest that segments of the entirety of

the malleable bodily tissues of two separate individuals functionally match if their contours conform closely enough in form to each other to allow one tissue segment to interact with adjacent bodily parts in order to carry out a similar direction of movement during the bodily actions carried out by each person.<sup>2</sup>

As a continuing check on my theoretical construction I have applied the movement principles which I derived from massaging bodily tissues to my own bodily feelings. My aim was to maximise my own feeling of well-being. I monitored the effects on my bodily feelings of altering the interrelated movement patterns of specific bodily parts and changing the relative proportions of activities which involved a differing type of use of the entire body. This ongoing monitoring - informed by my continuing practice and teaching of massage - depended on a theoretical model of the relationship between the sensed movement of bodily parts and whole. I developed a way of theorising the difference between malleable bodily parts and whole as occurring within a framework of action oriented to a distant object(ive) or action carried out whilst moving surfaces are in contact with each other.

### 11.1.2 A movement-based spatial setting

I have used the methods which applied in my exploration of the tactually accessible space of the massaged body to manufacture a spatial framework appropriate to feelings associated with the malleable body.

My examination of the role of bodily feelings started with those reported by the massaged person during massage. By asking questions of the massaged person I established to my own satisfaction a parity between the palpable feel of the malleable tissues and the reported bodily feeling of the massaged person. To my perception as

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<sup>2</sup>One implication of the second factor is to limit the discursive range of the massager in relation to a variation in form or absence of functional tissue of particular bodily parts. When for example the bodily parts of a massaged person are absent (eg. an amputation), no longer have the range of interconnected movement due to permanent tissue damage or change (eg. injury or operation) or when the bodily parts themselves are different in form (eg. genitalia of different sexes) then the bodily experience of the massager - based on the sensed movement of her own malleable bodily parts - is less comprehensively analogous to that of the massaged person. In my own experience the massager's assessment of the way in which that portion of malleable tissue mobility inputs to the entirety of the massaged person's feelings relies more extensively on the verbal input of the massaged person.

a massager the touch which stimulated the massaged person's verbal description of their bodily feeling was carried out at an area on the bodily surface of the massaged tissues which I could identify tactually and visually locate. The spatial placement of an agreed on area could be identified at another time by either the massager or the massaged person, using visual and/or palpable references to the bodily landmarks surrounding that area. It was thereby verifiable by both massager and massaged person as a fixed location on the massaged person's bodily surface.

When feelings reported by a massaged person were associated with their sense of their undifferentiated, entire body the massager's identification of the particulate areas available to her manual contact was no longer spatially congruent with the reported feelings of the massaged person. As a massager I could only palpate the malleable tissue at the area where I was massaging. This did not extend to the whole body. My solution to the apparent spatial incongruency between the body as parts and the body as a whole<sup>3</sup> was to construct a conceptual framework which accounted for the particulate quality of the area of malleable tissue palpated by me and sensed by the massaged person *and* the person's feeling of themselves as an undifferentiated unit. I reasoned that such a framework would assist me to hypothesise about the way in which the tactile intervention of massage at a particular location affected the feelings of the massaged person as a whole.

### 11.1.3 Sensing oneself

An obstacle to hypothesising a likely link between the feeling of bodily parts and the feelings of the entire self is my conjoint use - up to this point - of the perceptual perspectives of spatially separated bodies. This confuses the range of feelings associated with the act of touching oneself with the feelings that are registered as one person is touched by another.

Boehm points to the interdependence of the feelings generated at the level of one's own tissues and the sense of touch in relation to objects separated from one's own body: 'tactile auto-sensations play as important a part in the construction of

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<sup>3</sup>Braidotti has written a cogent and searching article which explores the implications of treating the body only as an assemblage of parts (Braidotti, 1988).

the outer world of touch as the tactile sensations brought about by contact with the external object'. Further: 'The awareness of one's own body is, to a large extent, based on these auto-sensations' (Boehm, 1939, 333).

In terms of the spatiality of the malleable body the interconnectedness of all portions of malleable tissue implies that the massager's tactually based assessment of massaged tissues is contextualised by the movement - and any feelings associated with the movement - of her entire body.

The major distinction between my conceptualising of the position of the massager and that of the freely acting person who is able to touch their own body, is that the massager is able to access the entire set of touched tissues with fewer lapses of time between her sequences of tactile contact with the massaged person. The spatial occupation of the entirety of the bodily tissues of a self-touching person is invariably co-incident with the spatial occupation of parts of their bodily tissue. The touching person cannot separate themselves from all of their accessible tissues.

My understanding of the distant sensing of one's own body includes the person's feeling of the malleability of bodily parts and their sense of the asymmetrically enacted mobility of their whole body. A feeling for the malleability of bodily parts can be gained as the person extends bodily parts to touch their own malleable tissues.

A sense of the person's asymmetrically enacted whole bodily movement<sup>4</sup> is available as the person moves from one supporting surface to another via action which is oriented to an object(ive) which is separate from the person's own bodily surfaces. As a bodily part is displaced from one position to another during the course of oriented,

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<sup>4</sup>I will expand on the significance of my use of the term 'asymmetry' in a subsequent section. Briefly I take asymmetrical movement to be bodily movement in which one part of the body takes a leading position (maximally alters the distance between the object(ive) and the person) in the initiation of bodily movement which is *oriented* to an object(ive) at some distance from the person. The bodily space occupied by the leading bodily segments whose contractile muscular tissue has shortened to allow a greater range of movement of the leading bodily part is asymmetrical in relation to the remaining portions of the body where contiguous segments retain the full extent of interconnected mobility. The range of movement available between areas of malleable tissue is altered from a constant relation (ie. where each tissue segment has a maximal elasticity) between interconnected areas to an asymmetrical one with a gradation of the possible range of movement between contiguous areas. The gradation is determined by the degree of contraction initiated by muscular tissue (which enables bodily parts to move in contradistinction to the rest of the bodily tissues and restricts the spatial occupation of contracted areas of tissue) and reflected in the remaining malleable tissue of the leading bodily parts.

asymmetrical movement then a palpable feeling - generated by the movement of one area of malleable tissue against an adjacent area - is available to the moving person. I derive this model of a link between feeling and movement from the capacity of a massager to palpate tissue and assign a verbal description to the tissue qualities which she feels at a verifiable location on the surface of the massaged tissues. As a massager can touch herself - and as a directional movement similar to that imposed by a massaging hand on malleable tissue can be generated by the contraction of muscular fibre and associated interconnected malleable tissue - I hypothesise a link between movement and feeling.

I place the movement of tissue against adjacent tissue during self-touching into two categories. In both instances bodily movement is maintained by use of the activity of the whole body. In one variant of movement the tissues are interconnected and move against each other. I include a person's feeling for the movement of a bodily part moving in relation to a background of intrinsic, rhythmical bodily movement and feelings which are associated with the rhythmical movement of the entire malleable body in this category of movement. In the other category the two sets of tissue are not adjacent and are moved into contact with each other by means of effort from elsewhere in the body (or from a source external to the bodily tissues). In the second instance movement acts to close the distance between two originally separated areas of tissue. The person is able to orient their head to use specific distance sensors eg. eyes and ears - to orient to their own bodily tissues.

I suggest that my second category of movement - where a person touches one bodily part with another part - expands into a third category of movement which is oriented to an object(ive) which is separate from the touching person. I suggest that the person's bodily feeling in the third instance relies on the tactile movement of their own tissue part against tissue part as their bodily parts project and move sequentially in relation to an object(ive). In addition, the person's movement-based feeling would rely on the alternating movement of distance sensors as they successively focus on a distant object(ive), in order to direct the oriented movement of the rest of the body in relation to the object(ive) and then relax the fixity of that focus as the person moves. This last phase of oriented movement returns the malleable tissues to



a less-contracted state which is in fuller accord with the interconnected movement of surrounding tissue.

#### 11.1.4 Bi-phasic bodily use

I shall expand on a wider contextualisation of the categories of bodily movement to which I have just referred.

Merleau-Ponty's appraisal of the person's ability to touch their own body contextualises bodily sensing within a spatial context. He states: 'If one wants metaphors, it would be better to say that the body sensed and the body sentient are as the obverse and the reverse, or again, as two segments of one sole circular course ... which is but one sole movement in its two phases' (Merleau-Ponty, 1968, 138). In this statement Merleau-Ponty signals his recognition of touch as a basis for bodily sensing and utilises movement as a foundational metaphorical element. I am interested in exploring the notion of bodily sensing specifically from the perspective of palpability in a way not entered into in Merleau-Ponty's work. My strategy here will be to overtly separate a tactually-based mode of sensing from bodily sensings which rely more heavily on the perception of objects at a distance.

Wyschogrod points to the unique quality of tactually based perception:

'While tactility has often been recognised as presenting unique features, so long as it was taken to be one among the other senses, subject to the same categories of interpretation as sight, hearing and the rest, its idiosyncrasies remained unexplained. For the most part, theories of sense based on the localisation of sense experience only functionally differentiate the senses in order to provide a formal structure which would account for all sense acts. But tactility subverts this unitary structure, since the body as a whole is the tactile<sup>5</sup> field'(Wyschogrod, 1981, 26).

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<sup>5</sup>My use of the term 'tactile' reflects Wyschogrod's denotation of the entire body as the tactile field. In addition to the touching of oneself and distant objects by the hands or other parts of the bodily skin I take tactility to encompass the movement of interconnected bodily parts in relation to other, contiguous parts of that same entire body.

My reading of Irigaray is that she indicates the usefulness of examining the differentiation of material contiguity (which I take to be a defining characteristic of tactually based bodily sensing) from a traditional, visually biased specular economy (Irigaray, 1985a, 72).

I suggest that in a way analogous and yet different to that posited by Merleau-Ponty, aspects of bodily perception which are contiguously characterised and tactually-based are intertwined with distance-oriented sensing (mediated predominantly by vision and hearing). Sarano refers to this characteristic from a visual perspective, that of the visible and the invisible body: 'We must grasp the totality of the two aspects of life, which is an inner-outer thing. . . The subjective and the objective approaches interpenetrate each other. . . Thus we will never forget that the techniques applied to the body-object also involve the body-subject which we do not "see". That is, they involve the totality of the person, which we see and do not see' (Sarano, 1966, 191). A part of Sarano's account - whilst it is phrased in terms of a predominantly visual perceptual mode - which points the way to a tactually-based version of bodily perception is indicated by his inner-outer dichotomy.

Wyschogrod's comment that tactually-based perception differs in its mode of operation from perception defined in terms of sight and hearing suggests that a conceptual foundation other than that of the visually based 'inner and outer' is appropriate in a tactually based model. I propose an analogous description of this distinction in terms of the interconnectedness of bodily parts within the entire body and the separation of interconnected bodily parts from the object(ive)s of the person's oriented movement in the world.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup>For the person who is touching themselves the oriented movement of any bodily parts engaged in touching will be completely framed within the interconnected movement (eg. the pulls exerted by muscular contraction on contiguous connective and epithelial tissue) and intrinsic movements (eg. the pulsations of the heart and associated fluid flows and rhythmical actions of breathing) of their own tissues. For the person who is touching another person - eg. the massager touching the massaged person - the touching person will engage in perception at a distance as they approach the massaged person or observe the degree of fixity of plasticity of the tissues at a distance. It is likely that the massager will register the degree of oriented movement of their own bodily tissues in response to the amount of resistance or plasticity of the touched tissues. The oriented movements of the massager will also be couched against a background of their own interconnected and intrinsic bodily movement.

### 11.1.5 Oriented and interconnected movement differences

I have used several concepts from Grosz's philosophical work as key points in my construction of a perceptual schema which uses the malleable body as a basis. Grosz's work interprets the views of a widely-ranging group of philosophers from a feminist perspective which consistently adheres to the theme of the materiality of the sexually differentiated body. Her clarification of language use and spatial positioning from the context of a sexually differentiated body is relevant to my current tactually-based perceptual discourse.

Grosz rejects 'singularity, ... polar oppositions, ... intertranslatability' (Grosz, 1986, 75) as spatial characteristics of a feminine use of language. In the following section I shall draw out the way in which the role of bodily difference assumes centrality in an approach to perception which includes the body as an object of perception and emphasises the contiguity and movement of bodily tissues. In my account I will treat the spatial characteristics specified by Grosz as allied to the perception of objects at a distance, the province of the perceptual systems of vision and hearing rather than of touch.

Vision, hearing and smell are aspects of the interconnected body and intrinsically part of any perceptual activity. I will argue - along lines indicated to me by Grosz's work - that an obfuscation of the palpability of the body and of the difference between female and male bodies has left a gap in traditional perceptual understandings of bodily experience. This gap is exhibited - in the context of my own work on massage and movement - in the non-correspondence of women's accounts of their spatial perception of their body with the reported spatial perception of the massaged tissues by the massager. An interpretation of two such incompatible, verbalised positions in terms of 'polar oppositions', 'singularity' and intertranslatability' would involve the rejection of one account of spatial positioning - either that of the massaged person or of the massager. If one reported position is opposed to the other then only one position can be legitimately occupied at one time. If there is only one position which can be asserted as the opposite of a singular position then again the occupation of one position obviates the occupation of another position. Thirdly, if the terms of one position need to apply to the opposite position for there to be any movement between the

two positions then there is no intertranslatability possible between positions where agreed on definitions of space do not apply.

The perception of objects at a distance - analysed from the perspective of tactile perception - is based on whether or not those objects can be touched or are in contact with the touching surface of the person. I suggest that the style of bodily movement performed when there is contact with an object differs from the style of movement performed when there is no contiguity between object and person.<sup>7</sup>

The style of bodily movement associated with the perception of a far object(ive) is marked by a bodily carriage which allows the sensory organs of sight, hearing and smell to function optimally. The style of exploratory movement associated with tactile contact employs any bodily surface to investigate the contours of an object(ive). By contrast, in distance-oriented movement the individual orients their head towards the object(ive) so that the distance sensors arranged around the head can fix on the object(ive) thereby stabilising the position of the whole body in relation to that object(ive). I am assuming that when there is movement in relation to a distant object(ive) the person's goal is to arrive at a specific spatial distance in relationship to that object(ive). Options for the person's spatial relationship with an object(ive) range on a gradient from the aim of a decrease in the distance between them in an effort to contact the object(ive), an increase in the distance in order to widen the gap between oneself and the object(ive), or a maintenance of a constant distance which is unaffected by the movement of the object(ive) itself.

In my analysis a shift between the styles of movement appropriate to the category of distant or of contiguous perception is readily available to the person. Because of the bi-lateral nature of the distance-oriented perceptual organs of seeing, hearing and smell, the dual parts (eg. two eyes focussing, two ears hearing, two nostrils smelling)

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<sup>7</sup>When there is contact with an object the style of bodily movement is marked by intrinsic bodily movement. The bodily tissues are perpetually engaged in movement promoted by, for example, the regulation of fluid flows and the maintenance of postural balance even when to the eye of a distant observer the observed person is at rest. From my perspective as a massager I see this type of movement as derived from the interconnected nature of bodily tissues. An object with which the person is in contact, will participate in the intrinsic bodily movement of a person to a degree determined by the relative pliability of that object and that object's own relationship with gravity. The latter is, in turn, mediated by the surface of the object which supports it in relationship to gravity.

of these sensory organs work together to orient the remaining bodily parts in relation to an object(ive). This requires a relative fixity of the larger movements of the remainder of the body so that the finer movement of the muscular structures which orient the distance-sensing organs can momentarily fix on the spatial positioning of the object(ive). This enables the person to assess their position in relation to that object(ive) prior to engaging in oriented movement of the entire body in relation to the perceived object(ive). Perception of an object(ive) at a distance is a series of fixations which allow the person to judge their distance from that object(ive).

The sequence of halts by which I suggest that the bodily movement of distance-oriented perception is carried out has implications for the tracking of a far object(ive). One major consequence emerges as a function of the nature of intrinsic, interconnected bodily movement. In terms of tactually-based perception with its fundamental emphasis on contiguity - ie. the contact of one surface with another adjacent surface - the distance between person and object(ive) forms a gap. The fixing of the body in its movement through space which allows the formation of this gap is created by means of successive contractions of muscular tissues and associated shortenings of other malleable tissues.

There are two senses in which distance-oriented movement which moves to shorten the distance across the gap between person and object(ive) is exhibited. Both are bodily movements in which the form and outline of the malleable body change the amount and the manner of their spatial occupation. One aspect is the linearly-directed movement of the entire body. The other type of movement shows the way in which the interconnected tissues of the body rearrange themselves to enable multi-directional sheets of contractile muscular tissue to effect movement of interconnected, malleable body segments. The latter style of interconnected movement occurs in reference to gravity and the bi-lateral nature of bodily structure. Any movement which is oriented to (or away from) an object(ive) occurs as a function of maintaining a supporting surface for the bulk of the body in relation to gravity as other bodily parts extend to make contact with a new surface of support which is in line with the object(ive). I suggest that a massager of the malleable body traces with their hands any residual tightness in the malleable tissues which has remained as a result of the

multiple and obliquely oriented contractions of muscular tissue which a person has employed to move in relation to an distant object(ive).

Such fixations of tissue occur as a result of the focussing movements carried out by bi-laterally situated distance sensors. Sets of bodily tissues contract to stabilise the majority of bodily tissues so that the fine focussing movements of the eyes, for example, have a stable point from which to fix the position of the person in relation to an object(ive). When the contracted tissues of the body only partially return to a lengthened state as the entire bodily tissues of the person move through space in relation to the object(ive) then these traces of contraction may limit the flexibility of oriented movement and the extent of bodily area able to fully participate in rhythmical, intrinsic movement. The massager seeks - by the imposition of the mechanical action of rubbing the malleable tissues - to promote the return of greater mobility to tissues which to the feel of the massager's hands retain tightness.

The action of interconnected bodily movement - when tissues are returning to a state of extension rather than contraction - is characterised by an alteration in the way in which the material components of the body occupy space. The overall process of return is marked by a kaleidoscopic effect due to the multiple directionality imposed by the variously oriented sheets of muscular tissue which participate in any one type of oriented movement, the bi-lateral nature of bodily structure and the need for the person to maintain whole bodily support in relation to gravity whilst engaging in oriented activity. When a massager loosens segments of tightened malleable tissue from their patterns of residual contractedness then the effect of a change in the malleability of the massaged tissues on other areas of bodily tissues is unpredictable due to the number of directional variables involved.

Grosz emphasises - after Irigaray - the socially constructed nature of the 'morphology' of sexually differentiated bodies. From my perspective as a massager the residual elements of contraction in either male or female bodies can be tactually traced. Similarly both female and male bodies have a predominant similarity in the number of malleable tissue areas which correspond in terms of orientation of muscle fibres, bi-laterality and relation to the central supporting axis of the body. Male and female bodies match in terms of their ability to orient and move in relation to distant

object(ive)s. In relation to my account of the movement of the malleable body the difference in the form of the tissue components between female and male bodies (eg. genitalia, breasts) implies a difference in the manner of bodily movement available to differently sexed bodies. I do not take this to be a limitation on the ability to carry out oriented movement in relation to an object(ive) of male or female. Rather the quality of whole bodily movement - composed as it is of the sum of malleable body parts - varies between differently sexed bodies. I suggest that the mode of action of the return of interconnected bodily parts to a greater degree of interconnected mobility following oriented movement will be unpredictable for both female and male bodies although residual remnants of the contractions involved in oriented action *will* be traceable in terms of the palpable registration by the massager of the feel of the massaged tissues. In terms of the malleable body the quality of the unpredictability of the experience associated with the return movement of the tissues will be different between male and female accounts.

My emphasis on male and female difference has significance here in terms of my inclusion of the work of theorists whose work interfaces with a spatial analysis of the body. Models developed from inalienably different embodied spatial perspectives may have elements which throw light on the contours of other approaches whilst simultaneously retaining their own essential alterity. In this sense I have drawn on the work of Ignacio Matte-Blanco to further characterise the difference between a predominantly tactile and a predominantly visual approach within perceptual functioning.

### 11.1.6 The malleable body as parts and whole

Matte-Blanco recognises an intimate connection between psyche and body: 'The fact that human beings have a body determines in a basic way all their psychical life, *which appears as built from bodily and material experience as a starting point*' (Matte-Blanco, 1988, 126, my emphasis). His work categorises the functioning of the person according to two distinct styles of logic. Matte-Blanco's treatment of spatiality intersects with my concept of the malleable body. He posits that the person functions in either of two styles of functioning. He variously likens these styles to conscious and unconscious functioning, asymmetrical and symmetrical functioning, Aristotelian and

non-Aristotelian logic and to the finite and infinite sets of mathematics.

I shall refer to Matte-Blanco's two orders of logic by the use of his terms 'symmetrical' and 'asymmetrical'. Matte-Blanco derives his concept of symmetrical functioning from Freud's characteristics of the unconscious.<sup>8</sup> I shall apply the notion of symmetrical and asymmetrical functioning to the perception of bodily movement, rather than basing my treatment of his terms within a psychoanalytic context.

Matte-Blanco gives three principles to describe his notion of symmetry. About the first principle *a lack of succession* he comments: 'time may be considered from various points of view, but in mathematical physics it is treated as a succession of moments. So, accordingly, when the principle of symmetry is applied, there cannot be time in the physico-mathematical sense'. The second principle, that *the part is necessarily identical to the whole* is similarly supported: 'in the same manner that time disappears, there also disappears all difference between any proper part and the whole' (Matte-Blanco, 1971, 585). The third principle is that *there can be no relations of contiguity between the parts of the whole*.<sup>9</sup> Matte-Blanco expands on the last by saying: 'In mathematics and physics the line (space of one dimension) is conceived as formed by series of points, one next to the other and each having only two neighbours; each point occupies a definite position with regard to the others. In other words, as the case of physico-mathematical treatment of time, this entails asymmetry. But if any point is identical to any other and to the whole line, that is, if only symmetry is available, then the physico-mathematical concept of line disappears ... In other words if only symmetrical relations are available there cannot be space in the physico-mathematical meaning of the word' (Matte-Blanco, 1971, 586).

I suggest that Matte-Blanco's two disparate styles of functioning can be applied to interconnected movement and oriented movement (symmetrical and asymmetrical functioning respectively). The most evident movement characteristic of the body

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<sup>8</sup>Matte-Blanco states these as the absence of time, displacement, condensation, substitution of psychical for external reality and lack of mutual contradiction (Matte-Blanco, 1971, 586-589).

<sup>9</sup>I suggest that Matte-Blanco's use of the term 'contiguity' emerges from a predominantly visual perceptual perspective. In my use of the term from a largely tactile perspective there is no palpable doubt that a relationship of contiguity between adjacent areas of malleable tissue exists. In terms of bodily experience one massaged person's comment that she felt as though she was floating above the massage table indicates a changed sense of space along the lines suggested by Matte-Blanco.



at rest is the rhythmical, intrinsic action of heart, fluid flows and breathing. This rhythmical action is extended throughout the entire body by virtue of the interconnectedness of bodily tissues. When the person is not engaged in oriented action the voluntary musculature of the body possesses no outstanding pattern of contraction in which the fixity of contracted muscle and associated malleable tissue is sufficient to limit the essentially even distribution of the movement provided by intrinsic bodily rhythms throughout the body. The bodily movement of one part participates in a rhythm equalled by the movement of other bodily parts and is characterised by a symmetry of rhythmical action. The component of movement which exhibits this quality is the interval between the movement phases of each participatory bodily segment. For instance the movement phases of inspiration and expiration are visible to varying degrees throughout the malleable bodily tissues (eg. the visible movement initiated by breathing covers a greater distance at the area of the chest wall than at the region of the feet). I identify a symmetrical use of the malleable body predominantly from a tactile perspective and suggest that symmetrical bodily action involves the alternately diastolic and systolic, rhythmical movement of segments of malleable tissue. Within the cyclical action of symmetrical movement the space occupied by a given bodily segment will alternately enlarge and contract within the tempo of an overall bodily rhythm. This occurs in the context of its spatial occupation of one portion within the many interconnected portions of malleable tissue composing the entire body.<sup>10</sup> The rhythm of this intrinsic aspect of bodily movement ideally ensures that the entire corpus of malleable body segments participates to an equivalent degree in the range of oscillatory movement determined by the elasticity of that tissue. The range of movement of each segment is conditioned by the push or pull of a neighbouring and contiguous segment. Without a distinction - or asymmetry - in

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<sup>10</sup>I am using the term 'symmetrical' in the sense of one bodily area being equivalent to another. In terms of the visually observable body symmetry commonly denotes a bi-lateral symmetry. Whilst acknowledging bodily bi-lateral symmetry, my preoccupation with the timing of the tactually sensed interval of the movement between interconnected bodily parts implies that the beat of intrinsic bodily movement is common throughout the malleable tissues. The bi-lateral symmetry of the body does affect the range of oriented movement expressed via the visually observable outline of the body with the range of movement becoming successively larger from the central axis of the body out towards the periphery of the body.

the period of the rhythmical movements germane to each malleable segment of the body, breathing, the beating of the heart and propulsion of intra-bodily fluids etc. participate in a coherent, visually observable bodily rhythm. At the palpable level such an integrated rhythm involves a degree of plasticity of tissues sufficient to enable a ready change from a condition of localised contraction to one of localised relaxation of the malleable tissues (and vice versa).

I equate oriented bodily actions which are carried out via a sequential alternation of the use of bodily parts, eg the alternate leg and arm movements of walking, with asymmetrically enacted movement. Asymmetrical action allows parts of the body to be supported whilst other parts are relocated in a changed interrelation to the originally moved part and to the object(ive) to which the person is oriented. Asymmetrical bodily action enables the person to move the whole or parts of their body from place to place. A bodily leading edge affects the movement of all other interconnected bodily parts as the person's point of balance - ie. their relation to their bodily basis of support - shifts. I suggest that asymmetrical bodily use equates to movement of the person in relation to a distant object(ive) and involves a sequenced movement of bodily parts away from or towards that object(ive).

I characterise the relationship of an area identified by a touch to the malleable surface of that body with the feeling of that same identifiable areas, as one to one. The spatial location of the area touched is co-incident with the feeling of that area. I suggest that a portion of the massaged tissues which is identified by the massager is also characterised by a one to one relation with the location of the area as felt by the massager. This is a propositional function - ie if I touch another point I set up a sequence of identifiable points. In terms of the malleable body I can trace an identifiable route around the body by way of tissue manipulation and the feelings associated with the areas touched. In effect this is the way in which the massager tactually moves from bodily area to bodily area.

I suggest that in the spatial terms of the malleable body the feeling associated with a bodily part can be identified with the movement of that part carried out either through feeling the tactile actions of the massager, by sensing the touching of one's own tissues or by the person's sensing of the voluntary movement of one adjacent part

of their body in relation to another part. By extrapolation from the last instance, the person would feel the movement of their whole body as the action of one bodily part against another throughout their entire body. In the resting position common to massage however, there are rhythmical bodily movements which act without cessation. The feeling of the movement associated with the movement of bodily parts would tend to blur the location of one bodily area into another as the directionality of movement repeatedly oscillated throughout many, wide-ranging portions of the entire bodily tissue.

An implication of examining bodily movement from a tactile rather than a predominantly visual perspective, and of using the concept of symmetrical and asymmetrical action to describe interconnected and oriented movement respectively, is that the distance between a person and a separate object(ive) of their oriented movement is not analogous to the spatial relationship which forms in the bodily tissues as the person engages in oriented movement. During oriented movement muscular tissue contracts to allow the displacement of bodily segments. The contraction of malleable tissues implies a fixity of bodily parts for the time that a set distance from the object(ive) is maintained. The interconnected nature of the bodily tissues means that a fixity of muscular tissue in one area will affect the spatial positioning of contiguous interconnected areas of tissue.

Oriented movement which seeks to bridge the separation between person and object(ive) has its analogue within interconnected movement in the contraction of muscular tissue which maintains bodily parts in a position of supported stability in relation to that object(ive). The contraction which results in a fixing of bodily parts in relation to each other and the object(ive) will return - given a disengagement from oriented action - to a more malleable condition which enables a fuller bodily participation within the interconnected, rhythmical and symmetrical movement of the malleable body. I suggest that the bodily feelings associated with remaining tension derived from a muscular contraction which has sustained the malleable tissues in a position of fixity in relation to a distant object(ive) can be conflated with the focus of oriented attention. In terms of the malleable body and massage areas of sustained contraction are more usefully read as signifying a lack of interconnected mobility,

rather than indicating an irretrievable distance between the characteristics of one's own spatial positioning and that of an object of attention.

Whilst a greater malleability of tightened tissue is very often attainable and the feelings associated with a fuller degree of interconnected movement are marked by reports of well-being, the spatial occupation of the mass of a malleable body means that a fully co-incident relationship with a palpable object(ive) will invariably be limited by the spatial occupation of the other's bodily substance. There is the possibility - when feelings of discomfort are viewed from a predominantly visual perspective, and characterised in relation to a distant object(ive) - that tactually accessible routes to a feeling of bodily comfort, made available through the tactile tracing of the tissue relationships of the interconnected body as evidenced in malleable body massage, will be ignored.

The subsequent chapter is a concluding one, where I will present a precis of the principles of malleable bodily movement, which I see as implicated in the construction of verbal accounts of bodily feelings. I will also briefly summarise ways in which my construction of the qualitative value of bodily feelings allows a projection of a set of outcomes for a person's manipulation of their own patterns of movement.

# Chapter 12

## Conclusion

### 12.1 The feeling of bodily movement

Throughout this project I have examined women's accounts of their massage-generated bodily experience and a construction of my own bodily experience within the context of bodily movement. I have used these instances of 'tissue talk' to construct a descriptive schema of some categories of movement which became evident as I examined the intersection of my analysis of the malleable body with the accounts of bodily feelings.

I have taken two main categories of bodily feeling, pleasure and discomfort, and looked at their production in terms of two distinct types of bodily movement; oriented and interconnected movement. I have concentrated on a use of bodily movement which has been directed at an increase in a feeling of pleasure and a minimisation of a feeling of discomfort.

In terms of a transition from an explicit feeling of discomfort to one of bodily pleasure, the increasing malleability of tissues, achieved by the manual actions of the massager resulted in a feeling of pleasure.

I have transliterated massaged people's descriptions of their transition, during massage, from a bodily feeling characterised by discomfort to a feeling which is denoted as pleasurable, into terms characterised by the direction of movement of malleable bodily parts. I have taken the feeling of pleasure reported by massaged people,

to be marked by a person's increasing attention to the rhythmical quality of the interconnected movement of segments of malleable tissue. I have derived the concept of interconnected movement from the massager's actions during massage, where she tactually accentuates the sensations associated with the movement of malleable bodily parts.

From the massager's perspective, as malleable tissues become more pliable via the actions of massage, an increased sense of bodily pleasure would accompany a greater degree of malleability of the tissues.

What was reported in some cases of massage, alongside a feeling of well-being - and rather than a straightforward and incremental increase in a feeling of pleasure - was an indication that the massaged person's bodily sense of their spatial location was altered during the course of the massage. In such instances, the terms of the spatial perception of the massaged tissues, by the massager and the massaged person respectively, were no longer congruent. Whilst the massager was endeavouring to accentuate the massaged person's awareness of localised areas of tissue by making them more malleable, the result for the massaged person was that they reported a sense of being spatially dislocated from the placement of the massager's hands on the malleable tissues.

I have explained the massaged person's changed sense of spatial location in terms of the increasingly symmetrical and undifferentiated nature of the interconnected movement of the malleable tissues, which has occurred alongside an increase in tissue malleability. The massaged women who experienced instances of a feeling of changed spatial placement during massage, talked about those feelings after massage, in a context where their talk had once more realigned with the perceptual setting mutually familiar to the massager and the massaged person. The women variously contextualised their experiences during massage as being akin to meditative states or to being that of someone who could be described as a lunatic.

In terms of my schema of oriented and interconnected movement, the women, once they were no longer being massaged, and were again ambulatory as they recounted their experiences to the massager, were engaging in a manner of movement which was primarily oriented to objects in the world, rather than the tactile interaction of

massage, where their bodily movement was bounded by contact with the supporting surfaces of the massage table and with the hands of the massager. The felt spatial locations of the massager and the massaged person had effectively become - not the same - but congruent, as the massaged person resumed a mode of perception which was characterised primarily by oriented movement.

I have identified malleable tissue tightness as a factor which reduces a feeling of bodily comfort, resulting in soreness or discomfort. Such a lack of well-being occurs when the muscular contractions of oriented movement remain in situ rather than engaging in a full return to a lengthened state as oriented movement ceases. When the malleable tissues of a person retain residual contractions, the person's orientation to a distant object(ive) cannot mimic the contours of that object(ive) as extensively as when the malleable tissues have a greater degree of pliability.

I have suggested that oriented action is associated with the perception of objects at a distance and proceeds via a series of stabilising bodily halts as the person acts in relation to an object(ive). When the malleable bodily tissues of an individual are fixed at particular bodily regions, then the bodily feeling, experienced during moments of bodily stabilisation within oriented action, is liable to be flavoured by a lack of bodily pleasure. This can occur as the person becomes aware of the feelings associated with an increased movement of malleable tissues which had been previously more fixed and which now facilitates a return, by the tissues of the malleable body, to a condition of greater bodily stability, and a corresponding increase in the extent of interconnected movement.

The aim of my schema of malleable bodily movement has been to allow changes towards increasing flexibility in an individual's movement patterns to occur with minimal restriction, ensuring that there is also minimal hindrance to a return - by the freely moving person who has been exposed to the feelings associated with an increase in the malleability of bodily tissues - to a feeling of bodily well-being.

One important condition on a person's free access to a process of shaping bodily movement patterns and bodily feelings in the direction of an increased feeling of well-being, becomes evident when a possible confusion of the discomfort associated with a reduction of interconnected mobility with a feeling of discomfort due to an

individual's fixity of position in regard to an object(ive), is considered. Reported bodily experiences which describe a transition from oriented movement to a predominant attention to the bodily feelings associated with interconnected movement, will at times, be marked by an ambiguous relation with that object, due to the bodily abandonment of a fixity of bodily focus on a distant object(ive), as oriented movements reverse their directionality towards a condition of greater symmetry of the movement of interconnected bodily parts.

In terms of oriented movement, a person's regaining of an extensive degree of bodily flexibility, via a return to a full degree of interconnected bodily movement, will, I suggest, allow the person's resumption of oriented movement in relation to an object(ive) to be accurate in terms of an assessment of the contours of that object(ive), the person's location in relation to that object(ive), and the possible range of movement options available to the person in regard to that object(ive). When a person's discomfort is seen as able to be remedied in terms of an enhancement of the condition of interconnected movement, I suggest that any resumption of oriented movement in relation to that same object(ive) will be available in terms of an optimum range of bodily flexibility. In this way the person has available a change in their response patterns patterns to an object(ive), via a reversion to a qualitative and interconnected bodily use, in addition to an adjustment of the quantity of their oriented movement. When feelings of bodily pleasure are conceptualised solely as a function of the perception of distant objects, then the very act of fixation on the characteristics of a distant (object(ive), may well prolong the interval of time between an abandonment of one bodily attitude - which is not assisting in the achievement of a person's desired spatial positioning in regard to that object - and the person's assumption of another bodily positioning which more accurately mimics the profiles of a desired object(ive) within the framework of a person's optimal degree of interconnected bodily movement.

Discursive patterns of language which emphasise fixity, rather than movement, and which accord greater attention to the feelings associated with points of hesitation in the oriented movement whereby a person seeks to alter the gap between their malleable tissues and an object(ive) - than to a positioning of bodily feelings at the point of interplay between the styles of oriented and interconnected bodily movement



- do so, I suggest, at the expense of the bodily pleasures signified by an optimum degree of interconnected tissue movement, and echoed in descriptions of the feelings associated with massage of the malleable tissues.

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# Appendix A

## Appendix

## Massage demonstration

The following section is derived from a transcript of a massage demonstration within a massage class which I taught, where I describe and give a rationale for my method of working. Included are questions and suggestions from the class members. The person being massaged was a class participant, Jeannette. I massaged Jeanette's back whilst the class watched. The purpose of the demonstration was to show how I carried out my assessment of the soft tissues of the body, whilst I also gave a commentary on my reasons for choosing particular areas to work on, what particular tissue features I could find, and my reasons for a particular sequence of massage movements involved in transferring from one particular bodily segment to another. All speakers other than myself (Catherine) were class members. Sections in square brackets indicate a later completion of my comments which were unfinished at the time of massage. I initially explain to the class what I want to demonstrate during the massage.

*Catherine: (To Jeanette) Don't feel you have to comment, but you can if you want. O.K. We're going to get started.*

*Really I just want to go over what I can feel, what I would do about [what I can feel of the tissues]. So it's a very personal thing, and I'm not saying that this is the right way to do it, to do a massage, um, but just to try and give you an idea of how, how I put together all the information I can get.*

Catherine and Jeanette then decide what the main focus of the massage will be in terms of Jeanette's problem areas.

*Catherine: Have you got any sore spots, Jeanette?*

*Jeanette: Uum, not that I can feel.*

*Catherine: Not that you're aware of normally?*

*Jeanette: No.*

*Catherine: No aches and pains? What, do you have a lower back thing?*

*Jeanette: Oh, sometimes yeah, I do get that, lower back pain.*

*Mm. That would be the only spot that I feel, other than slight weakness in the, cruddy knee that I've got.*

Catherine then speaks to the watching class, asking them to contribute if they can see any evidence of tightnesses, or areas on Jeanette that appear to warrant massage.

In the following section Catherine explains what she can feel of the back muscles which she is massaging. She is not yet able to interpret the meaning, in terms of tissue malleability, of the unusual quality of the palpated tissue.

*Millie: How did her tissues and muscles feel to you?*

*Catherine: I dunno. They're kind of actually a bit thin. There's not that much bulk of muscle.*

*Milton: How do you mean there's not that much bulk?*

*Catherine: Mm. The skin's quite loose, on an underlying firm surface. Sorry, I didn't explain it very well.*

*Milton: I'm just wondering if you're saying whether it's hypertonic or not.*

*Catherine: Tight?*

*Milton: Ah, yes, yes.*

*Catherine: Hypertoned?*

*Milton: Hypertoned.*

*Catherine: Uum. Yeah, well possibly I am saying that because the tissues underneath are really, they're quite firm, I mean it feels as though there's bone underneath and not much in between the skin and the bone, so, I'm really not quite sure what that means.*

In the next section Catherine is working on the back at the level of the shoulder blades. She compares the right and left sides of the upper back and decides, according to the reddening of the tissues, that there is tightness and some soreness more on one

side of the body than the other. After her massaging, she describes the whole back as responding by loosening up. She assesses this by lightly shaking Jeanette's back and observing the extent of the rippling of movement throughout the entire back surface tissues. She then works back to the original scapula area, and can now feel a tightness, a knottiness around its inner border. This is a palpable confirmation of the unusual tissue quality suggested beforehand by the visible reddening of that area. Catherine describes the rippling effect which accompanies her massaging fingers, and refers to this as an indicator of the relaxation of the tissues of the back in response to massage.

*Catherine: Up here, uum, now, what I've come to [observe] so far. It does take a little while just to get the idea of comparing one area with another, so, this is pretty obvious in between the shoulder blades, from the redness, that it's quite sore, and by doing that method [of massage] on both sides, you know, I'm not just working too much on that side, so, it [the redness and soreness] definitely is more that side.*

*Right, now, I'm comparing overall. That whole, that whole area has loosened up, the whole back is loosened up pretty well. And you can see that from the movement. You know, if I give Jeanette a shake, then most things carry, transmit the shake through. You notice that lopsidedness? There? Like the redness goes to there, and not to there. So I might, I can feel this, the scapula is tied in here, it's a bit knotty around the inner border.*

In the next part of this interaction Catherine uses her observation of the progress of the movement imparted to the massaged tissues to check her judgement that one side of the back is tighter than the other. She uses another visual observation, that the tissues are 'kind of flat' on one side of the back, as a further confirmation or guide of her sense of the larger pattern, the 'sense' of what is happening in the back.

*Catherine: Now, I want that to, those muscles to ripple under my fingers a bit. It seems to be working pretty well. Can you see that little 'wave' going down in front of me?*

*Jenny: Yeah.*

*Catherine: Does it seem to be less on one side than the other? To me it seems, these tissues seem less mobile, on the left.*



*Catherine: They're kind of flat. Well, I would use that as a guide. Sometimes you just use, you think something might be happening so you follow it.*

In the next section, after confirming the difference between the two sides, Jeanette gives some information which will lead into an assessment of the relative tightnesses of differing depths of muscular tissue. Whilst Jeanette says that her soreness is on the right side, Catherine remarks that the most obvious surface tightness was not on the right but on the left side. Given that Jeanette's ongoing soreness could be expected to correspond with tissue tightness (which is not the case on a surface level), Catherine considers underlying patterns of tightness, which may give a differing pattern of interconnected tightness in Jeanette's back. Via her massage movements, Catherine is trying to promote a feeling of connection, of loosening in the intervening areas, between the back and the originally observed tightness in the shoulder area.

*Jeanette: Have you got an explanation of why, what causes less ripple when you're going longitudinally in massage?*

*Catherine: Oh, just tightness. Uum, I would say that these tissues on your right, and my left are just, can you see anything? These are more mobile and these are less mobile.*

*Milton: More tense.*

*Catherine: More tense. Yeah. The layers are stuck together more.*

*Milton: Yeah.*

*Jeanette: It's on that side that I get that pain in the lower back.*

*Catherine: Is it? On the right side there. Which is interesting, given that that was where the initial, surface tightness was more evident, on the opposite side. This [massage] movement [that I am doing now] is connecting in that area up to the shoulder there.*

Catherine next expands on the notion of underlying, tactually perceptible areas of tightness. She and Milton decide that underlying tightness could directly cause an effect in the superficial layers of muscle, or that the pattern of underlying tightness could be connected with different muscles, lying in different orientations, and linking up differing bodily areas.

*Catherine: Right, the whole back has actually loosened up quite nicely, but, it's as though I've got down to the next layer of tightness up through here. So, we need to tone that.*

*Jeanette: And you can feel that rather than see it? That next layer of tightness?*

*Catherine: Yeah, it's not very visible, is it.*

*Jeanette: Right.*

*Catherine: I can feel it, yeah. So it's almost as though you start getting layers of tightness. The surface pattern might be quite different to what's underlying, [the] surface relations.*

*Milton: Mm. It could be influenced. I mean if you're getting tightness in the lower layers, that's going to cause a bulking up of the muscle tissue on top, the superficial layers.*

*Catherine: Although, you might have another muscle involved.*

*Milton: Yes, or both.*

Milton, Jeanette's husband, then links the overall tightness in Jeanette's back and shoulder area to an inappropriate postural position whilst computing.

*Milton: I was just saying this is probably all related to the extra computing work.*

*Catherine: Oh, right.*

*Milton: See you were sitting at a keyboard, leaning over a keyboard, last night and the early hours of this morning.*

*See that keyboard's all adjusted to my height. You don't use it most of the time.*

In the following section, Catherine speaks about how her tactile input adds another dimension to 'seeing things blind'. The rest of the discussion is concerned with the role of malleable body massage in initiating change in the tissue. The massager works until she can tactually feel and see in the reflected movements of the interconnected tissue that there are 'no great big stops to movement'. The interconnectedness of bodily tissue, in my model of malleable body massage, will enable a process of finer adjustment to continue after the initial mechanical input of massage has ceased.

*Catherine: Right now. See if you can keep following the movement, I know it's probably that you're trying to see things blind, because you haven't got the hands to work, to get the feeling with, but uh, I'd start to be quite happy with that now. There's still tightness through there, but I would say that one part of the body is connected up sufficiently with the next, there's no great big stops to movement.*

*Well, I'll leave the back now. I haven't 'fixed' the back up, but I've, it seems to me as though I've got things moving, connected to each other. So, in a sense I start to rely on the body as, ah, once you've set the conditions up, you, it'll, the circulation will, which is a little bit like what you were saying this morning, once you (sigh) allow the circulation and feeling of movement in the body to be all around, then you can go on to another area. You don't have to keep working something until it's completely gone. Does that make sense?*

*Jeanette: I've found that actually.*

*Andrew: Yeah, your body will start healing itself, once it's been given the right energy.*

*Catherine: Yeah, you kind of change your structure a bit with the mechanical input of rubbing, and then, let the body do itself.*

Catherine continues to work down into the lower back.

In the next section another response to massage is being brought out. An area which was not initially sore to the touch becomes more sore as Catherine works on it, and Jeanette wants to tense against the imposed soreness which massage brings to the area. The massaged person is able actively to resist the loosening of tissues. The massager, to get the best overall results in terms of entire bodily loosening, responds to the massaged person's feelings which can act as an override to the massager's tactual and visual assessment of the most appropriate sequence and pressure of massage movements.

*Jeanette: It's getting tight, sore up there as you work on it.*

*Milton: If the muscles are strong, and lacking in pain, there's no pain, then that's the optimum, isn't it?*

*Catherine: What's that?*

*Milton: The optimum.*

*Catherine: Yeah, they're resilient, that's right.*

*Milton: Yeah. They can produce good contractions.*

*Catherine: Yeah. Is this side getting more sore as I work on it as well?*

*Jeanette: Yeah. In fact I feel as though I want to react against it.*

*Catherine: In what way?*

*Jeanette: I want to tense against it.*

*Andrew: Uum, bringing something out.*

*Catherine: So the underlying layer's there as well.*

*Jeanette: That's a lot better.*

*Catherine: Is it? Down there [as well]?*

*Jeanette: No.*

In the next and final section, Catherine, in order to assess the extent of any lower back involvement, checks both on the feel of tissues and Jeanette's response to the palpation. Because there is little soreness in the lower back area, Catherine decides that the back is 'in fairly good nick, overall'. This acts as a final summing up of the degree of tightness in the back, which Catherine has left until the close of the massage, after maintaining a relatively open attitude to the feel of the tissues and Jeanette's responses throughout the course of the massage.

*Catherine: Oh yeah. Now, I'm mainly concerned with working close to the base of the spine, which actually might be incorporated in Jeanette's lower back tiredness that she gets. What about through there, Jeanette?*

*Jeanette: No. It's fine. No problems.*

*Catherine: There's a bit of, you know those cysty, fatty kind of fluidy area that you get down there?*

*Millie: Mm. They feel like little lumps?*

*Catherine: Yeah. There's a little,*

*Lyn: Little grainy bits.*

*Catherine: you can you see that down there? Yeah, I'm running across that, it's not bone, it's fairly hard -*

*Jeanette: How do you know it's not bone? Cos it feels as though you're right on it.*

*Catherine: There. Feel it?*

*Jeanette: Right (uncertain).*

*Milton: Looks like,*

*Catherine: It's only fairly localised. Just like a bit of a ripple in the muscle.*

*Milton: Oh yes.*

*Catherine: A rippling. That's not sore?*

*Jeanette: No.*

*Catherine: So, I don't know, I would interpret that as being a bit of a build-up, a breadthened kind of effect of the muscles there, but nothing drastic. I mean I think this is all in fairly good nick, overall. I'm being a bit picky. Now, I like getting, where I get at the base of the spine here, at the base of the sacrum, that's an area that can [easily] get left out, and ah, and if you've got, it's not sore there?*

*Jeanette: No.*

*Catherine: And if you've got tightness and soreness in there [which Jeanette hasn't], it's starting to say that the, the involvement of the lower back is um, more intense. More distributed and just coming out, particularly in that area.*