

Introduction

By Werner Kraus

Personally, I believe that dark-colored clothing makes people look thinner, that power corrupts and that a good Feldenkrais lesson makes you more flexible and a little bit more mature. But do I really look thinner in black clothing? Does power really corrupt? And has a Feldenkrais lesson always a good result?

It certainly happens all the time, that after a beautiful ATM lesson someone gets up from the floor and claims that nothing really has changed. She doesn't feel more flexible than before and certainly she has not experienced a minor explosion of maturity.

In order to deal with this problem we have a number of possibilities to react: 1) we could in a more or less friendly fashion reject the experience of the client and regard her as a trouble maker. Aren't we sure that our method works anyway?

2) we could accept her experience and admit that not everything is good for everybody.

3) we could become curious about the fact that her experience stands in stark contrast to the experience of her neighbor and try to find out why that is the case. And most probably this investigation would lead us to questions like: what does "more flexible" mean? What is "flexibility" anyway? What do I mean by "maturity" and what is the client's understanding of such a term. In short, we would find ourselves engaged in a scientific discourse. In order to deal with this kind of everyday irritations science developed a tool called research.

Scientific research is, as Max Weber used to term it, the central force for

demystification of thought and action. Science developed as a highly historical trend which rules today, at least on the surface, a vast terrain of our social interaction. If you want to convince your next-door neighbor that the Feldenkrais Method shows good results, you probably can resort to your own experience and convince her to believe it. If you have to convince the chairman of a health insurance company he wants to see scientific results. The public expectation that we proof our claims in a rational acceptable way is on us. We cannot reject it anymore. Even if we are of the opinion that the canonization of science is just another form of re-mystifying phenomenological experience and that the Feldenkrais Method should be classified under the category of non-researchable phenomena. And there are a lot of good arguments to substantiate this opinion. But even in this case we have to accept that the majority of our contemporaries want to see some sort of scientific evidence before they accept that our method works. And some might even be interested in how and why it works. However we look at it, we have to build up a sound research base in order to be able to communicate with essential parts of the societies we are living and working in.

The founder of the Feldenkrais Method, Dr. Moshe Feldenkrais, certainly understood his work as teachable, learnable and therefore researchable project. Only a method that can be discussed in scientific terms, can be handed down to a next generation of practitioners. As far as I am aware Dr. Feldenkrais never worked on a research

design to investigate scientifically certain aspects of his teachings himself. Maybe he was too busy, maybe he knew how difficult such an endeavor would be. After all, the core of his method asks for nothing less than a holistic understanding of the world and its phenomena. Fortunately his students were not quite as reluctant as their teacher. Over the last years a lot of Feldenkrais research has been done, as documented by the IFF Research List attached to this journal.

The online IFF Research Journal, which is planned as an ongoing endeavor, understands itself, in the best tradition of the International Feldenkrais Federation, as a documentation service. We, this first volume's editor and the organizer of the IFF Academy Journal, would like to present to the Feldenkrais community samples of research works done over the years by different people in different cultures. The selecting criteria for the articles of this edition are not arranged along the line of "good" or "bad" research. To repeat it again: we are not the ones to decide, but to document. We are the ones who offer the community access to an ever-growing selection of Feldenkrais research and the wisdom, competence and knowledge of the community will finally decide how Feldenkrais research could be improved. After all the Feldenkrais Method basically stands for self-education.

The first volume, which is presented to you here, includes American (Bearman&Shafarman, Buchanan&Ulrich), German (Laumer), Swedish (Lundblad) and Belgian (Frydman) research works. It begins with a very wise friend of Moshe Feldenkrais – Friedhelm Kemp - followed by articles on the nature of Feldenkrais research (Stephens, Ginsberg, Yoly) and it includes a rather blunt critique of Feldenkrais research methods by a non-Feldenkrais movement scientist (Ives) as an answer to an article by Buchanan&Ulrich; it ends with thoughts about a future dialogue

(Schacker) and last but not least offers a little help for beginners in the matter, a 'Beginners guide to Science' (Theuring) gives an introduction to all those who hardly ever got in touch with any research projects, but would like to contribute in the future.

Besides a wide geographical range we also have a historical depth – Frydman's article is regarded as the first Feldenkrais-related research work ever done. Kemps' essay 'Walking Upright' was published 1969. As an international institution the IFF Academy decided to have most articles in their original language of publication and in an English version as well.

Finally the journal presents the most substantial list on Feldenkrais research and Feldenkrais research related works. To keep this list up-to-date everybody is invited to give notice of any research piece not yet included in this list. (contact: Werkraus@aol.com)

The hope of the editor is, that this journal might encourage one or the other of our colleagues to engage in Feldenkrais research. As a community we have reached the "critical mass" for a major break through. Let's move on.

Passau/Germany March 28, 2004