

# The Radical Orthodoxy...

by Michael J. Salvesson

"Get your physics in place, then worry about the metaphysics," Dr. Rolf used to say. And she did her best to live up to her own words, putting the emphasis in her work on the *materiality* of the body and its behavior in gravity. She knew there was more going on, but she realized she had to *start* here.

We have taken her work a step further here and there, most importantly by understanding we must approach different bodies differently. All structures are not held in the same pattern and, therefore, must be released according to the logic of the individual structure. We have discovered there are structural types and that gravitational strain travels similarly in similar types. In doing so, we have begun to think about structure and to uncover some of the hidden assumptions influencing our work.

One of the important contributions to this process of thinking about structure has been made by Hans Flury and Willi Harder. What Willi Harder refers to as their "Radical Orthodoxy" has been developing over the years in the writings of Hans Flury in the *Notes on Structural Integration* published in Zurich and most recently in a six-day class offered by Willi Harder entitled "The Human Structure and Its Integration under the Perspective of Gravity and Normal Force". The title is in keeping with the style of presentation in the *Notes* and should not cause alarm. Both Hans and Willi have a technical interest: Hans Flury's background is in medicine, and Willi Harder worked as a civil engineer before becoming a Rolfer. Their choice of terms reflects their concern that talk about Rolfing and structural integration be done in a way that is consistent with what we know about the mechanics of physical bodies and specific to what can be reliably observed. Although this may challenge the understanding of some Rolfers who have a more "humanistic" or "emotional" approach to their work, it is not intended to replace any aspects of the complex work of Rolfing, only to lay a reliable foundation for the observation of human structures in gravity. And this is much needed.

I have followed Hans Flury's writings in the *Notes on Structural Integration* for years, always learning from his inquiry and always sensing there was something I wasn't quite getting. I recently participated in Willi Harder's six-day class in Phoenix, and I came away with a renewed appreciation for Hans' work. Willi has combined

the work of Hans Flury with a basic course in physics for Rolfers and an introduction to "Normal Function" and created a six-day class that will fundamentally alter the way you think about your work. By staying with a strictly *physical* line of inquiry, he reforms our understanding of balance, economy, gravity, the Line, and what is truly the "structural" component in posture, all of which have very practical consequences in practice.

Briefly, Willi introduces some basic notions of physics and then uses them to illustrate his notional of economy, which is at the heart of his "Radical Orthodoxy" and his understanding of "Normal Function". It is exciting to see how the basic ideas of Rolfing are expressed in a way consistent with the quantitative world of physical vectors and more importantly how this leads to a view of the fascial net as the true structural element in posture. The distinction that Willi draws between the passive fascial net and the active muscular components of posture is arrived at with a logical force that would bring a smile from Ida and makes a contribution to one of the real problems we face as we deal with explanatory models of work that must take into account the role of the nervous system in creating posture. The class goes on to elaborate the importance of preserving length in the midline of the thorax—a notion central to understanding "normal function"—criteria for evaluating pelvic position and hence structural type and the importance of differentiating between primary and secondary shortness in developing working strategies. Finally, I think Willi does a good job of working with practitioners in developing a mode of touch that can be specific to the fascial net.

I learned some important things from Willi's class. What concerns me now is how we as an institute can evaluate "new formulations" or "radical reformulations" of our work and assimilate them into the teaching of Rolfing. There is obviously much of value in the Flury-Harder "Radical Orthodoxy", particularly as it pertains to the teaching of structural evaluation. It seems there may be an approach to teaching structure here that could very well be put to use in basic classes. What we need is a mechanism to evaluate new information and if it seems valuable, put it to use in the training of Rolfers.

Until then, take Willi's six-day.

*There are two more workshops scheduled. The first is in Zurich July 4-10. The second is in Boulder, CO August 6-12 before the Annual Meeting. For registration, please call Willi Harder (01) 242-2000 or the Rolf Institute.*

## of Hans Flury and Willi Harder