

Creativity, Art and Rolfing®

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This article is a reply to the request to make available to the members my resources and responses to the questions presented on the Art of Rolfing Panel at the 1998 Annual Meeting.

A R T

"...what makes the artist is primarily the formative power that enables him to give them shape, to weave them into an organic aesthetic whole."¹

There were three questions posed to the Art Panel at the Annual Meeting. The first question was, "How is Rolfing an art form?" Before saying why I think Rolfing is an art form I feel it important to discuss what is meant by art. Admittedly, this is no easy task as H.W. Jansen, in *The History of Art*, concurs by stating, "Defining art is about as troublesome as defining a human being."² Art forms include visual arts, or the displaying of concrete objects to be observed by others; performing arts, presentations of events involving human movement expressions; martial arts, the practice of unifying and defensive movements; and healing arts, the treatment of forms of disease, disharmony, or imbalances and bringing organisms into harmony, order, and balance. Healing arts also can be described as making sense of confusion and conflict within a person and bringing an internal sense of "fit" to the individual. According to the above definitions,

Rolfing can be seen as being more specifically related to the healing arts.

Definitions of art from Webster's and American Heritage dictionaries include: a human effort to imitate, supplement, or alter the work of nature; conscious production or arrangement that affects the sense of beauty; beauty, aesthetic value; nonscientific; a system of principles and methods in performing set activities; a specific skill requiring intuitive faculties; and the conscious use of skill and creative imagination especially in the production of aesthetic objects. All art forms involve executing well a decision-making process that produces expressions reflecting beauty and aesthetics. In art, these expressions are aimed at affecting the beholder's perceptions towards wholeness. Art produces concrete and true representations of inner and outer beauty which help others to perceive with more sensitivity.

Do we, as Rolfers, involve ourselves in a decision-making process and produce or contribute to the production of expressions of beauty and aesthetics? Do we have an effect on our clients' and our own perceptions

and sensitivities? My experience is that we do. There is no question in my mind that Rolfers, through our efforts and choices, bring organisms into greater relative harmony, order, and balance. We also aid in the process of making that which does not "fit" in the client to more truly "fit." Finally, through increasing awareness as a result of Rolfing, ideas of what it means to be human can change.

But is this beautiful and aesthetic? What makes it so? Who says what is beautiful and aesthetic? Again, definitions can be useful in answering these questions. Aesthetics means pleasing in appearance, an appreciation and response to the beautiful, and what is pleasurable to the senses. Beauty is a pleasurable experience of the senses or exaltation of the mind and spirit. Beauty is a felt experience of expansion, upliftment and deepening unity. Art brings together seemingly unrelated elements in such a way as to make sense to our perceptions without the need for it to appear logical. The beauty in a healing art can mean that one can perceive something in oneself to be appropriately connected and related to oneself, another, or the environment. The beholder has a sense of wholeness, whether logical or not, and this is pleasurable. It is a pleasant experience to the senses when something "fits." Our bodies feel good and our minds and spirits can

be easily uplifted. Beauty is not only in the eye of the beholder but in his or her body as well. Rolfing is a healing art that works with the experience of beauty, aesthetics, and wholeness in the body.

Human efforts to make arrangements that affect the sense of beauty demand that the artist engage in choice-making, using both intuitive faculties and the conscious use of creative imagination. Executing human effort to make arrangements that affect the sense of beauty, and skills requiring intuitive faculties with the conscious use of creative imagination imply that the artist must engage in choice-making. Artists must make decisions about time, space, light, color, shape, meaning, function, experience, movement, effect, technique, medium. Rolfers are no exception to these types of choices. Certainly in the course of a Rolfing session we are called upon to make choices regarding our course of action with our clients on a moment-to-moment basis.

To decide means to select a course of action. Decisions imply tension of forces vying for selection, a conflict of interests at odds with each other. Each proclaims itself to be the true course of action. The tension that can exist in the client lies between the struggle with staying with reliable compensations on the one hand and the pressure of an emerging desire to experience an expression of a deep inner beauty on the other.

How do artists make decisions? By definition, artists commonly make decisions through intuition. Intuition is a quick and ready insight, an immediate apprehension or cognition of information from within ourselves without evident rational thought or inference.³ Carl Jung describes it as an immediate awareness of relationships that include subliminal factors about

a thing's possible relationship to objects not appearing in the field of vision.⁴ To the extent that we, as Rolfers, engage in our intuitive faculties in the decision-making process of our client interactions, we are behaving as artists and expressing our work as art.

Artists, in the execution of their art forms, have a capacity for recognizing intuition and relying on it in decision-making. They would trust in it to position themselves for the synchronous emergence of new perceptions, new forms, new ideas, new ways of doing, being, and seeing, that move one in the directions of beauty, aesthetics and wholeness, changing perceptions and realities toward greater unity and beauty.

C R E A T I V I T Y

"The strife between opposites is an important source of energy for an evolving new synthesis."⁵

It is a widely accepted assumption that artists are creative and that art is a creative process. But what is creativity? There are many ways of defining creativity with one of them being that it is undefinable.

Common characteristics or driving forces of creativity mentioned in definitions include tension, conflict, dissonance, discomfort, and imagination. Robert J. Sternberg places definitions of creativity into six classes. Briefly, these are:

- 1) Gestalt or Perception—a process of destroying one gestalt in favor of a better one.
- 2) End product or innovation—any process by which something new is produced.
- 3) Aesthetic or Expressive—an ability to think in uncharted waters without influence from conventions set up by

past practices.

4) Psychoanalytic or dynamic—a certain interactional strength of ratios of the id, ego and superego, or creativity as permanent operant variables of personality.

5) Solution Thinking—whenever the mind can see the relationship between two items in such a way as to generate a third item; divergent-thinking factors—ability to go off in different directions.

6) Varia—addition to the existing stored knowledge of mankind, or the result of our subjective relationship with man and environment, or the integration of facts, impressions, or feelings into a new form.⁶

A tension of opposing forces forms the basis of a creative process. Opposing psychological forces comprise the dynamic tension of all being, according to Jung.⁷ I am suggesting that the primary driving force behind the creative process is the tension of being in the presence of duality. The artist stands on the center mark amidst the power of effort and stillness, chaos and order, in subjective and objective awareness and "...assimilate[s] the immediate perceptual aspects of experience into a total structure of harmony and beauty [with] an unusual sensitivity to the beauty in nature's forms and structures."⁸ The artist remains conscious under the coercion of each side until a new awareness emerges and can be shaped and integrated into a tapestry of wholeness.

We encounter many dualities in Rolfing. Some of them include: Is it structure or function? Is it strong touch or light touch? Is it hands on or movement? Is it recipe or not recipe? Is it the client or the Rolfer?

In the face of the tension of polar forces what does it take to be creative? What are the characteristics of

the creative personality? Robert J. Sternberg says it takes "...fluency, flexibility, originality, and elaboration...transformations of thought, reinterpretations, and freedom from functional fixedness."⁹ The creative individual's attention is available to the known and the unknown, accommodates a complexity of paradox which is, ideally, both gracious and graceful. He or she can navigate the known rules and symbols of a particular discipline while functioning well in authenticity, synchronicity, and, above all, ambiguity.

Creative artists can stand in a field of ambiguity and feel the trembling of the ground of insecurity. They are able to remain confident in their ability to perceive a kind of relative soundness and order in the middle of movement. They can hold a vision of wholeness and beauty, feeding their creative endeavors with an imagination that encompasses compassion and positive outcome while their creations move, shift, and transform unexpectedly before their eyes.

In describing Roling as an artistically creative process, it might be of interest to view it in terms of Klondike Problems.¹⁰ A Klondike problem refers to looking for gold in vast geographical regions such as the Klondike. Put simply, it says that, "Gold is where you find it." The first consideration for Roling in this light is to determine what is our gold? In our Roling language it is, most essentially, an individual's integrated relationship of personal structure with the planet's field of gravity. This is the awareness and quintessential experience of line, core, and harmony of movement with gravity. It can also be said to be one's true relationship to the Self and its expressions while in a state of ever-changing perceptions of life. But where is the gold in our work and how do we find it?

The Klondike problem presents itself with four aspects:

1) Rarity—Gold is sparsely distributed in vast spaces of possibilities.

Where in the human structure is this integration, core, and harmony? Think of the infinite complexity of a human body, mind, and soul, of the vast prairies, canyons, and valleys of compensations. Where do we look? How do we look? What signs do we search for? What clues do we perceive? I present these questions rhetorically here as I believe every Rolfer has an idea how to answer them.

2) Isolation—Regions of gold often lie isolated or semi-isolated.

How does the client present possibilities of integration? How do we reach them? Every Rolfer can appreciate the depth and complexity of the search for integration in the structure, function, and experiences of an individual.

3) Oasis—Regions of gold or promise are hard to leave.

How satisfying it is to both client and Rolfer to finally reach transcendent moments of integration. It is not difficult to imagine wanting them to go on forever. When do we decide to leave the oasis of the client having an integrative experience and what makes us choose to do so?

4) Plateau—Regions with directions toward greater promise are not clear.

How do we handle uncertainty in the midst of a session? How do we deal with any anxiety to perform that may arise in us? How do we educate the client about the reality of plateaus in a transformational process? Creativity, as David N. Perkins describes is the ability to cope with these Klondike aspects while engaging in one's work.¹¹ The choices we make and how we cope with the aspects of

the Klondike problem as Rolfers demonstrates the creative art of Roling.

"[Art] is a strange and risky business in which the maker never quite knows what he is making until he has actually made it...it is a game of find-and-see in which the seeker is not sure what he is looking for until he has found it... this need-to-take-a-chance should be the essence of the artist's work...the urge to penetrate unknown realms..."¹²

Roling is an art because it lends itself to an artistically creative process. It is a process of the changing of perceptions towards more beautiful expressions of wholeness, from perceptions of what is mechanical and comfortable in human structural existence to what actually is or could be possible in human form. It is also an art because individuals whose personalities are harmonious with artistic creative process are able to take advantage of it.

QUESTION TWO

"To be creative, a person has to internalize the entire system that makes creativity possible."¹³

The second question posed to the Art Panel was, "How is this art best taught to others?" I am approaching this question from the point of view of Roling as a creative healing art. I am also approaching it from the focus of traits and personalities of the individuals who are drawn to Roling.

This may sound obvious but Roling is best taught to those whose desires, abilities, and personalities are congruent with the experiences of Roling. In order to teach Roling, teachers and students must have an interest, motivation, and access to Roling. Interest and motivation may have to do with inherent predispositions towards the experiences Roling

produces. Access simply means such individuals are able to find their way to those experiences. In addition, I believe these individuals need to have a desire to increase their creativity in the face of uncertain processes related to Rolwing. To be a creative healing artist, to teach and learn about Rolwing, means that a person must feel a compatibility with and acquire a relatively whole understanding of the symbols, the language, and the paradigms of this domain. To me this means laying down thorough and concrete foundations of fundamentals in our trainings. Rolwing fundamentals lie in the areas of theory, practicality, and artistry and include, chiefly, a person's relation to gravity, movement in gravity, line of gravity, connective tissue, recipe, and now principles of Rolwing.

In light of the question of how the art of Rolwing can best be taught I thought I would describe creative choices. In keeping with the idea that creativity is characterized by a tension of opposing forces, creative learning can be seen as effort to balance the known and the unknown. On the known side we have that which is predictable, even mechanical, including all the rules, formulae, symbols, language, recipe, principles, guidelines, and techniques of our domain of Rolwing. This is the side that plays it safe and does it by the book.

On the unknown side we have that which is arbitrary and mysterious. This side is characterized by a Trickster and synchronicity reality. This reality is continually reminding the adherent that things are not what they appear to be. It is notorious for luck, coincidence, and opportunity. From here the creative practitioner takes risks.

Both the known and the unknown, playing it safe and taking risks, are necessary for a creative process of learning. However, keeping Csikszentmihayli's quote in mind, it would be inappropriate to encourage new students to engage in too much risk-taking before they have had a sufficiently comprehensive internalization of the known aspects of the Rolwing domain. In order to thoroughly learn our domain it makes sense to begin with spending sufficient time with, and having sufficient experiences of, the theories and practices of what is known about Rolwing. This is particularly relevant in light of personality theory which says that certain individuals have preferences in the way in which they take in information and make decisions.¹⁴

The theory that the dynamics of personalities are evidenced by preferences to paired functions of opposites was presented by Carl Jung.

*"Consciousness is primarily an organ of orientation in a world of outer and inner facts. First and foremost, it establishes the fact that something is there. I call this faculty sensation...perception in general.
...Another faculty interprets what is perceived;
this I call thinking...A third faculty establishes the value of the object. This function or evaluation I call feeling...It is the fourth faculty of consciousness, intuition, which makes possible, at least approximately, the determination of space-time relationships
...the possible relationship to objects not appearing in the field of vision, and the possible changes, past and future, about which the object gives not a clue."¹⁵*

According to this theory each person

is born with certain preferences of orientation to reality, how we take in information, and how we make decisions. These preferences are as innate as right-handedness or left-handedness. Although an individual whose preference is extreme on one side may find it very difficult to relate to an individual whose preference is extreme on the other, neither of the opposites is seen as superior to the other. They simply represent individual preferences.

The function pertinent to the question of how Rolwing is best taught to others is the function pertaining to how we take in information, how we perceive or find out about things. Individuals are either Sensors, having a preference toward Sensation, or Intuitives, having a preference toward Intuition.

Sensors focus on what is real and actual. They value practical applications. They prefer what is factual and concrete. They notice the details of situations, circumstances, and problems. Sensors observe and remember sequentially and want information step-by-step. They are present-oriented and trust in experience. Sensors trust what is certain and concrete. They like new ideas only if they have practical applications. They value realism and common sense and like to use and hone established skills. Sensors tend to be specific and literal giving detailed descriptions.

Intuitives focus on "big picture" possibilities. They value imaginative insight and what is abstract and theoretical. Rather than preferring facts themselves, Intuitives see patterns and meaning in facts. They are future-oriented. They jump around and leap in anywhere. They trust what inspires them rather than what they experience. Intuitives value innovation. They trust inspira

tion and inference and like new ideas and concepts for their own sake. They like to learn and become bored easily after mastering skills. Intuitives tend to be general and figurative, use metaphors and analogies, and present information through leaps in a roundabout manner.¹⁶

These differences in types, relative to teaching the art of Rolwing, suggest to me that considerable time be spent on the known, the fundamentals of the Rolwing domain in the beginning of a person's training. This lays down a vital foundation for internalizing the entire system. Internalizing the fundamentals of Rolwing and Rolf Movement is important in embodying the craft of Rolwing. If we do not embody the craft and fundamentals of Rolwing, how can we internalize the creative process within this domain as Csikszentmihalyi proclaims?

Secondly, understanding one's preferences increases the likelihood of a quicker internalization of the system by showing the individual his or her weak and strong points in gathering information and making decisions. It also can help students to match their needs with the preferences of the teacher. A teacher of similar preference type will feel reassuring and a teacher with opposite preferences will feel challenging. Both reassurance and challenge are necessary elements in the learning process.

The actual teaching environment could become more comforting when considering type differences. A faculty member of one strong type can choose an assistant of a complimentary type thus giving students more options in how they take in the information presented. It could help both teacher and student ease through difficulties or confusions when information is being transmitted and received. For instance, a

Sensor type may think an Intuitive type is changing the subject when he or she is actually attempting to generate possibilities. Or, an Intuitive may think a Sensor is unimaginative when he or she is being realistic about practical matters.

With the compression of decades of experience from Ida and her heirs being imparted to new practitioners in a relatively brief timespan, any advantage to the learning environment is welcome. Keeping personality type in mind, a thorough emphasis on the Known side in the creative model taking place in early training and practice with the Unknown side emerging in importance later on could give great advantage to teaching the Art of Rolwing.

QUESTION THREE

The final question posed to the Art Panel was, "How do the science and art of Rolwing intermingle and inform one another?" I would like to remain consistent with my approach to this question by responding in terms of personality interests and the creative process. While it appears true to me that each of us has a preference, and this could be a strong preference, to either the sciences or the arts, I believe that within each of us is a scientist and an artist.

According to the Strong Interest Inventory,¹⁷ individuals who have science occupations, e.g., mathematicians, physicists, sociologists, and who really enjoy what they do display generally similar characteristics. These individuals self-report a preference for activities that entail observation, symbols, and a systematic investigation of physical, biological, and cultural phenomena with the intent to understand and control those phenomena.

Their self-perception includes being

scholarly, intellectually self-confident, and having mathematical and scientific abilities, i.e., logic. Science-oriented people exhibit behaviors that are analytical, cautious, critical, curious, independent, introspective, methodical, precise, and rational. They will solve problems being analytically and rationally.

Individuals who have art occupations, e.g., musicians, dancers, interior decorators, and who really enjoy what they do, report the following characteristics. They have a preference for activities that entail ambiguity, freedom, and an unsystematized manipulation of physical, verbal, or human materials, to create art forms or products.

Their self-perception is that of being expressive, nonconforming, and original. The artist-oriented individual exhibits behavior that is idealistic imaginative, impractical, intuitive, impulsive, emotional, independent, flexible, and complicated. These individuals will solve problems emotionally and unconventionally.

To the question of how art and science intermingle the answer is both simple and complex. If a creative process is a tension of opposites, the intermingling of art and science would be such a process. Fundamentally, this tension lies within each of us as individual Rolwers and in our dialogues as colleagues. Though we may identify more strongly with the artist or the scientist, I would be surprised to find anyone who read the above interests who did not recognize some traits of both within them.

At its worst, the process of the polarities creates division, alienation, resentment, and attempts to control the other. At its best, it fosters the continuous and fluid shift of preconceived notions to a new perception,

inconceivable from the perspective of being in one polarity alone. In consciousness, the creative process of being with the tension of opposites brings forth the synchronous emergence of new ideas, new forms, and new symbols of our work that are alive, fluid, and dynamic.

How do art and science inform one another? As seen from the previous descriptions of personality types, science-oriented individuals can be likened to Sensors while art-oriented types can be likened to Intuitives. Keeping this and the creative polarity in mind, we can describe the mutual usefulness of art and science opposites in terms of personality type theory.

In this description art needs science to bring up pertinent facts, to apply experience to problems, to read fine print, and to notice what needs attention now. In addition, art needs science to have patience and enthusiasm for projects, to keep track of essential details, to face difficulties with realism, and to show that the joys of the present are important. On the other hand, science needs art to bring up new possibilities, to supply ingenuity to problems, to read signs of coming change, and to see how to prepare for the future. In addition science needs art to watch for new essentials, to tackle difficulties with zest, to show that the joys of the future are worth working for.

Potential obstacles to the scientific position which could be ameliorated by including an artistic perspective include becoming over-focused and seeing very few options, becoming too literal in interpretations, getting stuck in a rut and not acting, and glossing over important details. Additional obstacles to the scientific view also include believing all details are equally important, not wanting to try something new, being too set on

outcome, and having difficulty with "What if...."

Obstacles to the artistic perspective include seeing too many options, having difficulty focusing, getting stuck in possibilities and not acting, and ignoring crucial information. Additional obstacles to the artistic view also include taking great risks but ignoring reality, becoming too set on possibility, and having difficulty with specifics.¹⁸

The mutual informing of art and science has a practical basis relative to Rolfing. We could always use more research to bring out more of the facts regarding our work. We need these to verify and ground our perceptions and experiences of the value of our work or to alter our perceptions accordingly. We need to satisfy our innate creative curiosities through inquiry and exploration of the work Ida Rolf gave us while remaining true to her fundamental ideas. Finally, art and science informing each other means developing the weaker preferences in our own personalities. It will naturally affect the way we work on a daily basis. □

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