

LIMITATIONS, PAIN, AND CREATIVITY

(Written in 2010)

When I was a boy, I would look up at the ceiling of a room and dream of being able to swing around there like a monkey in an invisible forest. I've never managed it, at least not literally. I don't suppose I ever will. Especially not now, since I broke my arm, and then developed tendonitis in the other shoulder as a result. Both my arms are still weak, and at times painful. I can't even swing around on real branches at the moment, let alone imaginary ones. My dance is different. My whole psyche is different actually, because of these physical limitations.



I've become old enough to know that limitations are profound teachers, precisely formed to match our own psyche, and to see them with more curiosity than I used to. For about a year after that accident, the pain in my

arms was a big feature of my dance experience, as well as how hurt I felt about it emotionally and mentally (in fact that was a much bigger journey than the physical pain).

Every time, if I followed that pain all the way into my centre, I always found myself there, renewed, stronger, with a deeper level of freedom. My body still hurt, but I loved more deeply and strongly with it.

Isn't this the way of things?

It kept taking me to new places, and teaching me that if I want freedom I have to go through a different door, much more subtle, more about my state of mind than the velocity of any one body part.

Then there are more subtle, non-physical limitations. I've been teaching the rhythms now for over 17 years, and there have been so many moments that went beyond the ordinary, where something luminous was happening, something beyond words, bigger than any of us in the room. I usually come out of such experiences feeling lighter in spirit, expanded beyond my normal self. I love that feeling; it's what I've been seeking my whole life, and why I'm so devoted to the rhythms, because I've never found anything that so reliably takes me there.

Yet every time when I look back, once I've 'come down', I see that there were shadows playing around that I didn't see at the time. With hindsight I can see my ego doing it's little games, pulling strings and twisting perception.

Ha! So much for en-lightenment :-)

There I go again.

Same old same old.

Ah.....deep breath.....smile.....

This is no cause for despair, it is just a different kind of enlightenment; the kind that keeps my feet on the ground and my heart open to recognise that we're all the same. No prizes for being special, but on-going membership of the human race and a little more humour and compassion for our collective situation.

I often see people on the dance floor wrestling with limitations and hear them lamenting their situation: I don't like the music, the room's too hot/cold, there's not enough fresh air, the floor's not right, this partner's a loser, I'm a loser, I've hurt my foot, my ex-lover hurt my heart.....

Often the question is simply what to do about being tired. Or whether it's OK to do a workshop despite having an injury. I always say yes, and respect your limitations. There's no problem. I bet Van Gough would not have refused to paint if he'd only been given small canvases. No, he would have done small paintings! So what? So what if you're tired? Dance tired! So what if you can't dance like that other person, or like you did when you were 20? In truth, the only problem is if you are unwilling to feel your feelings about it, and make them part of your dance.

There are a few basic steps to dancing with limitations:–

- At least at first, be willing to move within and around your limitations, to explore them with genuine curiosity.
- Then be willing to feel your feelings about that and give them to your dance. Breathe into whatever feelings come up, and let your body handle them. Feelings are just energy that needs to move. Let your voice come if it needs to.

These first two steps if taken deeply will very likely completely change your dance. You might just use micromovements for a while. You may crawl around on the floor or even just lie almost motionless for ages. You might move like you have a deformity, or a mental handicap, with weird expressions on your face. I mean it! Why not?!

- Thirdly, listen for wisdom, or an opening of some kind. If you do the first two steps, then at some point there will probably be a knowing, some information about what your next step needs to be. It might be to dance with that person the other side of the room. It might be slow down, or speed up, or to leave the dance floor and go watch a movie. It might be to write a novel, or to leave your job and go wander the world for a year, or just get an early night.

The rhythms wake up your intuition, that aspect of your mind that is mysteriously plugged into big mind, and gets the downloads from the matrix of consciousness that we live within. Getting into your body and opening to your feelings, those two sides of you moving together

create a huge space that you fall into, out of chat-room mind and into that place where you simply know how it is and what your next step is.

If you're able to see it, then you simply have the choice whether to trust your knowing, or not.

These three steps might actually show you a space beyond that limitation, or they might take you to a place where the limitation dissolves as you experience yourself on a different level, where those limitations do not even exist.

Then you get to start over again: everything moves in cycles.

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