There is a world of difference between knowing one's body intellectually, and being able to sense it. Eutony invites you to go on this journey.

In the early 1930's, following her professional training in the fields of music and Jacques-Dalcroze Eurythmics, and prompted by an attack of rheumatic fever which had left her with a weak heart, German born Gerda Alexander (1908-1994) began her life-long research in natural movement.

The advent of nazism made her abandon a promising career in theatre in Berlin where she had been in contact and had often worked with the pioneers at the forefront of experimentation with new forms of movement and dance and of what we now call “embodiment” practices, and move to Copenhagen. The political situation in Germany also made her realize the importance of integrating into her work the principles of the “New Education”. These principles emphasized respect for the individual, rejection of any standardization and any ritualized pattern of gestures or mechanization of movement, or of any coercive aims.

Working both on herself and with her many students from all walks of life and all ages, she developed her personal way of teaching movement based on sensory awareness. It became more and more evident that this teaching went far beyond “movement”, and involved the total person. Based in Copenhagen, where in 1940 she founded a professional training school, GA travelled the world, from European countries to Israel, from North to South America, often returning year after year to give seminars and lectures to an increasingly interested body of dancers, movement therapists, psychoanalysts and psychotherapists. (During her four month visit to the USA in 1954, she took part in the yearly congress both of the Freudian and of the Psychosomatic societies. Several long conversations with Gerda Alexander inspired Alexander Lowen, then on training with Wilhelm Reich, to integrate the Eutony principle of “contact”, in the shape of “grounding” in his work.)

The word Eutony, from the Greek “eu”=good, well and “tonos”= tension, expresses the idea of well-balanced tension.

Tonus can be defined as the level of tension of muscle fibres, and by extension of all the tissues of the body. Optimal health requires a fluid and adaptable tonus. Each situation requires a different tonus. Breathing, voice, posture, movement are intimately linked to tonus which itself is modulated by our emotions and our thoughts. Emotions are communicated through tonus. Tonus is one of the clearest expressions of the unity of mind and body. GA understood intuitively what neurology has since confirmed, that the different systems in the body influence each other and are in constant interaction with the environment. Many of her empirical discoveries were often only later demonstrated by science.

The essence of Eutony lies in an attitude of awareness of oneself, in contact with others, and with all manifestations of life.

The means for achieving this lie in observing the finest sensations experienced in the body, from the outer boundary of the skin to the inner space of the bones, joints and vital organs, at rest and in movement, and in relationship with the surroundings.
Whether by exploring deep revitalising stretches, in tune with your own needs, or by pushing against a resistance such as the floor and feeling the shape and structure of your bones as a source of clarity and security, whether by awakening the sensitivity of your skin, your boundary and largest sense organ, or by making conscious contact beyond the limits of your skin, and feeling the nature of objects around you, you will progressively become more attuned to your body, and experience greater connectedness and pleasure in everyday life.

You will learn how to release superfluous tensions, develop strength and flexibility and discover within yourself ways to improve your health. By feeling and understanding how your body works, you can restore your body's adaptability, facilitate its natural processes of self-regulation and regeneration and discover how to move with more efficiency and ease.

You discover the beauty and subtlety of your own organism, and of life itself. Realizing that your actions, feelings and thoughts are all rooted in your body, you acquire a greater sense of self.

As well as being uniquely equipped to help you re-acquaint yourself with a true sense of freedom and well-being, Eutony also gives you the tools to increase your awareness of other people around you. Movement studies with 1 or 2 partners, where you learn to stay within yourself while fully in contact with another person, open up new fields of experience. Your new body awareness develops into a new awareness as a human being.

Deeply felt experiences in Eutony are in direct connection with the unconscious, and can be accompanied by images, bring forward memories, reveal emotions, and can lead to the need to put them into words. These verbal expressions are received without judgement or interpretation. The words used in these situation are of great authenticity, and can for the individual become a personal reference made flesh, a source of evolution still unknown and it is important not to short-cut this process, but to let it take its course through the body. This does not mean that the need for a further verbal exchange or therapy may not arise. Indeed, the combination of Eutony and psychotherapy or psychoanalysis can be very enriching, but there is infinitely more in deeply felt sensation than the objective elements signified in words which can remove the person from the authenticity of what is “felt”.

Art on the other hand, as well as the writing of poetry, risk less to be reductive, and are frequently offered as a complement to or as part of the Eutony sessions. The work produced can be eminently personal and strong.

Gerda Alexander's original artistic sensitivity and creativity permeated all her work. This artistic inheritance is still manifest today, whether in the intuitive and individual way Eutony is taught, or in the way it develops through the body an understanding of form, surface, depth, tension and balance, and frees the full scale of emotional perception.

Tutor:
Thérèse Melville completed the 4 year training with Gerda Alexander in 1979. She teaches Eutony both in the UK and in France.

Her recent interest in Permaculture stems directly from her awareness of our fundamental connection with the environment, and from her recognition of the affinity between Eutony and Permaculture, in their common emphasis on observation and their shared principle of working with nature rather than against it. She is also a potter and sculptor.

For any further information about classes, email theresemelville@gmail.com

Bibliography: