

# Habit and change: discovering the present. An essay on the invention of time in Feldenkrais method: learning through movement, questions of temporality

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# HABIT AND CHANGE: DISCOVERING THE PRESENT

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## AN ESSAY ON THE INVENTION OF TIME IN FELDENKRAIS METHOD: LEARNING THROUGH MOVEMENT, QUESTIONS OF TEMPORALITY

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This article is one stage in an interdisciplinary research process conducted by a group of researchers, somatic practitioners, and dancers investigating uses of somatic practices<sup>1</sup> in dance, and within contexts of social vulnerability and exclusion where such use has been less common.<sup>2</sup>

In order to carry out this research we have had to question the epistemologies of somatic practices.<sup>3</sup> Such epistemological work is necessary, we claim, because while somatic practices are often said to lack

<sup>1</sup> We use the term 'somatic' anachronically. It was proposed by Thomas Hanna in the 1970s to refer to a group of corporeal practices which had certain principles in common. We are bringing under this term earlier techniques which are part of the same tradition. See 'What is somatics?' in Don H. Johnson (ed.) 1995 *Breath Bone and Gesture*, North Atlantic Books.

<sup>2</sup> The Parisian organisation AIME (Association of Individuals Engaged through Movement: <http://www.individus-en-mouvements.com>) develops corporal and somatic practices as resources for people living with chronic illnesses such as HIV and or VHC. Initially AIME opened its studios to participants referred by patient organisations, and subsequently works with patient support organisations and organisations and shelters supporting people living in conditions of social vulnerability or loss of autonomy. These experiences have convinced us of the pertinence of proposing non-therapeutic corporal practices in such cases. At the same time however, we have become extremely aware of the complexity of what is at play in such practices when they become integrated to institutional medical or more or less disciplinary contexts and where the status of the individual as 'accompanied' or 'taken in charge' by the institution sometimes comes into conflict with the status of the 'participant' as constructed by the somatic workshop.

<sup>3</sup> This research group dates from 2010 and includes in addition to the authors, Carla Bottiglieri, a dancer, Body-Mind Centering practitioner and doctoral candidate in dance; Joanne Clavel, a doctor of biological conservation and researcher in art and ecology; Beatriz Peciado, a philosopher and activist; and Violeta Salvatierra, a dancer and doctoral candidate in dance.

a theory, in fact it seems to us that what we are really dealing with is an inherently diverging theory. On the one hand – and this is particularly true for the Feldenkrais method which we will be discussing here – there exists a theoretical corpus developed in texts written by the founders and their disciples. On the other hand, there is a second, implicit theoretical corpus which grounds and organises the practice itself. This second theoretical corpus is often transmitted orally during practitioners' training, and is implicated within the practice itself. Although scarcely formulated as such, this second corpus is often infinitely more coherent and complete than the first. Furthermore, the first corpus (often taken as 'the' theory of the technique) sometimes contradicts the second.

In this article, we will focus on the Feldenkrais method beginning with the hypothesis that, in discovering and inventing, his method Moshe Feldenkrais sought to address problems that were neither therapeutic (how to heal?), social or pedagogical (how to teach movement?), nor yet political (how to make the world a better place?), even though all of these 'problems' do in turn appear to direct his research.<sup>4</sup> The main problem focusing his work is rather that of 'change', a problem which we will formulate as: 'what is it that allows for change in human action and behaviour; what prevents or obstructs change?' This question of change is a recurring theme in Feldenkrais's discourse, and crystallises just as intensely in Feldenkrais practice. In both cases, specific conceptions of time and ways of thinking change emerge as intrinsically linked.

In this article, our own problem is a double one: on the one hand, Feldenkrais practice, it seems to us, (and we are talking here about Awareness Through Movement which is practised in groups) is a site for constructing and experimenting with a specific experience of time. The temporal aspects of the endogenous theory (i.e. of the texts) can prevent a recognition of this particular invention or discovery. We will need therefore, firstly, to separate ourselves from these temporal models in order to *describe* how the practice of Feldenkrais produces a specific experience of time. On the other hand, we need to return to Feldenkrais's 'general theory' and to question the kind of change that is envisaged there. What is this change, actually? Our concern here is a political one: we need to be wary both of the apparent 'neutrality' of change in Feldenkrais (i.e. that Feldenkrais can produce any desired change whatsoever), and of its universality (Feldenkrais allows not a specific change but the very experience of change itself, as an absolute), in order to discern what conscious and political uses of this notion of change might be extracted from it.

## *Problems of habits*

Interestingly, in his many writings, Feldenkrais says little about his method. In these writings, he draws instead on two main kinds of resources: on the one hand, there are the major theoretical or philosophical issues and debates to which he would like his practice to be linked in order to give it universality.<sup>5</sup> This ambition (which we are tempted to call megalomaniacal) reflects the need for legitimation felt acutely by all the founders of somatic practices of the same era. It adopts motifs that are widespread elsewhere: the

<sup>4</sup> Here again there is a divergence between the two theoretical corpuses: in his works, Feldenkrais seems to attribute to his practice at least all of these goals; in the practice, and even in a very orthodox definition of the Feldenkrais practice by the practitioners themselves, the method is fundamentally educative and not therapeutic.

<sup>5</sup> For a critique of Feldenkrais's texts and their uses see: I. Ginot, 2010 'From Shusterman's Somaesthetics to a Radical Epistemology of Somatics', *Dance Research Journal* 42/1.

<sup>6</sup> Especially by Matthias Alexander, Elsa Gindler, Bess Mensendieck, Gerda Alexander.

ill-effects of civilisation, loss of contact with 'nature', evolutionary progress, etc.<sup>6</sup> On the other hand, Feldenkrais looks to popular scientific knowledges for arguments not only to legitimate his practice, but also for theoretical resources to *invent* it. Among the 'scientific' models of change referred to in his writings are those of phylogenesis and the progressive appearance of the human species, and ontogenesis and childhood development. These scientific references (phylogenesis in particular) occupy an important place in his writings in a popularised version which is both partial (as though explaining to the neophyte the scientific models necessary to understand the method), and instrumentalised in favour of his own work. Feldenkrais's texts, multiply constrained as they are (not the least by the need to legitimise his work with scientific arguments), appear weighed down with concepts that are not his own (concepts foreign to those appearing in the practice), which he rarely uses scientifically, and which conceptualise a practice that does not cohere with the one he is at the same time discovering and inventing – and which, much more than the texts, constitutes the heart of his work. This 'theoretical model' appears by turns teleological (the human species is the result of a line of 'progress'), anthropocentric (the human dominates all other animal species because gifted with a more advanced, if more fragile, nervous system), and regressive (the loss of natural animal reflexes is badly compensated for by damaging social and familial education) ... This teleological model itself contradicts the idea of adaptation, a central value in Feldenkrais discourse, and which is also borrowed from theories of evolution that insist on the importance of 'presence' within an unstable and unpredictable context. Finally, there is a last temporal theme which we must discuss at greater length since, contrary to the other themes above, it occupies a crucial place in Feldenkrais practice. This is the theme which opposes 'habit' as repetition of the same, to 'experiential learning' (*apprentissage*) or the sought after ideal change. If it is difficult to find in Feldenkrais's main writings a scientific source or sources specific to this 'theory of habits' it is perhaps because, even if it does not form the object of dominant scientific theories, this question is actually broached obsessively throughout the 19th century. It is the main target of the great majority of somatic methods before or contemporary with Feldenkrais, and is focused around a question which could be formulated thus: 'why does human bipedal posture, unlike that of animals, tend to degrade with age?' The founding somatic practitioners, like Feldenkrais, draw on explanations ranging from various versions of evolutionary theory through rather vague sociological analysis to biomechanics. A 'dystopia' of habit as necessarily repetitive, fixed and dreadful is opposed in the majority of their texts to an ideal process of learning in which there is a constant and permanent renewing of gesture. By contrast, the process proposed by the Feldenkrais method seems to exclude all repetition and progresses inexorably. Moshe Feldenkrais was, nevertheless, well-informed of theories of the reflexes and acquired automatisms and did not deny the *necessity* of habits (which he linked to his reading of phylogenesis: habit is the necessary and finally fixed learning-by-doing [*apprentissage*] from which the nervous system of animals benefits directly at birth). What he criticizes is rather that the learning process in the child stops because of defaults in the education systems of our most imperfect societies. According to Feldenkrais, habits stop functioning as a plastic system which, as in infancy, keeps adjusting to new exchanges with our contexts, and becomes a congealed system. Hence it is not a matter of undoing habits but of making them newly malleable (variable) by renewing the process of learning that 'the society' (non-naturally) has stopped. Feldenkrais's practice

develops and experiments with this plasticity, while his attempts at conceptualisation remain caught in binary models which, it seems to us, contradict the 'experience' made possible through the invention of the practice. There is, however, another conceptual tradition anterior then contemporary with the emergence of the first somatic methods which seems to offer a different pertinent model to describe the experience of change, and thus a model of temporality consonant with a Feldenkrais session.

## *Ravaisson*

In fact, the question of habit was also articulated within 19th century philosophy, in particular in what could be called a minor branch of French philosophy extending from Ravaisson and his treatise *De l'habitude* (*On Habit*) to Bergson and his conception of habit in *Matter and Memory*. At a moment when philosophy was defining itself independently of psychology, the problem that habit posed was situated at the crossroads of fundamental problems. For example, in order to rethink the question of freedom, a series of distinctions had to be finely re-articulated: between the innate and the acquired, between nature and culture, between the physical and the psychic body and consciousness, between past and present, repetition and difference, the voluntary and the spontaneous, the conscious and unconscious ... These distinctions provide less the hidden explanatory framework for the then barely emergent and almost unknown somatic methods, than a series of problems and perspectives which we can take up again today, using Feldenkrais practice, in order to problematise the relation between habit, change and temporality. Any work which claims to 'mount an attack' on habits, for example, those inhabiting our ways of moving, implies thinking a certain triangulation or permeability of these dichotomies which vary according to the times.

In his short treatise, *De l'habitude*, published in 1838, Ravaisson identified in a particularly fine manner diverse problems around habit that we will call collectively 'corporal'. The problem with habit, he said in early 19th century terms ... is that it is found before reflective awareness and beyond mechanical determination. It is both active (voluntary) and passive (involuntary) inscription, and therefore emerges as a site of articulation between activity and passivity.<sup>7</sup> At the same time it is situated at the intersection of what he calls 'the body' and 'the soul' (which we must not think of as a priori existing categories, identical, say, to what Feldenkrais continues to call 'body and soul' but as a problematic and changeable distinction whose stakes we must each time try to understand).

It is thus the condition of habit to be situated at these multiple articulations - however they may be conceived in a particular era - and to demand that we invent ways of rethinking the relations between voluntary and involuntary, body and soul etc. 'Physical and rational theories are equally lacking here. The law of habit can only be explained by the development of a spontaneity that is both active and passive and which differs equally from mechanical determinism and reflective freedom.'<sup>8</sup> Located in the articulation between mechanics and will, between passivity and activity, habit requires the elaboration of its own theory - one which understands reality as at the same time active and passive, explained neither by the simple mechanics of a pure materialism, nor by the freedom of a pure idealism. More precisely, Ravaisson's

<sup>7</sup> Ravaisson, 2007 *De l'habitude*, Allia, Paris.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p.45

philosophy provides us with the idea that habit locates us in a 'middle' term between pure will and pure passivity. '... Habit is the common limit or the middle term between will and nature; and it is a moving middle term, a limit that is ceaselessly displaced and which advances imperceptibly from one extremity to the other. Habit is thus so to speak the infinitesimal differential, or the dynamic 'fluxion' from will to nature.'<sup>9</sup> Through an effort resisting the 'either/or' of will and determinism, habit emerges as a dynamic field of inflexion between the two, escaping at once the purely determined and the pure reflexivity of free will. Ravaissou even concludes this passage in terms of a 'method': 'Consequently, habit can be considered a method, as the only real method, through an infinite convergence of Nature and Will.'<sup>10</sup>

How can this dynamic fluxion, mobile limit, moving frontier, differential tendency, which cannot be rationally understood but is nevertheless somehow graspable, become a method? How can habit through its dynamic, tending and differing nature, inspire a dynamic work upon that tending, that between-two in movement,?

## *Propensity and tendency*

This 'spontaneity' which is neither purely 'fated' nor freely willed by reflecting needs to be thought as a particular moment of action, dependent on an 'anterior involuntary propensity where the subject is not yet distinguishable from its object'. It is through this propensity and this tendency, 'mobile middle terms' between will and determinism and between subject and object....that we might envisage a change of habit: developing in the soul, we could say with Ravaissou, 'not only a disposition but the penchant and the actual tendency to action, as in the organs the tendency to movement. Finally, to the fugitive pleasure of passive sensibility succeeds by degrees the pleasure of action.'<sup>11</sup>

Although Ravaissou's study pre-dates our own realities by two centuries, from it emerge, beyond these last considerations on the pleasure of action and not just the enjoyment of the senses, two hypotheses for our research: on the one hand, repetition as inscription and manifestation of acquired habit, can equally be that through which habit can be modified and directed. On the other hand, the tendency to movement and the penchant for action that are a mixture of activity and passivity constitute 'the matter' of habit upon which a change of habit can be anticipated.

Changes through repetition, attention to the junction between sensation and action, and the tendency to movement constitute a specific frame from which to think the articulations between past and future through the experience of the present and of repetitions and differences. In fact the experience of the present through movement and the affirmation that there is change at the heart of habits characterising the Feldenkrais method require, in order to be fully understood, a theoretical-practical frame of change and temporality, which can only be found in an ongoing dialogue with the practice.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 50

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 65

## REPETITION, VARIATION AND DIFFERENCE: TEMPORALITIES OF FELDENKRAIS PRACTICE

In order to understand the nature of this ‘change’ as the ideal of Feldenkrais method, and at the same time to extricate ourselves from the theoretical impasses within which Feldenkrais’s discourse seems to enclose us, we will use as our starting point a Feldenkrais session and, specifically - in order to facilitate the description - a group session known as ‘awareness through movement’.

### *Here and now*

*Lie on your back. Observe how your pelvis is resting on the floor. What parts are in contact with the floor? Which parts are making full contact with the floor? Which parts are just brushing the floor? Which areas are not touching the floor? On which side does your pelvis feel more heavy?*<sup>12</sup>

Awareness through movement (ATM) always begins with the ritual of ‘gravitational scanning’, often lying on the back, but it can also be done in other positions, and can be done again at the end of the session and also during it. This scanning sets in place the elements of the session to come from the subjective point of view of the participant. The first element is a guiding of the participant’s sensory introspection: s/he does not follow a norm presented by the teacher (who might have said, ‘stretch out on the floor with your legs in parallel, making sure that your pelvis is resting with its weight equally on both sides’), but rather must determine what his/her own ‘map’ of contact with the floor is, using the proliferating questions and perceptual observations, and without being offered an ideal map to emulate.

The second element contained in this scanning is that of ‘presence’: the participant is to experience a ‘here and now’ of contact with the floor, without yet changing these contacts through the movements which are to come later in the session, and above all without predicting what is to happen.

The third element is the perception of ‘small differences’: not only those between the support of different parts of oneself in the here and now but also those between ‘now’ and ‘just before’ or ‘just after’. In fact, the attentive participant, as s/he allows his or her attention scan the points of contact with the floor, will also be experiencing the able-to-be-sensed changes in these supports as the ‘effect’ of this mobile attention. It is therefore impossible to know when the ‘present moment’ starts or finishes. It is impossible to define a beginning and an end, a before and an after of sensation, just as it is impossible to discern what comes from an objective difference (did that really change?) or a subjective one (or was it me who thought something changed?). Finally, through these tiny variations, the participant begins to experience the ‘blurring’ (*le flou*) which thenceforth will organise for the whole session the experience of a voluntary and an involuntary, of an active and passive, of a conscious and an unconscious.

<sup>12</sup> Here, as in the sections to come, we give ‘classic’ examples of instructions given by the practitioner during an ATM. Taken together, however, they do not represent a complete session. Nevertheless, if the reader wants to stop reading in order to explore the experiences s/he needs to create the temporality of the session fragments by repeating the movements and observations several times, varying them and above all allowing her or himself pauses according to her or his own rhythm and time.



## *A present of tendencies and anticipations*

The session's present is in the first instance an attention to small changes principally through noticing differences of contact with or pressure on the floor. The participant new to Feldenkrais is likely to take this initial 'scanning' as a 'still photograph' of his or her sensations; but everything in the conduct of the session by the practitioner will lead her or him to notice that there is no difference between the moments of scanning and moments of action, only a difference of degree. What unites the times of rest or scanning and the times of action is the attending which is always to the present moment, either in the process of initiating a movement (described by the practitioner) or of observing, at rest, the traces left in our contacts with the floor by the previous actions. The participant thus learns gradually to explore the time of rest or apparent inactivity as those moments when s/he senses 'towards which movement' her rest is tending or 'which movements' have left their traces in her resting. Thus, gravity, the primary context of Feldenkrais practice is not so much an object of work in itself, in the sense that one should learn to place one's weight better on the ground or to let go (as if in relaxation, for example), than a means of perceiving ways of moving and of organising through movement. In fact, what emerges from this gravitational panorama is more a certain relation to gravity than actual 'data', and, more specifically, a relation to gravity insofar as it sketches a relation to movement and a way of entering into movement (*se mettre en mouvement*). It is precisely that this here and now, when the variation of supports as they change according to the different ways of tending towards movement are perceived, reveals a present which is not the instantaneous 'full stop' for a photo 'capture' of the situation but rather a present which lasts and which tends towards multiple differences and which thickens with these tendencies towards movement. The first time frame of the method is thus a present of tendencies rather than a present of the instant - an abstraction that can never be experienced<sup>13</sup>. Thus, a thickness of the present through an attention to small differences in tending to move furnishes the temporal frame of what now follows in the session: namely, repeating and varying a co-ordinated movement.

The temporal attitude of the participant in a Feldenkrais session is thus progressively elaborated in terms of familiarity with a continuous present, which resonates with what has already taken place and anticipates what is going to happen. For, as we discuss below, a Feldenkrais session is wholly organised around the perception of 'changes'. These changes, however, are not goals (a session does not 'aim for everyone to obtain the same change' but that 'something does change'); changes cannot appear other than in the present, as a point to which the trajectory will lead us, but exactly in the here and now of the session. One expects change and is aware of a temporality oriented towards an 'in a moment it will be different', while knowing that this change can only appear in the here and now of attention. One expects something, without being able to plan it: one can only notice, 'It is happening' now.

<sup>13</sup> See Henri Bergson, 1939, *Matière et Mémoire*, Chapter 2, University Presses of France.

## *Repeat and vary: small differences*

*Bend your right knee and put your right foot flat on the floor. Allow the right knee to descend slowly towards the left, then bring it back to the vertical. How far can you let it go comfortably? Does your right foot stay flat on the floor or does it roll to the inside when you lower your knee? Try allowing your foot to roll, then keeping it flat on the floor. Which way seems more comfortable? Which requires less effort? Now continue the same movement and notice your pelvis. Does your pelvic contact with the floor change when you lower your knee or when you bring it back to vertical?*

During these variations, the first experience is that of change, or more precisely the perception of differences. The practitioner repeats the instruction several times and develops variations on this instruction – which may have to do with the kinematics of the movement as in the example above, or with the focus of attention. The participant is thus constrained by the very precise restriction of the instructions distancing this method from any spontaneous investigation or free expression of the self. By slow repetition, this rigorous score of verbal instructions aims for the participant to sense as many details as possible, and the multiple co-ordinations that are in play through the gravitational organisation and orientation. One is to perceive the differences between a movement (allow your right knee to move towards the floor to the left) and the same movement undertaken according to a different instruction (allow your knee to fall while keeping the foot flat on the floor or allowing it to roll over). Then, as the variations multiply, one begins to perceive differences that are beyond voluntary variation. Thus, a whole modulation of perceived changes is elaborated between what is already in the process of changing and what is made to change through an instruction, the middle term between the voluntary and involuntary. One does not progress from worst to best but observes the differences, non-hierarchically, between ‘before and after’, an experience made possible by the structure of the session which provides regular points of comparison, and the ‘voluntary production’ of differences, created in response to the verbal instructions.

The Feldenkrais session which proposes, apparently paradoxically, to repeat at length almost the same movement while apparently seeking to escape from habit, actually assumes that in doing the same movement several times and attending to the small differences and tendencies towards the movement, that the ‘almost’ will prevail over the ‘same’: repetition becomes experiencing multiple variations. Thus, the tendencies towards movement sharpen and the work concentrates less on effecting the movement or its sequencing than on what initiates it – ‘the tendency to’, ‘on the point of’ - opening a singular temporality of tendencies and intensities during the execution.

The sought after change in Feldenkrais occurs, thus, through the experience of tendencies rather than through the observation of the adequacy of the results. Here we have a distinct apprenticeship through movement which proposes an attention to differences within tendencies-in-process rather than the acquisition of new co-ordinations for one’s repertoire.

*Try different ways of letting the pelvis follow the knee. How many different ways can you find of lowering your knee to the left? When your pelvis rolls as the knee descends or ascends, what happens to your thoracic cage, you sides? What do you feel in your right hip? What way of doing the movement feels most familiar? Which requires the least effort? What is the difference between your pelvis rolling or not rolling as the knee moves?*

In exploring, thus, a particular co-ordination during a lesson, rather than learning and retaining several ways of doing something, several schemas, what is explored is that there are several ways of doing something. Thus, rather than learning variations, the method is based in an experience of variability.

## Variability

It is a question, therefore, not of replacing a bad habit with a good one, one movement by another, than of experimenting with and experiencing the variability of processes of moving. In other words, this work seeks to inflect the process of moving: if there is change, it is a change through the experience of variability rather than the learning of different variations.

*Understand that what is in question here is not simply the replacement of one mode of acting with another, which would be purely a static change. What I am suggesting is a change in our way of acting which aims at a dynamic change in the whole process of one's action.<sup>14</sup>*

This is where the distinction between learning movement and learning *through* movement gains its meaning and implies several consequences: thinking in terms of learning through movement is to wager that, to a certain extent, habits linked to the past and new ways of acting to come can be at play in the present of an experience. The experience of a here and now through movement can allow us, as we retrace the dynamic through which habits are acquired, to pay attention to the initiations and ways of orienting oneself during the movement, to inflect, inhibit and change the unfolding tendencies. Such in our view is the meaning of the notion of 'reversibility' which is critical to the practice of Feldenkrais.<sup>15</sup> But practitioners often reduce reversibility to the idea of a movement which could at any moment be interrupted and reverse its direction – thus excluding speed and momentum. We believe, however, that the notion of reversibility can be understood more broadly as the possibility of varying the movement while it unfolds.<sup>16</sup> Understood thus, reversibility – what we are calling variability – radically recasts the relation to the past and the future, thus avoiding our reaching for a performative schema projected into the future.<sup>17</sup> In the same way, the past is no longer the unchangeable source of conditions determining our gestures and from which we must tear ourselves in order to find a freedom in which all movements will be possible. The past becomes instead the dynamic web of experience through the different tendencies to move in such and such a fashion, partial determinations exercised in an unstable time; potentials which can be actualised rather than projections of possibilities that will be realised. As such, the temporality of these actualising potentials, these unfolding tendencies can only be multilinear, thick and tangled. If dynamic attention can take hold of and be caught up in this tendency to movement, it is in a thick present, where delays and inhibitions, inflexions and transformations, spacings between the lines mixing perception and action, activity and passivity insinuate themselves. It is this attention which weaves the new from the roots of habits, rather than trying to cut them off or oppose them. Rather than learning new ready-made formulae for the future, it introduces

<sup>14</sup> Moshe Feldenkrais, 2010 'Bodily Expressions' [1964], trans. Thomas Hanna in *Embodied Wisdom, the collected papers of Moshe Feldenkrais*, edited by Elizabeth Beringer, North Atlantic Books, Berkeley, CA, p.4.

<sup>15</sup> For Feldenkrais's definition of reversibility see 'Bodily Expressions' op.cit., p.18.

<sup>16</sup> Such is the analysis suggested by Alan Questel. See 'Balance' in *Feldenkrais Journal*, no.24 forthcoming 2012.

<sup>17</sup> Cf. Henri Bergson, 'Le possible et le r el' in *La pens e et le Mouvant* (1938), editions PUF, pp.99-116.

variability. It breaks with habit as an inflexible determination and repetition of acquired schemas in order to introduce the potential of variation. Thenceforth, habit is no longer there to be absolutely repeated or annulled but to vary and develop itself.

Thus the temporality that emerges here is non-linear, it is anchored in a present thick with multiple tendencies to move and is the site where habit and novelty are entwined. It is composed of dynamics that unfold through a variability that is at once infinitesimal and powerful. More humble and perhaps more powerful, change in Feldenkrais is less the objective augmentation of movement possibilities in the sense of a greater repertoire of moves, than the variability of potentials which are woven as much into the way of doing a movement as in the breadth or quantity of possible movements. Learning through movement supposes a non-linear time realised less in terms of goals or plans and more through experiences of a present thick with variations-in-process.

The production of this 'continuous present' which is at the heart of the session occurs in the interval between the two temporalities which in their parallel unfolding constitute the session. The first 'time' is that which the practitioner explicitly structures. Paradoxically, it follows a teleological, causalist and accumulative logic – even if this does not always appear explicitly to the participants. In the examples of instructions mentioned in this article it can seem thus: 'in order for the knee to be able to lower towards and lift from the ground with greater amplitude and ease, the ankle must articulate, the pelvis move in the direction of the knee and that this pelvic rotation include a rotation from bottom to top of the spine, right up to the head, in proportion with the movement of the knee.' Such instructions might appear as though progressively constructing the aim of the session so as to improve the co-ordination in question through bio-mechanical analysis.

The second kind of time, however, is different. It animates the attention of each participant (as many 'times' as there are participants). This is a lived temporality in which certain moments of the session take on a specific value while others disappear. The vectorial logic which organises the chronology of the practitioner's instructions entwines with the lived experience of the singular present, subjective for each person. This prevailing of the subjectively 'lived' over the objective process is made possible paradoxically by two specificities of the first 'time', that of the practitioner: on the one hand, in describing the kinematics of the movement, the practitioner frees the participant from projecting towards the goal (or ideation) that is indispensable for any action under normal circumstances. While the practitioner takes charge of this ideational phase for everyone, each participant's attention can (and must) be directed toward the unfolding process. On the other hand, the direction of the session by the practitioner towards a sort of biomechanical ideal (the most economical organisation of the movement) is hidden from the participant by the absence of comments of value. The biomechanical ideal, in say a gymnastics context, would be made quite explicit to the pupils whose job it would be to get as close to this ideal as possible. In contrast, the Feldenkrais practitioner does not articulate the norm from which s/he is working, but instead continually proposes subjective measures within a proliferation of variations, requiring each participant to construct her or his own scale of values. The direction towards which the practitioner is aiming is thus obscured by the other aspect of her/his teaching, the instructions to attend to the process which 'deroute' the goal of the session by calling each participant's attention to his or her own ends or in other words his or her own provisional perceptual and sensuous values.

What produces the 'effect' (of change) is thus the presence (attention or attentive awareness) of the student which is 'devectorialised' within the linear accumulation of variations. Change is thus the intervals and meanders organised by the practitioner's instructions (her or his double temporality), recomposed (woven and unwoven, as Michel Bernard would say) with the students own internal guiding<sup>18</sup>. It is thus through this double temporality and its deliberate intertwining that a singular experience of time, what we are calling the experience of variability, emerges. This seems to us that what is most at stake in a practice like Feldenkrais.

## Change?

It can be seen, therefore, that Feldenkrais's efforts of theorising in his writings fail to realise what is at stake in the practice in so far as they borrow from representations of time attached to the notion of progress. They remain enclosed within a vectorial and linear time as in the expression often used to sum up the aims of the practice for the public: 'the impossible becomes possible, the possible becomes easy, the easy becomes enjoyable...' This rhetoric of progress and improvement echoes only one part of the teaching. In fact, the linearity of the kinematic instructions, as we have seen, is masked from the participants by the emphasis on the process in its present and thick dimension. Nevertheless, as the theoretical discourses insist, the teaching does aim to 'produce change' and the pedagogical rhetoric insists massively upon this expectation of change. But this expectation of change is itself also 'derailed' by variability: if each participant, in the lived experience of the session, is actively seeking multiple and continuous change, how can he or she know what change to expect? The 'good move' is not the one aimed at through the session (the one that could be identified on everyone's behalf by the practitioner), but that which each student elaborates for her/himself as he/she experiences variations in the flow of this variability. That is why the discourses – theoretical, explanatory, publicising – respond very little to the question, 'what change does Feldenkrais method aim for?' (or what use is it?) More precisely, these discourses resist assigning a definitive aim to the practice, all problems apparently finding their solution 'thanks to Feldenkrais': improve one's mobility, one's efficiency, one's relationships and feelings, etc. Rather than seeing in this apparent (and doubtful) universality of the method an effect of marketing ('whatever your needs, Feldenkrais method is for you'), it seems to us that it is rather the question itself that is problematic. Feldenkrais practice seeks less to produce a specific change than to allow one to experience that 'there is change': what we are calling variability. But this absence of particular, a priori predetermined results does not imply that one might re-assign to it universally valid and so-called 'neutral' aims. Instead, it implies a specific situation. This 'change' appears as the play of effects attached to all the multiple tendencies present in the situation of the session and the manner in which it takes place. Far from pointing towards the idea (widespread amongst practitioners) that 'the method Feldenkrais is neutral', or in other words, that it can serve all possible intentions, on

<sup>18</sup> 'Dynamique de métamorphose infinie de tissage et dé tissage de la temporalité qui s'effectue à l'intérieur d'un dialogue avec la gravitation'. Michel Bernard, 2001 'Sens et Fiction, ou les effets étranges de trois chiasmes sensoriels', in *De la création chorégraphique*, Editions Centre national de la danse, Pantin, p. 63. ('The dynamics of the ceaseless weaving and re-weaving of time at the heart of the dialogue with gravity'. Michel Bernard, 2001 'Meaning and Fiction, or the strange effects of three sensory chiasms' in *On Choreographic Creation*, published by the Centre national de la danse, Pantin, p.63)

the contrary, the change produced is strictly dependent upon the context: the personal context of the individual taking the session, and the institutional, social context of the session, the attention of the practitioner and his/her explanation of specific aims etc. In other words, the subjective tendencies which are experienced in the light of variability are also intertwined with the context's tendencies. Far from being a neutral method, Feldenkrais practice is thus particularly available to the inflections of its different uses.

To the question 'what change does Feldenkrais aim for' we must therefore substitute 'what changes are permitted and contemplated by the practitioner or the (collective) mechanism producing the session? For this change, thought as variability, we must thus invent not 'criteria of evaluation' envisaging results and applying frames of measurement, but ways of narrating what does change, and for thinking the ways of doing and deciding on the setting, assuming that if there are criteria, they can only be immanent criteria in the sense that Deleuze and Guattari speak of: 'Experiment. It is easy to say? But there is no preformed logical order of becomings and multiplicities; there are criteria but these do not come after: they are exercised ongoingly, in the moment, enough to guide us among dangers.'<sup>19</sup> In order to invent ways of navigating between the impossible predetermination of fixed and expected goals, and the mute condition of doing and saying nothing, instead, ready for ever new situations, one must re-activate one's attention to the effects in train.

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<sup>19</sup> Deleuze and Guattari, 1987 *A Thousand Plateaux: capitalism and schizophrenia*, Minnesota UP, Minneapolis, p.