



The interpersonal body: knowing another through the shared embodiment of 'energetic contact'

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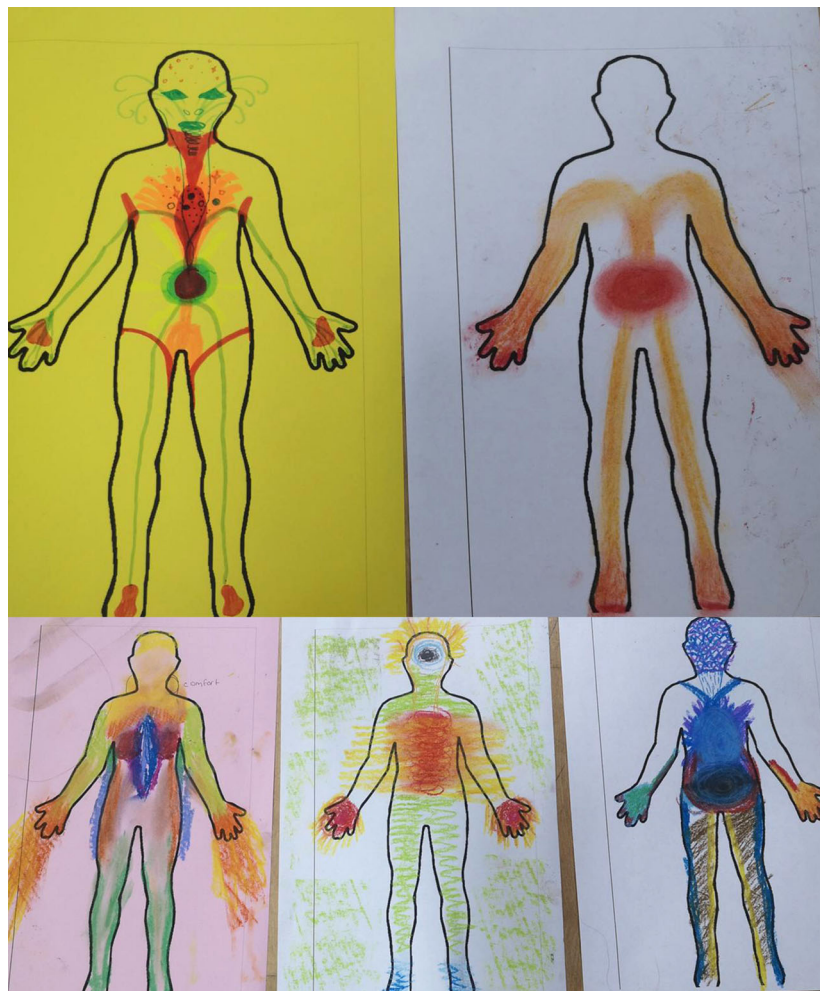
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Rudolf Laban suggests that through observation and analysis of another's movements we may 'sum him up, more or less accurately' and through analysis we only see 'the outer manifestation of moods' Laban, (L/E/53/27/, n.d).

But what if we enter the experience of another from within, not as a dispassionate observer, but as a moving witness, entering the interpersonal domain and allowing the other to be refracted through us energetically, sensorially?

In a three-hour-long class with Level 6 students at Rose Bruford College, we contemplated intimacy, personal space, touch and consent. The ethical considerations of such things unexpectedly took us more deeply into the world of subtle, energetic contact.

Moving in pairs, and one trio, we explored the boundaries of our personal space and the liminality of our physical and energetic encounters with the others.

Without physical touch, the gaze led us which then quickly became subsumed by other senses within and beyond the corporeal domain - an 'energy' difficult to describe in words but wholly locatable in the body. We moved in proximity, tracking the boundaries of our personal space, enlarging and shrinking the spaces between us. We moved into the interpersonal domain, cultivated at first by group movement and then with only one, or two other movers we found that

our "body" – far from being restricted to "me" – is actually ... inclusive of the other embodied ones ... [and is] at a more subtle level ... an interpersonal body (Ray 2014, 279).

Eyes closed now, and moving only from felt senses, we navigated connection, energetic touch, and eventually, separation. When stillness arrived, and without exchanging words, students drew an impression of their movement experience. They did this alone and without their movement partner/s. Only after circle discussion of the work and our sharing of images, did we realise that each partner had visually 'mapped' the movement of energy in the body in the same way. The hands, gut/anatomical centre, heart and 'activity' in the head centre were all shared locations of energetic experience and each mover described the feeling sense of their partner accurately. Might this be a way toward cooperation with others, to energetically, put ourselves in another's shoes, whereby 'An affinity with all men[sic] becomes ingrained through his participation in the joy of movement' Laban, n.d., (L/E/53/40, 3).

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Juliet Chambers-Coe is a GL-Certified Movement Analyst and is Lecturer in Movement at E15 Acting School (University of Essex). She is Principal Editor for the *Journal of Dance, Movement, and Spiritualities* published by Intellect. Her research focuses on Rudolf Laban's philosophy of movement and its spiritual foundations, with a particular focus on training actors.