

## WRITING "IN"

**Moshe: Man or Monster?**

*Franz Wurm, a long-time friend and colleague of Moshe's responds:*

It's a relief that you should have come up with the question "Man or Monster?" A few facts may help to answer it.

Let me present my credentials first: Moshe and I became room-neighbours in London in late 1947 or early 1948. He was then writing BODY AND MATURE BEHAVIOUR and soon to start his first group (of some 4 or 5 people, including me), but was already having "hopeless cases" sent to him by some few medical friends. We remained in close contact after he had moved to Tel Aviv and I to Switzerland, seeing each other at least once a year (he would usually come to stay with us for his holiday), and I had something of a hand in the writing of most of his books, from the night of our first meeting onwards. Until about 1978 I was the only "Feldenkrais-man" in Europe, except of course for himself. The breakthrough began when, in '68/

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organizing correspondence, so you can modify the method to suit your particular needs.

At year-end I start new files and use WORD's **Table of Contents** command to index those from the previous year. I add that index to a Correspondence Log file which provides a cumulative index of all correspondence since I started using the system. I've been doing this since 1987, and can quickly and easily put my hands on any letter I've written since then. I archive old correspondence files using the compression utility STUFFIT, to reduce the amount of disk space they take up. You can even encrypt your archives, if security is important to you.

On balance, I've found this to be a good way of keeping track of correspondence. If you haven't used outlining and paragraph styles the whole thing may seem complex and overwhelming, but (as you know with ATM's) if you're willing to get in there and muck around a bit, it will become a lot clearer. If you have problems, please let me know and I'll see if I can help (strauch@aol.com).

'69. I broadcast over Swiss Radio two *Feldenkrais* courses which we had worked out and recorded together (I was, and still am, terribly proud of his letting me do, and include, three of the lessons). The courses were broadcast over two years, then made available on LP, later on cassettes which are still obtainable and in demand.

Now to the Monster. He could be offensively rude and vulgar during courses, occasionally too much so for some of his Tel Aviv groupers, especially elderly ladies; but more often than not he was deliberately so, trying to wake people up, or to provoke them into countering, instead of meekly submitting to insult (to vent their aggression instead of repressing it, if you like), or to make them realize that they were hampering themselves by absurd taboos.

A change started as the years changed him. He had abandoned what had promised to be a steep climb to fame in London, by moving to Tel Aviv. In Israel, the medical professionals remained his enemies practically until he died. When, about 1968, Ben Gurion and I independently proposed him for the Nobel Prize in Medicine, he was not even considered, the reason given being that he was not a medical doctor and had to-date not published anything in a professional journal (he couldn't have done: the journals were closed to non-medicals). Ben Gurion told him, and Moshe was both flattered and upset. And, also in 1968, he suffered a traffic accident in London (a van throwing him onto another car), from which however he seemed to have escaped unscathed.

He did suffer trouble with his teeth, and had to have a set. One eye after the other got cataract and had to be operated. Moshe, who, as far as I know, never caught infections, nor even a cold, and who used to brag humorously that he would live to be three hundred ("Well, two hundred at least."), resented any such physical sign of age as a personal insult. He would take out his teeth, fling them on the table and exclaim, "How is one supposed to eat with THAT?" His hearing began to fail him, and so did his half-conviction that he could, by his work, "turn any idiot into a genius." We used to discuss and argue about his training courses. "They'll pick up a bag of tricks," he would say, "that's all; and that's not what my work is about. But," he would add, "they'll make a living by what they've

learnt, and that's something, too - for them, anyway." Or again: "Perhaps in fifty years' time somebody will pick up the threads, and grasp them, and make something better of them." True such despondency came out rarely, and in public would not go beyond humorous resignation. But impatience came along with it, though only towards the end of his time would it get the better of him. He had found no successor, and he knew what this meant and what it would lead to. And he realised that his days were counted, but his work not done. His tantrums and outbursts however were to turn out to have another cause yet. Listening to recordings of Amherst and of the last workshops he gave in the States, listening to them after his death, I was amazed by the subtlety he had achieved, and I was surprised and dismayed by his losses of temper; but by then I knew.

When he landed here on a morning at the end of Sept. '81, he looked a washout as I'd never seen him except once when a very close friend had fallen foul of him. For the first time, he said, he hadn't slept a wink during the flight. He was not to be persuaded to go to bed, but went to town instead, and came back after a couple of hours utterly bewildered and half amused: people had been helping him to cross streets, he felt himself tottering. The next morning he didn't wake up, nor was he to be woken by any means. A doctor brought him to and urged him to go to hospital; he wouldn't hear of it. The next morning the doctor failed to bring him round, and we had him taken to hospital unconscious. For five days he lay there resting and undergoing examinations with no result. We finally unearthed the "big shot" in neurology ("officially" still in Japan). He soon found Moshe to have a subdural haematoma on each side of his skull. (I later gathered from him that these could in no small way contribute to depressions and fits of temper.) This raised the question of how it had come about. By the doctor's, Prof. Yashargil's say, it could have been caused only by a violent blow on the head. Neither Moshe nor any of us remembered any such thing. Eventually Moshe - or perhaps it was his brother - recalled that traffic accident in London 13 years previously. That, it seems, was it, incredible though it sounds. And utter exhaustion had played

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its part: for the last six or seven months, in the States, Moshe had been overworking beyond excess - "in a stupid panic," he told me in hospital, "of not being able to finish my work. It finished me instead - perhaps," he added with a twinkle. Whether he had been driven by apprehension, I don't know."

Exhaustion, apprehension - despondency, impatience, temper: am I being wise after the event? His situation and his condition seem to provide clues to his behaviour, and may have made the Man act "monstrously" at times (and childishly at others). And because I found it a sad thought that people should get their picture of him from instances of the recordings - video and audio - made of him during his final years, it was a relief to me that you should have raised your question about whether the Man was a Monster, too.

He wasn't. He was a man of genius, and his failings may have been to the measure of his abilities and gifts; and a man who never forgave himself when he chanced to fall short of exceedingly exacting moral standards - which he never presumed to apply to others, and an awe-inspiring natural sense of responsibility showed in his actions. He got more than his fill of ingratitude, but it never left a grudge. When he helped people, apart from his work, you would have been hard put to find him out. He boasted of his successes; but his own decency he may never even have noticed, and would merely have liked to be able to expect it from others. But then I think there must be plenty of people around to bear out his kindness, not only to children. Stupidity could bring him to the boil in a desperate attempt to open someone's mind and his senses; but while still in full possession of himself, he would never boil over, at least not without a clear purpose. Let others tell the stories, my concern here was with the point you had raised.

As for the videos and the various problems connected with them, this is hardly the place to go into the matter. Moshe had his own opinion of their quality and the value of their use. Some perhaps, like the ones you mention, would not necessarily need to be shown, unless there is something important to be learnt from them. To what other end would one want to show them anyway? Surely not in order to disparage Moshe.

### Recollecting Moshe

*Paul Bayard, a professor at Ohio State University, shares his childhood memories of Moshe.*

I was very interested to come across your request for information on Moshe Feldenkrais while browsing "America Online". Some years ago I came across an old article describing his visits to Hampshire College. Unfortunately I never followed up my intention to try and contact him. In any case, I began to doubt that he was still alive since he was the same age as my father. After reading your request I decided to jot down a few notes thinking that the years that I knew him might be from a period of his life which was not very well documented.

My earliest recollections of Moshe date back to 1940 or 1941. He and my father both worked for the Admiralty in Scotland on the development of ASDIC, the British equivalent of SONAR. The Research lab they worked in had been moved to avoid the constant attacks of the Luftwaffe at its original location in Weymouth in the south of England. In Scotland he started a Judo club which I and my mother attended. My mother made a number of the heavy canvas suits for Judo on a sewing machine, breaking countless needles in the process. On one occasion she dislocated her thumb in Judo practice and Moshe instantly manipulated it back into position. He taught judo but apparently had studied both karate and the use of pressure points to block pain. I don't know where he learnt judo but it was possibly in Paris.

From the early forties until the last time I saw him, probably in 1956, he was a constant visitor to our home. He worked initially on a Judo instruction book for which my mother did the illustrations, working from photographs. Later, I remember him working on his book **BODY AND MATURE BEHAVIOR**.

He of course had countless anecdotes and, later, case histories from his work after the war when he moved to Israel. I wish I could remember them, but only two stick in my mind. One, when he was young and lived in a Kibbutz in Israel, probably in the 20's or 30's in which he described a narrow escape from a flood, and a later account of his treatment of the wife of an ambassador who had suffered a knife attack which

had apparently left her paralyzed. After he had determined there was no organic reason for her paralysis he was able to use the techniques he was developing to help her recovery.

He had a sister who lived, and survived, in Paris during the second world war who also visited us in London in 1945 or 1946. I believe he was born in Poland and he spoke at least four languages fluently. I am just sorry that I was unaware of his journeys to the U.S. otherwise I would have made a great effort to renew our friendship. He always radiated confidence and charisma but, unlike some, listened to others. Although he was of my parents generation, he always took a great interest in whatever I was doing.

### Anatomy?

*Trisha Jewellen Hargaden adds the following to the discussion...*

In answer to your question "...whether or not anatomy, physiology, etc., should be required subjects has opened the larger and more general debate over the content and organization of training programs as a whole," I would like to relate my experience. In my second year of training Olena Nitefor from Canada, came to teach Anatomy. At various times over the years I had learnt Anatomy and Physiology, Kinesiology, etc., as part of my training to be a Physical Education Teacher, Dancer, and again as a Massage Therapist. Since I knew the names of the bones, muscles, their position, type articulation....Olena's approach not only brought this "dead subject" alive for me, it deepened my understanding of functional movement and integration, and created in me a curiosity that wanted to explore how parts related. I began to see a clearer relationship between the parts that make up the whole. I also caught a glimpse of how the whole was contained in a part. This interconnectedness was a giant leap forward for me.

Yes I believe, as a result of my experiences learning this subject, that students could gain a depth of understanding of how the system works, its structure and function, if the teaching of the subject was similar to Olena's approach. For that reason I would advocate having these subjects offered