

are unplumbed depths to be explored. The 'variations of the teacher's art' are myriad; there seem to be as many techniques as there are teachers. And consider the differences in the qualities of touch! When Alexander began to use his hands on his pupils (remember that he didn't at the beginning) he went into new and unexplored territory. We are still there, with a lot left to discover.

The process of becoming a teacher begins before and continues long after actual formal training. Perhaps it begins when we first try to explain the Technique to someone. Goddard Birkley had his first demonstration of the work from someone who was not a teacher, but who whipped him in and out of the chair so impressively, that he immediately wanted to start having lessons himself. Not all of the teaching of this work is done by those who are formally qualified to teach it. I have learned much about the Technique from music and sports teachers, some of whom had never heard of the AT. The best kind of learning situations contain opportunities to inhibit and direct. Anyone having Alexander lessons who is a teacher in another field will usually more or less immediately begin to apply what s/he learns to her/his own teaching. There is a continuum inherent in the process of learning and applying the Technique, and as far as I can see it will tend to continue if encouraged. It can probably be stopped by a lot of stiffening and down-pulling, but it can also become contorted and turned into something rigid and controlling. When we decide to formally train at a training course it is like joining an artist's studio, or deciding to practice our instrument four or so hours a day under expert guidance. We are going to immerse ourselves in the work or the art and see where we get to. What goes on during these three or more years is very dependent on who we are, in all our conscious and unconscious aspects, what we want, and where we are in the process of learning the Technique. Learning to teach continues as long as we live. Even those Alexander teachers who retire, and they are few, go on teaching. I have heard from several colleagues the reflection "I think I learn more from my students than they do from me!" No wonder people want to become teachers of this work!

Walter Carrington used to say to his newly qualified teachers, "the important thing is, I know you cannot harm anyone". As well as being a good example of English humour and understatement, it was a great thing to remind us. It brings us back to square one, the beginning of becoming a teacher. The day when you put your hands on another student and your teacher says "stay with yourself, stay with your own directions". And every brain cell seems to cry out "no, no, the important thing is this person here, I am an old, known quantity, I am boring, I know me - I want to concentrate on this person here, I want to learn how to do something". It is boring to be brought back again and again to the same old self which changes fairly slowly. The fellow student you have under your hands will be much more interesting. You can see things that need to be changed; you may even notice things happening. Or you may not notice very much happening, and this may worry you because you are sure you should feel more. Our thoughts, more than anything else, may be getting in our way. As Margaret Goldie was prone to say we need to "become quiet throughout". I have spent the years of my training and many years after that looking for that quiet. This moment of contact with another person is crucial and central to our work. It is when our process meets the other person's and the two nervous systems come in contact with each other. We may think that we are working on muscles, but it is the nervous system which is being

re-educated. Marjorie Barlow often said "bad habits live in the nervous system". And every time we go to put a hand on someone we notice interference. We may perceive it as muscle tension, but it is mind tension. Our own thinking is blocking and over-stimulating our neurones.

I once watched a video of Kandinsky's hand drawing as part of an exhibition of his paintings in London. The movement was beautiful and free; there seemed to be a totally clear channel of communication between the creative part of his brain and his hand. I could only see the hand, but the movements were so delicately nuanced that the clarity of intention was almost palpable. It is the same clarity of intention which can help a violinist to play perfectly in tune. Missy Vineyard in her book *How you Stand, How you Move, How you Live* explains how we can stop interfering by putting our attention up into the pre-frontal cortex. She suggests that Alexander discovered this by using the direction 'forward and up'. It seems to work for most of the people I have tried it on, first of all myself. We can draw consolation from the fact that teaching the Alexander Technique is not as difficult as playing the Tschalkowsky violin concerto or painting a masterpiece, but learning it is the basis for being able to do these kinds of things with much less wasted time and effort. Basic Alexander directions are very clear and simple thoughts, which, if they are clear in us will resonate through to another person as clearly as a bell ringing. But to continue with this image, first of all we need to become as open and free as a bell blowing in a breeze. That is the first process. When you have come that far, and for some of us it may take years after the formal training is complete, you will probably be teaching the Alexander Technique to everyone you come in contact with, whether you put hands on them or not.

FM, Alexander, *Articles and Lectures* Mouritz 1995 p.198

Title of first chapter of *Freedom to Change*

FM, Alexander, *Constructive conscious control of the individual* Mouritz 2004 p.8 footnote

Bernard Shaw (quoted in M. Barlow's "The Teaching of FMA" [1965], reprinted in *An Examined Life* [2002, p280]) "Alexander calls upon the world to witness a change so small and so subtle that only he can see it." Goddard Birkley author of *The expanding self- How the Alexander Technique changed my life* Mouritz 1993



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