

Where Are We Going?

F.M. Alexander Memorial Address, Part Two, June 6, 2005

by John Nicholls

What meanings could we ascribe to the expression *mind-body unity*, or the lack of it? I think it's helpful here to distinguish at least three categories of meaning:

1. Subjective, or phenomenological category. A felt sense of unity, integration, or coordination between our thoughts, intentions, emotions, and physical sensations. Or a lack of such a sense.
2. Objective, or scientific category. The current state of understanding based on repeatable observation and experimentation.
3. Philosophical category. The attempt to make sense of both categories 1 and 2 above.

The subjective sense in category 1 may give rise to personal beliefs, which may not always accord with categories 2 and 3. For example, belief in free will is often an intuitive or "gut-level" belief that is now called into question by many scientists and philosophers.

Alexander teachers can be enormously helpful in bringing the consciousness of self more into alignment with the nervous system and musculo-skeletal system. Our emphasis on treating the mind and body as a whole, our focus on aligning consciousness with the central axis of the body (head/neck/back), the effectiveness of our work in freeing breathing, the conscious direction (which is an aspiration) for energy to flow up along the spine without losing the ground, the non-egoic aspect of non-doing as opposed to doing—all these have interesting parallels with the major Indian and Chinese systems.

However, we need to be clear in our own minds that teaching the Technique as a practical tool for enabling people to experience unity or integration of mind and body subjectively (category 1), does not in the Western world give us any authority on the matter in the scientific or philosophical fields (categories 2 and 3).

In many people, their felt sense of themselves corresponds to a Cartesian dualism, beautifully exemplified by a comment a new student once made to me: "We're talking foreign territory here, you know: me and my body. Of course I do look after it. I take it out running regularly." That sense that the physical body is the vehicle carrying around the mental self can lead to many versions of misuse. For example:

disciplining the body to behave as a separate, but well-oiled machine, always ready to obey commands (e.g., training the body while the mind is plugged into the iPod, as we saw in Part I); ignoring the body as a tedious but necessary encumbrance; or exploiting the body as a source of pleasure while attempting to block out any less than pleasurable aspects of it.

So we are experts at bringing about psycho-physical integration as a subjective, first person, phenomenological experience (category 1). Very nice, an outsider might say. But so what? I don't see why that should make such a big difference to my life. Now we know the experience of this work can subtly resonate throughout the depth and height of one's being. But how do you explain that to an outsider? It would be helpful if there were widely accepted views in categories 2 and 3 that would assist in making sense of that experience.

In the scientific category (category 2) the prevailing view is certainly that mind and body are a unity, but in a way that can have awkward ramifications for a discipline such as ours. Those of you who attended last year's International Alexander Congress at Oxford may remember one of the British scientists lecturing to us, saying in answer to a question about consciousness: "It's all molecules." Dr. Francis Crick, who first made his reputation as co-discoverer of the structure of DNA, went on to write a book about consciousness called *The Astonishing Hypothesis*, which expresses the most widespread view in the scientific community today. Crick's Astonishing Hypothesis is that, "You, your joys and your sorrows, your memories and your ambitions, your sense of personal identity and free will, are in fact no more than the behavior of a vast assembly of nerve cells and their associated molecules."¹ Unfortunately when all of our experience is reduced to this, it leads many to conclude that therefore our sense of selfhood and our sense of free will are entirely illusory. Here is a quote from a review of a recent book by a well-respected author in the science and philosophy of mind and brain, Susan Blackmore: "But Blackmore is not a neutral observer and her own views are honestly discernible. I venture to summarize them thus...the study of consciousness will likely reveal that standard views of mind and self are radically mistaken in that there is no unified self and free will is an illusion."²

No unified self and no free will do pose some difficulties for a discipline whose founder believed implicitly in the existence of the unified self and that one could freely choose to improve the use of that unified self. But if, as Crick says, there's only a bunch of molecules and their constituent particles whirling about, the universe and our place within it seems very flat compared to the multi-leveled richness of some older cultures.

Someone who's written a great deal about this is Ken Wilber. Wilber borrows the term "the Great Chain of Being," from another author, Arthur Lovejoy,³ to describe those philosophical frameworks that express experience as different levels of being. The Great Chain of Being is a vertical chain representing a multidimensional hierarchy from the most dense level, which would be considered the physical level, up through levels of emotional, mental, spiritual experience that seem to be progressively less dense or in a sense have a higher vibratory level.⁴ In this kind of world-view, which has been common throughout history and in many different cultures, it makes sense that conscious growth at many levels is both possible and desirable. Indeed, this kind of world-view not only adds meaning and value to the individual seeking conscious growth, but such a framework may also suggest that all beings are linked and therefore each individual progressing helps everyone to progress. In the history of the Western world you can find elements of this view in writers such as Plato, Plotinus, and St. Thomas Aquinas; in the poetic vision of Dante's *Divine Comedy*, and the inner visions of 18th century seer Emmanuel Swedenborg. In contrast, Ken Wilber describes modern scientific reductionism as "Flatland." Flatland is a vast, flat expanse of subatomic particles that wander around bumping into each other, and somehow they accidentally combine and produce the material world. Within this accidental Flatland of the material world, there stands the accidental observer, the uninvited guest, the "I" in me; the "I" in you: conscious awareness observing and aware of observing. The German existential philosopher Martin Heidegger described this as feeling like being "thrown into the world."⁵ Our experience is that there's the world, and here's me looking at it. The "I" and the world; so the "I" looks behind and asks, "Where did I come from?" And the "I" looks ahead and asks, "Where am I going?"

In Flatland, there are no answers to these questions. Much of modern scientific study of the brain seems to be telling us that our sense of self as a free agent is illusory, a story we tell ourselves after the fact—after brain activity has impelled us into action. And consciousness is an epiphenomenon, something that arises out of the complexity of the brain's physical structures but probably has no ability to act back upon these physical structures. Here, indeed, is the accidental observer, a helpless and probably illusory onlooker.

If we move to the philosophical category, 20th century Anglo-American academic philosophy was largely rooted in logical positivism and linguistic analysis. Its main contribution to the large questions of life, being, consciousness, mind and body, etc. was to say: "These aren't really questions any more." I spent the mid-sixties at Oxford University in England, where part of my studies was philosophy. The dominant influence at that time was the late Ludwig Wittgenstein, an Austrian who had been on the faculty at Cambridge University in England. There's a great story they used to tell—I'm sure it's apocryphal—but it nicely illustrates something. Wittgenstein is crossing the campus of one of the Cambridge colleges when a young undergraduate rushes up to him: "Professor, Professor! I must speak to you!" "Certainly, my dear boy." "Professor, I have a problem!" "Tell me, what is the problem?" "Professor, I'm not at home in the universe!" "Ah, my dear boy, that's not a problem, that is simply a difficulty." Such was the contribution of Western philosophy at the time.

F.M. Alexander's own writing can seem a little awkward and frustrating at times. I wonder whether it's awkward and frustrating because it arises out of this Flatland view, or rather its late 19th century precursor. In the late 19th century, the full implications of the view that it's all molecules had not yet become apparent. So FM writes of the whole self, not just the physical body, but this self goes through the world reacting to stimuli largely on the basis of accumulated habits, until eventually consciousness arises, where from we don't know, and it begins to take charge. This in turn enables us to be more rational. Armed with this new tool of conscious control, we all learn to make rational decisions, we solve all our problems and we live happily ever after. I'm not sure this is an entirely adequate model of human beings or of life, but that's not to blame FM. His writing seems to me to be struggling to express a larger vision than his late 19th century

philosophical framework can accommodate. Unfortunately, 20th century science and philosophy have almost made it harder since they appear to dismiss self and free will and make consciousness an accidental byproduct of brain chemistry. Hence my comment in Part I of this talk that I see the Technique as a method in search of a philosophy.

I think that's one of the reasons why we get bogged down in arguments and issues about how we present ourselves and how we're perceived, questions about being perceived as a therapy or as an education. People come to us to cure a back problem; people come to us to improve their singing or their acting skills; people come because they value the Technique as a remarkable tool for personal growth, psychologically and spiritually. Of course we're confused, and of course our potential clientele is confused, because there's no adequate or widely accepted framework within which to

"...we are searching for a
meaningful philosophy to link
consciousness and matter..."

fit, whereas within the Indian or Chinese frameworks, it makes perfect sense that one could be drawn to Yoga or Tai Chi for everything from a bad back to spiritual growth.

Going back to our three categories, phenomenological (subjective), scientific (objective), and philosophical, we were looking at category 2 and saying that the current orthodoxy in scientific circles leaves little room for conscious choice since the self and free will are probably an illusion. One attempt to escape that conclusion is by Benjamin Libet, formerly Professor of Neurophysiology at the University of California, San Francisco. He has been interested in the Alexander Technique and even came to give a talk at the Carrington's training in London sometime in the early 1990s. On the one hand, Professor Libet's work contributes to the idea that free will is an illusion, since he was able to show that there is readiness activity in the brain before we are actually conscious of making any decision to perform an action. On the other hand, he also showed that we seem to have a brief (approximately one tenth to one fifth of a second) window of opportunity to say "No" and to inhibit the action after the idea to perform it comes into awareness. This has been termed by one commentator "Free Won't," as opposed to "Free Will." Libet's book, *Mind Time*, makes a case for this negative aspect of free will being sufficient

to give some control over the course of our lives.⁶ And it fits well with FM saying that when faced with a stimulus we can either give or withhold consent to our reaction. But it's trickier to see how we could choose a different reaction. And it hasn't found widespread support among Libet's scientific colleagues.

Another fascinating development in category 2 was the work of the late Francisco Varela, which was brought to our attention at last year's International Congress in Oxford by Rachel Zahn, whom some of you will know. Rachel trained as an Alexander teacher at ACAT-New York in the 70s; she now lives in Paris and she's working in the field of cognitive sciences. Rachel strongly urged us to look at this as a really exciting field, and during her time in Paris she actually worked with Varela, a great innovator in biology and cognitive science. Varela realized that science was leaving out category 1, the subjective consciousness, and started trying to develop ways to bring first person conscious experience into the scientific laboratory. This even included studying the experiences of Tibetan Buddhist meditators, and Rachel has suggested that experienced Alexander students would be a very worthwhile group to study in a similar way.⁷

Going back now to category 3, the category of philosophy, how to develop a coherent framework that makes sense out of categories 1 and 2; as I said at the beginning of this talk the situation today seems worse than it did 20 years ago. However, I don't want to leave you on that downbeat tone; I suspect that what's really happening is we're now beginning to see just how big this project is—the project of establishing a broadly accepted philosophical framework that can accommodate current advances in physics, neurosciences, and our inner life, in a meaningful fashion. And as the East becomes Westernized, the project becomes even bigger.

There's a wonderful story about the pioneering psychoanalyst C.G. Jung, analyzing a fellow psychoanalyst's dream. I found the story in a great book called *The Creation of Consciousness* by Edward Edinger. The other Jungian analyst described his dream: "A temple of vast dimensions was in the process of being built. As far as I could see, ahead, behind, right and left, there were incredible numbers of people building on gigantic pillars. I too was building on a pillar. The whole building process was in its very beginning; but the foundation was already there, the rest of the building was starting to go up, and I and many others were working on it."⁸

Jung's remark was, "Yes. You know, that's the temple we all build on; we don't know the people because believe me, they build in India and China and in Russia and all over the world. That is the new religion. Do you know how long it will take until it is built? Six hundred years." That's what Jung suggested. That's an awfully long time to wait. But it's going to be a very exciting journey in the process.

"The 'hot question' in
neuroscience is
consciousness: what it is and
how the brain could possibly
give rise to it."

From a different angle, here are the words of one of the great physicists of the mid-20th century, Wolfgang Pauli, winner of a Nobel prize in 1945: "When he speaks of 'reality' the layman usually means something obvious and well-known, whereas it seems to me that precisely the most important and extremely difficult task of our time is to work on elaborating a new idea of reality. That is also what I mean when I always emphasize that science and religion *must* be related in some way."⁹

The early 20th century philosopher A.N. Whitehead famously said: "Religion is what the individual does with his own solitariness."¹⁰ That sense of solitariness is also the "insiderness" of each of us. The "I" in me and the "I" in you. So if the use of the term "religion" disturbs you, you can translate *science* and *religion* as *objective observation* and *subjective experience*.

If you want to take a really serious look at what psychophysical unity could mean philosophically, and all the philosophical questions that raises, take a look at papers on the subject by David Chalmers, formerly here in the United States at the University of Arizona, now at the Australian National University in Canberra. David Chalmers is originally from Adelaide, Australia—and Australia has produced some interesting and original people as we know. A Google search will lead you to his papers on the Web.¹¹ Take a look at one entitled *Consciousness and its Place in Nature* and you will get an overview of all the different approaches currently in play concerning how to relate the inner and the outer, categories 1 and 2, as I have called them. These range from hard materialism in which there are only the movements of molecules; through ideas of consciousness emerging from complexity but having no causative influence on the material world (so the sense that your thought caused something to

happen is an after-the-fact illusion); through revisions of dualistic theories;¹² to modern monists who would say: "consciousness is constituted by the intrinsic properties of fundamental physical entities." In other words, perhaps "insiderness" is just simply there right from the beginning, even, in some (to us) unimaginably primitive way, in the fundamental building blocks of nature. In the early 20th century both Whitehead and Teilhard De Chardin were saying something like this. In Whitehead the fundamentals are "throbs of experience" rather than particles. For De Chardin "interiority" is present all the way through.

Chalmers is notable particularly for separating the philosophic and scientific problems of consciousness into two groups: the easy problems and the hard problem. The easy ones are not particularly easy at all. They're the ones currently being intensively researched in universities all over the world: finding correlations between the physically observable brain activity and our inner subjective experience. Whether it's the brain activity seeming to give rise to the inner subjective experience, or the subjective experience seeming to change the brain activity, the research is all a matter of studying correlations. David Chalmers is saying, relative to the hard problem, all that correlating stuff is easy.

So what is the hard problem? The hard problem is: Why is there any "inner" to correlate to the "outer"? As he puts it, "There's absolutely nothing in all those movements of cells, molecules, or subatomic particles that tells an outside observer that this brain activity necessarily must be accompanied by the bearer of this brain having an inner experience. And yet a felt sense of inner experience is the most primal, basic phenomenon of each of our lives."

Chalmers is simply articulating clearly what some other leading scientists and philosophers are now saying. Two weeks ago, the New York Times on its Science page had a little piece about Cornell University's neurophysiology labs. Would you believe they have a collection of brains from late 19th century and early 20th century dissections! They used to take out the brain, put it in a jar, pickle it, and preserve it for posterity. Near the end of the article, they touch on this consciousness business, and say, "The 'hot question' in neuroscience is consciousness, what it is and how the brain could possibly give rise to it. Scientists today are 'groping in the dark' for an answer, much as they did in the 19th century, said Dr. Kristof Koch, the author of *The Quest for Consciousness* and Professor of Cognitive and Behavioral Biology at the

California Institute of Technology. 'We don't understand how mind emerges out of this vast collection of neurons,' Dr. Koch said. 'We have no intuition. It's like Aladdin rubbing a lamp, and a genie appears.'"

This is followed by a quote from a favorite author of mine in this field, although I can't understand the mathematical aspects of his books. Roger Penrose, Professor of Mathematics at Oxford University in England, is the author of several books on brain-mind issues. Penrose agrees there's a mystery here, one that he thinks will only be unraveled with the discovery of new physical laws. According to Penrose, scientists today are still trying to correlate physical structures with personality. "It's a worthwhile thing to do certainly, and interesting, but just finding what functions different parts of the brain serve won't give us the answer [to consciousness]."¹³

So I am saying that in this respect the Eastern disciplines have an advantage.

"We need to feel connected
to each other, and connected
to something more than just
molecules in ourselves."

While Yoga, Tai Chi and Qigong may risk becoming popularized as purely physical exercises, they have behind them a profound tradition in which mind-body unity makes sense. In the Eastern traditions all is linked in a Great Chain of Being, from the densest physical level up through the inner levels of our emotional, mental, and spiritual lives, linked by the circulation of the prana or chi, right up to the levels at which unity is experienced as the oneness of all, as the great mystics and spiritual teachers of the East have always said. But within the Flatland of Western thought we are searching for a meaningful philosophy to link consciousness and matter; to link our inner life, sensorial, emotional, mental, and beyond, with the outer world. Without a new and widely accepted philosophy, a new framework to make that link, it is hard to express the full potential of a practice like the Alexander Technique.

Now, we're going to end soon, and you know how I ought to end this: I ought to end this by telling you what that philosophy is going to be. And preferably telling you that I've discovered the new philosophy myself, and today I'm going to announce it to the world!

Well, I'm not, and I haven't. Sorry. But some interesting pointers are emerging. Extending successful concepts from physics into what we might call metaphysical realms is one popular approach. Field theory, for example, which so successfully unified the understanding of electricity and magnetism has been extended to the "mental" realm in different ways by Benjamin Libet, mentioned above, and the maverick British biologist Rupert Sheldrake. Libet postulates a Conscious Mental Field to explain the sense of a unified self.¹⁴ Sheldrake has a more controversial theory: following his work on morphogenetic fields and his hypothesis of "morphic resonance" underlying biological development and learned behavior, he has introduced the hypothesis of a mental field extending beyond the physical body.¹⁵ And as many of you will know, there is a ferment of speculation around the issues raised by the 20th century's most spectacular scientific advance, quantum physics.

One of the fascinating things about quantum mechanics, as I think it's more accurately called, is that it shows that the particles that make up Flatland, the physical world, spend most of their time hanging out in some sort of virtual reality, where they only exist as probabilities, or probability waves. They become actual only when observed. Whether and how this is in some way connected with our accidental observer, our inner subjective conscious experience, is the subject of intense debate. Whatever the outcome of this debate, it does tell us that at the most fundamental level of nature, right in the basic building blocks, some kind of observation process is embedded. And that might hint that inside and outside, subjective and objective, are there from the beginning. Which, of course, very nicely lines up with the modern monist philosophers we mentioned briefly earlier. In their different ways, Chalmers, Whitehead, and De Chardin have been suggesting that there is an inner aspect to the basic building blocks of nature.

Where it all will lead, I have no idea. Roger Penrose, whom I quoted earlier, certainly believes that the laws of quantum physics will have to be extended in some way that will link consciousness and gravity (which quantum mechanics has not yet accounted for) as fundamental elements that bring forth the manifest world from the sea of virtual particles or probability waves. Wouldn't that be a nice connection for the Alexander Technique? Gravity and consciousness create the world! Penrose's speculations are treated with some respect,

since he is a highly reputable mathematician, but they are usually considered as fascinating but currently untestable. However there are other scientists and philosophers speculating within the current parameters of quantum physics, exploring what this strange quantum world at the subatomic level might mean to the debate about mind and body, consciousness, and the material world.

There are many books on this subject, and one that I've found particularly helpful and interesting is called *Nature Loves to Hide*, by Professor Shimon Malin, Professor of Physics at Colgate University in upstate New York. Shimon is a student of the Alexander Technique; he takes lessons from Missy Vineyard. Shimon's wife is training as an Alexander teacher with Missy Vineyard; their son I knew some years ago in London because he was training at the Carringtons' as an Alexander teacher. I'd like to give you some quotes from Shimon Malin's book.

In particular, I'm going to quote to you from Erwin Schrödinger, one of the giants of the foundation of quantum mechanics. He was a mathematician in Zurich in the 1920s; he developed the mathematics that underlies quantum physics. Later in his life, he thought a great deal about some of the philosophical questions raised by the science he'd helped to develop. On the subject of mind and body, inner subjective and outer objective, consciousness and the material world, he wrote about something he called the Principle of Objectivation. Remember we're talking about the subject (or subjective) and the objective.

Schrödinger wrote, "By the Principle of Objectivation, I mean what is also sometimes called the hypothesis of the real world. I maintain this amounts to a simplification that we are adopting in order to master the infinitely intricate problems of nature. Without being aware of it, we exclude the subject of cognizance. We exclude the subject from the domain of the nature that we endeavor to understand. We step back with our own person into the role of an onlooker who doesn't belong to the world, which by this very procedure becomes an objective world."¹⁶

Following on from that comment about objectivation, Schrödinger continued: "The world is given to me only once. Not one existing and one perceived; subject and object are only one. The barrier between them cannot be said to have broken down as a result of recent discoveries in science, for the barrier doesn't exist."¹⁷ Now that's extraordinary stuff coming from a major

scientist, but we're going to go one step further.

Then Schrödinger deals with the following problem. "Ordinarily, we live under the impression that there is one objective real world and many selves."¹⁸ In other words, there's the objective world out there, and then each of us has this unique, inner experience. Many selves, one objective world. As Shimon Malin explains it: "Each of us seems to have his or her own conscious mind, or self. The two aspects of this impression are interrelated, the apparent existence of one objective real world and the presence of many selves."

But there is a problem about this. If there are so many minds, i.e., all these different subjects, why do they all seem to share the same objective world? As Professor Malin puts it: "Schrödinger responds to the challenge of this question in one bold stroke. Schrödinger writes, 'There's obviously only one alternative. The multiplicity is only apparent; in truth, there's only one mind.'¹⁹ Now that's pretty extraordinary. That's not somebody on the banks of the Ganges; that's not somebody in an ashram in Rishikesh; that's one of the founders of one of the great scientific edifices of the last few centuries, saying the answer is simple. The multiplicity is only apparent; in truth, there's only one mind.

After Schrödinger's statement about the oneness of mind, Professor Malin goes on to say "Schrödinger doesn't claim the

"The multiplicity is only
apparent; in truth, there's only
one mind."

discovery of the oneness of mind for himself, far from it. He quotes both ancient and modern sages, invoking the wisdom of the East as well as the West. 'My purpose,' Schrödinger declares, 'is to contribute perhaps to clearing the way for a future assimilation of the doctrine of identity with our own scientific world-view without having to pay for it by a loss of soberness and logical precision.'²⁰

I think there's an echo there of that wonderful statement of FM's about consciousness: "The triumph is not to be won in sleep, in trance, in submission, in paralysis or anesthesia, but in a clear, open-eyed, reasoning deliberate consciousness and apprehension of the wonderful potentialities possessed by mankind, the transcendent inheritance of a conscious mind."²¹

The quotes from Schrödinger are provocative and heady stuff. A word of caution, though. It's easy to get carried away by a few profound statements like his and drift into another kind of Flatland—one where instead of a horizontal expanse of particles bumping into one another, there's a horizontal sea of consciousnesses merging into one another, and all differences and individuality are just an illusion. Until of course you stub your toe, have an argument with a colleague, miss a payment deadline, and the gritty angularity of the world intervenes.

This is an example of what Ken Wilber has called the danger of "collapsing hierarchies." Professor Malin's book draws on Whitehead and Plotinus in suggesting hierarchical levels of reality, while trying to make sense of that in a modern scientific way.²² As he describes it, he is supporting "the proposition that the universe is alive, intelligent and multileveled in the sense of being."²³ If there really are levels of being, hierarchies, as in physical, emotional, mental, imaginal, spiritual etc., then the perception that *All is One* may work beautifully at a high level, but not so well at the level of negotiating peak-time downtown traffic. Precisely the richness of this sense of a multi-levelled reality is stripped away by the "It's all molecules" attitude prevalent among many scientists. And the richness can also be stripped away by jumping from "It's all molecules" to the polar opposite of "It's all consciousness."

So I'd like to come back to the question of how we interpret, to ourselves as well as to an interested outsider, the effects of the Alexander Technique. Of course it's great to be free of back problems, or perform better on stage or on the golf course. Yet why do a significant number of those exposed to the Alexander Technique find that it comes to occupy a much more central place in their lives than that?

Although he wrote that "My own conception is rather of the unity than the diversity of life,"²⁴ F.M. Alexander himself never tackled issues in the philosophical category like the thinkers we have mentioned here. To some extent he didn't need to since at the time he was developing his work science was not yet threatening to undermine commonly held beliefs about consciousness, the self, and free will.

According to FM's own presentation of it, by practicing the Technique we should be experiencing ever increasing constructive conscious control of the self, ever increasing ability to inhibit unwanted reactions and to consciously choose our actions. Yet somehow, when set in the Flatland of modern science, this picture of the accidental observer, the lonely "I" in you and me,

becoming ever more in charge and making ever more rational decisions, has an element of coldness and isolation about it. Is this really what attracts us so strongly to the Technique?

People often speak of feeling more whole, more integrated, and more connected after good Alexander work. Connected to what? To feel whole we need to be more than consciously-in-charge "I's," each of us rationally running his or her own show. We need to feel connected to each other, and connected to something more than just molecules in ourselves. I suspect that when the thinkers who are now building (as in the Jungian dream) the post-reductionist worldview have completed much of their work, we may see a return of vertical dimensions—a sense of many levels of being, uniquely individual and yet shared in common humanity—a renewed chain of being, a veritable Jacob's Ladder.

We may also see the possibility that FM's discoveries offer a means to grow by connecting these levels more fully—alignment not just in a physical sense, but alignment as a correspondence, an aspiration to connect to inner purpose. I do wonder if the passion that F.M. Alexander brought to the teaching of conscious inhibition, direction, and primary control throughout his long life, when seen alongside the awkwardness of his writing, suggests something of this nature struggling to find expression before its time.

Just as I think it is an honor and a privilege for me to be here and to be invited to give this Alexander Memorial Lecture, so too I think it is an honor and a privilege for all of us to be involved in Alexander's work, which in its own very practical way explores that mind-body dynamic. It is therefore at the leading edge of where the Western world and the Western psyche is going. That temple in the Jungian dream is being built; the foundations are there; we're working on our pillar, or our three pillars, primary control, inhibition, and direction. It may be a very slow process, but collectively the philosophical framework is being developed within which the potential of the Alexander Technique could be more fully realized.

Thank you.

Endnotes:

¹ Francis Crick, *The Astonishing Hypothesis* (New York: Touchstone, 1995), 3.

² Online journal *Psyche* (<http://psyche.cs.monash.edu.au>). See review of *Consciousness, An Introduction* by Susan Blackmore, last paragraph.

³ Arthur O. Lovejoy, *The Great Chain of Being: A Study of the History of an Idea*

(Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1936, 1961, 1970).

⁴ Ken Wilber, *The Eye of Spirit* (Boston and London: Shambhala, 1998), 38.

⁵ Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time* (New York: Harper and Row, 1962).

⁶ Benjamin Libet, *Mind Time* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004), 123.

⁷ *The Congress Papers: Exploring the Principles* (London: STAT, 2005), 371.

⁸ Edward Edinger, *The Creation of Consciousness* (Toronto: Inner City Books, 1984), 11.

⁹ J.M. Schwarz and S. Begley, *The Mind and the Brain* (New York: HarperCollins, 2003), Epigraph.

¹⁰ Alfred North Whitehead, *Religion in the Making* (New York: Macmillan, 1926), 16.

¹¹ <http://consc.net/chalmers>. For a much less technical, and therefore much more readable, overview, see Craig Hamilton's feature article at <http://www.wic.org/consciousness>.

¹² For a new approach to this that I find very interesting, see <http://www.newdualism.org>, a site set up by Ian Thompson, Professor of Physics at the University of Surrey, United Kingdom.

¹³ *New York Times*, May 24, 2005, F2.

¹⁴ Libet, *Mind Time*, 168.

¹⁵ See <http://www.sheldrake.org>.

¹⁶ Shimon Malin, *Nature Loves to Hide* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 202.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 235.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 233.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ F. Matthias Alexander, *Man's Supreme Inheritance* (London: Mouritz, 1996), 146.

²² Malin, *op. cit.*, especially Ch. 17 "Levels of Being."

²³ *Ibid.*, 218.

²⁴ Alexander, *op. cit.*, 25.

John Nicholls trained in London from 1973–76 with Walter and Dilys Carrington and stayed on for eleven years, assisting the Carringtons on their teacher training course. He subsequently directed Alexander teacher training programs in Melbourne, Australia and Brighton, England. His book, The Alexander Technique: In Conversation with John Nicholls and Seán Carey, was published in 1991. During the last fifteen years, he has run post-graduate courses for teachers and seminars for the public in the United States, Europe, and Australia. John currently teaches in New York City and directs teacher training and post-graduate programs there.

© 2005 John Nicholls. All rights reserved.