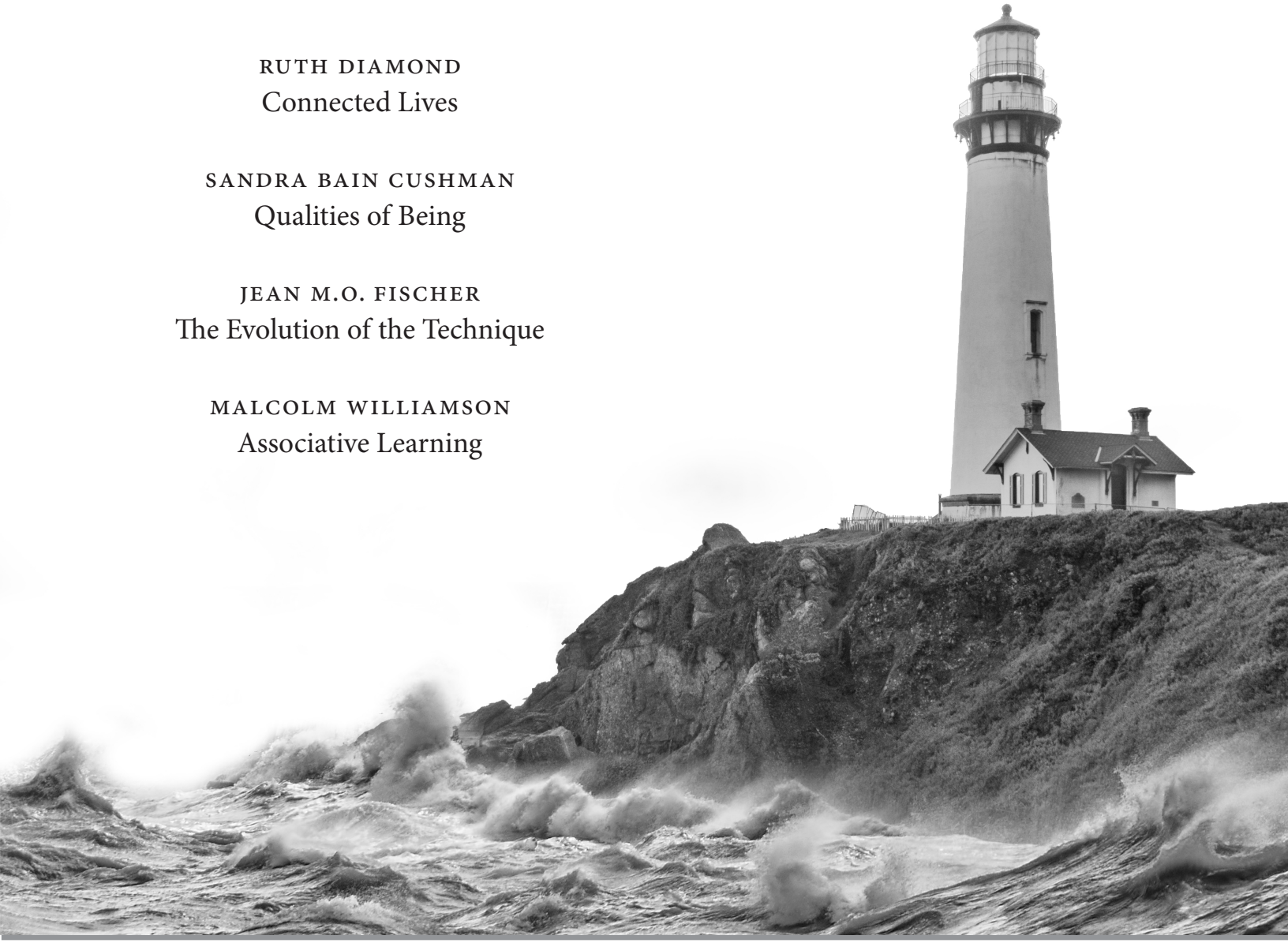
AmSAT™ Journal
AMERICAN SOCIETY FOR THE ALEXANDER TECHNIQUE



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AMSAT MISSION

To establish the Alexander Technique as a basic and recognized resource for health, productivity, and well-being.

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From the Editor

IT HAS BEEN a challenging and volatile time. In many ways, it is fascinating to be living through a point in history that will be written about for years to come. The pandemic has brought death, suffering, and long-term isolation to many. We have a new president. We have had to find new ways of working with no warning. For many of us, this has led to innovation and new possibilities in teaching. While associate editor Genoa Davidson and I do not teach the Alexander Technique online, we have found other ways to offer online work in voice and speech, dialect, and actor training, while incorporating elements of the Technique into how we teach. We currently have students from all over the world, which is not something we could have fathomed pre-pandemic.

Another challenge we have faced is in cultivating consistent personal practices in isolation; something we can do at home and without a teacher. I do a daily lie-down. Additionally, Genoa and I are teacher candidates in Jessica Wolf's Art of Breathing, which brings awareness to breath and breathing in all domains of our lives. I have incorporated the practices learned through Jessica into my daily work regime, as well as my classroom teaching of voice and acting, which at the University of Oklahoma, for now, is in-person. We are looking forward to the final phase of training next summer.

While I do not offer Alexander lessons online, I do integrate directional thinking and inhibition into my teaching of the Linklater progression. I studied with Kristin Linklater and was certified in her work in 2007. She recently passed away, but not without impacting generations of students. Kristin was a strong advocate for the Alexander Technique: I remember completing a session with John Nicholls as Kristin was waiting for her turn. She required her teacher trainees to complete at least thirty hours of lessons with certified teachers during my teacher training with her.

Genoa and I recently had our peer-reviewed interdisciplinary paper on the subject of listening in performance published in the *Voice and Speech Review*. One domain of our interdisciplinary work that is beginning to have an impact, not only on our research and practices as theatre artists and educators but also on our Alexander teaching, is the work of Chilean neurobiologists Humberto Maturana and Francisco Varela. From their writings, we are cultivating an understanding of interaction, communication, and being in the world that challenges the sender/receiver dynamic outlined in, for example, the Shannon–Weaver framework. For Maturana and Varela, the nervous system is closed; it does not have inputs or outputs. While changes in the nervous system are triggered from perturbations outside the self, the changes are determined by the system itself, not by the perturbing agent. This notion resonates, giving us grounding for what happens when we give a lesson. In doing so, we perturb the nervous system of our students indirectly. See the book *The Tree of Knowledge* by Maturana and Varela for a fascinating look into their work on the biological roots of human understanding.

Throughout the pandemic, we have continued to write. Our peer-reviewed article on the approach to and principle of action as taught by the late master acting teacher Earle R. Gister was published in the *Texas Theatre Journal* in October. We have also been hard at work on our new play, *My Dearest Friend*, which focuses on the role of women in the shaping of policy and the Revolutionary War. As a source, we are using the relationship and experiences of John and Abigail Adams through the exchange of their many letters. Part of our work has been to reconstruct what their dialects may have been, which has been a fascinating and educational journey. As we explore their lives through our work, we are observing many similarities to our own, such as the smallpox and typhus epidemics, the political upheaval, and physical separation through quarantine.

Genoa and I have also spent the past year meeting with *STATnews* and *Alexander Journal* editors Jamie McDowell and Paul Marsh. We have worked on clarifying our mission statements, updating style guides and bringing a peer-review option for all three of our publications, in addition to sharing resources and bringing together the global Alexander community through high-quality, scholarly works. We are accepting papers for peer review and encourage those who are interested in participating in the peer-review process to contact us.

The constant threat of illness and political drama is wearing. But there have been spots of light as well. We have seen urgent social issues brought into the forefront, people are coming together in support and solidarity, and I am hopeful for the future.

Poise,
Joe

Contents

Connected Lives

by Ruth Diamond

IN 2017, when the American Center for the Alexander Technique (ACAT) closed after more than fifty years, I decided to write a book celebrating its history and accomplishments. As I started my research, it became clear to me that a chain of interconnected women—Ethel Webb, Margaret Naumburg, Irene Tasker, Alma Frank, Henriette Michelson, Debbie Caplan, and Judith Leibowitz—played significant roles in bringing the Alexander Technique to the United States and establishing it in New York City.

One of the first things that caught my interest was the relationship between ACAT co-founder Debbie Caplan and Margaret Naumburg, who founded the progressive Walden School in New York City. This seemed significant since I knew that Naumburg had arranged F.M. Alexander's passage to the United States during World War I and was instrumental in introducing him to John Dewey.

Caplan and Naumburg were connected through Caplan's father, Waldo Frank, a novelist and left-wing political writer who reviewed *Man's Supreme Inheritance* in the *Chicago Tribune* in 1919 and promoted the Technique in some of his books. Naumburg, Waldo Frank's first wife, heard about the Technique from Ethel Webb, a first-generation teacher who worked side by side with Alexander for more than forty years. Naumburg and Webb met in 1913 during the First International Montessori Training Course held in Rome. First generation teacher Irene Tasker also attended this course, so Tasker, Naumburg, and Webb were connected through their Montessori training.

Caplan's mother, Alma Frank, was Waldo Frank's second wife. She taught at the Walden School and learned about the Alexander Technique from Naumburg. When Alma Frank went on to train as a teacher with Alexander in London, her husband paid her tuition and training fees. After graduating in 1940, she taught in Manhattan, where her students included Debbie Caplan, Judy Leibowitz, and Henriette Michelson.

ACAT co-founder Judy Leibowitz learned about the Technique from her cousin's piano teacher, Henriette Michelson, who had taken lessons with Alma Frank and also with Alexander. Michelson taught piano at the Juilliard School, where she championed the Technique and encouraged her pupils to study it with Alma Frank or with the only other New York teacher, Lulie Westfeldt. When Michelson retired from Juilliard in 1949, she emigrated to Israel and taught at the Rubin Academy of Music in Jerusalem. At the academy, she met Shmuel Nelken and encouraged him to study with Patrick Macdonald in London. Nelken trained as an Alexander Technique teacher with Macdonald and later established Israel's first training program, so Michelson is indirectly responsible for bringing the Technique to Israel.

Each of these women was a pioneer. They understood the importance of Alexander's work and made connections between his ideas and complementary progressive theories and practices within their own fields of expertise—music, education, psychology, dance, science, and physical therapy. They preserved the integrity of Alexander's discovery while broadening and deepening the scope of his work.

As I saw how the strands of their lives were woven into the history of the Alexander Technique in the United States, I began to appreciate the significance of their personal histories, interests, education, and talents in the evolution of an American approach to teaching the Alexander Technique—and to the birth of the American Center for the Alexander Technique.

I decided to follow the connections among these women, from Ethel Webb to Judy Leibowitz. Since Webb is the first link in this chain of women, I shall begin with her. Future articles will focus on Irene Tasker, Margaret Naumburg, Alma Frank, Henriette Michelson, Debbie Caplan, and Judy Leibowitz.

Ethel Webb (1866–1952)

Ethel Webb was the first person Alexander trained to teach the Technique after he arrived in London and the first non-family member to teach in his practice. Alexander acknowledged her extraordinary contribution to his success in the preface of his last book, *The Universal Constant in Living* (UCL).

I must record special thanks to Miss Ethel Webb, who has been intimately connected with the work since 1911, consistently rendering most valuable help and encouragement to all engaged in it at 16, Ashley Place, whether as pupils or students. I am particularly indebted to her for the patience and perseverance which has characterized her invaluable help in making the subject-matter as clear as possible—in fact, without her help I fear these pages would not be ready for the printers today. (Alexander 1942, viii–ix)

In the literature, she is often referred to as Alexander's secretary or assistant, although as Jean M.O. Fischer (2017) writes, "The help and support she gave Alexander in establishing his teaching practice and interviewing and looking after his pupils—as secretary, teacher and friend—went far beyond ordinary secretarial duties." She helped edit his books and provided him with important professional connections in both London and the United States. Frank Pierce Jones (Jones 1997, 29) believed that she did more to establish Alexander in London than any other person.

There are few photos of her, and I found only one short description in Lulie Westfeldt's (1998, 24) memoir of her training.

"She was a small, cosy, attractive-looking woman, with just the right amount of plumpness. She was called 'Pip' by her students and 'our dear Ethel' by Alexander." Quiet and self-effacing, she devoted her life to promoting Alexander's work.

Ethel Webb was born in 1866 into a wealthy mercantile family with strong ties to the Unitarian Church of England. Many years later, during World War I, the Webb family's connections in the international Unitarian community would be crucial to the establishment of the Alexander Technique community in America.

In 1862, Webb's father, George, formed a partnership with his brother-in-law to open the world-famous jewelers' and silversmiths' establishment Mappin & Webb in London. Her father's death in 1889 left his wife, Ann, alone to raise eight children aged four to seventeen; but he also left her with an estate of £117,000—approximately fourteen million pounds ($17,406,270) in today's currency. Ann Webb's strong will, powerful connections, and financial independence made it possible for her to provide her five girls and three boys with fine educations. One of her younger daughters qualified to be one of England's first women doctors and another daughter, Elsie, attended the progressive Roedean School, where she was taught by Elizabeth Fry, a Quaker who devoted her life to reforming British prisons, hospitals, and schools (Evans 2001, 153).

At the time of her father's death, Ethel was fifteen and enrolled in boarding school, where she received a classical education, including literature, art, and music. She was a talented pianist, and after graduating in the mid-1880s, she moved to Berlin to pursue her interest in the piano at the conservatory there. Just one decade earlier, Berlin had become the capital of the newly unified German Empire. Visiting around the same time as Webb, Mark Twain (1892) called Berlin "the Chicago of Europe." "It is a new city; the newest I have ever seen. The main mass of the city looks as if it had been built last week." The vibrant, chaotic, new city described by Twain suited Webb well, and after graduating from the conservatory, she remained there, establishing her career as a concert pianist. However, in 1890, back problems put an end to her performing career (Jones 1997, 77). Unable to play professionally, Webb accepted an invitation to visit New York with her American friend Alice Fowler. The two young women moved to Greenwich Village and set up successful practices teaching piano to the children of the wealthy and fashionable Washington Square set. The Village was an exciting place to live and work. By 1880, it had become a center of social reform, feminism, and the labor movement. Italian, German, and Irish immigrants were moving into crowded tenements, working in factories, and shopping in stores and stalls that had replaced elegant old town houses. It was becoming known as "Little Bohemia." Working-class residents mingled in seedy bars with avant-garde writers and artists. It was the age of ragtime music, Freudian psychology, and American pragmatism.

In the 1890s, upper- and middle-class women were shedding their corsets and stepping out into the wider world. Webb was not a suffragette, marching or staging hunger strikes, but in her quiet way she was, as she told Frank Pierce Jones (1977, 3) many years later, an "emancipated woman." She considered herself to be a feminist and had wide-ranging interests, a fine intellect, and an adventurous nature.

Ethel Webb
(1866–1952)

Webb and Fowler were part of a group of upper-class women active in social reform and the universal education movement. The focus of the progressive universal education movement was experiential learning. Empiricists were looking for ways to engage children through whole-body experiences. In this light, Webb understood the importance of her role as a piano teacher and studied the writings of John Dewey, Friedrich Froebel, and other educational theorists. Many years later, her grasp of educational theory would prove useful as she worked with Irene Tasker to edit Alexander's books.

One of her piano students, Mary Potter Bush, brought Webb into a social circle that included the leaders of the progressive education movement. Bush's husband, Wendell T. Bush, was a wealthy midwestern philosopher who had studied under William James and was at that time teaching in the philosophy department at Columbia University, while John Dewey was the dean of its Teachers College. Like James and Dewey, Bush was an empiricist who believed that sensory experience is the source of all knowledge and that experiential learning must precede or accompany written explanations (Hutchinson 2015).

Ethel Webb made friends in Potter's circle, attended classes at Columbia, and studied the works of William James, learning about his groundbreaking innovations in the field of experimental psychology. Considered by many to be the greatest American mind of the late nineteenth century, James integrated ideas from psychology and philosophy into educational theory. Like Alexander, James knew from personal experience how impossible it is to separate mind from body, and he incorporated his insights into his theories.

Before James, scientists believed that a stimulus triggered a physiological response, which was then expressed as an action. James (1950, 449–50) maintained that it is impossible to isolate the components of experience. "Our natural way of thinking about these coarser emotions is that the mental perception of some fact *excites* the mental affection called the emotion, and that this latter state of mind gives rise to the bodily expression. My thesis on the contrary *is that the bodily changes follow directly the* perception *of the exciting fact, and that our feeling of the same changes as they occur* IS *the emotion*."

Another way to express this might be: My anger does not cause me to yell; the triggering event, the adrenalin rush, the

flush of my cheeks, and my loud voice are interconnected aspects of one unified experience. James (1950, 233) called this connection *stream of consciousness*. He was attempting to describe a non-dualistic reality that Alexander later called the *self*.

James's ideas radically influenced literature, art, education, and philosophy in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Webb would encounter his ideas again in 1913, when she enrolled in Maria Montessori's first international teacher training class in Rome.

Interested in experiential learning and friendly with the social set that included Dewey and the Bushes, Webb knew about philanthropist Grace Hoadley Dodge's Kitchen Garden Association, which provided vocational training to poor immigrant women and their children. Dodge's work attracted the attention of serious thinkers within the fields of psychology, social reform, philosophy, and education who recognized the need for new pedagogical methods to engage children in learning (*New York Times* 1914). In 1887, Dodge funded the New York College for the Training of Teachers, which was designed to prepare professional teachers for the classroom. In 1892, with the help of Columbia University philosopher Nicholas Butler and philanthropists including George Vanderbilt, Dodge's school evolved into Teachers College. In 1898, Teachers College moved uptown and became affiliated with Columbia University. At the suggestion of Wendell T. Bush, John Dewey was hired as its first president (Teachers College, 2018).

Webb had created a richly fulfilling life in New York, but her mother was not pleased. A career in the arts or professions was permissible, but teaching in other people's homes, even rich people's homes, was unthinkable. Ann Webb wanted her daughter to return home. When Ethel resisted all of her arguments, her mother sent a telegram saying she was very ill. Ethel immediately sailed back to London. Upon discovering that her mother was feigning illness, however, she returned to New York. Around 1900, Ethel finally gave in to her mother's demands and returned to England to stay.

Back in London without a career to occupy her, Ethel moved in with her mother and tried to keep up her piano playing. She had many friends in the arts, including the poet John Masefield, and she performed house concerts for them, but ongoing problems with her back and arms made playing increasingly difficult. She and her younger sister Elsie toured Europe, visiting music festivals, but when her sister married in 1907, their trips together ended (Evans 2001, 154).

In 1910, when Ethel Webb came across a review of Alexander's first book, *Man's Supreme Inheritance* (*MSI*) in the *Morning Leader*, she was thirty-nine years old and unemployed. The review was written by William Archer, a popular Scottish writer and theatre critic best known for his translations and productions of Henrik Ibsen's plays. The piece drew positive attention to Alexander, although the critique was not really a book review. After calling *MSI* "able and interesting," Archer (1910) launched into a lengthy discourse on open-mindedness versus gullibility, apparently sparked by Alexander's chapter on habits of thoughts and body. Alexander understood the value of the publicity provided by the review and included it in the second edition of *MSI*, published in 1918.

The review motivated Webb to read the book and sign up for a course of lessons, which dramatically improved her health. Before long, she was working as Alexander's receptionist and assistant, an arrangement that made sense for both of them. Alexander needed an assistant and Webb needed a new passion. She became involved in every part of his practice. By 1914, Alexander had trained her to teach the Technique. Her gentle disposition and easy manner were, by all accounts, extremely helpful to Alexander's practice. His pupils loved her, but Alexander's wife Edith was not happy with the new arrangement. As Webb's duties expanded to include editing, publicity, and teaching, Edith grew increasingly jealous—and her jealousy was not completely irrational, since Alexander had a reputation for being a lady's man and Webb was openly infatuated with him, although there is no evidence that Alexander and Webb were ever romantically involved (Bloch 2004, 95).

While working full-time for Alexander, Ethel stayed abreast of developments in progressive education. In 1909, just one year before Webb's first lesson with Alexander, Maria Montessori (2013) had published a groundbreaking book describing a revolutionary new teaching method that she had developed in one of Rome's poorest neighborhoods, a method centered on providing children with activities and materials to stimulate their senses. Montessori was convinced that the senses were the "foundation of the entire intellectual organism," such that "there can be neither ideas nor imagination, nor any intellectual construction, if we do not presuppose an activity of the senses" (2013, 260). She believed that all children have innate patterns of developmental learning built into their systems, and if provided with properly structured activities, they will teach themselves what they want to learn.

When Maria Montessori offered her First International Training Course in Rome in 1913, Ethel Webb was one of just ninety-three teachers from around the world attending the program. She struck up a friendship with two young women attending the training, Irene Tasker and Margaret Naumburg, and she gave her new friends copies of Alexander's second book *Conscious Control* to read (Bloch 2004, 95).

Irene Tasker later wrote of reading this book for the first time:

> *I still remember the excitement that I felt when I first read* [*in* Conscious Control] *that we are responsible ourselves for defects and inefficiencies which come from "continuing to perform wrong and detrimental actions" and then in the next paragraph to find that in the necessary reeducation "in every case the means rather than the end must be held in mind."*
>
> *I had already seen this principle at work in the Montessori school in which I had been an observer. Here the material for the children's occupations was designed by Dr. Montessori in such a way that no piece of work done was an end in itself, but a means to another end. For example the children learned to write not by writing but by preparing the means for writing in other occupations.* (Tasker 1978, 6)

After the Montessori training, Tasker and Naumburg followed Webb back to London to take lessons with Alexander, and when Naumburg returned to New York to start Walden,

an experimental school based on Montessori principles, she hired Tasker as a teacher.

Webb was very excited by what she had learned in Rome. She may have been the first to make a connection between modern progressive education and the Alexander Technique and to envision the role the Technique could play in elementary school education.

By 1914, Alexander had trained Webb to teach the Technique. The timing was auspicious, as Alexander's newly married sister, Amy, had left the practice to start a family. Little is known about Alexander's method of training teachers at that time, and we have no documentation or first-hand accounts. Alexander's younger brother A.R. boasted that it took him just six lessons to learn how to teach. Their niece, Marjory Barlow, recalls the younger Alexander saying that he had never had a hands-on lesson from his brother, but these comments might be chalked up to sibling rivalry (Bloch 2004, 44). It seems likely that Alexander trained his assistant teachers Ethel Webb and later Irene Tasker by giving them lessons, having them observe lessons, and then gradually allowing them to take over parts of lessons.

During World War I, the steady exodus of civilians fleeing the German bombing decimated Alexander's teaching practice. He had often expressed a desire to see America and so when Naumburg invited him to teach in New York in 1914, he accepted. Alexander sailed on September 12, leaving A.R. and Webb behind to manage his London practice. Naumburg arranged passage and accommodations, found him a teaching space in the Essex Hotel, and lined up influential students for him (Bloch 2004, 95). The practice thrived, and in December 1914, Alexander asked Webb to join him in New York as resident teacher to a crippled ten-year-old child. Before long, Webb was assisting in his practice and recruiting new students from her extensive contacts in the city, including her friends Mary Potter and Wendell T. Bush.

Bush was connected to some of the richest and most influential people in the city through his industrialist father, Rufus, and to the top scholars in the country through his own Columbia University professorship. Thanks to these connections, Alexander's roster of pupils included bankers, industrialists, writers, artists, and East Coast intellectuals, including Richard Morse Hodge (1918), a professor of English and Biblical Studies at Columbia. When the second edition of *MSI* was published, Alexander's new pupil Hodge wrote a full-page review in the *New York Times*. Hodge's review is detailed and substantive, and like William Archer before him, he saw the book through the lens of his own expertise, using the Bible as his reference point. "And rigidity of body induces rigidity of mind. A 'stiff necked people,' is a designation which occurs more than once in the writings of the ancient Hebrews and points to the accurate observation in ancient times of the habitual posture of the most obstinate individual."

In 1916, Wendell Bush introduced Alexander to John Dewey at a Columbia University faculty party. Malcolm Williamson (2017, 22) writes that "neither man knew anything of the other prior to their meeting in 1916" and that "John Dewey (1859–1952) was an established Columbia professor destined for a long and distinguished career as America's foremost philosopher while F. Matthias Alexander (1869–1955) was relatively unknown, his first book *Man's Supreme Inheritance* having had little impact in America." Williamson thinks that "both men must have recognised a certain straightforward honesty in each other." Dewey found that Alexander Technique lessons improved his health, and for the next eight years, he took lessons whenever Alexander was in the United States. The two men remained friends for the rest of their lives, and Dewey wrote introductions to three of Alexander's books.

Webb also introduced Irene Tasker to Dewey. Tasker, who attended Dewey's classes at Columbia, formed a close, lifelong friendship with Dewey and his wife, Alice, traveling by train with them across the United States. After that journey, Tasker returned to London. By 1917, Alexander had trained her to teach and she was assisting in his practice. Webb and Tasker were already working together to edit and consolidate Alexander's first two books, *Man's Supreme Inheritance* and *Conscious Control*, into a single volume. They consulted with Dewey as well as with Alexander to clarify the texts. "Although there were long deliberations possible," between Dewey and Alexander "even more must have taken place with Misses Webb and Tasker as between them they worked out the most precise wording for Alexander's books" (Williamson 2017, 23).

In the same article, Williamson describes significant changes in Alexander's thinking as expressed in his writing after he became friends with Dewey and after Webb and Tasker started editing his books. Williamson does an excellent job of tracing the way many of Dewey's ideas gradually worked their way into Alexander's theory, and he explains that this shift was not just the result of Alexander's direct encounters with Dewey but also reflected the influence of theories in progressive education as understood by Webb and Tasker. Perhaps the most dramatic ideas Williamson (2017, 36) cites are the introduction of the concept of the *means whereby* and the emphasis on having the proper attitude to learning.

From 1914 to 1924, Alexander spent the winters teaching in New York and the summers in London. Webb remained in New York while he was in London, but she returned to the UK permanently in 1920. The war was over and Alexander's thriving London practice once again needed her assistance. In addition, Webb's nine-year-old niece Erika Schumann had recently been diagnosed with scoliosis and she was then able to give her regular lessons. The closest we come to having an explanation of Webb's understanding of the Technique and of her teaching style are her niece's memories of these lessons. "I had lying down turns on the floor with the simplest of directions, suited to a child. One of them was think of your back spreading like strawberry jam on the floor.… That early simplicity has remained with me all my life" (Fertman, 2012). The lessons made a deep impression on the child, and eleven year later, she joined Alexander's first training class—she would become first-generation teacher Erika Whittaker.

Webb's most effective lessons were short, friendly reminders to "keep her length" when practicing piano or writing. Whittaker believed that the power of those early lessons came from learning to attend to her own use while she was doing things she wanted to do, and from her aunt's skillful ability to keep the

reminders so friendly and non-critical that the young girl looked forward to hearing them.

A wonderful video on YouTube shows Whittaker (2011) explaining her Aunt Ethel's style of teaching. "She said, 'Keep your length, dear.' Now the *dear* is very important because it makes it friendly. And she showed me. She took my head forward and up and lengthened me and showed me how to keep that going when I was writing or painting or playing the piano. Or if she caught me slumping around somewhere, she said, 'You are coming down, dear,' and up you came. It was as simple as that because my length was then part of what I was doing, not separated out, and it was my responsibility."

In the same video, Whittaker goes on to describe her aunt's approach to the Technique as much gentler than Alexander's, at least in his early years of teaching. Whittaker says that Alexander's teaching was "fierce" in those days. Someone told Whittaker that Tasker reported breaking out in "a cold sweat" during lessons. Whittaker says that he became much gentler and easier to work with later on, after his hands-on skill increased, but that her aunt knew how to engage students gently, without activating fear responses, even as a very new teacher.

Whittaker's recollections highlight Webb's use of brief interventions in the midst of activities, followed by time for pupils to integrate the new awareness by themselves, at their own pace. This approach anticipated Marjorie Barstow's teaching style by decades, and in fact years later, Barstow acknowledged the influence of Webb and Tasker on her teaching style (Hunter 2013a).

Erika Whittaker's memories of those lessons served as a reference point for reflections upon her experiences in Alexander's first training course, starting in 1931. In conversations with Hunter, excerpts of which were published on his blog, Whittaker explained that the first class was divided into two distinct groups that tended to work separately. She said that Patrick Macdonald, Lulie Westfeldt, Kitty Merrick, and Marjory Barlow were dissatisfied because "they were not being taught how to teach … [and] they began to observe what Alexander was doing and tried to recreate it themselves by working on each other" (Hunter 2013b).

The trainees in the second group, including George Trevelyan, Erika Whittaker, Gurney MacInnes, and Irene Stewart, thought that Alexander wanted them to find their own ways of working with his concepts, and they experimented with attending to their use while in activity. Whittaker said that this kind of experimentation seemed like a continuation of what she had experienced in her lessons with her aunt in 1919 and had seen practiced at Ashley Place in 1929 while helping her aunt with administrative work and assisting at the Little School, which Tasker had started in 1924 as a way to combine the Technique and Montessori-based elementary education. She found that the work her group did together developed the same skills her aunt had taught her for "keeping her length" while doing the things she loved or needed to do (Hunter 2013b).

Marjorie Barstow, who did not belong to either clique of trainees, also traced her application work back to Ethel Webb and Irene Tasker. Barstow's approach was characterized by application work that "encourages observation, attention to process, decision making and what Marj called 'constructive thinking'" (Hunter 2013a).

Webb's busy schedule assisting on the training course, teaching private pupils, managing the practice, and editing manuscripts continued until the outbreak of World War II, when her contacts in the Unitarian and Quaker networks in America once again proved extremely valuable.

The German bombing made conditions unsafe for the children boarding at the Little School in Kent. In July 1939, Alexander sailed to Halifax, Canada, with ten children, the mother and nanny of four of the children, Webb, and two newly trained teachers, Irene Stewart and Margaret Goldie. Alexander and Webb were able to obtain visas and enter the United States in August, but the rest of the group had to stay in Canada until they were granted visas in December. The two teachers waited in Maine, living in the summer house of Webb's good friend Alice Fowler.

During the months in Maine, Webb edited the manuscript of Alexander's new book, *The Universal Constant in Living*, incorporating changes made by Alexander in consultation with John Dewey. Evidently, the time in Canada and Maine exacted a toll on Webb's health; she was reported to have lost weight and become noticeably frailer.

In December 1940, the children and their guardians entered the United States; and in January 1941, the Unitarian Association of America offered Alexander and the children the use of the Whitney Homestead in Stow, Massachusetts. This offer may have been facilitated by the Webb family's Unitarian connections. The children's school was set up in a large, rambling Victorian house on the estate. Webb, Irene Stewart, and Margaret Goldie taught the children. Alexander maintained a teaching practice in New York but visited the school regularly.

In 1941, the first American training course opened at Stow, with Frank Pierce Jones as the only student. Ethel Webb assisted on the training. Drawn together by common intellectual interests, she and Jones became close friends, spending time together in lessons and in conversations outside of the training. Jones (1950, 18) admired Webb greatly, calling her "a woman of character and breeding with a good education in literature and music."

Jones, a classical scholar, was teaching Greek at Brown University in Rhode Island when he started training. In his book *Freedom to Change*, he recalled spending much of his first training year writing an article on the role of the classics in the emancipation of women in nineteenth-century England. He lauded Miss Webb as "an unexpected aid … [who] remember[ed] the excitement … in 1887 when Agnata Francis Ramsey alone in her class had won the honors in the classic tripos [Classical Tripos] at Cambridge, a distinction that no male students ever obtained" (Jones 1950, 18).

Jones developed an Alexander Technique teaching style that focused on working with a pupil's thinking in the midst of activity, in order to help the pupil re-educate his or her own sensory register. In this way of working, he can trace his heritage to Webb and other first-generation teachers. Jones (1950, 153) wrote, "The aim of teaching, as I conceive it, is to bring a pupil to the point of self-discovery that F.M. reached when he was able to translate what he saw in the mirrors into kinaesthetic terms and to apply his new knowledge to the solutions of his

own problem and become, in effect, his own expert in the use of himself."

After the Unitarians sold the Whitney estate in the summer of 1942, the children's school was forced to close, and A.R. Alexander moved the training course to the Braemore Hotel in Boston. In 1943, one of his pupils, Esther Duke, invited his brother and the other teachers to teach at a Quaker school in Media, Pennsylvania, but the older Alexander had become tired of living in America and was anxious to return home. However, Irene Stewart and Margaret Goldie taught in Pennsylvania briefly. In 1943, F.M. Alexander, Webb, Stewart, and Goldie returned to England. At that point, A.R. Alexander had already relocated the training course to Pennsylvania, but he suffered a debilitating stroke in 1945 and at that point returned to London. The Media school ultimately became the Alexander Foundation School; its history is recounted by Ruth Rootberg in her article "The Alexander Foundation School: An Experiment in Education" (2012, 29–33).

In the late 1940s, Webb was weakened by a series of strokes and could no longer teach. She managed Alexander's administrative work as long as possible, but her health continued to deteriorate. In December 1951, Alexander (2020, 289–90) wrote a letter to friends saying, "I am sorry to tell you that our dear Ethel Webb has suffered another stroke and if the details of the report I have received are even nearly accurate it is doubtful if she can go on very long. She has been so valuable a worker in all that has happened in and come out of 16 Ashley Place that she will be more than missed." She died in 1952, only a few years before Alexander's death.

Ethel Webb never married, and from the time she took her first lessons with Alexander in 1911 until her death in 1952, she devoted herself wholeheartedly to supporting Alexander and promoting the Technique. For forty years, she gave Alexander the benefit of her family and personal connections, her fine mind, broad education, and ceaseless hard work. Like A.R. Alexander, Margaret Goldie, and Irene Tasker, she became a teacher before there was a training course, and therefore depended less on formal training than on personal experimentation in learning how to teach the Technique. Her experiences teaching piano and studying pedagogical theory drove her belief in the importance of including the Technique in early childhood education. Her innate skill as a teacher and her gentle, creative approach to pupils served as a model for many of the first-generation teachers and acted as a counterbalance to more formal approaches to teaching.

It is impossible to separate Webb's devotion to the Technique from her devotion to Alexander. Because she was content to stay in the background, it is easy to underestimate her importance in the history of the Technique in England and in the United States. And it is hard to know exactly how much influence she had on the content of his four books.

Her work as an educator was instrumental in moving the Technique out of the medical model and into the world of education. Her interest in Montessori and her experiences in progressive education circles in New York City led Alexander to Dewey. Without her, Alexander would not have met Irene Tasker, and there would have been no Little School.

We cannot know how different the history of the Technique would have been if Webb had not happened upon Archer's review of *MSI* in 1910, but we can gratefully echo Alexander's (1942, viii) tribute to her in *The Universal Constant in Living* and record special thanks to Ethel Webb for "consistently rendering most valuable help and encouragement" to all who were engaged in the Technique whether as pupils or students." As American Alexander Technique teachers, we owe Webb a particular debt of gratitude. Without her, Margaret Naumburg might not have learned about the Alexander Technique or invited Alexander to New York City during World War I, thus introducing the Technique in the United States and eventually leading to the establishment of the American Center for the Alexander Technique, a uniquely American training program.

Future articles in this series will feature the contributions of Margaret Naumburg, Irene Tasker, Alma Frank, Henriette Michelson, Debbie Caplan, and Judy Leibowitz.

Author's note: I wish to thank Phyllis Richmond for her careful reading, perceptive suggestions, and skillful editing and for our many enjoyable discussions of this material.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS OF F.M. ALEXANDER'S BOOKS CITED IN THIS ARTICLE

MSI *Man's Supreme Inheritance*
UCL *Universal Constant in Living*

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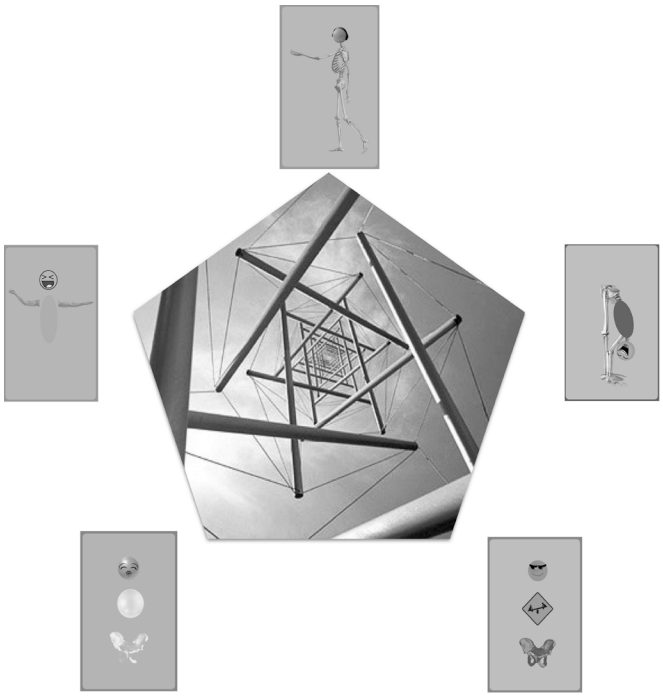
Qualities of Being

by Sandra Bain Cushman

THE FIVE RELATIONS make available to us a simple scheme for understanding and bringing about dynamic balance, the anti-gravity potentiality that is the lasting gift of F.M. Alexander's work. The pentagram below has at its center a tensegrity structure, representing the qualities of connection and suspension, characteristics of the term *up* as it is used in the Alexander Technique as the chief feature of optimal *use*. The five relations are depicted below, each represented by an emoji:



THE FIVE RELATIONS

Zero relation "Eyes free in the room;" "neck free, head forward and up" and—inseparable from these—opening our audial, visual, and kinesthetic awareness. The 0 relation corresponds to "right mental attitude," a general and gentle state of mind that allows us to begin to effectively explore the other relations.

First relation Leg/torso counterbalance; legs release away from the torso in order to release the torso up into suspension (dynamic length, width, and depth); invite the legs to lengthen out of the torso to the tips of the toes, and then back up to the torso.

Second relation Head-pelvis counterbalance, activates and reactivates "up"; defines, frees, and expands the breathing container.

Third relation Natural breathing coordination; freedom, balance, and poise of the thorax, invite the ribs to drape with gravity on the exhale, spring open on the inhale.

Fourth relation The arms' relationship to the torso: elbows release away from the shoulders, back from the fingertips, and in relation to one other; invite the arms to lengthen from the lower back up over the shoulders to the fingertips.

Fifth relation Invite the neck to be free/let the head tilt slightly forward on the top joint of the spine to release upwards, allow the head to freely rotate left and right at C1 to C2; engage all three in order to integrate and animate the total pattern of coordination.

A thorough discussion of the five relations can be found in "Dynamic Balance and the Five Relations" (Bain Cushman 2019).

THE QUALITIES OF BEING

The triads of the five relations

It is easy enough to visit all five relations in an Alexander Technique lesson. Whether or not you differentiate them one from another as five distinct relationships, most experienced teachers follow procedures that address each of the five relations in turn, often in the order in which they appear on the pentagram—where each relation, beginning with 0/5 and moving clockwise back to 0/5, has the capacity to unlock the next. This is one way to read and follow the pentagram of the five relations.

Of course, we would be wise to revisit "eyes free in the room" (0) and "allow the neck to be free in order for the head to go forward and up" (5), between each relation and the next. We must be sure to gather relations 1–4 into the primary and preventative orders and into the "up," the dynamic efficiency of the whole.

This article will address another way of reading the pentagram, by addressing the relations in groups of three. The 0/5 relation heads—literally and metaphorically—each of the six triads of the five relations, for the reasons mentioned above. We turn now to a discussion of the triads of the five relations pentagram: why they may be useful, how we might apply them as individuals and in groups, and what "qualities of being" are invoked or invited by each of the six.

After an Alexander Technique lesson or group class a student has much to process. The questions often arise: "What should I focus on once the teacher is no longer there to guide me?" "How do I recreate the experience I've just had?" "How can I 'do' this without 'doing it?'"

It is difficult for people learning the Technique to recreate for themselves the wholeness they have just experienced at the hands of a teacher. As students leave a lesson or a class and begin the rounds of daily activities, the Technique directions and principles can—especially in the beginning phases of study—seem fleeting, ephemeral.

Keeping three of these five relations in play gives us a reliable way to collect ourselves and improve our coordination as we move about in the world, even as we engage in complex and demanding tasks. It offers beginners a dynamic way to think about and engage with the relationships that their teachers have "put right" during a lesson, and allows them to continue working (and playing) on their own. It is no accident that this method of the five relations arises from decades of working with guitarists playing difficult polyrhythmic music. The five relations and the triads of the five relations (the qualities of being) provided them, and provide us now, with a cognitive and kinesthetic anchor even while engaging in demanding activities.

In private lessons we can sum up at the end by reviewing three relations we have focused on during the lesson, and by identifying which three the student—or we, if we are the students!—might keep in play until the next lesson. (I've developed refrigerator magnets of the emoji, so that students can paste up their learning set for the week/weeks between lessons and classes.)

In group work we have the opportunity to focus on specific triads—depending on the number of classes in a series, or the specialty of the students attending. It may be we are teaching a group of horseback riders, musicians, meditators, singers, or dancers. It may be that *we* are horseback riders, musicians, meditators, singers, or dancers. The following are examples of the triads we might choose to focus on for these activities: for horseback riders, balance, animation, and poise; for musicians, balance, differentiation, and poise; for meditators, poise, integration, animation; for singers (actors and public speakers), animation, integration, poise; for dancers, balance, span, differentiation.

Before we go further into defining and applying each triad, let's take a look at the origin of the system. In the fall of 2009, I showed Robert Fripp, the founder and director of Guitar Craft and Guitar Circles, my diagram of the five relations. I handed the picture to Robert at lunch on a weeklong residential course. He pulled out a pencil and began making notes. As I left the dining room, I looked at the six triads of the five relations along with five tetrads, my next decade of work, scribbled in the upper left-hand corner of my diagram of the five relations pentagram.

In 2011, I took on the challenge of exploring the triads as my sole means of directing, each for a period of one month. In walking, teaching, lie-down, I focused on keeping three of the five relations in play.

Toward the end of this experiment, two trainees who were in their final year of training asked me to run a study group for them. Together we chose a triad, and individually we explored it on our own for one month. At the end of the month, we reported back with what we'd discovered. In only one case did the study group come up with a word—one word describing the qualities evoked by the triad—that was different from the one I'd come up with months before. And thus, the qualities of being were born.

The first quality of being triad, *balance*, appears on the right side of the pentagram and is comprised of what I call the *structural relations*:

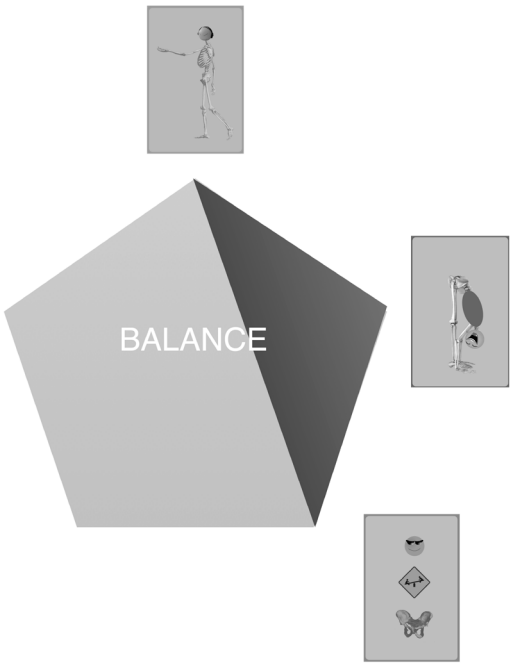
BALANCE

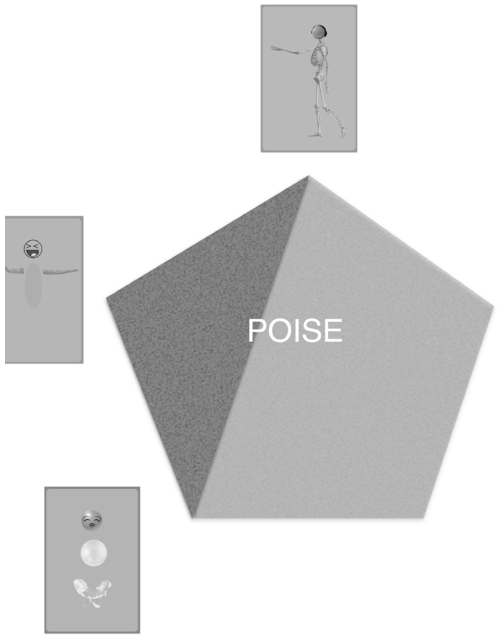
Zero/fifth relation ↔ first relation ↔ second relation

The balance triad arose from two lively professional predicaments in the Guitar Circle. In the spring of 2006, I was spending a week with a group of more than a hundred guitarists in a monastery near Mendoza, Argentina. We were two Alexander Technique teachers for 114 people, an admittedly impossible situation. I found myself reaching for a new teaching setup: a yoga block, a small model of a pelvis, and two chairs. In the courtyard of the monastery, I gave thirty-four turns in one afternoon. The second relation (head-pelvis counterbalance) came to life—and served to educate thirty-four guitarists about sitting balance while preserving my energy and sanity to address seventy-nine others.

A few years later, I was working with a performance ensemble of nine guitarists in Seattle, Washington, and noticed that no matter how they directed themselves or were directed up through the head, neck, and back relationship, the disorganization in their legs inevitably dragged them back down. I found myself standing in the middle of a circle of guitarists saying, "Oh my goodness! You need legs." Enter the first relation—and the balance triad—as the guitarists "got legs."

From that moment on, I have noticed that every time what I now call the lower suspension system properly balances and activates, the head-pelvis counterbalance—the





second relation—fairly pops the spine into springy upward release. While working with students in their chairs in private lessons and in groups, I am continually confident that when we get the legs going, there will come a reliable and repeatable moment—this "popping" of the torso into the "up"—along with an opportunity, a necessity, to move the sit bones back under the torso, off and away from the legs, into better line with the freely balancing head. This results—almost always and even with beginners—in increasingly effortless sitting balance.

When working with riders, or when working on the "horse" in an Alexander Technique session, we evoke the balance triad by first finding a soft and open gaze, or "eyes free in the room." Then we allow the pupil's—or our own—situation on the saddle to release the legs out and away from the torso, in this instance down and away with gravity, in order to allow "neck free, head forward and up," free head balance, to guide the spine up into length.

We revisit the primary and preventative directions—"eyes free in the room" (0 relation) and "neck free, head forward and up" (5th relation)—to amplify, or if necessary to reboot, upward release. Then—and here is where the magic of the triads comes alive—we rely on the head-pelvis counterbalance (stimulated here by the articulated support of the sit bones on the saddle) to do its part in refreshing the up, to keep the torso dynamic both in relation to the release of the legs and the direction of the head. The spirals in the torso, allowing the eyes to lead and the head to follow while looking to the right and left, torso responding by following the head movement into gentle and connected turning on the sit bones and from the hip joints, complete the picture.

Now let's turn to the *poise* triad to explore the interaction of breathing coordination, poise of the chest, and freedom and expression in the arms.

POISE

Zero/fifth relation ↔ third relation ↔ fourth relation

The *functional relations* are found on the left side of the five relations pentagram, and together create the poise triad. This is where the systematics—the dynamic geometry—of the five relations pentagram gets interesting.

The structural relations: 0/5 ↔ 1 ↔ 2 line up obviously with "neck free in order for the head to go forward and up in order for the back to lengthen and widen and the knees to go forward and away."

The functional relations 3 ↔ 4 ↔ 5/0 have an affinity with doing the thing: riding a horse, playing an instrument, following our breath in meditation, singing, dancing—using the hands to teach the Alexander Technique. The functional relations and poise triad lie on the opposite side of the pentagram from the structural relations, to the left of what those familiar with systematics would call "the Great Divide."

What is it that took Mr. Alexander and us across the Great Divide between stopping and organizing ourselves, finding our balance, to maintaining our balance in activity? Alexander (1946) found that he was able to maintain optimal use while speaking when he gave himself three choices:

> to do the thing (in Mr. Alexander's case, to speak the sentence)
> to not do the thing
> to do something else

The "three choices" put Alexander in the right state of mind (and body!) to cross the divide from sorting himself out and finding his equilibrium (balance) to maintaining his equilibrium in the course of activity (poise).

Let's look at the poise triad in relation to the horseback rider, or the student on the "horse" in an Alexander Technique lesson:

We begin with "eyes free" (0 relation) and "neck free head forward and up" (5th relation)—which in the case of the rider on the horse directs not only the rider, but the horse. Having found our balance in the saddle (structural relations/right side of pentagram) we now turn to freeing the breath to support the arms and freeing the arms to help support and expand the breath, and to keep us alive and alert in the saddle. In the case of the rider, we explore the poise triad to keep from interfering with, and in order to stay in dynamic relation to, our own balance and the movement of the horse.

Free breath also keeps us quiet and centered, as any meditator will affirm, and keeps the stress reaction—pulling back of the head, lifting of the chest, shortening of the back, and the consequent holding of the breath—at bay. As always, while thinking of freeing the breath and releasing the arms, we keep returning to the balance of the head and the freeing of the gaze, which activates and integrates the total pattern of coordination.

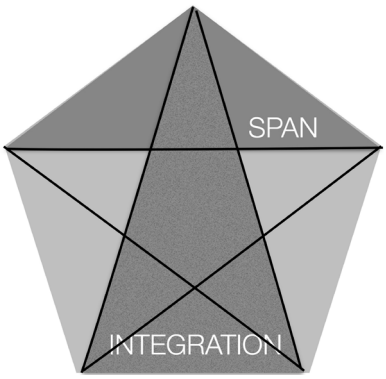
Finally, when we look at the pentagram, we see that the emoji for the second relation (head/pelvis counterbalance) is the same structurally as that for the third relation (breathing coordination). In other words, a torso integrated by the head/pelvis counterbalance gives us a breathing container available for free and fluid turnover of the breath. And free and fluid

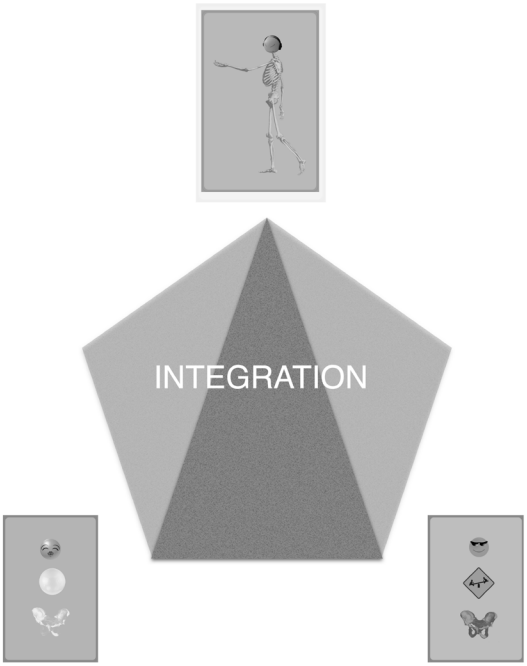
breathing fuels the appropriate amount of tone and activity in the torso to support the arms.

Kathleen, a rider who has studied the quality of being triads, writes: "Movement in the torso stimulates breath, breathing coordination supports movement."

She then says, "I am finding my limbs are squeezing in on me. Release, release, release."

Prompted by Kathleen's "release, release, release," let's move on to a second pair of triads: *span* and *integration*. Span and integration form the inner core—the inner star—of the pentagram, representing the total pattern of coordination:

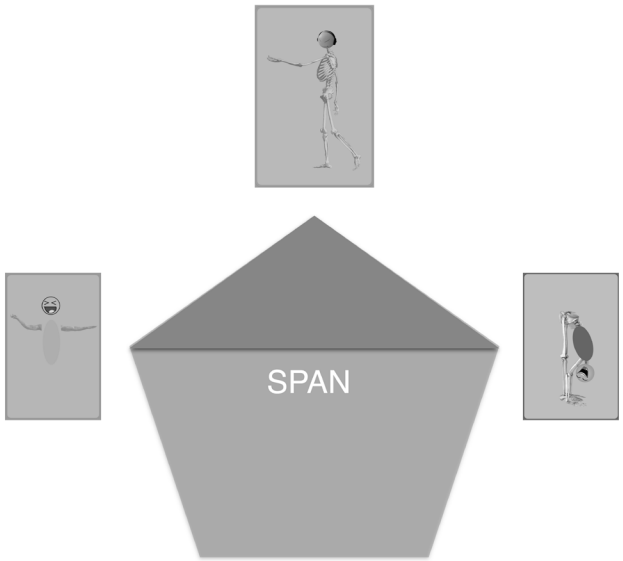




SPAN
Zero/fifth relation ↔ first relation ↔ fourth relation
INTEGRATION
Fifth relation ↔ second relation ↔ third relation

In order to explore how allowing the limbs to release in relation to the torso frees up our torso and our breathing, let's move through a span/integration table turn and lie-down.

First, we allow the head to come into support and relax the neck muscles in order to allow the neck to be free and the head to go forward and up (5th relation). For any but the most reticent students—or for ourselves when we are in any but the most retiring of moods—eyes open and "free in the room" will make things easier all around (0 relation).



Already we may have tapped into integration: often the breath opens by simply relaxing the neck and bringing the head into better orientation and support.

Next we "take" the legs, if we are a teacher, or "give" the legs, if we are a student, or tent the legs to balance them if we are working by ourselves in lie-down, while keeping the preventative orders going: relaxing the neck in order for the head to rest into its easy nod on top of the spine; inviting the easy rotation of the head from C1 to C2 as we occasionally look—or are at least available to look—side to side.

Next we take, give, or release the arms in similar manner, while continuing to attend to the primary relationship, the 0/5 relation, in order to continue to allow free head balance to begin to guide the spine out into length along the table.

Next comes the dramatic moment when the teacher can scoop her hands under the student, one hand on either side of the student's spine, or if you are the student you can allow the teacher's hands to slide down along your already actively releasing spine, or if you are working on your own you can take yourself into the tiniest of yoga bridges in a sequence I will explain shortly.

Almost every time (except where the spine and surrounding musculature are densely compacted) the spine—having not been "worked with" prior to now, with only the head balance, the leg release, and the arm release in play—will spring out long onto the table like one of those Jacob's Ladder toys, popping into the up (at the moment, up in the horizontal) in a way similar to what we find when we establish the balance triad while sitting in the chair. The expansion and freeing of the torso into three dimensions to stimulate the opening of the breath occurs simultaneously.

Working on one's own in lie-down, the teacher's "scoop" can be simulated by:

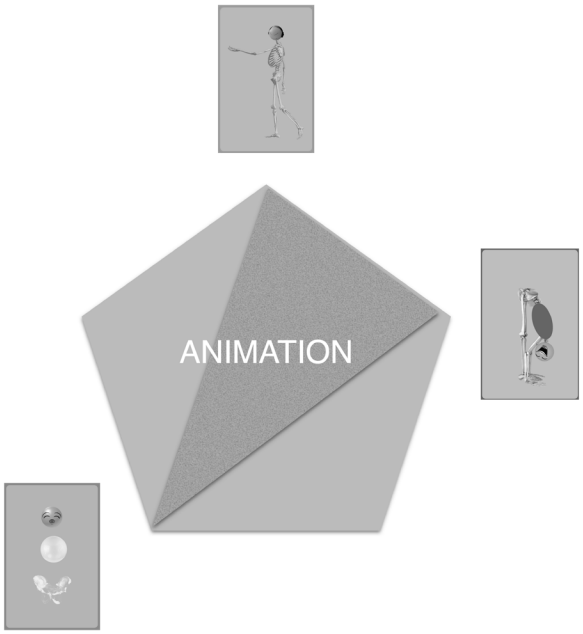
- saying "no" to bringing yourself into the tiniest of yoga bridges
- thinking "knees to the ceiling"
- thinking "open and springy feet in contact with the table or floor"
- thinking "free ankles ready to crease gently into flexion"
- thinking "back of thighs active and available for activity"
- leaving the natural shape of the legs, arms, and breathing container alone
- neck free/head forward and up/eyes free in the room

and then

- very gently pressing into the feet while
- sending the knees forward toward the toes while
- allowing the back of the thighs to become active while
- releasing the torso back
- allowing the breath to be free
- marveling as the pelvis springs up gently and delicately off of the table into the hammock of gently activated back and back-of-leg muscles—without being lifted—while
- the spine springs out long and free and the suspension of the lower body transmits up through the whole torso

There are many other ways to play with the span of the limbs leading to integration of the torso—in sitting meditation, in hands on back of chair, in lunge, in other yoga poses, while reaching, and while stretching. The beauty of the qualities of being triads is that they invite you to explore and discover their mysteries on your own, to puzzle out the Technique directing in a creative and dynamic way.

Let's look at the next quality of being, *animation*, through the dual lenses of a singer going up on her toes to organize and stimulate the spontaneous turnover of the breath and a meditator sitting cross-legged during his practice, working to maintain an upright and free sitting posture in order to focus on the breath.



ANIMATION

Fifth relation ↔ first relation ↔ third relation

When a singer comes up into extension by pressing her toes gently and firmly into the floor to release up into her full stature—head leading, spine following—and then floats her heels back to the floor while maintaining full extension, she discovers, and over time develops, dynamic—animated—vocal support.

We begin this sequence by first juxtaposing the 0/5 relation with the first relation prior to focusing on the breath. After several repetitions of coming into extension by sending the legs away, all the way to the toes, and the torso up, head leading, spine following, we add in the third relation by introducing the whispered "Ah," or a gentle SSssssss, or (adapted from Jessica Wolf's Art of Breathing) a silent "la la la." After warming up this way to the full combination of three relations—0/5 ↔ 1 ↔ 3—we may move into sounding and vocal practice, if the conditions of the student, or our conditions if we are practicing on our own, allow.

For the meditator sitting with legs crossed and sit bones poised on a supportive cushion (determining the right height of the cushion is as precise a process as determining the right number of books to support the head in lying-down work), the animation triad provides a simple, practical approach that helps practitioners maintain an easy upright posture during meditation while expanding the thorax and freeing the breath.

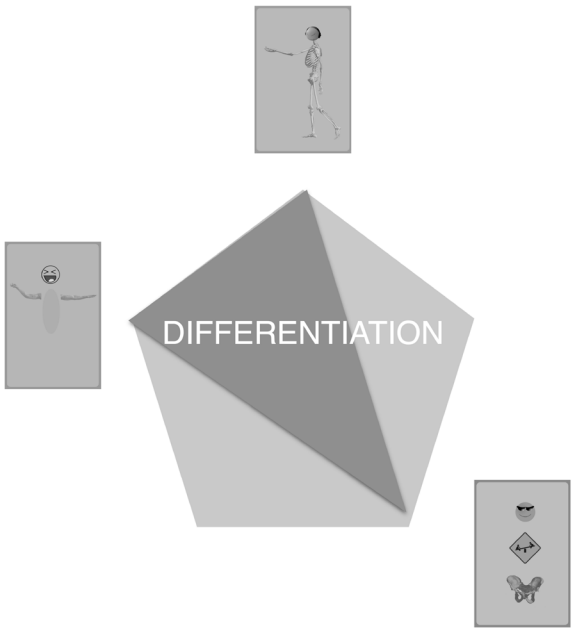
First, we organize the pelvis on the cushion and cross the legs, making sure that the rotation bringing the knees to the center line of the body takes place at the hip joint rather than at the knee itself. We then establish the primary and preventative orders "allow the neck to be free in order for the head to go forward and up." "Eyes free in the room" is an approach I myself use, as the school of meditation I ascribe to asks that eyes remain open during sitting, but if eyes are to be closed during sitting, we may leave the zero out of the 0/5 relation.

If the knees will not quite settle in cross-legged posture, they can and should be supported from underneath by cushions or rolled blankets or even small yoga blocks, so that they have a surface to release toward as they give in to gravity. As the legs release—as they did for the guitarists sitting in their chairs in the circle—the release has the potential to pop the torso up, sending the torso/breathing container back and away from the legs. This makes necessary that little movement of the sit bones back under the torso that puts them more in line with the free head balance and establishes activity—lengthening, widening, deepening, spirals—throughout the torso. This activity stimulates and supports the natural turnover of the breath.

During a longish period of sitting, strain may build up in the spine, or we may begin to use undue mental or physical effort to breathe. The simple release of the legs out and down and away from the torso, while the head releases into "forward and up" on top of the spine, reboots the suspension and restores both the sitting balance and the breathing coordination.

The sixth and final triad of the five relations is *differentiation*:

DIFFERENTIATION
Zero/fifth relation ↔ second relation ↔ fourth relation



As we complete our exploration of the qualities of being, let's come back around to our guitarists. In the same monastery in Argentina in the fall of 2015, a young man, Pedro, walked up to me in the hallway and said, "I need help with my shoulder!" He then brought his right arm around the guitar to rest his hand on the strings and in doing so:

- pulled his head forward and down
- hunched his upper back
- pulled his shoulder joint forward toward his arm and toward the guitar in such a way that
- any semblance of a shoulder joint, of widening, or of upper back extension disappeared.

I laughed. "Yes, you do, Pedro!"

Standing next to Pedro in the long corridor of the convent, I took a hand and gently reminded him of his head/neck balance, and his head/neck/back connection. I asked him to free his eyes and look about. We then took a moment to find the whole of his torso, from sit bones to the top of his head, and spiral it gently right and left, eyes and head leading, spine and ribs and pelvis following, one after the other and all at the same time.

Then—and here the differentiation triad came to the rescue, with the 0/5 relation and the second relation in play—while Pedro maintained his length and width, depth and mobility, I stood opposite him and asked him to mirror me as I:

- dropped my left arm to my side
- opened my palm to the front
- leading with the fingers, allowed my arm to extend gently out and away from the torso
- stopping at shoulder height (while keeping 0/5 and 2 relations going all the while)
- I released my elbow back from my fingertips and away from my shoulder joint to bend at the elbow in order to bring my hand across the front of my body, while Pedro, who had followed every action with his right arm
- bent his elbow in similar fashion to bring his hand across the front of his guitar and rest it on the strings

Pedro broke into a huge grin as the miracle of an organized—a differentiated—shoulder and arm came to pass. We both laughed with delight.

Perhaps the power of the quality of being triads lies in what we leave out as we restore the total pattern of coordination, in knowing that we need only address "these three things" for now. Perhaps the five relations and the triads of the five relations give our pupils—and ourselves—a little less to think about a little more clearly and offer us a little more agency while working with—while playing with—the Alexander Technique directions.

Perhaps the next best thing about the qualities of being is that, more often than not, they work.

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Some Thoughts on F.M. Alexander's Story of the Evolution of the Technique

A Search for the Date of the Beginning of the Technique and the Time It Took Alexander to Develop the Technique

by Jean M.O. Fischer

IN HISTORY, the year of a significant event provides a shorthand for recording events—a milestone in the forward-progressing story of humanity. The years are nothing in themselves, but they become handy reference points, especially when summarizing a development and placing ourselves and our endeavors in the context of an ongoing process. Most historical references to the Alexander Technique document the years of significant events, e.g., 1869, 1904, 1918, but the most glaring omission from this chronology is that of the beginning of the Technique. We do not know the year of the great turning point for Alexander (*UoS* [1932, 1939] 1946, 8) when he asked his doctor, "Is it not fair, then, to conclude that it was *something I was doing that evening in using my voice that was the cause of the trouble?*" When this happened and how long it took Alexander to develop the Technique is unrecorded. By "develop," I here refer to the narrative in his "Evolution of a Technique," as Alexander of course never stopped working on himself and continued to develop his technique for the rest of his life. An example of this is that his teaching changed after his stroke in 1947 (Carrington and Carey [1992] 2004, 99–100).

A search in Alexander's books is inconclusive. If going by the various places in his books where he writes along the lines of "Twenty years ago I first developed this Technique…," a reader ends up with dates anywhere between 1893 and 1897. That round figures are always used naturally awakens one's suspicions. Walter Carrington confirmed to me that this avenue of research is fruitless: Alexander, not thinking exact dates important in the greater scheme of things, had a cavalier attitude towards them. This means, as we shall see later, that if we take his figures at face value, he is contradicting himself.

While Alexander did not state in his writings how long it took him to develop the Technique, Lulie Westfeld (1998, 156), a first-generation teacher who spent four years training with Alexander, wrote that it took Alexander nine years to develop the Technique. We do not know the source for Westfeldt's nine years, but ten years seems to be the general impression of first-generation teachers. For example, Edward Maisel (1969, xvi), who interviewed several first-generation teachers in the 1960s for his entertaining introduction to *The Resurrection of the Body*, states that Alexander embarked upon nine or ten years of prolonged observation. As is often the case, once a claim is made in print, one sees the copying in other texts. Many introductory books about the Technique repeat the claim of nine or ten years.[1] Significantly, however, Maisel (1969, xvii) adds that Alexander started teaching "after four or five years." This is echoed by Walter Carrington (Carrington and Carey [1992] 2004, 103) when asked about the time it took Alexander to develop the Technique: "We don't know for sure but it's always said that it's probably ten years or so. What is clear is that he started teaching the fundamentals of the Technique long before he'd discovered all the answers."

Two questions thus remain unanswered: When did Alexander start to develop his technique, and how long did the process related in "Evolution of a Technique" take?

Let's look at the evidence for the first question.

When did Alexander start to develop his technique?

An unpublished, and now presumably lost, fragment of historical documentation is a paper (McCormack 2014, 12) that was in the possession of Beaumont Alexander, Alexander's younger brother. It states that it was in 1892, in Melbourne, that Alexander made his fundamental discovery, and that it was evolved between 1892 and 1894. Patrick Macdonald (1989, 101), who would have had access to this paper as he worked with Beaumont Alexander at Ashley Place after Alexander's death, also lists 1892 as the "discovery of the Technique."[2] (Maisel's [1969, xiii] suggestion of 1888 is very unlikely; see below).

Thanks to the detailed research undertaken by the teacher Rosslyn McLeod ([1995] 2017), published in her book *Up from Down Under*, we can create a better chronology of events. We know that Alexander worked at Mt. Bischoff Tin Mine in Tasmania until 1888, where he also took part in amateur

1 Sarah Barker (1978, 14): "This close scrutiny [in front of mirrors] continued for nearly ten years." Glen Park (1989, 293): "At this point Alexander embarked upon a process of self-observation that went on for about nine or ten years." Betsy Polatin (1987, 66): "So he spent the next ten years exploring the possibilities of his misuse and experimenting with ways to change." Robert Rickover (1988, 22): "After nearly ten years of observation and study…" Richard Craze (1996, 13): "Alexander had actually spent nearly ten years on his work." Judith Stransky (1981, 75): "Alexander spent nine years…" Richard Brennan (1991, 19) goes for seven years just for FM to discover where he was going wrong (no mention of how long it took him to develop his technique from there). Brennan (1992, 3) is vaguer in his second book, however: "He in fact spent many years examining himself minutely in front of mirrors…" Deborah Caplan (1987, 11) settles for the general idea: "After many years of tireless investigation…"

2 Lulie Westfeldt (1998, 125) writes that his voice trouble started in 1892.

dramatic performances (56). While working as a clerk he continued his amateur career in Melbourne. The earliest reference to a performance by Alexander we have is in the publication *The Age* of November 26, 1891: "Mr. F.M. Alexander gave a tragic recital with great spirit" (57). He then participated in a competition run by the Victorian Amateur Competitions Association, of which *The Herald* wrote on September 14, 1892: "Dialogue, Miss C. Malmgren and Mr. F.M. Alexander.... The winning dialogue was chosen from *Macbeth* and was listened to with rapt and silent attention. Miss Malmgren and Mr. Alexander received a most enthusiastic ovation at its conclusion, the applause continuing even as they walked down the hall after leaving the platform" (57). The reviewer of *The Sun* of May 19, 1893 wrote: "Extracts from some of Shakespeare's best pieces were well given. Mr. F.M. Alexander was indefatigable in his efforts to make the affair successful, his dramatic power being well shown in the murder scene from *Macbeth*, and in the two scenes from *Hamlet*, in each of which he took the name part..." (60). After this, there are no further records of his amateur recitals.

Thanks to the research of another Alexander teacher, Margaret Long in Tasmania, we have available the first writings by Alexander (1995) on the Technique, dated July 1894. The investigations of Rodney Mace (1994) unearthed a second article (largely an expansion of the first) in a New Zealand newspaper that appears in July 1895 (Alexander 1995). From both of these and some other advertisements appearing at the same time, we can safely conclude that Alexander was teaching *his* method of elocution by July 1894, although the articles give little away as to what his method was. In his autobiographical sketch, Alexander reveals that the Tasmania tour was his first professional tour, and we know this started in February 1894.

Alexander's throat trouble could have started anywhere between his first amateur recitals and his Tasmania tour in February 1894 (followed five months later by his advertisement of his technique of "natural elocution" in July 1894). According to his autobiographical sketch (*A&L* 1995, 221–49), his voice trouble started while working in the office of a tea merchant. From what we can gather from that sketch, he left his work at the tin mine in 1888 and probably arrived in Melbourne the same year. Here he had a period of three months of rest and theatre visits before he started working, which can be summarized as two weeks' work in an estate agent's office, at least some months in a dairy produce auctioneering company, a non-specified period as an accountant's clerk in a department store, three months as a clerk in Brighton, and one month's rest before working for the tea merchants (which is of unknown duration) (221–28). His job for the tea merchants was the last job before he became professional, and it is during this job that he records problems with his voice, as he writes in his sketch:

During the time I occupied this position I did all that was possible in my own time to prepare myself for the career as a reciter with a small selected repertoire that gave me the opportunity to run through the gamut of dramatic and humorous expression. By this time, however, I was much worried by the recurrence of hoarseness and lowered vitality. However, I considered that I had by my study and observation found that the source of my troubles lay in what I was doing myself in activity, particularly in the use of my vocal organs and associated mechanisms when reciting. (*A&L* 1995, 228)

TRIUMPHS IN VOCAL CULTURE

Made in One Term in Melbourne by

MR F. M. ALEXANDER,

And proved by the following eulogies:—

CLERGYMAN'S SORE THROAT.

Rev. F. C. Anderson, St. Peter's Church Home, 34 George street, Fitzroy, writes:—

Dear Sir,—I have much pleasure in testifying to the help you have given me in the art of Voice Production. When I first went to you my voice was giving me a good deal of trouble. I am thankful, however, to say that, after a quarter's lessons from you, I find far greater ease in speaking, and feel that my voice has greatly improved in strength and clearness.

VOICE PRODUCTION, VOICE BUILDING, A D NATURAL ELOCUTION.

Testimonial from Rev. Robert Stewart Carson, Methodist Minister, Williamstown, Melbourne.

There is a very noticeable improvement in my voice, in fullness of tone, although I have only taken a few lessons. I can now speak with comparative ease for almost any length of time.

PROPER BREATHING.

To Mr F. M. Alexander. Dear Sir,—Having seen your treatise, I decided to take your course of "breathing" lessons. I can, therefore, testify to your ability in communicating to pupils the knowledge that you possess, and can state that I found very little difficulty in acquiring the art of proper breathing. I found, too, a very distinct advantage—so far as health was concerned—from practising the method of deep breathing which you prescribed.—C. REES, Punt road, Prahran.

STUTTERING AND STAMMERING.

Blessington street, St. Kilda. Dear Mr Alexander—When I took my first lesson from you I found the greatest difficulty in speaking even one word; my vocalisation was jerky, and I had not the least control over my voice or breathing. By means of your splendid methods I can to-day read aloud and enter into conversation without the least difficulty. I thank you most sincerely for the great help you have given me in eradicating my trying defect.—(Signed) A. THOMAS.

SINGERS SPECIAL COURSE

22 Villiers street, Elsternwick, Melbourne. Dear Mr Alexander,—I studied singing under several teachers, but without satisfaction. I was told to take breath before beginning to sing, and immediately I opened my mouth the lungs were emptied, and I could never sing more than half an octave with one inspiration. Now I do not find it necessary to take breath before beginning to sing, and I can sing a full octave without the least effort. You have shown me how to produce my voice properly, and an increase in range and power is very noticeable. What was once a great effort is now a work of ease.—(Signed) M. ROWSON.

NOTE.—Mr Alexander's new treatise just published, "The cultivation of the speaking and singing voice," which contains invaluable advice to voice users, explains the new methods, and points out the grievous faults in the prevailing system. Send 6d (stamps) to studio, Australian Buildings, Elizabeth street, Melbourne, where all communications should be addressed. Mr Alexander may be interviewed at Reid's Coffee Palace on Thursday, after 3 o'clock.

Alexander advertising his teaching in the *Ballarat Star* (Victoria), July 7, 1896, p. 3.

The above "presented a difficulty in deciding when I should begin the new career and relinquish once and for all that of the past" (226). Still, he decides to go ahead, starting as a professional reciter in February 1894 in Wynyard and publishing his first article in July 1894. The autobiographical sketch does not refer to his voice problem again; on the contrary, in Tasmania he "gained confidence with every performance" (228), and he had even more success the following year on his New Zealand tour. It was his teaching experience at Auckland that convinced him of the value of his technique. He said: "It was in Auckland during those last three months that I got the idea of what it really was—and could be."[3] His job with the tea merchants was his last before his recitation career, which means, if the reference to his being "much worried" in the above statement is taken to indicate his crisis with his voice, that his first discovery, i.e., it was something he was doing himself that caused the trouble, would have taken place in 1893.[4] It is unlikely he would have embarked on a professional career without having the confidence that he had solved or could solve his voice trouble. He was acutely conscious of his problem, as he writes about the "difficulty in deciding when I should begin the new career" (*A&L* 1995, 228). It is credible he had developed either (a) the Technique fully or (b) important aspects of the Technique before February 1894.

Given the newspaper review evidence of successful amateur recitals until May 1893, it is unlikely that his voice problem became acute before then. Perhaps the pause from amateur recitals indicates his period of self-observation and discovery?

It cannot be true that Alexander, as he writes in his chapter entitled "Evolution of a Technique" from *The Use of the Self* (*UoS*), took up "reciting as a profession" and that "all went well for some years" before his throat trouble began ([1932, 1939] 1946, 3). According to his autobiographical sketch, his vocal trouble started while he was an *amateur* reciter, causing him so much concern as to consider whether to delay his decision to become a professional (*A&L* 1995, 228).[5]

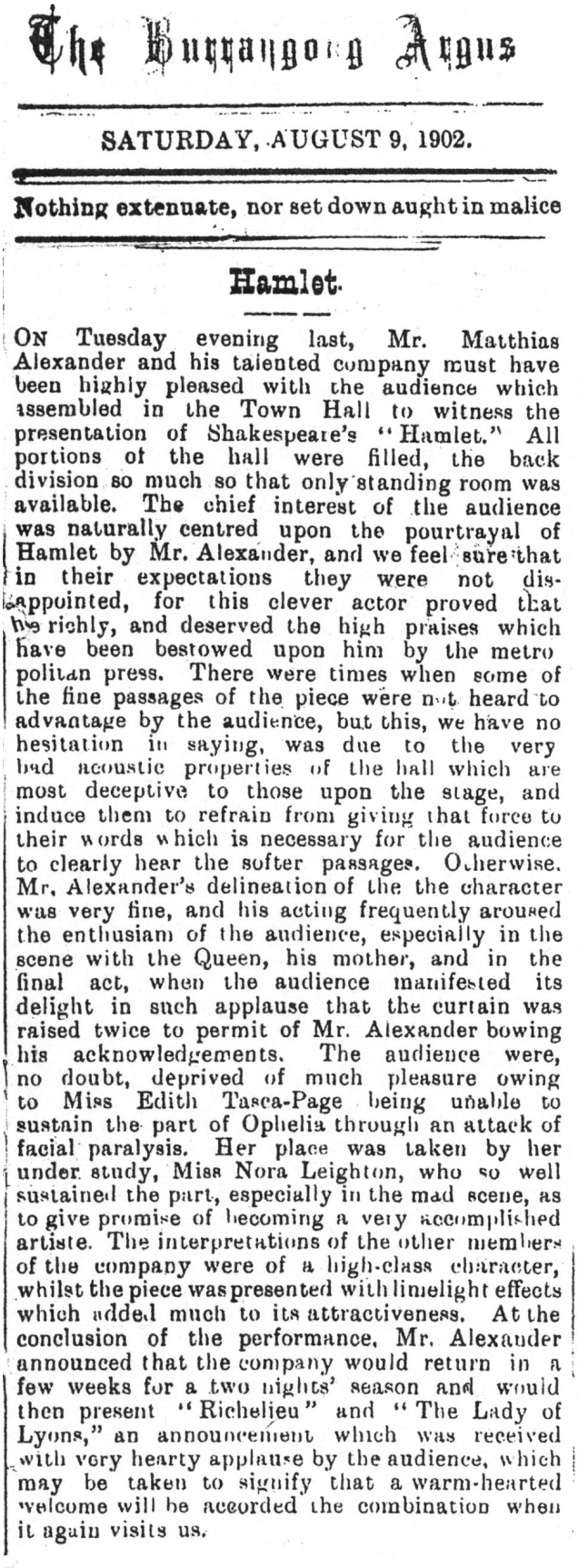
Several other pieces of evidence support the contention that he recited as an amateur for years (1888–93) before the trouble started. Alexander also writes in "Evolution of a Technique" that he received treatment for "a few years" while his throat trouble "gradually increased" until the point where he would lose his voice altogether (*UoS* [1932, 1939] 1946, 4). It is not improbable that he had recurring problems with his voice during his amateur reciting career, but the problems did not become serious until May 1893. This leaves a gap of some eight months (from

3 Excerpts from Walter Carrington's 1979 edited edition of *F. Matthias Alexander–A Biographical Outline, 1869–1955* as quoted in Walter Carrington and Dilys Carrington (2017, 121).

4 Lacking exact dates of Alexander's employment somewhere between 1888 and 1893, it is not impossible that his job with the tea merchants came to an end earlier. However, Alexander was not well-off and could not have afforded long periods without working. Hence it is likely that his tea merchant job did not finish until 1893 or early 1894.

5 The sentence in *UoS* would therefore make more sense if he took up reciting as an amateur and all went well for some years before his throat trouble began.

Review of Alexander playing Hamlet in the *Burrangong Argus* (New South Wales), August 9, 1902, p. 2.



The Burrangong Argus

SATURDAY, AUGUST 9, 1902.

Nothing extenuate, nor set down aught in malice

Hamlet.

ON Tuesday evening last, Mr. Matthias Alexander and his talented company must have been highly pleased with the audience which assembled in the Town Hall to witness the presentation of Shakespeare's "Hamlet." All portions of the hall were filled, the back division so much so that only standing room was available. The chief interest of the audience was naturally centred upon the pourtrayal of Hamlet by Mr. Alexander, and we feel sure that in their expectations they were not disappointed, for this clever actor proved that he richly, and deserved the high praises which have been bestowed upon him by the metropolitan press. There were times when some of the fine passages of the piece were not heard to advantage by the audience, but this, we have no hesitation in saying, was due to the very bad acoustic properties of the hall which are most deceptive to those upon the stage, and induce them to refrain from giving that force to their words which is necessary for the audience to clearly hear the softer passages. Otherwise, Mr. Alexander's delineation of the the character was very fine, and his acting frequently aroused the enthusiam of the audience, especially in the scene with the Queen, his mother, and in the final act, when the audience manifested its delight in such applause that the curtain was raised twice to permit of Mr. Alexander bowing his acknowledgements. The audience were, no doubt, deprived of much pleasure owing to Miss Edith Tasca-Page being unable to sustain the part of Ophelia through an attack of facial paralysis. Her place was taken by her under study, Miss Nora Leighton, who so well sustained the part, especially in the mad scene, as to give promise of becoming a very accomplished artiste. The interpretations of the other members of the company were of a high-class character, whilst the piece was presented with limelight effects which added much to its attractiveness. At the conclusion of the performance, Mr. Alexander announced that the company would return in a few weeks for a two nights' season and would then present "Richelieu" and "The Lady of Lyons," an announcement which was received with very hearty applause by the audience, which may be taken to signify that a warm-hearted welcome will be accorded the combination when it again visits us.

May 1893 to February 1894) in which to make his self-observations and discover the fundamentals of the Technique—meaning enough to solve his voice and breathing problems—or, to be more specific, enough to solve his voice and breathing problems sufficiently for embarking on a professional career.

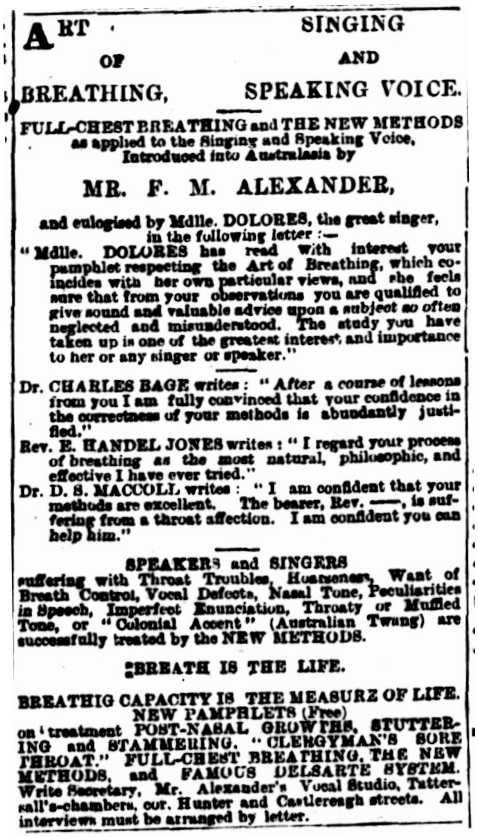
How long did the process related in "Evolution of a Technique" take?

Time references in the "Evolution" chapter in *UoS* are sparse: the following are the only indications of how long the process took. His first major discovery, that the prevention of pulling the head back also had a preventative influence on the sucking in of breath and the depressing of the larynx, was made "after some months" of observation (*UoS* [1932, 1939] 1946, 7). This was followed by a "long period" of many experiments with head positioning (8). When he discovered he could not do what he set out to do, he practiced "patiently month after month" (11) before discovering that he could not trust his feelings. He embarked upon giving new directions without attempting to "do" them for "long periods together, for successive days and weeks and sometimes even months" (22). Later he speaks of these attempts as having taken place "these past months" (19). It is only after "a considerable time" practicing the giving of directions while making a "fresh decision" as to whether to gain his original end or some new end that he becomes free from his throat and vocal troubles.

Although the time details are vague, it is significant that the time periods are described in terms of months, not years; there was no offhand statement like "all went well for some years" or anything protracted. On this basis it is theoretically possible that the whole process could have taken about a year. Any time spent in front of a mirror, observing himself minutely, probably felt extensive, especially for a young man who admitted to having a temper problem (*A&L* 1995, 226) and in the retrospect of some thirty years,[6] it may have felt longer than it actually was. An additional argument for the process he described in "Evolution" spanning months rather than years is provided by Peter Macdonald (2015), father of Patrick Macdonald, and a pupil and staunch supporter of Alexander within British medical circles. In 1926 he gave a talk on Alexander's technique to members of the British Medical Association in which, referring to Alexander's discovery, he said: "Then followed months of patient research" (256). Note the reference to "months," not years. Naturally, this information could only have come from Alexander himself since Macdonald didn't start having lessons until about 1921 and *UoS* was not published until 1932.[7]

It can be argued that the only thing that could have made a substantial change to his voice, *when reciting*, would have been to have reached the final point, that of making a fresh decision as to what to "do" while continuing to give the directions: and that it is implausible that he could have had a successful career in reciting without having reached the final point in "Evolution" that he reports frees him from his throat and vocal trouble. In that case he would have reached this point before his tour of Tasmania and New Zealand.[8]

Alexander advertising his teaching in the *Sydney Morning Herald* (New South Wales), April 18, 1903, page 2.



ART OF BREATHING, AND SINGING SPEAKING VOICE.

FULL-CHEST BREATHING and THE NEW METHODS as applied to the Singing and Speaking Voice, Introduced into Australasia by

MR. F. M. ALEXANDER,

and eulogised by Mdlle. DOLORES, the great singer, in the following letter :—

"Mdlle. DOLORES has read with interest your pamphlet respecting the Art of Breathing, which coincides with her own particular views, and she feels sure that from your observations you are qualified to give sound and valuable advice upon a subject so often neglected and misunderstood. The study you have taken up is one of the greatest interest and importance to her or any singer or speaker."

Dr. CHARLES BAGE writes : "After a course of lessons from you I am fully convinced that your confidence in the correctness of your methods is abundantly justified."

Rev. E. HANDEL JONES writes : "I regard your process of breathing as the most natural, philosophic, and effective I have ever tried."

Dr. D. S. MACCOLL writes : "I am confident that your methods are excellent. The bearer, Rev. ——, is suffering from a throat affection. I am confident you can help him."

SPEAKERS and SINGERS suffering with Throat Troubles, Hoarseness, Want of Breath Control, Vocal Defects, Nasal Tone, Peculiarities in Speech, Imperfect Enunciation, Throaty or Muffled Tone, or "Colonial Accent" (Australian Twang) are successfully treated by the NEW METHODS.

BREATH IS THE LIFE.

BREATHIG CAPACITY IS THE MEASURE OF LIFE.

NEW PAMPHLETS (Free) on treatment POST-NASAL GROWTHS, STUTTERING and STAMMERING. "CLERGYMAN'S SORE THROAT." FULL-CHEST BREATHING, THE NEW METHODS, and FAMOUS DELSARTE SYSTEM. Write Secretary, Mr. Alexander's Vocal Studio, Tattersall's-chambers, cor. Hunter and Castlereagh streets. All interviews must be arranged by letter.

However, there is a second possibility: that Alexander started teaching his first discoveries before he had fully developed his technique. In this scenario, Alexander achieved sufficient progress and confidence to embark upon a professional career as a reciter and to commence his tour of Tasmania in February 1894. His first article, from July 1894 (*A&L* 1995, 3–5), announces his method of "natural elocution," but could his teaching, at this point, only have consisted, for example, of not pulling the head back by direct means?

This is a plausible theory because he writes that his throat had undergone a "considerable improvement" after his first important discovery: that the prevention of the pulling the head back and down diminished the "sucking in of breath and the depressing of the larynx." He writes:

6 In a 1967 talk, Irene Tasker (1978, 15) reports working on the manuscript of *UoS* in the early 1920s.

7 Of course it can also be argued that Alexander's references to various periods of experimentation lasting months each would therefore add up to more than one year.

8 This is the view taken by Jackie Evans: "After months of self analysis of his own use, he thought he had solved his problem and he decided that he could pursue a career as a reciter" (Evans 2001, 96).

This led me to a discovery which turned out to be of great importance – namely, that when I succeeded in preventing the pulling back of the head, this tended indirectly to check the sucking in of breath and the depressing of the larynx.

The importance of this discovery cannot be overestimated, for through it I was led on to the further discovery of the primary control of the working of all the mechanisms of the human organism, and this marked the first important stage of my investigation.

A further result, which I also noted was that with the prevention of the misuse of these parts I tended to become less hoarse while reciting, and that as I gradually gained experience in this prevention, my liability to hoarseness tended to decrease. What is more, when, after these experiences, my throat was again examined by my medical friends, a considerable improvement was found in the general condition of my larynx and vocal cords. ([1932, 1939] 1946, 7)

This "considerable improvement" may have been enough for him to embark on a professional career and to start teaching this early stage of his technique: the prevention of the pulling back of the head. This would also explain why his writings at this time indicate that he was teaching a *new* method of elocution (i.e., not some copied version of contemporary elocution methods).[9] At no point does he indicate that any of his other discoveries (there are at least twelve key discoveries) helped his voice when reciting until the last discovery described in "Evolution." The discovery of the general influence upon his use by the prevention of the pulling back of the head is the only one of his intermediate discoveries that helped his voice.

What is certain is that from 1894 onward, his career—and one has to assume his voice and breathing—went from strength to strength. His 1895 New Zealand tour was triumphant, according to the reviews found by Rosslyn McLeod ([1995] 2017, 45–53) and Jeroen Staring[10] (2009, 7–8)—and according to his own autobiographical sketch. At his farewell recital in Auckland, he received an illuminated address from the Mayor of Auckland (McLeod [1995] 2017, 72). This leather-bound, colored calligraphy is a heartfelt appreciation of his teaching of his method (i.e., it does not mention his performances). It is here quoted in full:

Mr F.M. Alexander
Elocutionist & Actor Reciter

Dear Sir,

On being informed that your stay in our city must shortly come to a conclusion we your pupils, feel that we cannot allow the occasion to pass without an expression of regret at your departure, & of appreciation of the services you have rendered us.

Of your mastery of the art to which your life is devoted, & your ability as an instructor, we do not feel it necessary to say anything here.

Your gifts are in both directions sure to be speedily recognised in whatever English speaking country you may happen to be located. But we feel, Sir, that the relations between us, have been something more than those common between master & pupil.

Each one of us has been made to feel that you took a personal interest in our progress & we feel that we cannot allow you to go from amongst us without some acknowledgment of the tireless energy, the ceaseless care & unwearied patience, with which you have directed our studies of an art which is too generally neglected.

In thanking you sincerely & wishing you every success coupled with good health, we can only hope you will never entirely forget those who now subscribe themselves your grateful pupils.

[*Followed by thirty-six signatures and*] *Auckland, N.Z. 20th November 1895.*[11]

This experience no doubt encouraged Alexander (*A&L* 1995, 236) as to the soundness of his technique. As he writes:

My teaching experience at Auckland was the longest continuous experience up to then, and, during this time, I became convinced of the value of my Technique, which did much to encourage me to make teaching my career instead of reciting.

It is evident that by this stage, he was not teaching any existing vocal or respiratory method but that he had already formulated the foundations of his own technique, which indeed were novel:

There [*in Melbourne late 1895, early 1896*] *I gave consideration* [*to*] *and asked advice in the matter of deciding definitely whether I should relinquish my career as a reciter and teach my Technique.… The asking of advice meant, of course, the expression of the opinion of the advisers and all of these … were of the opinion that I was courting failure to embark on the career of a teacher of a method that was unfamiliar and, indeed, opposed in principle to known and widely accepted methods of breathing, vocalization, physical culture and the like.* (*A&L* 1995, 236–37)

His second article, published in July 1895, points at prevention as a cornerstone of his technique of elocution: he criticizes other elocution teachers for asking people to recite without anything being done "to remedy the imperfect production and wrong breathing"; the term "natural elocution" also points to a method in which the principle of non-doing is prevailing.[12]

9 Unless you take the view that Alexander was a liar: see addendum 2.

10 Jeroen Staring (2009) reports that he was unable to find proof "for Alexander Technique teachers' claims that Alexander already taught his 'technique' while in New Zealand in 1895," but as he does not quote the illuminated address it presumably was not available to him at the time of writing.

11 A facsimile of the text of the leather-bound appreciation is published in Rosslyn McLeod ([1995] 2017, 86–87).

12 The term "natural elocution" is the title of C.S. Hartley's booklet (F. Pitman, [1890?]), which Alexander mentions in his 1894 article. It is available from www.alextechteaching.org.uk, retrieved September 26, 2019.

This interpretation—the first step of prevention–inhibition providing enough of an improvement of his voice to start reciting and teaching professionally—is supported by a remark that Alexander makes in a letter to Dr. Mungo Douglas in 1943 (Alexander 2020, 321–22). Here he writes that his first observation was that his cause of trouble was that his head was pulled back and down and then adds "the 'head forward and up' was a much later observation."[13] It is additionally supported by Walter Carrington's remark quoted earlier in this article that he had begun to teach the basics of the Technique before he had all the answers.

This might also fit with Alexander's statement (*UoS* [1932, 1939] 1946, ix) that "it took me years to reach a point that can be reached in a few weeks with the aid of any experienced teacher." I find that this statement is imprecise because he is referring to an "experienced teacher" and we don't know what "point" to be reached he is referring to. The only clue in the statement is that there was a process that took him years, not months. However, it would fit with teacher Goddard Binkley's (1993, 49) diary observation of his lessons with Alexander that "it was only after ten years of intensive self-observation, working with mirrors, that he [Alexander] discovered what he called the primary control."

Further discoveries described in "Evolution"—among them discovering how to allow the head to go forward and up—might then have been made over a period of years, culminating in the conclusion at the end of the chapter, where Alexander reports that "the marked effect of this upon my functioning convinced me that I was at last on the right track, for, once free from this tendency, I also became free from the throat and vocal trouble and from the respiratory and nasal difficulties with which I had been beset from birth" (*UoS* [1932, 1939] 1946, 25).

It is difficult to suggest an end date for this process from his writings. If we go by what has been reported above (nine to ten years), and if we assume the process began in 1893, we are looking at 1902 or 1903. It would make sense that he had reached a convincing point in the development of his technique that provided him with the confidence to undertake the bold move to London in 1904.

Conclusion

As far as one can deduce on the basis of existing literature, Alexander developed his throat trouble in 1893 and either (a) went through the whole process as described in "Evolution of a Technique" in some eight months (finishing around February 1894) or (b) evolved the first step of his technique (the prevention of the pulling back of the head) between 1893 and 1894, and that further discoveries described in "Evolution of a Technique" took nine to ten years, meaning that the process was finished roughly in 1902 or 1903. The second possibility is the more likely. However, it should be remembered that history is not an exact science; people's lives are rarely linear and smooth. A historian has to sift and weigh available evidence and present the most plausible scenario while also acknowledging existing caveats and complexities.

Besides teaching his technique and reciting in the second half of the 1890s, we know that Alexander dabbled with François Delsarte and memory systems[14] and others.[15] Learning and exploring and examining possibilities are not uncommon behaviors for a young man in his twenties. His writings about the Technique give a definite sense of a man whose discovery was yielding more and more possibilities to him, which eventually—around 1910—culminated in his argument for conscious guidance and control.

ADDENDA

The following four addenda address various suggestions and suppositions made in passing by various people over the years regarding Alexander's history of the development of his technique.

Addendum 1

It has been insinuated that the lack of any written details of Alexander's method means that these did not exist—that he only taught what he wrote—that any teaching could not have existed until it was written down. However, it would be unreasonable to suggest that the procedure of "hands on the back of the chair" was not practiced before a description was published in 1923 (*CCCI* 2004, 112–25) or that "knees to go forward" was not practiced before Alexander mentions it in a lecture in 1925 (*A&L* 1995, 149). That his writings are not more forthcoming can be explained by several factors: (1) he was not a born writer; (2) he was protective of his technique (and income), believing, at least up to the 1930s, that anyone could do what he did; (3) he was hesitant in committing his ideas to writing before he had tested them for some years (xxiv); and (4) he worked from practice, not theory, and it must have taken a long time to develop the appropriate vocabulary, given the fact that his discoveries were unlike anything he had come across before. There is a long delay between the forming of the concept and the appearance of the term, at least in his writings, for that concept. This would explain why it is only by 1906 we find, in

13 Of course "much later" is a relative term and therefore open to interpretation. For example, it might simply mean much later than it took him to observe that he pulled his head back which, if he did that in a couple of days, may just mean some weeks.

14 Alexander's (1995, 13) letterhead (c. 1900) in Sydney lists "The Famous Delsarte System" and his 1902 prospectus for his proposed Sydney Dramatic and Operatic Conservatorium mentions that there will be instruction in the Delsarte System, although it does not mention who would teach it. See McLeod ([1995] 2017, 201–5).

15 Alexander ([1898?], 2) provided a testimonial for Charles Edwin Jones's memory system in Jones's book on that topic. With thanks to Tomonori Ikeda for finding this. "Professor A. Loisette" wrote a testimonial of Alexander's teaching, and Alexander may therefore have been familiar with his memory system. See McLeod ([1995] 2017, 79–81).

his writings, the words "use" and "direction" (38), and, by 1908, "inhibition" (78). He continued to develop his vocabulary for the exposition of his technique into the 1940s.

Addendum 2

It has been proposed that the story of the evolution of the Technique as presented in "Evolution of a Technique" is a complete fabrication.[16] While no evidence has been put forward to support this assertion, there are, however, several arguments against it.

First, there is nothing to suggest that Alexander had the imagination and literary skill to concoct such a long and detailed story. Nor are there any instances of him being mendacious. To judge from all his writings—books, lectures, private letters—there is nothing to indicate a man making up stories. In fact, a reading of his letters suggests a man who takes things at face value with nothing in them to imply a fantasist.[17]

Second, fabricating such a story would mean that he would have had to lie to all of his friends and family, including his brothers, sisters, and his mother, Betsy Alexander (who wrote him in a letter in October 1904, telling him that "it is indeed wonderful what you can accomplish and to think how you studied it out all your self"). Additionally, he would have had to continue that deceit in *UoS*, which would be read by friends and relatives in Australia who knew him back in the 1890s and therefore could have come forward and denounced him if the story were false. (This also means that his brother A.R. Alexander, who taught in London, New York, and Boston, would have to have been complicit in this fraud.) And then Alexander would have had the shameless audacity to accuse British throat specialist and one of his own students, Dr. Scanes Spicer, of plagiarism (*A&L* 1995, 91–102). Moreover, Alexander would have had to continue lying—consistently and unwaveringly—for the rest of his life, in lectures, private letters, and in papers such as his autobiographical sketch.

Third, why should he go to such extraordinary lengths to make up such an elaborate story? He already had fame and success; he did not need to invent a "hero's journey" story. And why invent such a detailed story? Many people—then as now—invent new systems or methods (voice, breathing, exercises) but they rarely explain how they developed their particular system, and certainly not in any detail. Take for example Gerald Stanley Lee, a pupil of F.M. Alexander in 1918. After his lessons Lee wrote a book on his own system, *Invisible Exercises* in 1922, clearly plagiarizing Alexander's technique. In it he writes that he came upon the idea of relaxing the neck and stretching the upper back as a control of everything else while walking in the hills (Jones 1997, 37).

His wife, Jeanette Lee, also had lessons with Alexander and also went on to teach a version of Alexander's technique. Jeanette Lee (1946, 34–37) later wrote a book entitled *This Magic Body* about her method. She mentions neither her husband nor Alexander but instead credits her discovery to her own observations of people and children, especially observing children developing bad posture as they grow up, all done in a page and a half. So why think that Alexander needed to engage in the labor of fabricating a yarn lasting a whole chapter?

In summary, there is nothing to suggest that Alexander had either the good qualities (the imagination) or the bad qualities (that of a life-long resolute liar) to carry out such a risky deceit.

Addendum 3

Carrying these last observations further, it has been intimated that Alexander pilfered and plagiarized his ideas from other people. In order to do this, Alexander would have had to (1) buy and read a lot of literature, (2) discard all the books that had no bearing on his voice problem, (3) select just the right bits that had a similarity to possible solutions to his problem, and (4) put all of these bits together into the whole that we know as the Alexander Technique. The main problem with this (apart from the fact that there is nothing to suggest that Alexander was an avid reader) is: How could he have known which "bits" to choose from when reading piles of books? The Alexander Technique is not a "cut and paste" job, consisting of piecemeal bits from various sources turned into a collage. The Alexander Technique is an organic whole, it operates as a whole, and cannot be fabricated by a little breathing method from one source, a vocal technique from another source, some reference to posture from a third source, something about relaxing from a fourth source, etc. Furthermore, if he discovered for himself in front of mirrors that the prevention of the pulling back and down of the head had a positive effect on his breathing and voice, then why turn to books for answers? With self-observation he had discovered a method of finding out for himself.

Or did he steal ideas from teachers whom he had received instruction from? Certainly whatever instructions he received before his voice trouble became acute were no help in preventing his voice trouble. Alexander in particular pointed out that some instructions were counterproductive, such as that given by James Cathcart (Williamson 2015, 18–21) who told Alexander to "take hold of the floor with your feet" (Alexander [1932, 1939] 1946, 18–19). However well-intentioned the advice was, it caused Alexander to develop "an abnormal amount of muscle tension" in his legs, feet, and toes.

The Delsarte method could not have solved his voice problem—at least there is nothing in the literature about Delsarte to suggest the fundamentals of the Technique. (There is no doubt, as has been explained elsewhere,[18] that Alexander adopted the vocabulary of his time to describe his technique, selecting the terms which best encapsulated the meaning he wished to convey and which he could endow with experiential meaning.)

16 For example, Staring (2005, 433) writes in an endnote, "His accounting of his quest and ultimate discovery of his method was written forty years after the fact—if it ever occurred."

17 This is not to deny that Alexander misremembers and get facts wrong (he was not of Scottish ancestry as he at one time claimed), but such occurrences are rare and do not indicate a pattern of deceit.

18 See Alexander (1995, xx–xxv; endnote 93, 289–92).

Addendum 4

It has been suggested that the story of Alexander's development of the Technique (in "Evolution of a Technique") is written in such a way as to fit with John Dewey's outline of the scientific method. F.P. Jones (1997, 45) points out that Alexander's methodology of his evolution of his technique bears similarities to Dewey's outline of scientific inquiry; however, Jones did not claim that Alexander "rewrote" his story of his development of his technique to fit Dewey's description.

First, it needs to be noted that Dewey himself did not state that his description was a description of scientific method. In *How We Think*, Dewey (1910, 72) summarized his "analysis of a complete act of thought" as follows:

Upon examination each instance reveals, more or less clearly, five logically distinct steps: (i) a felt difficulty; (ii) its location and definition; (iii) suggestion of possible solution; (iv) development by reasoning of the bearings of the suggestion; (v) further observation and experiment leading to its acceptance or rejection; that is, the conclusion of belief or disbelief.

This description of what Dewey considered a general description of reflective thinking was seized upon by teachers and educators in the US as a description of the scientific method. It was adopted by authors of science textbooks in the 1920s and became an established description in the nation's classrooms (Rudolph 2005, 341–76). But Dewey's description was not a description of scientific method then, and it is not now. It is a general description of problem solving, which we all perform every day—for example: My keyboard ceases to work. I have the idea that the cable is not attached properly. I check the cable. The cable is alright. I retest with another keyboard that does not depend on a cable. It works. I discover the settings of the computer are set to a Bluetooth connection, not a cable connection. Problem solved. But such reasoning is not science and it does not make me a scientist.

Dewey's point in *How We Think* was indeed that basic problem solving is natural to us all, including children, and is probably innate (leaving aside the fact that animals are also able to solve problems based on observation and experience [McFarland 1999, 343–46]). It is worthwhile here to resurrect a previous distinction that was made between technique and science. The original definition of technique (from the Greek word *techne*: art, skill, cunning of hand)[19] had to do with the usage and knowledge of tools for the purposes of construction and problem solving. Various "techniques" have been used successfully for thousands of years to solve practical problems, many apparently without the need for the knowledge of "why" or "how" that science addresses.

Dewey's description of "how we think" is not a description of scientific method. And if Alexander thought it was a description of scientific method, then why would he not say so? Instead, Alexander (2000, 102, 179) lauded the idea of operational verification as a scientific procedure, as can be noted in UCL. Operational verification requires a description of the process (the "operations") and the means, in order to verify a statement or a concept; in operational verification a concept has no meaning unless its definition formulates performable experimental procedures. This explanation was proposed by P.W. Bridgman in the 1920s in order to rid science of vague concepts and terminology (Hondererich 1995, 898).

Alexander would probably not have known of Karl Popper, since his theory of empirical falsification[20] was not generally known in the English-speaking world until after Alexander's death.[21] Popper's ideas have since been revised and expanded upon by others, notably Thomas Kuhn. And of course, the definition of scientific method continues to evolve.

For these reasons I find it extremely unlikely that Alexander would have rewritten his story of his development of the Technique to fit Dewey's analysis of "how we think." Without any evidence to the contrary, the most realistic and plausible explanation, following the principle of Occam's razor,[22] is that Alexander was truthful.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS OF F.M. ALEXANDER'S BOOKS CITED IN THIS ARTICLE

A&L *Articles and Lectures*
CCCI *Constructive Conscious Control of the Individual*
UoS *The Use of the Self*
UCL *The Universal Constant in Living*

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———. 1995. "Autobiographical Sketch," 222; "Elocution as an Accomplishment," 3–12; "Speech Culture and Natural Elocution," 7–12; "An Unrecognized Principle in Human Behavior," 149; "Why We Breathe Incorrectly – Some Points in Connection with a Scientific Explanation of the Latest Developments in Breathing, Physical Culture and Voice Production," 91–102; "A Protest – Against Certain

19 The Alexander Technique (note the Greek origin, *techne*) originated with practical problem-solving. The solution—the process of change of use and functioning—can be described, practiced, and taught, but we still lack adequate satisfactory scientific explanations of how and why it works.

20 Karl Popper proposed that statements and theories that are not falsifiable are unscientific.

21 The 1959 edition of Karl Popper's *Logic of Scientific Discovery* was revised and translated from his 1934 German original.

22 Occam's razor states that when presented with competing hypotheses that make the same predictions, one should select the solution with the fewest assumptions, i.e. the "simplest solution."

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The Alexander Technique and Associationist Learning Theory

A Historical Perspective

by Malcolm Williamson

WHEN, IN 1894, F. Matthias Alexander set out as a "natural elocutionist" (Alexander 1995, 3), little could he have guessed what lay ahead—that in his search for a sore throat cure he had hit upon a new and thoroughly practical understanding of how the human being functions as an integrated whole and to a technique for "the development of the control of human reaction" (Alexander [1942] 2000, 88). Central to the way the Alexander Technique is framed is the concept of habits of thought or action as some kind of chain reaction of associated events—one giving rise to the next and so on. It is well documented that around 1900 Alexander became acquainted with William James's book *Principles of Psychology*. James's theory of habit provided a sound theoretical basis for Alexander's empirical discoveries.[1] As with any new theory, James built on the ideas of others. This article traces ideas from the eighteenth-century English physician David Hartley—the acknowledged founder of associationism—through to Alexander and the present day. There is also obvious relevance to nineteenth-century ideomotor theory, but this is not included as it has been discussed elsewhere (Ballard 2015, 49–71; Williamson 2017b).

Associationist learning theory can be traced back in philosophical thought to Plato and Aristotle. The concept is summed up in the question posed by Hartley: Why is it that, after thinking of A, we think of B the next moment? Or how do we come to think of A and B always together (James [1890] 1950, 1:553)? In his book *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, Hartley's predecessor, the great philosopher John Locke (1632–1704), proposed that habits of thinking and "motions in the body" are formed through "custom"—that is, repeated practice and familiarization. Once started, it is in the nature of habit to proceed automatically without further thought. Difficulties can arise, though, when it is desirable to change a habit. It is here where the Alexander Technique—a mechanism for change—becomes useful (Jones 1998, 65–80).

By inhibiting the first link in the chain, the cue that triggers what follows—and hence, each subsequent event in the chain—is prevented from occurring. Stopping provides an opportunity to restore integrated functioning through Alexander's *means whereby* and improved conditions for our manner of use.

The preeminent American philosopher John Dewey began his lessons with Alexander sometime around March 1917.[2] A comparison of the first and second editions of *Man's Supreme Inheritance* (1910 and 1918) shows evidence of their long evening discussions.[3] Alexander related how Dewey had read the manuscript of *MSI* remarking, "Alexander, I am delighted that you hit upon the wonderful principle of non-doing in your technique" (Alexander 1995, 147). Dewey was a colleague of William James. In his 1922 book *Human Nature and Conduct*, Dewey clearly formed a synthesis of James's theory of habit with Alexander's technique (McCormack 2014; Williamson 2017, 29–44). In an oft-quoted passage, Dewey wrote:

> *As soon as we have projected* [*an end*] *we must begin to work backward in thought. We must change* what *is to be done into a* how, *the means whereby. The end thus appears as a series of "what nexts," and the what next of chief importance is the one nearest the present state of the one acting. Only as the end is converted into means is it definitely conceived, or intellectually defined, to say nothing of being executable.… We do not know what we are really after until a course of action is mentally worked out. Aladdin with his lamp could dispense with translating ends into means, but no one else can do so.* (Dewey 1957, 36; quoted in McCormack, 91)

The correlation between Jamesian theory and Alexander Technique practice must have been what Dewey was referring to when he wrote of his lessons, "I found the things which I had 'known'—in the sense of theoretical belief—in philosophy and psychology, changed into vital experiences which gave a new meaning to knowledge of them" (Alexander [1932] 1985, 11). Eric McCormack wrote that Dewey developed a doctrine of "a 'temporal continuum of activities in which each successive stage is equally end and means' [that] could be shown to be infused with Alexander's 'means whereby' versus 'end-gaining' principle" (McCormack, 137).

1 "He (Alexander) read James's great work [*Principles*] and was struck by what James had to say about the 'ideo-motor function'": in a letter from Horace Kallen to Eric McCormack dated February 20, 1958, as quoted in McCormack (1958, 29n65). Also see Alexander ([1923, 1946] 2004, 201; 1995, 292n94), Ballard (2015, 60), Carrington and Carey (1992, 154), Maisel (1974, 45), Murray (2015, 37).

2 "Mrs J. Dewey began Friday [March 2] and that is a splendid thing in so many ways. It is a big connecting link all round." Letter, Alexander to wife Edith, Thursday [March 8, 1917]. Author's private collection.

3 "I had gone on with Professor Dewey, and we had spent night after night discussing these matters" (*A&L*, "An Unrecognized Principle" (1925), 158. See also Williamson 2017b.

David Hartley (1705–57)

Writing in 1774, Joseph Priestley, the Unitarian minister and polymath—discoverer of oxygen and carbonated water (fizzy drinks) among other things—considered David Hartley's book, written in 1749 and entitled *Observations on Man: His Frame, His Duty, His Expectations in Two Parts*, to be the single most important book for him next to the scriptures (Allen 2020, §1). Hartley expanded on Locke's notion in his *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* ("Of the Association of Ideas") that

custom settles habits of thinking … and of motions in the body; all which seem to be but trains of motion in the animal spirits which, once set agoing, continue in the same steps they have been used to, which by often treading are worn into a smooth path, and the motion in it becomes easy and, as it were, natural. (Locke 1689, §6; quoted in James [1890] 1950, 1:563–64; Hartley [1749] 1996, 67)

William James explained that by "animal spirits," Locke meant what we understand as *neural processes* and thought science had not yet succeeded in improving on this concept of habits: chained sequences of mental associations formed through "custom" or routine.[4]

Hartley put his mind to the question of how mental connections are formed: Why is it that, after thinking of A, we think of B the next moment? He suggested that ideas are connected or become associated through "vibrations" in the nerves. By proposing that physical processes may underlie thoughts, Hartley challenged the orthodoxy of Cartesian dualism, thus giving birth to the very modern concept of "psychophysical"—ideas (feelings, sense impressions) produced by "vibrations in the nerves" or what we now know as nerve impulses.

Erasmus Darwin (1731–1802)

It would be another fifty years before Hartley's theory made its full impact (Rockey 1980, 153). Erasmus Darwin (grandfather of Charles), wondered what set the organs of speech in motion, and why movements sometimes went awry. He had a personal interest in what made him and other people stutter. In the second volume of his two-volume medical textbook *Zoonomia* (1794, 1796), Darwin suggested that stuttering happens when the mind is distracted or overwhelmed by strong emotions such as "awe, bashfulness, ambition of shining, or fear of not succeeding":

Impediment of speech is owing to the associations of the motions of the organs of speech being interrupted or dissevered by ill-employed sensation or sensitive motions, as by awe, bashfulness, ambition of shining, or fear of not succeeding, and the person uses voluntary efforts in vain to regain the broken associations.… Thus in the common impediment of speech, when the association of the motions of the muscles of enunciation with the idea of the word to be spoken is dissevered, the great voluntary efforts, which distort the countenance, prevent the rejoining of the broken associations. (1796, 505)[5]

Stutter (or stammer) is an interruption of the normally smooth sequencing or "catenation of motions" of the organs of speech formed "by long habit." According to Darwin's analysis:

The first syllable of a word is causable by volition, but the remainder of it is in common conversation introduced by its associations with this first syllable acquired by long habit. Hence when the mind of the stammerer is vehemently employed on some idea of ambition of shining, or of not succeeding, the associations of the motions of the muscles of articulation with each other become dissevered by this greater exertion, and he endeavours in vain by voluntary efforts to rejoin the broken association. For this purpose he continues to repeat the first syllable, which is causable by volition, and strives in vain, by various distortions of countenance, to produce the next links, which are subject to association. (1794, 193)

Darwin compared this "broken association" with our struggle to remember someone's name. The feelings associated with mental effort tend to cloud our ability to think clearly. When we stop trying, then we are more likely to remember.

Compare Darwin's account of speaking the syllables of a word (or words of a sentence) by association with the following from William James, writing around a hundred years later:

The object of our will is seldom a single muscular contraction; it is almost always an orderly sequence of contractions, ending with a sensation which tells us that the goal is reached. But the several contractions of the sequence are not each distinctly willed; each earlier one seems rather, by the sensation it produces, to call its follower up, … habitual concatenated movements being due to a series of secondarily organized reflex arcs. The first contraction is the one distinctly willed, and after willing it we let the rest of the chain rattle off of its own accord. ([1890] 1950, 2:586–87; emphasis added)

The implication from reading these passages by Darwin and James is that once a habit is set in motion, we have little or no control over its subsequent unfolding. We can trace a direct line from Darwin's theory of catenation of motions through to William James, John Dewey, and Alexander (Williamson 2017, 29–44). It is most unlikely that Alexander thought about associationist theory and its origins when he was developing his technique. Yet, remarkably, he developed a practical self-help method for dealing with unwanted habits in accord with this principle.[6]

4 For instance, "brain-centres for the various feelings and movements and tracts for associating these together" (James 1, 40).

5 Cf. Vol. 1 (1794) "Thus in the common impediment of speech, when the association of the motions of the muscles of enunciation with the idea of the word to be spoken is dissevered, the great voluntary efforts, which distort the countenance, prevent the rejoining of the broken associations" (189).

6 See Alexander, *MSI* (1910, 60–63; [1918] 1996, 33–35); or, for a

William James (1842–1910) to the present

James's theory of habit provided Alexander with a rationale that he might have used to defend himself against accusations of being an uneducated "empiricist."[7] It was common practice for the medical profession to so accuse elocutionists, whom they characterized (often unfairly) as dangerous quacks lacking the necessary education and knowledge of anatomy and physiology. Being denounced as an empiric harked back to antiquity. It referred to a sect of physicians who were guided by experience and were opposed to the rationalists' view that illness must only be treated by those who understood its origins and theory. Gradually, the best of both systems has merged somewhat. In the nineteenth century, though, the term was used as a pejorative for practitioners who were thought unable to profit by their own means and who falsely lived off the experience of others (Rockey 1980, 68, 140, 174, 215, 255; *Lancet* 1846a, 557–58; 1846b, 663–64).

Expanding on Hartley's concept, James wrote:

The laws of motor habit in the lower centres of the nervous system are disputed by no one. A series of movements repeated in a certain order tend to unroll themselves with peculiar ease in that order for ever afterward. Number one awakens number two, and that awakens number three, and so on, till the last is produced. A habit of this kind once become inveterate may go on automatically. And so it is with the objects with which our thinking is concerned. With some persons each note of a melody, heard but once, will accurately revive in its proper sequence. ([1890] 1950, 1:554)

For James, it is external objects that stimulate our thoughts[8] and "guiding sensations" that necessarily organize and guide our complex movements:

All these cases, whether spontaneous or experimental, show the absolute need of guiding sensations of some kind for the successful carrying out of a concatenated series of movements. It is, in fact, easy to see that, just as where the chain of movements is automatic each later movement of the chain has to be discharged by the impression which the next earlier one makes in being executed, so also, where the chain is voluntary, we need to know at each movement just where we are in it, if we are to will intelligently what the next link shall be. (2:490–91)

Compare Alexander's use of the term "guiding sensations" in *Man's Supreme Inheritance*:

When this has been done he must proceed to inhibit the guiding sensations which cause him to use the mechanism imperfectly, apprehend the position of mechanical advantage, and then by using the new, correct guiding sensations or orders, he will be able to bring about the proper use of his muscular mechanism with perfect ease. (1910, 80; [1918] 1996, 58)

In the second edition of *MSI*, Alexander writes:

It is essential, in the necessary re-education of the subject through conscious guidance and control, that in every case the "means whereby" rather than the "end" should be held in mind. As long as the "end" is held in mind instead of the "means," the muscular act, or series of acts, will always be performed in accordance with the mode established by old habits. *When each stage of the series essential to the "means whereby" is correctly apprehended by the conscious mind of the subject, the old habits can be broken up, and every muscular action can be consciously directed until the new and correct guiding sensations have established the new proper habits, which in their turn become subconscious, but on a more highly evolved plane.* ([1918] 1996, 117–18; emphasis added)

In his account of the "evolution" of the technique, Alexander describes how he found that he must inhibit his usual reaction to wanting to speak "at the start" and continue to do so until he was fully confident that he could maintain the new, consciously directed means for a coordinated manner of use:

For by actually deciding, in the majority of cases, to maintain my new conditions of use … [and] to refuse to [speak the sentence], … my instinctive response to [wanting to speak] was not only inhibited at the start, but remained inhibited right through, whilst my directions for the new use were being projected. *And the experience I gained in maintaining the new manner of use while going on to gain some other end or refusing to [speak], helped me to maintain the new use on those occasions when I decided at the critical moment to go on after all … and speak the sentence.*[9] ([1932] 1985, 47)

It is beyond the scope of this article to discuss current theories. Today, the subject of behavioural integration is studied not only by philosophers and psychologists but also by researchers into cognitive neuroscience, artificial intelligence (AI), and

detailed exposition on stutter, see Alexander, *UoS* ([1932] 1985, chapter 4, "The Stutterer," 70–85).

7 "A Protest against certain Assumptions contained in a Lecture delivered by Dr R.H. Scanes Spicer" (1910) in *A&L*, 107–18. "…that he should make slighting references to 'empirical methods' and teachers without a medical degree" (107, 115). "Dr. Jokl had chosen to ignore Mr. Alexander's protestations that he was no curer, and chose to brand him 'as a quack, a charlatan, as a man who is preying on the upper classes of society.'" *Rand Daily Mail*, February 17, 1948. "They [the defence] submitted that the evidence showed that Mr. Alexander was an ignorant layman that in anatomy and physiology he knew very little, yet claimed that healing or therapeutics were 'his own province.'" *Cape Argus*, March 1, 1948.

8 "All ideas being in the last resort reminiscences, the question to answer is: *How can processes become organized in the hemispheres which correspond to reminiscences in the mind?* Nothing is easier than to conceive a possible way in which this might be done … the same cerebral process which, when aroused from without by a sense-organ, gives the perception of an object, will give an *idea* of the same object when aroused by other cerebral processes from within" (James [1890] 1950, 1:24).

9 Adapted for clarity, with original emphasis. "Some other end" could be anything in general, such as reaching to pick up a cup or something AT-specific like a whispered "ah."

robotics. The only ultimate law of association seems that of neural habit. In an attempt to explain associative or Hebbian learning, in his book *The Organization of Behavior*, Donald Hebb (1949) introduced the concept of synaptic efficiency and neural networking through (what John Locke called) "custom."[10]

In *The Power of Habit*, Charles Duhigg (2013, 17) reported on studies at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. The brain uses a process known as "chunking" to convert a sequence of actions into an automatic routine.

It is at the root of the way habits form. Once the cue sets off its associated routine, the whole sequence plays out automatically. As yet, there is very little Alexander Technique-specific research, but a recent study by Ian Loram (2017, 367) and colleagues found that "proactive selective inhibition" of neck muscle tension affects whole-body movements coordinated along a "proprioceptive-kinematic chain." Science no longer talks of "animal spirits" or "vibrations in the nerves," but the idea of a sequence of associated events set in motion by a single thought has persisted through history and provides some explanation for why and how the Alexander Technique may work.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS OF F.M. ALEXANDER'S BOOKS CITED IN THIS ARTICLE

A&L *Articles and Lectures*
CCCI *Constructive Conscious Control of the Individual*
MSI *Man's Supreme Inheritance.*
UoS *The Use of the Self*
UCL *The Universal Constant in Living*

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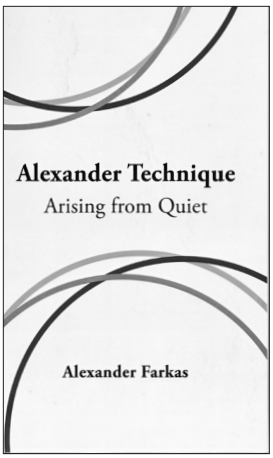
10 Psychologist D.A. Allport proposed ideas that included inhibitory processes regarding cell assembly theory and its role in forming neural networks or *engrams*: "If the inputs to a system cause the same pattern of activity to occur repeatedly, the set of active elements constituting that pattern will become increasingly strongly interassociated. That is, each element will tend to turn on every other element and (with negative weights) to turn off the elements that do not form part of the pattern. To put it another way, the pattern as a whole will become '*auto-associated*'.... We may call a learned (auto-associated) pattern an 'engram'" (1985, 44).

Arising from Quiet

by Alexander Farkas, reviewed by Genoa Davidson and Joe Alberti

Arising from Quiet by Alexander Farkas. London: HITE, 2019.



ARISING FROM QUIET by Alexander Farkas is a series of deeply personal essays ranging from the pitfalls of teaching in a music studio, to his reflections on the wisdom of first-generation teachers encountered throughout his life, to contemplating the differences between sound and silence. Farkas offers upfront the dilemma of attempting to put an "experience" into writing—and a highly objective experience at that. With this in mind, no results are guaranteed, no promises are made—there is just an invitation outstretched to discover and play. The author writes with ease on a vast variety of subjects, but this ease is by no means facile. There is depth in every chapter. For example, in an essay on teaching, he states: "The entire transaction depends on quiet and calm in order to allow fluidity and an active passage of energy. This is how we can reconcile Alexander's idea of 'directing' with his principle of 'non-doing'" (23). Another passage contains an astute observation concerning musicians: "Remember too that the state we are in when learning a piece, both muscularly and emotionally, will be the same state that will return each time we play that passage or piece" (39), could apply to almost any habit or repeated behavior.

Of particular value to teachers of the Alexander Technique are the detailed and thoughtful sections on working with dancers, actors, singers, and musicians. While it is not necessary to have expertise in every student's vocation or hobby to offer an effective lesson, Farkas's lifetime of experience in the arts brings clarity and compassion.

In the same way that singers worry about not having enough breath, string players fear they will not have enough bow to complete a phrase. This fear gives rise to an attempt to "save bow" just as the singer tries to save breath. Such a fear quickly leads to a tightening of the entire bow arm in order to prevent the bow from moving too fast. It is much like trying to move and stop movement at the same time, like trying to drive a car with the brakes on. The arm will quickly tire and, if continued to be used in this way is prone to injury. (75)

In working with actors:

Non-doing initiates receptivity, which in turn, brings on vulnerability. The more we are able to rest in non-doing, the more receptive we become. Receptivity increases and deepens until it invites the courage to become vulnerable. We are then hiding nothing. The courage to be so open helps the actor discover his hidden self and through that a path to the character he is portraying. It also opens him to the spontaneous interaction with others on stage. (97)

Teachers will also find value in the recounting of his own lessons and interactions with first-generation teacher Patrick Macdonald. Although Macdonald was clearly frail, his personality leaps off the page.

"And it's up to go up and it's up to come down." Macdonald's voice brought me back from my momentary drift, my musings on the aesthetic of pure poise in movement. His hand never stopped taking me into and out of the chair. My back, with each successive movement, was induced to widen further, my spine to extend to greater length.… I was being given the opportunity to discover, through repeated practice, Macdonald's own understanding of the dynamic of opposition. Through his hand, he was giving me the fullest possible explanation. He was answering, silently, all my questions. (145)

I could not, as I waited, keep my mind from dwelling on Macdonald, his work and his art. What, after all, I thought, is the measure of a man's life? To accomplish, following a single path, uncompromisingly, one small task. Is that not sufficient for proclaiming success, fulfilment? Macdonald's lifetime of experience had revealed its essence in the course of one brief lesson. (149–50)

Arising from Quiet is a valuable book for both Alexander Technique teachers and students. There is some repetitiveness in the essays, which Farkas himself admits, and there is no formal biography, though his life and experience are clear in the essays themselves. It is specific but not so esoteric as to be inscrutable to a less experienced student. Farkas's writing is thoughtful and does a good job of describing the indescribable. It is well referenced and filled with titbits from working with first-generation teachers, as can be seen from these quotes about his lessons with Macdonald. There is an appealing humbleness of a teacher this experienced who still returns to lessons as a student. In his own words:

The roles of student and teacher are complementary, one cannot exist without the other, and the partnership is of a fluid nature. In a healthy educational exchange the teacher is always learning and the student slowly learns to become his own teacher. In this regard the boundaries are not so fixed as they may seem. Subtle though the exchange may be, the teacher enters into the inner being of the student and the student absorbs the pertinent qualities of the teacher. We may even say that one must learn how to be a student in order to become a teacher. (152)

Letters

DEAR EDITOR,

In connection with a discussion about diversity, inclusion, and allied subjects, I think it is helpful to also remember the last paragraph in Alexander's *Use of the Self* (1932), where he writes:

If a technique which can be proved to do this for an individual were to be made the basis of an educational plan, so that the growing generation could acquire a more valid criterion for self-judgment than is now possible with the prevailing condition of sensory misdirection of use, might not this lead in time to the substitution of reasoning reactions for those instinctive reactions which are manifested as prejudice, racial and otherwise, herd instinct, undue "self-determination" and rivalry, etc., which, as we all deplore, have so far brought to nought our efforts to realize goodwill to all men and peace upon earth?

Best wishes,
Jean M.O. Fischer

IN HIS "On the Necessity of Knowing, Experiencing and Practicing Our Wholeness in Our Quest to Fundamentally Change Our Behavior through the Use of Our Selves" (*AmSAT Journal*, no. 16, Fall 2019, a lofty title indeed) Larry Ball argues that we as Alexander teachers—both individually and as "the international Alexander Technique community"—have failed in not promulgating and practicing what he sees as the most fundamental of Alexander's principles, namely, that "a human being functions as a whole and can only be fundamentally changed as a whole." At first glance, this is an idea that resonates at a certain level and that seems almost self-evident. But the grand generality of it suggests a question, namely, what actually *is* a whole human being (not to mention a *collection* of whole human beings) and *how* does this whole behave in such a way as to manifest this wholeness? Ball gives some personal examples, such as, in terms of "life energies, … heart, soul, spirit, sacred body, feeling, psyche, human values, oneness with others … nature, and God."

Ball invites "discussion and answers," thus I submit that all of us—as Alexander himself, quoted above, tells us—in our teaching and everything else, are *already and necessarily* acting in our wholeness; we cannot otherwise. It's not this wholeness as a *fact* that can be at issue, but rather as a *quality* of being and doing, for better and worse. An apt analogy is that between the *fact* of posture and its *quality*—its *posturality*, as I have called it—a distinction, by the way, crucial for the Alexander Technique. There appears, however, to be no like term to denote the quality of wholeness.

What determines the quality of anything? It is whether and how its various components jointly comprise a cohesive or functioning or intelligible union. Some such unions are recognized as good or beneficial in their particular spheres, others not.

Ball has managed to conflate wholeness with some ideal of goodness or virtue, and my objection to this is by no means only a quibble over terms: our words need accurately to reflect our meanings. His fulsome argument for our already-existent wholeness is thus pretty much moot. He would have done better to give us specific ways that, in his view, we actually *have* failed, thereby suggesting *how* the quality of our individual and collective (if there be such a thing) wholeness might be advanced.

Ron Dennis
Atlanta, GA

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JOE ALBERTI (Alexander Technique Center of Albuquerque, 2017), trained with Karen DeWig. He is an assistant professor of voice and acting at the University of Oklahoma. Joe is also a Designated Linklater Voice Teacher, a Certified Colaianni Speech Practitioner, and the author of two books.

SANDRA BAIN CUSHMAN (Virginia School for the Alexander Technique, 1990) is the founder of Orchestral Maneuvers, born of thirty-two years transforming the Alexander Technique into group practice in Robert Fripp's Guitar Craft and Guitar Circles North America, South America, and Europe. OM is based on the premise that the group informs the individual: as our presence within the group develops, our capacity as individuals flourishes.

Sandra's most recent teaching includes "Freedom and Ease for Singers" a nine-class series available online for individuals, choruses, and choirs (Heather Hightower, the Center for Vocal Study Charlottesville, Virginia, producer); "Intro to the Intro" for Introduction to the Guitar Circle August, 2021, with Robert Fripp (DGM Live for more information); the McIntire Department of Music, the Meriwether Lewis Institute, and the Contemplative Sciences Center at the University of Virginia; Violapalooza at Virginia Commonwealth University; and OM spoken word performances at the University of Pennsylvania and the Virginia Festival for the Book.

Sandra's articles in *AmSAT Journal* feature her group-centered pedagogy: "Dynamic Balance and the Five Relations" (no. 15, Summer 2019) and "Safe Space Mini-Retreat for Educators," written with Heather Dennee (no. 16, Fall 2019). "Dynamisches Gleichgewicht und die Fünf Beziehungen," translated into German by Philipp Quaet-Faslem, appeared in ATVD's Infobrief in March of 2019.

LARRY BALL (Alexander Training Institute of San Francisco, 1979) lives and teaches in San Rafael, California. He taught at ATI-SF from 1981 to 2004, assisting Frank Ottiwell. He also studied with Patrick Macdonald and Walter and Dilys Carrington. For ten years he studied extensively with Marjorie Barstow in San Francisco and Lincoln, Nebraska. Marjorie and Frank Ottiwell are his mentors. He continues to teach (and explore, study/write, and practice) Alexander's work. Mr. Ball obtained his juris doctorate from the University of California at Berkeley.

Larry Ball's article "On the Necessity of Knowing, Experiencing and Practicing Our Wholeness in Our Quest to Fundamentally Change Our Behavior through the Use of Our Selves" appeared in *AmSAT Journal* no. 16 (Fall 2019). His biography was inadvertently omitted from the print issue of the journal and is included here with apologies to Mr. Ball.

GENOA DAVIDSON (Alexander Technique Center of Albuquerque, 2018) is an actor, acting coach, and writer. She and her partner, Joe Alberti, have just written and produced their first full-length play, a modern adaptation of Kafka's *The Trial*. Genoa is currently certifying as a Colaianni Speech Practitioner and will complete Jessica Wolf's Art of Breathing in July. With Dr. Alberti, she is currently working on a new play about the lives of John and Abigail Adams.

RUTH DIAMOND (American Center For the Alexander Technique, 2003) has pursued careers in nursing, psychotherapy, computer programming, consulting, and teaching. She was on the editorial staff of *AmSAT* Journal from 2004 to 2018 and served on the ACAT Board of Directors for five years. She also taught on ACAT's volunteer faculty from 2004 to 2018. She is now retired and has been happily engaged in bike touring, fiction writing, and researching the early history of the Alexander Technique in the United States. The next article in this series will be "Margaret Naumburg, the Progressive Education Movement, and the Alexander Technique."

JEAN M.O. FISCHER (Aalborg Alexander Skole Forening, 1987) is a Danish teacher, living and teaching in Graz, Austria. He runs Mouritz (www.mouritz.co.uk) and the Mouritz Companion to the Alexander Technique (www.mouritz.org).

MALCOLM WILLIAMSON (Constructive Teaching Center, 1984) studied viola at the Royal College of Music and was subsequently a member of several orchestras, including the London Festival Ballet (English National Ballet), the National Orchestra of Iceland, and the Scottish National Orchestra. He trained as an Alexander Technique teacher with Walter and Dilys Carrington and began teaching the Technique at the Royal Northern College of Music, Manchester, in 1985. He served on STAT's governing council for twelve years in various roles including treasurer, chairman, and editor of *STATnews*. Malcolm has campaigned widely for the Alexander Technique as a foundation for music training and has been involved with several research projects. He is interested in the history of the Technique and how it links in with current science.

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Errata in Past Issues

AMSAT JOURNAL N°15 (SUMMER 2019)

Jean M.O. Fischer, "A History of Magnus in the Alexander Technique" (29–35)

31 Alexander's description in the ~~1935~~ **1934** Bedford lecture… Patrick Macdonald wrote in a letter in *British Medical Journal* in ~~1939~~ **1936**…

33 Roberts wrote in ~~1975~~ **1976** that: "Motor control…"

AMSAT JOURNAL N°16 (FALL 2019)

Larry Ball, "On the Necessity of Knowing, Experiencing and Practicing Our Wholeness in Our Quest to Fundamentally Change Our Behavior through the Use of Our Selves" (42–45)

Larry's Ball biography was inadvertently omitted from the print issue of the journal. We apologize to Mr. Ball. His biography is published in the current issue on p. 34 and in the PDF version of issue N°15, available online at AmSATonline.org.

Announcements

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