

Your Paradise Body, Lost and Found

Part One: A History of the "Dreadfully Disappointed, Ramified Body" (DDRDB)

"We used to live in the Garden of Eden," they say. Yes, I believe that, but not exactly as it says in the old "YWH" or "EL" Bible. No, mostly we lived IN THE TREES of that garden among their "ramifications". That's a fancy word meaning "branches".

It was a wonderful, three-dimensional experience which our BODIES have not forgotten...and now miss, "dreadfully". Yes, we "fell from grace", the grace of running & jumping, skipping & swinging from branch-to-branch in all of those 720 degrees of directions (That means 360 horizontally plus 360 vertically.) What a big 3-D "ball" of "ramified" possibilities our BODIES then lived in! It was glorious, even better than Tarzan!

Oh yes, there were dangers up there, dangers like falling (especially in your sleep), large & hungry cats, and silent & deadly snakes. Otherwise it was paradise with lovely fruits and insects to eat.

And so our BODIES then practiced good nutrition and plenty of exercise, so no wonder we NOW (forced to live in our body-unfriendly, civilized world) so often feel "dreadfully" home-sick for that "Paradise Lost". Yes, we miss our "roots" in the tops of the TREES because when our BODIES left that 3-D paradise, they got put-back into the "trailing and tracking imperative" (TTI) which mammals OBEYED long before they (as lemurs and tarsiers) started living in the TREES.

Our first return-steps (now bipedal) back into that ancient "trailing and tracking imperative" (TTI) were devoted to following "protein-promising herds" (PPH) of the other (older species) mammals (still quadra-pedal).

Well, I suppose that when we left those TREES, what we lost in our arms (our former "front legs") we made-up-for in those amazing hind legs (and massive buttocks). We became the best long-distance (marathon) "trackers and trailers" EVER. No other mammal was safe with a group of us (now totally bi-pedal) chimps running after him (sometimes for the whole day!) armed with deadly "throwing" tools of predation. Yes, we had "protein in the pot" almost every night. Hallelujah! (And don't forget to say "grace".)

But what price have we paid for all this protein? What has this return to the "tracking and trailing imperative" (TTI) done to our once "ramified" BODIES?

Part Two: Why "Dreadfully Disappointed"?

The Christian part of the Holy Bible promises a resurrection into a "new body" in some distant, after-death "new life" I don't buy into that "pie in the sky" promise because I want my RESURRECTED BODY NOW, thank you (RBN,ThY). And why not?

When we lived in the trees, we used our arms "aloft" (above shoulder level and usually in a "V" position). Our legs were mostly used for "bracing" our weight side-to-side against branches. This meant that our legs were used mostly in a straddle "A" position. Now, if you put these two positions to-gether (the "V" above and the "A" below), you get an "X" for the entire body. It was that "X"-axis body position which gave us some very important, deep-inside muscles which operated to bind the whole torso (both thorax and pelvis areas) to the very flexible spine.

But today, our civilized way of life neglects to exercise these deeply important muscles, and so usually if we want our paradise bodies back again, we have to take special exercise programs like yoga or Pilates. Any other kind of exercise tends to neglect these deep muscles and can even cause our bodies to wear and tear and degeneration. Certainly just walking or running in a straight line ahead (especially on a level surface or a treadmill) is a GREAT LIMITATION on our "once-ramified" bodies. This GREAT LIMITATION began when we left our tree homes and began to track and trail again, led this time not by the nose (like the four legged mammals) but led by the eyes (now in front of the face) "fixed on some prize on the far horizon".

But at least running and walking gives your body SOME exercise. Today, too many people don't even do THAT on a daily or even a weekly basis. So much for the LEGS.

Let's now focus on our "upper limbs", our two arms which "branch" (usually downward now) into our palm with thumb and fingers. THESE are the parts of our bodies which have become the worst victims of civilized behaviors. And I have lots to say about these pitiful arms and hands which are enslaved by customs and habits that we have come to take for granted and consider to be "natural". They have even come to "serve" talking...even on the telephone!

I once wrote a song about what happened to our bodies when they left the trees. The song consisted of only seven words repeated by a low voice as a rhythmic chant while another, higher voice sang the same seven words more slowly and melodically over the beat. The seven words were as follows:

WALK & RUN, CARRY & THROW, TALK & DRAW & WRITE

Somehow these new bipedal, arm-free activities have become the "Seven Deadly Sins" against the "ramified" body we developed in our Paradise Trees. These seven "civilized" activities have come to dominate our "marvel-ous" bipedal lives. The first four activities at least involve moving the larger muscles of the body, but those last three are the worst of the bunch because they use only the very small muscles, and they are usually performed while the body is in the HORRIBLE position we call "sitting down". For example when I graduated from college as a commercial artist, I refused to pursue that career when I saw people moored to their drawing boards under fluorescent lights.

"Sitting down" encourages bad posture (slumping and hunching) and the nurturing of a pot belly in the lap. But the spine and torso are only the more obvious problem areas. Very few people realize how "dreadfully" en-slaved our arms and hands have become in the "service" of civilized occupations and rituals. These "services" are almost always performed at LOW horizons or levels: belly, chest, and hips. Tables, chairs, and car-seats keep our arms and hands down at these low levels where they keep repeating the same movements over-and-over again. Very rarely do you see anyone over the age of eight gleefully tossing his arms up above shoulder level. How sad for the adults of our species! The major exception to this sad state of affairs is the occasional rock-concert audience who have been encouraged to "Get those hands up in the air". What a glorious, revolutionary idea!

To counter this dreadful "sitting down" enslavement of my own body, I have made several important changes in my life-style. Probably the most important change has been my refusal to drive a car again. Now I either bike, walk, or take a bus. But even these forms of transportation have their body limitations. For example, biking does nothing for the arms, and walking is not only "trail-ahead linear", it also forces the arms and hands into becoming mere "straight-ahead" counterweights for the swinging actions of the legs. What a waste! And bussing usually involves "sitting down", but because of those wonderful metal poles and overhead grips, I consider the bus to be a great gymnastic opportunity! In fact, even while sitting, I always keep at least one arm above shoulder level holding a pole or a window sill. And if I'm lucky enough to be standing on the bus, I try to keep both arms aloft and my legs in that tree-inspired "A" position. Thereby riding the bus almost becomes a "surfing" activity with my arms up in the happy "V" (for victory) position. Yes, riding the bus while standing is one of my favorite "X"-axis activities for my "ramified" BODY.

However walking is the best, BUT only IF the arms are UP, UP, UP.

O.K. So people think you are crazy (or childish) if you go-around waving your arms in the air, but here's how you can gradually put first your OWN fears at rest and then become not a "laughing stock" but an "inspiration" to others. The "safest" position (socially acceptable) for your raised-up arms is with at least one palm on the top of your head. Two is better, of course. Just walking with your two hands up there immediately frees your arms from being just "dead" counter weights for the leg movements. Now your shoulders begin to lead the torso into a spine-twisting action which engages those wonderful, deep-torso muscles again. At best, this "hands on head in public" strategy is a compromise or a mild concession to the opinion of others, but eventually you must convince yourself (and later others) that the BODY BENEFITS of this unusual behaviour far outweigh any unsympathetic stares or silly comments from strangers.

WEIGHT TRAINING

Really, since we left the trees, our arm muscles need additional "gravity resisting" weights while they move in those upper regions. One usually thinks of barbells and dumbbells when thinking of weights, but why not plastic bottles of water (small or large)? Again barbells and dumbbells suggest only traditional curling" and "pressing" which reinforce the "trail-ahead mind-set" tending to convert the body into a rectilinear "box car". This moving-ahead, "space cube" concept for the body de-ramifies its tree-trained muscles and forces them into a "front-back, left-side, right-side" space which when combined with the usual weight lifter's pursuit of massive muscles, invites RIGIDITY rather than FLEXIBILITY. But if you start your so-called "weight training" with small, plastic bottles of water, you can build muscle "tone" in the arms while waving them about in diagonal and curvilinear patterns. But even the bottles

(small or large) presuppose what I call the "bar-grip" which may well have its origin in "brachiation" (swinging from branch to branch) but it limits the freedom of our "handy" ramifications (thumb and fingers). The solution to this "frozen palm" grasp is the occasional use of plastic shopping bags for holding your water-bottle weights. These bags come with strap-handles which can be looped over the palm, the wrist, the fingers (in many combinations), or the thumb so as to invite all kinds of digital freedoms like stretching, rotating, clawing, and twiddling (with palm up or down). Why condemn the digits of our "branching" arms to frozen isolation while moving the rest of the body in 3-D space? And too, I recommend an occasional putting-down of the weights for brief periods of "flipping" or shak-ing-out the occupational (habitual) rigidities in those ten digits. Liberate these poor little slaves every chance you get.

So maybe you ARE too shy to get outdoors with your bottles and subject yourself to possible strange stares or even rude comments from the more rigidly civilized members of our species. Here in Brazil, many people who see me on the trail with my bottles automatically assume that I am trying to sell those bottles of water I'm holding aloft. Why else would a person do such a thing? And when a car-full of young men jeer in fast passing, I just imagine myself asking them, "And what are YOU doing for your poor body at this moment? Does your motionless 'sitting-down' give you the health and free-dom I'm now enjoying as you ride past in your 'box-car' ? Now tell me who looks foolish?"

So maybe you'd rather exercise your body at home in private. Fine! But I suggest that you get out of bed earlier than usual to do this because so much of what we automatically do "with" or "to" our bodies in the morning is all about "regimental rituals" which are designed to put both your mind and your body "back on the trail" in pursuit of that "prize on the horizon". Well, DON'T DO IT ANYMORE. Get up early enough to give yourself time to really focus on three new thoughts while you exercise:

1. My body moves in a 3-D "bubble", not an always-forward-moving "box".
2. I stretch and strengthen my body's "X" axis.
3. My arms feel at home on and above my "chin table".

With these new concepts in mind you can easily design your own RE-RAMIFICATION OF THE BODY PROGRAM (RRoBP) with or without music. However, I have one more word of caution:

Do not assume that every move you make on, say, your left side must be duplicated on your right side (or vice-versa). No, this is just another form of rigid acculturation which tries to ignore the fact that our bodies (like our brains) have TWO IDENTITIES, each needing its own freedom of movement, expression, and fulfilment.

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