

Seek the beginnings; learn from whence you came, and know the various 'earths' of which you are made

Edwin Muir

Horses and riding once filled all my leisure time, almost to the point of obsession. High spot of the riding year was to have lessons from a most skilled rider and perceptive instructor, Audrey Horne. Round and round the manège we would ride, each in turn performing the latest 'evolution'. Frequently after my attempts, Audrey would say "And now, *breathe*, Roy", or "Now uncurl your toes". She could, in fact, have gone on and on listing the responses within my body to the intensity of listening and concentrating in which I was engaged. Thus whereas from my perineum to my calves I should have draped the saddle like a folded wet towel, I resembled a rigid forked branch forced down onto it; and whereas my hands should have been soft as if I was gently holding two injured sparrows, two iron rods linked my elbows and the reins. (Under such skilled tuition there were, however, magic moments when it all came together).

Listening and concentrating. Picture a wild creature in its natural environment, hearing an unusual sound. It virtually stops breathing as it starts to sniff; its ears become cocked to listen more intently; its anal and bladder sphincters lock; genitals are tensed and testicles are retracted; the abdomen is drawn up tight; and many other internal responses kick-in in an automatic and instinctive sequence.

Listening and concentrating - but not to, or on you, as you attempt conversation in a crowded cocktail party or similar social gathering. The chat in the adjoining group is *so* much more interesting to the person in front of you as they strain to catch the gossip. Their eyes are focused in a peculiar way - directed towards you, but beyond you. This, unfortunately, can be the permanent state of someone whose mind and body have been intruded into. The intrusion does not have to be overtly malevolent or aggressive; it does not have to threaten or mouth obscenities - it is just *there*, a presence in one's mind and sometimes subtly physical in one's body, demanding that one listen, or keeping one in suspense expecting to be 'spoken to', or anticipating, indecisively, a physical action. I am reminded of a woman who briefly passed through my group of friends who exemplifies what I am trying to convey. While, say, gardening and carrying on herself with what she was doing, she would say "Listen, Roy...." while she thought of something to say and hold the centre of attention, and, until I learned to ignore the call, I would stand in suspense, waiting for the next remark.

Or a neighbouring farmer who has a son who became more competent and alert than his father, and willy-nilly dominated him, deriding his efforts, until the father became incapable of connected thought or initiative in the presence of the son, and dithered, drawing down more ridicule on himself. It used to be pitiable seeing the otherwise highly competent father reduced virtually to a quivering, indecisive,

inadequate. But this can be the near-permanent state of someone who is dominated by intrusive spirits. Individuals can be kept in suspended animation waiting for the next 'conversation' or next physical imperative (this last is the most difficult to describe): they can be 'coursed' like a hare between two greyhounds as one voice says "Do this", while an equally impelling voice says "No, do that". Meanwhile, within, the body is becoming permanently locked into what, as in our mammalian ancestors, should be only a transient response to a passing threat. (This is but one of over thirty 'ploys' that I describe in my book*.)

Essentially, and to succeed, any programme that is aimed at helping voice hearers regain control of their minds must include a recognition of the deterioration which is being engineered within the person. Space does not allow me to describe all that is happening internally, but accept that, for example, with the contraction of the perineum and lower sphincters, the throat is contracted, possibly adversely affecting the performance of the thyroid gland, with all that follows from that. Breathing will be shallow and shoulders hunched, producing a physical adjunct to the feeling of inadequacy. The muscles of one arm and shoulder together with the diagonally opposite hip and leg will be tensed ready for immediate response to the implied threat which the 'listening' state generates, while the wrists will be locked internally.

I have been asked why I find it necessary to give so much - indeed any - attention to the physical 'us', and to our reactions within, when after all it is the release of the *mind* that is our prime objective. If we think about it at all, we see each other and ourselves through intellect, personality, behaviour, spirituality, but not, apart from the externally obvious, as the mammals that we are. Yet we contain within ourselves the total sum of millions of years of evolution, an evolution that was successful because it harnessed the imperatives of self-preservation, procreation and species enhancement. They are all there within, the instinctive and social reactions of our species, activated and modulated through those local 'brains', nerve centres that many call the chakras. Much has been written concerning the effect of 'mind' upon physical health as it interferes with the smooth operation of instinctive responses, but not much about the reverse influences upon mind, and indirectly the vulnerable spirit, which can be activated through these centres. Let me quote just two: Dr Elmer Green of the Menninger Foundation when writing of the dangers of personal exploration of the deeper realms of the mind, warns of the possible encounters with "indigenous beings", some of whom are "malicious, cruel and cunning" who "can obsess him (the investigator) with various compulsions for their own amusement and in extreme cases can even disrupt the normally automatic functioning of the nervous system, by controlling the brain through the chakras. Many mental patients have made the claim of being controlled by subjective entities, *but doctors in general regard these statements as part of the behavioural aberration, pure subconscious projections, and do not investigate further*". Secondly, the traditional Christian teaching avers that "the evil spirit takes his stand at the gateway between sense and spirit, making his impact not at the deepest point of the spirit but upon the imagination".

If you are a carer, please accept that with someone who has virtually lost their own identity, in the sense that they cannot make a positive decision or motivate themselves to begin, and eventually sustain, any course of action - please accept that only by yourself (as carer) getting totally involved, almost like a partner in a three-legged race, can such a person whom you want to help be eased gently into a

winning course of action. No matter how bright the day, how delightful the company or enticing the proposed activity, the person who is in this mental limbo is incapable of self-motivation. The sheer inertia to be overcome may daunt you, and if you are not careful, you could be sucked into this invisible vortex and harmed yourself. So know your own strength, which may be greater than you think, but do not begin until you are fully prepared and know your goal in advance. Where I live there is a large resource of stone, residue from, and rounded by, the glaciers of old, and inevitably, garden features employ a lot of it. The inertia latent in some large stones used to daunt me, until I devised my own 'Zen in the art of lifting large stones'. It became a matter of preparation - deciding on handhold, position of feet, destination of stone and dropping zone - then waiting, poised, until the right moment and exact breath, bending knees, and effacing myself totally while the stone lifted itself (almost).

The very act and quality of breathing tells the body and mind something. Deep, regular, relaxed breaths say that all is well. Shoulders that are eased and lowered from this permanent hunch tell us that we are not cringing, not dominated. Sphincters that are constantly in a state of 'compression' have, when relaxed themselves, an effect which reaches remote parts of the body. (Read '*The Secret of the Ring Muscles*' by Paula Garbourg ISBN 0-89529-762-0 for practical ways of 'healing yourself through sphincter exercise'). The Alexander Technique, yoga, Tai chi, all enable a person to appreciate and recapture ownership of their own bodies, their own actions and eventually their own minds. But, at every stage, a person whose mind has been 'taken over' for some time, or who may have been further rendered inadequate by a prolonged drug regime, such a person has to be partnered in all they do and encouraged at every step. Remember the three-legged race. When I was effecting my own recovery and regaining possession of my own mind and thoughts, I had no companion to help me, but succeeded in devising my own strategy. (I was also given help from a spiritual source, help that was so very profound, but which space does not permit me to describe.) Part of my strategy involved an alarm timer that I hung around my neck. Every hour it rang, and I stood and took stock: breathing, thought pattern, posture, and prayer. In time I didn't have to use the watch, and although there is always a constant need to be alert to the insidiousness of intrusions, the planning and constant monitoring have been highly successful. But be on your guard against complacency: the 'intruders' never give up.

3 a.m. - a desolate, diabolical, God-forsaken hour. It does not truly fit into my narrative, in fact, if many, myself included, had their way, it would not exist at all. It can be a void, a no-time of no-sleep. A time when sleeping pills when used have lost their effect and the unnaturally wide-awake mind is a fertile field so easily harrowed by blatant torment and aggravating, aggressive or derisive voices. A void so lonely, made even more lonely if there is the presence alongside of a quietly sleeping partner, as one sweats and agonises and fears the day ahead with its pretence of normality. What voices? What torment? What threats? It is 10 a.m. - broad daylight - how can they be remembered rationally and confronted and, most importantly, talked about? Happily, for me this is well past. Then, at a desperate time I was fortunate to be given a source of strength - a hand- or pillow-cross. Made of something semi-rigid, about 12 cm long, it was there to be clutched and provide a focus and a link in one's own suffering to the original incumbent, who was not a stranger to suffering. With friends, I made a number of hand-crosses from 2 cm. wooden beads threaded on leather boot-

lace which we gave where needed and where they became much valued. We drilled the centre bead with a second hole at right angles, and had two beads each at the head and limbs and three more down the stem. Some individuals preferred a circlet of beads which they could use as a miniature rosary or in their own prayer way. Other faiths and philosophies might devise their own pillow objects.

From another source comes another strategy - Jean Cooper, a lady who may have been known to you, either personally or through her writing - her book 'Taoism' was accepted as definitive worldwide. Spiritually very aware, Jean used to recommend that one should not sleep in total darkness; there should always be a glimmer. Also that a radio in the room, operating at a level so low that it was almost inaudible, could provide a subliminal 'barrier' that intrusive spirits would find difficult to penetrate. (My only personal caution would be that, because of electromagnetic radiation, it should not be close to one's head on a bedside table.) I am sure that many will come forward with other effective strategies.

Before I conclude, let me leave you with a thought to ponder. If you have not already met them, I think you soon will - the individuals isolated by, within, their computers. They, we, when eyeballing our PCs, can find ourselves in a world dominated by concentration, imagination and the abstract - virtual people at the far end of the keyboard, and a world of temptation for the susceptible. How easy to be persuaded 'subliminally' to take a peep at pornography - who will know? - or will someone find out? - will it register indelibly on my computer? Temptation: torment. The new vulnerable; isolated and open to malevolent intrusion. Whereas it was formerly the artist starving in his garret who was so easily the victim, soon we shall find that it is the nerd, geek or anorak, or...? *Anyone* is a potential victim. Hitherto, it was God Who could see and record everything one did and thought, and the prospect of confrontation with one's past at the Day of Reckoning focussed one's mind on the consequences of present actions. Now the susceptible dipper into pornographic and other dubious channels, or sender of questionable 'chat' emails starts to wonder, particularly following high-profile prosecutions, whether there are Cyber Police monitoring *Everything*, knowing *Everything*, and whether there will be a Day of Reckoning. These are situations which the 'intelligent intrusions' know how to exploit, particularly amongst the isolated and vulnerable, or, even more so among the 'respectable' who get hooked.