

On *Better Judo* **Moti Nativ – 2017**

Better Judo is a series of 5 articles, published from January 1948 until January 1949, which Dr. Feldenkrais wrote for the quarterly bulletin of the Judo Budokwai club.

“A true secret is still a secret even when it is revealed to all.” (Rabbi Adin Even-Israel Steinsaltz, Preface to *The Thirteen Petalled Rose*)¹

Judo concepts and techniques had a significant impact on Dr. Moshe Feldenkrais’ development of the Feldenkrais Method for improving a person’s abilities in action. We can see the results in many Awareness Through Movement (ATM) lessons, although the judo component may not always be obvious to those without the proper background.



(Moshe Feldenkrais teaches Judo – Paris 1938, Notre-Dame view from the Dojo’s window)

Feldenkrais became involved with judo when he met its founder Professor Jigoro Kano, in Paris, September 1933. This was not merely a meeting between two giants, it was an event that would lead to a dramatic change in the direction and trajectory of Feldenkrais’ thinking. In his famous 1981 interview about martial arts, Moshe recalled that Kano had said to him that judo is “the efficient use of the mind over the body.” At the time, Moshe had thought that this was a funny way to describe a martial art. During their initial meeting Moshe was introduced to the concept of seiryoku zenyo (minimum effort, maximum efficiency). Kano challenged Moshe with a judo choking technique. Moshe attempted to free himself using the technique that had always worked for him, but this time it did not help him.



(Feldenkrais releasing himself from a choke hold).

As Kano described in his diary "I grabbed him in a tight reverse cross with both hands and said, "Try to get out of this!" He pushed my throat with his fist with all his might. He was quite strong, so my throat was in some pain, but I pressed on his carotid arteries on both sides with both hands so the blood could not get to his head, and he gave up"². Imagine a small Japanese man, at the age of 75, subduing a strong, young man of 29. This incident impressed Feldenkrais and changed his approach to the use of his own body.

Feldenkrais began to study judo and in a relatively short time was promoted to black belt. Feldenkrais became more than a skillful practitioner of the art, he proved to be a unique judo teacher of the highest quality. Kano had a great deal of faith in Moshe³. Supported by Kano's authority and through his own considerable abilities, Moshe became the leading judo teacher in France. Moshe's influence on the development of the martial art in France was extraordinary, earning him the title "Pionnier du Judo en France"⁴.

As Moshe became more expert at Judo, he learned from and cooperated with the Judo master Mikinosuke Kawaishi. This partnership gave Feldenkrais the background to later write two Judo books. He wrote in the forward of Higher Judo, "I wish to express my gratitude to my friend and teacher of many years, Mr. Mikinosuke Kawaishi, 7th Dan. The figures in the illustrations in this book represent him and myself".

After escaping Paris during the Second World War, Moshe served 5 years in the British admiralty. He continued to teach judo and also trained the soldiers on his base (Unarmed Practical Combat, 1942). After retiring from the service (1945) he moved to London and joined the Budokwai Judo club where he studied judo there under the great master G. Koizumi⁵. Moshe admired Koizumi's skill. He often mentioned Koizumi in later years while teaching *Awareness Through Movement*. Moshe was in turn recognized as a judo expert by top judokas and researchers who knew him well, including Koizumi⁶, Leggett⁷, and Brousse⁸.

In my research on Moshe during the years 1920-1950 I did a detailed study of his judo⁹ and self-defense books¹⁰. As a martial artist, my study was not just theoretical. It involved experiencing the techniques myself and teaching them to others. Through this study of Moshe's work I believe that I better understand his way of thinking about self-preservation and how this relates to an understanding of the Feldenkrais Method in general.

Recently, with the help of Dr. Mike Callan¹¹, I managed to obtain a series of five articles, titled **Better Judo**, which Feldenkrais wrote for the quarterly bulletin of the Judo Budokwai club¹² in 1948–1949. In this essay I will share my thoughts and insights on those articles. I refer to these years as the "turning point"¹³. During this period Feldenkrais labored on writing Higher Judo (1952) concurrently with Body and Mature Behavior (1949) and The Potent Self (published posthumously in 1985). It can be clearly seen that Feldenkrais was already carrying, in his mind and body, his *Awareness through Movement* method, which did not yet have a name. In this period, Feldenkrais was at his peak as an experienced

judoka. From then on Moshe decreased his activity as a judoka, as he applied his experience and knowledge of judo to lay the foundations of the Feldenkrais Method.

In ***Better Judo*** he reveals his thoughts about Judo, digging deep into the means of mastering judo. Moshe goes through a complex process, applying his ingenuity and skilled body, which already understood the foundations of the Feldenkrais Method.

Before the discussion of ***Better Judo***, it would be helpful to remind readers about meaningful milestones of Moshe's unique approach to judo. The first milestone, relevant to this article, is Moshe's work in Tel Aviv at age 16, as a member of the Baranovichi group. At this time (1920) the Haganah, a paramilitary organization in British mandated Palestine, was established. At that time Moshe helped protect the properties of the Jewish pioneers and was engaged in real fights for survival, fights in which some of his friends were injured or even killed. Although the Haganah fighters were trained in jiu-jitsu, they were not always able to make practical use of it in actual combat. Moshe was troubled by the results of these fights. He wondered why his friends could not use their skills to effectively protect themselves.

From this point we can clearly follow Moshe pressing on with his fighting spirit and intelligence toward the next important milestone. Feldenkrais published the first Hebrew self-defense book (*Jiu-Jitsu and Self Defense*, 1930). He based this work on a behavioral study of human beings that gave rise to the concept of using unconscious or instinctive responses for self-preservation. In other words, he wanted to design a self-defense system for the Haganah, based on "a movement someone would do without thinking" that would protect them. Feldenkrais mentioned this concept in his translation of *Autosuggestion* by Emil Coué (1929). He used this idea to promote efficient learning of self-defense techniques, thus building the ability to retain a skill no matter how long ago it had been learned.¹⁴

Feldenkrais' background as a survivor gave him a unique perspective on judo, or rather on another dimension of judo, the practical use of judo in an emergency situation, *outside* the dojo. At that time, he was one of the first judokas who thought about the use of judo for self-defense.¹⁵ He applied the same attitude towards survival in the development of the Feldenkrais Method and this approach manifested itself in his teaching. As he said years later "The most drastic test of a movement is self-preservation"¹⁶.

On the other hand, we can discern Feldenkrais' innovative thoughts from ***Better Judo*** "In those days judo/jujutsu was an art of self-defense. Thanks to Dr. Moshe Feldenkrais it gained a scientific and more sophisticated facet. The Japanese art was then seen as a science of combat practiced by intellectuals, university students, scholars...Moshe played a pivotal role in this evolution from a utilitarian practice to a scientific one." (Dr. Michel Brousse)

Returning to **Better Judo** – the editor of the Budokwai Bulletin invited Dr. Feldenkrais to compare the judo practiced in their club to the judo practiced elsewhere. Moshe started his writing by saying “I do not think that such criticism would serve any useful purpose. Criticism leading to no improvement is wasted effort and as such is contrary to the spirit of judo. I prefer therefore, to present to you **another way of looking at things you already know...**” (As we Feldenkrais practitioners would say about his choice of words, “This is Feldenkrais”.) Reading Moshe’s writings, I find them sophisticated and not easy to follow. At the time of their publication others must have felt the same. We should remember that Moshe wrote **Better Judo** for the judo community, so the judoka must have understood the judo terminology he used, but we Feldenkrais Practitioners might get lost. I will try to present his chain of thought. At the same time, I will highlight points that provide basic knowledge about judo and martial arts.

Part 1, January 1948

The first article in this series contains clues that, from our perspective as Feldenkrais Method practitioners, we can identify as basic concepts of the Feldenkrais Method. Here Moshe made an effort to provide a logical background for acquiring master skills that cannot actually be taught.

Feldenkrais begins by pointing out the difference in the performance of a judo technique the way Koizumi, the master teacher, performs compared to the learner. He challenges the readers, raising the question “What precisely is the difference in performance?” Could it be entirely a question of balance, as many believed? Moshe said that this would be true “if balance means balance of *mind and body*”.¹⁷ I would have been satisfied with this answer. But Feldenkrais continued to dig into the question like a psychologist or a philosopher. “We know quite easily how to distinguish such balance when it is there, but our problem is to acquire it, and this is a different matter altogether.”

So what generates such learning? Feldenkrais says that the process has greater complexity than is immediately apparent – “When the mental qualities in question are acquired, certain physical qualities of the body’s behavior appear at the same time.” Feldenkrais shares his own experience as a judo teacher here. From his studies he declares: “the knowledge of the precise mechanical qualities necessary to achieve physical balance is of great assistance in the process of growth of an active and efficient personality”. Continuing and clarifying, Feldenkrais says that actually “we find ourselves approaching the same problem from different directions but aiming at the same goal”. Feldenkrais continues to ponder the idea of simultaneous improvement in mind and body, which he considers an indivisible unit. Striving for a more tangible explanation of those general concepts, he uses basic elements of practical performance of judo techniques - tsukuri and kake.

Tsukuri means "making"– making an opening, by positioning yourself and disturbing the opponent’s balance. Basically, tsukuri is effected by:

- a. The opponent's voluntary action.
- b. Maneuvering, enticing, or forcing the opponent into the desired position or action.

Kake means “applying” – applying a throw, by a coordinated action of the body that will cause the opponent's body to fall.

Although the technique is performed with one smooth movement, for the purposes of convenience, we learn and practice tsukuri and kake as two distinct elements in a static situation. The challenge is to perform the technique in a free training environment (**randori** 乱取り).

Feldenkrais uses the term “phrasing” to describe the ability to connect one movement to the next when the two opponents are continuously moving and changing their relative position. The difficulty of phrasing is that the opponents move with the intention to surprise one another, looking for opportunities to attack, as in a combat simulation. Making the opening (tsukuri) and applying the throw (kake) is dynamic. In such a fluid situation there are no precise rules for performing the techniques as practiced in static training. Here is where Feldenkrais' unique thinking on the matter is most apparent. Feldenkrais wrote that “Phrasing in judo, as in all cases of a dynamic relationship between individuals, is a most personal element.” It is one not easily acquired, because it involves the idiosyncrasies of the individual as a learner.

Moshe suggests that the best way to acquire this “most elusive” part of the art of judo would be to practice with a master of great skill. Here again, however, he raises objections, warning that repeated acts during practice become habitual. Practicing by repeating and imitating the master will not, by itself, lead to mature independence. So how can we discover the quality that the master possesses and that we lack?

Feldenkrais talks about two different approaches. Some people are able to derive benefit from the suggestion of poise and serenity and will put themselves in the *frame of mind* that will help them control their body as they want. Others will succeed better with slow adjustments to control the *body first*. Here he again emphasizes that “mental and physical qualities must be present simultaneously”. Quoting from *Mind and Body* (Feldenkrais' famous lectures in Copenhagen, 1958), “There are ... two major roads to change in a person's behavior: either via the psyche or via the soma. However, to make change real it must be brought about in a fashion which allows both the soma and the psyche to be changed simultaneously”. Moshe continues his article describing this quality of simultaneous adaptability in the master's possession: “He is slow and yet always ahead of his opponent”, as Miyamoto Musashi¹⁸ wrote in the [Book of Five Rings](#), “Whatever the Way, the master of strategy does not appear fast... Very skillful people can manage a fast rhythm, but it is bad to beat hurriedly. If you try to beat too quickly you will get out of time. Really skillful people never get out of time, and are always deliberate, and never appear busy.”

Finally, Dr. Feldenkrais reveals his conclusion (which may not surprise us): “As we think in terms of serenity, balance of mind, poise, and similar subjective feelings, we can only refer to what we presume to be going on in the mind of the master. What we observe in his action can be described in simpler mechanical terms, which describe what he is actually doing. And the results he obtains depend physically on what he does rather on what his feelings are while he does it or the motive behind his action.” He emphasizes that, although he lays stress on the mechanics of body movements he hopes that the reader realizes that mental qualities are of equal importance.

If we, as Feldenkrais practitioners, reread the section above, we find that it includes ideas that are familiar to us. We are left to wonder how the judokas, the original readers of the bulletin, perceived Moshe’s ideas, which to many of them must have been very new. We are reminded of the chapter, “Correction of Movements is the Best Means for Self-improvement” in Moshe’s book Awareness Through Movement where he gives a detailed explanation of why he chose to give priority to movement in his method.

Part 2, April 1948

In this section, Feldenkrais answers the leading question “Of what precisely does that difference of performance consist?”. According to him, it is not a skill of one trick or one movement; it is the general manner of doing. The rationale of the elusive difference is based on qualities common to all the masters. He confidently lists those qualities, which implies that he is talking from his own experience and abilities. One must be a high level judoka to make such observations about the master’s hidden qualities.

I will summarize Moshe’s points and highlight the important details:

- 1) The master’s **balance** is difficult to disturb in any direction –pushed or pulled, but it will not affect the continuity he will maintain in his vertical carriage control (*shizen tai* 自然体 – natural posture).
- 2) His attacks will come **without any preliminaries**. He has access to either of his feet, standing or moving, in any direction. He can push, pull, twist, or combine those in any possible sequence without apparent preparation.
- 3) His counters come with **automatic ease** (spontaneously); it seems that he needs no warning.
- 4) His **hip joint initiates** the action of attack or defense; his body moves as a single whole unit around this joint.
- 5) He creates an **accurate contact** of three points at the critical moment of any throw. Imagine the three points: two hands of the attacker and one foot, hip or shoulder,

on the opponent's body. All become connected and synchronized in their trajectories, so both bodies are moved as one solid piece.

- 6) He **moves smoothly** with no sharp, angular change of direction in the trajectories of any part of the body.
- 7) All his muscles groups are equally contracted in performing the throw. Consequently, **no muscle effort** is apparent in performing the technique and moving the two heavy bodies.

The bold terms summarize the master's qualities and they are concepts that we are familiar with as Feldenkrais practitioners. These points may explain the "magic" in Moshe's hands: it originally developed through his many years of experience in the martial arts and is fully expressed in his book The Elusive Obvious, chapter "Biological Aspects of Posture". Looking at the list, we might think about our feelings during FI lessons when we position ourselves, supporting our clients, to direct and push/pull/twist their bodies smoothly to the right distance, with the right speed of the movement, and becoming one body.

Moshe returns to the element of balance he mentioned in Part 1, saying that all the above items describe, in one way or another, the properties of "unstable balance." Let us see if this could be the answer for the leading question of this article.

He kindles our curiosity: "We are used to hear extolled the extreme "stability" of the judo expert and it sounds somewhat **paradoxical** to find the word "unstable" used to describe his action". I think that this is an amazing sentence. I quoted it previously as the opening for my article about "The Paradox of Unstable Stability"¹⁹. Moshe claims that "Improper understanding of this point is the major reason of confusion of thought of many judoka". Moshe uses his scientific brain to explain the mechanics of balance. This is not the first time he talks about balance. He had already done so in his first judo book, dedicating a chapter to the judoka's balance.²⁰.

Generally, we tend to increase our stability by spreading our feet to widen our base of support, or by lowering the center of gravity, or both. This position could be described as "stable balance". This is what we do when we lack confidence. In this position, more power is necessary to put our body in motion. The confident master has higher control over his body motion - "We have seen that the Judo master behaves as if his body were governed by the principles of "unstable balance" and that he achieves better results than other people even when he has a handicap of weight and strength against him." In Higher Judo Moshe uses the term *dynamic stability* to describe the quality of mastering unstable balance "Dynamic stability is stability acquired through movement."²¹. In The Elusive Obvious (1981), the term *dynamic stability* has morphed into **dynamic equilibrium** - "A posture is good if it can regain equilibrium after a large disturbance". Thus we see that the theories

and principles, which Dr. Feldenkrais deduced in the 1940's, became the bedrock of the Feldenkrais Method.

An important element needed to develop such confidence is the ability to fall. Since Moshe did not mention the subject in this article, I should point out that he repeatedly wrote about the importance of acquiring the ability to fall (The Art of Falling). For instance, in Higher Judo: "The untrained man finds only part of his attention free to deal with the opponent's action and is so engaged in preserving balance in the most primitive standing position, on two feet, that the only reaction he is capable of is the general contraction of his muscles initiated by his fear of falling". In teaching dynamic stability, I combine learning the art of falling and recovering stability. Stability and falling complement one another.

Concluding this part, Moshe answers the question of the difference between the master and the ordinary person: "The judo master is merely conforming more truly with principles underlying human structure and he is therefore using capacities potentially hidden in every human frame, while the untrained man is deprived of them by his own ignorance." When the "hidden capacities of the human frame" are used by the master, then he or she is controlling his or her own body (with the seven qualities) while at the same time controlling the opponent's balance, usually disrupting it.

How can these ideas be taught? How can we close the gap between the qualities of the initiate and those of the master?

Part 3, July 1948

We immediately see that Moshe is focusing on breaking an opponent's balance. He opens with the suggestion for "two ways of finding out and studying means of unbalancing the human body". "One, form a broad principle like that of maximum efficiency and then proceed selecting by trial and error those movements that satisfy the requirements of least exertion. Second, examine the human body from a mechanical point of view and apply the well-established laws of mechanics to this particular case." He notes that "Both ways have their advantages and drawbacks".

Regarding the first way, Feldenkrais says that no special knowledge is needed for it, "and every person is therefore capable of discovering new ways and details and contributing to the general development of the art." This is the process of natural discovery that every judoka senses after a period of ongoing training. As Feldenkrais wrote about the development of mind and body through the study of judo: "The constant presence of an opponent gradually develops a special attitude of ever-readiness to meet any emergency. Observation and watchfulness are trained by the constant attention to the opponent's actions. The powers of judgment and imaginative enterprise are brought into play when seeking to find the weak point in the opponent's position and contriving instantly the means of taking immediate advantage of it." (Judo, the Art of Defense and Attack, 1941)

“Contributing to the general development of the art” is a significant phrase – it is about the responsibility we take when we are learners of an art and also when we become leading experts of it. At the time Moshe wrote those words judo was young, having existed only about 70 years (Kano introduced judo in 1882²²). Moshe looked at judo as a method in the process of development. He saw that there is more to the study of a method than just personal development. Our Feldenkrais Method is now about 70 years old. This should be our attitude towards it as well.

So what are the drawbacks? “...each discovery usually becomes a ‘secret’, which the inventor is generally loath to communicate to others so long as he can enjoy the fruits of personal usage of his discovery.”

We seem to be straying into the area of politics here! But what happens if the inventor shares his discovery? Moshe says that even when a personal discovery becomes common knowledge “it retains the mystic character” so that nobody knows why it really works. He cites the example of Koizumi’s discussion on the use of the little fingers of the hands and the feet.

Koizumi closed his book My Study of Judo (London, 1960) with a chapter on “Little Fingers” saying: “A fraction of an inch may stand between working and not working. The length not only affects the power of the lever, but on its correctness, depends the subtleness of contact and direction of the movement...you are able to give subtle touches to the action, for the fingers are more sensitive and dexterous than many parts of the body.”

In the Amherst training Feldenkrais talked about the power of the little fingers: “It turned out that many experts, many high graded judo people, make this the essential thing of the movement...(and picks a tall student) you see if I pull you up, you won’t, but if I take with the small finger...look (controls the student’s body)”



Feldenkrais demonstrates the power of the little finger, showing how it affects the opponent’s balance

The second way requires “... extensive specialized knowledge which perforce involves a cumbersome terminology, so that the explanation remains a closed book to most people”.

“It is rational to use both ways”, Moshe said. It seems that he felt that the second way was little known and not in use because “it is easier to make people understand and learn something for which there is logical necessity rather than teach them to remember a series of unconnected arbitrary details”.

Many judo books refer to the skill of breaking the opponents balance. I can mention here an old book by Sadayaku Uyenishi (The Textbook of Jui Jitsu as Practised in Japan, 1905), which Dr. Feldenkrais owned²³. Uyenishi wrote a chapter titled the “Principles of Balance”, in which he declared that “Balance is the whole secret of ju jitsu both for attack and defense”.

Moshe read all the judo books and also learned the skill of disrupting his opponent’s balance. His idea was that a judoka should know the “reason” behind the skill. So he enumerated the unique features of the human body:

1. “The human body is more like a pole standing on its end...The easiest displacement that one can produce in a pole on one end is rotation round its vertical axis”.
2. “The cross-section of the body is...elliptical with the longer diameter from right to left”.
3. “Rotation of the body round the vertical axis when the feet remain motionless, is taking place almost exclusively in the cervical and lumber vertebra”.
4. “The upper parts of the body are denser and heavier, especially in the male, than the lower ones, and the center of gravity is therefore high above the ground”.

These four features provide the rational basis for controlling body balance in judo techniques. Dr. Feldenkrais describes those features, but reminds us that the human body is not rigid like a pole. So, a well performed tsukuri should bring the rigidity to the opponent’s body. Also “if we bring both feet together the analogy is complete and the mechanics of a pole apply.” Then throw can be completed effortlessly.

He cites one of his favorite techniques, the okuri-ashi-harai (accompanying foot sweep), as an example for such an action. In this technique we control the opponent’s body by pulling/pushing with the hands and sweeping one leg toward the other, thus bringing both feet together.



Moshe performing okuri-ashi-harai, 1939

“The rigidity of the body is essential for the transmission of force through it”. When sharply pulling the left shoulder “the body stiffens reflectively and moves as any other rigid body would move”. He explains: “The object of tsukuri is essentially to satisfy the requirements of the four main features enumerated. The great variety of tsukuri is due the fact that we do not need to satisfy all the four points at the same time.”

Here are the technical stages of tsukuri:

1. Pulling both lapels slightly forward and upwards – stiffens the extensors of the back and legs.
2. Twist the body in the larger diameter – exhausts the range of rotation of the lumbar vertebrae.
3. Apply force in the opposite direction at the lower end – which will be equally transmitted through the whole body.

So, to achieve the object of tsukuri “Reduce the range of rotation of the trunk relative to the hips, further increase the rigidity of the body by shifting his weight on to one foot and, thirdly, reduce friction against the ground in one direction”.

Two thoughts come to my mind as I read Moshe’s words about tsukuri:

1. Moshe writes about principles and techniques. As said by Takuan Soho (Zen Master 1573-1645), “...even though you may wield the sword that you carry with you well, if you are unclear on the deepest aspects of principle, you will likely fall short of proficiency. Techniques and Principles are just like two wheels of a cart”.²⁴
2. The skill of controlling the opponent’s body, which Moshe developed through Judo, contributed much to his skill in handling the bodies of people lying on his table.

Part 4, October 1948

A surprise opening for the fourth part: “At least one of the readers is disappointed with **Better Judo**. I guess that this could mean more than one or even many readers.

Moshe thinks that the Budokwai judo practitioners, who read his article, expected that “the **secret** of Judo will be divulged and the perfection would be within easy reach of every reader”. On the other hand, he sees the positive aspect of having secrets in the Dojo.

“Imagine a dojo where everybody is simply godlike and has nothing to learn from anybody, being just perfect. This would be boring”, he says. Maybe he is rebuking the critics or he is angry and is trying to give impression that he is above this situation: “I am curious to know how many more readers I have disappointed. The worst criticism is indifference. I should be very glad to have any other criticism no matter how devastating”.

Truthfully, I hesitate to write about Moshe's response to the readers, because I do not see the contribution to the professionalism of *Better Judo*. However, such interruption gives us the information that Moshe is writing while he is on his own journey, active in the Budokwai Club, connected with members of the club, sharing his way of thinking about judo and generally the way to use the body. Around this time Moshe was recognized as a real judo expert and was chosen to be a member of the Council of the European Judo Union. Also, at this time, Koizumi had just completed reading the draft of Higher Judo and wrote the foreword for the book. Moshe again addresses the issue of professional "secrets" in dojo. We feel that Moshe is touching on politics as he says that "Outside the Budokwai and the Kodokan important rules are often kept as "secrets" and sometime sold to keen and persistent students".

My thoughts are that "secrets" are a kind of creativity, being personal discoveries about manipulating the body, an almost instinctive level of coordination of to where and when. Such discoveries are a result of the learning process. Meaning that more than one person would likely discover the same secret as he continues on the judo way of learning. We already understand that in order to know such secret, even if it was revealed to you, one still needs to "discover" it by the same learning process of practicing and training the body until the secret is owned. Moshe lists some secrets, "all observable in the action of judo masters", while implying that there are more.

For us Feldenkrais Method practitioners, he wrote, "It is not enough to know what to do to make good judo. The means to enact the rules are obtained by clearly visualizing configuration and for that, understanding and muscular feeling obtained through experience are indispensable". In our terminology of awareness through movement we say "...it's essential, following the general principle that it doesn't matter what you do, but how you do it..." (M. Feldenkrais, San Francisco training, June 26, 1975)

As I pointed out earlier, you can be sure that Moshe understood those secrets in his body and had the ability to use them. Let us look more closely at some of the secrets that Moshe listed:

- "Hold your body so that the action of kake forces air out of the lungs without resistance or conscious awareness."
Meaning that while the tsukuri, making the opening to prepare the opponents body to the act of throwing, you preserve a good posture so the throwing action is performed with no inner resistance. Read Moshe about what is good posture.
- "Start the movement with the hips, or more precisely, with the tanden, leading the body and the members, and not inversely as the poorly coordinated do".
Read Awareness through Movement – What Action is Good? "Use large muscles for the heavy work - in a well-organized body work done by the large muscles is passed on

to its final destination through the bones by weaker muscles, but without losing much of its power on the way.”

- “Put your legs on the ground so that the vertical line passing through the middle of the knee cap of the weight-bearing leg passes exactly in the space between the big toe and the next”.

To this “secret” I will not add anything, as it is simply a good suggestion for standing, walking, running, and even sitting.

We see that many of those secrets are incorporated into the Feldenkrais Method as techniques and principles.

I find that the closing paragraphs of this part are most sophisticated. Moshe is challenging the judoka, presenting his ideas about a good learning process. Through my perspective of an experienced Feldenkrais Method practitioner, I can cope with the sophistication of such a presentation, but it occurs to me that it might have been peculiar for many judokas. Again Feldenkrais says “It is not enough to know what to do to make good Judo”. He goes on to explain that enacting the rules by visualization of their configuration requires physiological understanding that can only be obtained through experience – meaning training.

He also proposed this idea: “You will find it very instructive to break these rules deliberately and then to repeat the movement strictly observing them. Try them one by one. You will see that the movements in which you are normally more successful, you do in fact unintentionally abide by them. You may find it easier after that to extend their application to movements which have felt foreign to you hitherto”. I’m sure that such a concept was not accepted by many judoka, but we already have accepted it as a contrivance to enhance learning. We often encourage our students to make mistakes and not to succeed. Could this be a way to break habits?

Another confusing point that comes up is that “these rules should be visible in our movement, but that there should be no intentional observance of them”. As I read it, this is the goal of the judoka, to perform the “secrets” spontaneously and naturally.

The next, and last part, of *Better Judo* lays forth his purpose in writing these articles “...to clarify the more fundamental principles from which the above rules, and many others, are a natural consequence...one cannot fuse rules and corrections into a coherent whole by simply practicing them”.

Moshe adds, “Only those who form a vivid personal image, binding practice, and understanding into one whole, ever do spontaneous and proper Judo”. At this point we may expect that Moshe will talk about “more fundamental principles”, as they should enable the “spontaneous and proper Judo”, meaning of *Better Judo*.

Part 5, January 1949

We have waited since October 1948 for Moshe to reveal his fundamental principles for better judo. He was fortunate with an article that T. P. Leggett published on the Budokwai bulletin on October 1948, titled "Butsukari". I should remind you that at this time Leggett was the chairman of the EJU. Moshe praises Leggett's article and it seems that he uses it as an additional foothold to support his ideas on the fundamentals essential for achieving better Judo.

Leggett's article was about the importance of butsukari (now known as uchi komi or repetition training in the western judo world) training for improving the judoka's performance of throws. Butsukari is a basic training in which the judoka attacks an opponent who is standing still. The judoka enters the preparation stages of a throw. He performs tsukuri (creating the opening and moving into the throw position) and kuzushi (taking out of balance), but stops at the point of the kake (the throwing action). He returns to the opening position to perform this act again and he repeats this sequence many times. In each act the attacker reaches the peak point when his body parts create connections with the opponent's body while he pulls/pushes him with his hands. At high speeds there is an effect of the attacker's body striking lightly against the opponent's body. This is the meaning of butsukari – come together or strike against.

According to Leggett, "[butsukari] is one of the important methods of practice, especially for those approaching Black Belt standard". The principle behind butsukari training is the physiological contention that one must perform a movement at least ten thousand times for it to become integrated into the nervous system. Although that number of repetitions sounds rather daunting, you must take into consideration that because of the speed of action a large number of iterations can be performed in a minute and hundreds in the space of an hour.

Leggett states, "Judo is not a question of merely knowing a series of moves, but a question of carrying them out at sufficient speed to defeat the opponent's counter-action. You have to get the "feel" of them... after ten thousand repetitions you begin to get the 'feel' of a throw and after about hundred thousand repetitions the throw begins to come naturally".

What does the "feel" mean? Repetition clarifies the different of elements of the throw. For example:

- The exact placement of the pelvis and shoulders relative to the opponent
- The optimal action of the arms and hands
- Identifying the critical moment to initiate the throw
- Being aware of body organization at the starting point of the technique

The judoka achieves a clear sense of efficient body organization necessary to perform a throw without actually executing the throw. Through butsukari the judoka can practice

many throwing techniques and, depending on his or her mastery of one technique or another, can make an informed decision about the number of repetitions needed.

On the surface this sounds like quite a boring training session, however, I have learned through long experience that rapid execution of *butasukari* (hundreds of repetitions in quick succession) is an uplifting experience due to the need of maintaining concentration, the flowing sweat, the intensive breathing that is coordinated with the movements, and noticing how the technique improves and is internalized.

Generally, this is not an approach that we encounter in ATM lessons, however you have heard Moshe ask that a movement be repeated ten to twenty times and he even instructs us to increase the speed of the action. In the Amherst films of him teaching a “four points” lesson, you hear how he asks students to repeat the movement many, many times and much faster. The students are sweating in the summer heat and Dr. Feldenkrais shows them no mercy.

Moshe talks about judokas’ concern “...repeating a movement as often we are advised...when we know that our performance is far from being perfect, are we not going to perpetuate our faults? They are bound to become so deeply rooted that we will never be able to perform the movement really properly?” He also asks “Bad habits being so difficult to get rid of, how can we know that we are doing the right thing?” Let’s examine how Dr. Feldenkrais, in his great wisdom, shows the judoka the way. “The concrete answer to these questions is: hold your body so that the throw you perform forces air out of your lungs without hindrance and without having to make a conscious effort or change of body position and attitude.” So it is fairly simple to ensure this correction.

Dr. Feldenkrais presents the fundamentals of good posture in his book The Potent Self²⁵ which was being written at the same as this series of articles. First of all, he recommends utilizing the principle of executing movements slowly and paying close attention to oneself. Applying this fundamental principle, the judoka will find that he or she can avoid creating unnecessary muscle tension in the shoulders, neck, and chest. Thus basic deficiencies can be avoided and continuing the training will only improve the performance.

Reversibility of the movement is the next important principle he mentions. “A correct movement is so performed that one can stop at any instant and return to the initial position without holding one’s breath, and the body, in general, complying with the preceding rule”.

These principles allow us to judge the action by how much energy is expended and to conserve energy by avoiding unnecessary movements and parasitic efforts. Dr. Feldenkrais advises using someone more experienced to elucidate the process and point out errors or one must be capable of sensing deviations.

He asks, “How do we feel these things?” Dr. Feldenkrais explains the importance of enhancing the ability to sense small differences in our body manipulation through the

Weber-Fechner law, even though he does not specifically cite Weber-Fechner. He uses this elegant analogy “Thus, we cannot tell whether there is a letter in a book when we lift it, but we have no difficulty in telling that an envelope contains more than one sheet of paper simply by picking it up...”. This leads him to “The main thing is to understand that, when we make a big effort, we cannot “feel” any small reduction or increase; there must be a large difference before we become aware of it.” When the body is well organized at the vertical position we can sense very slight extra efforts. Then “We assume a new position in which the muscular effort is smaller than before and we become capable thereby of feeling [awareness of] even slighter imperfections. **We cannot but go on improving**”.

He disagrees to a certain extent with Leggett’s statement, “We can understand now why butsumaki practice is normally more beneficial to advanced students who already have rudimentary feeling of correct movements. They produce the movement with reduced effort and their progress is assured”. Dr. Feldenkrais maintains that beginners, who have learned these principles of achieving a goal, can find their training sessions “beneficial and more entertaining.”

Conclusion

“I do not teach you but you are learning” is a well-known phrase that Moshe often repeated to his students. **Better Judo** explains this sentence. The gap between teaching and learning is understood when Moshe says that such “secrets” cannot be taught but they can be learned.

Throughout this series of articles, which were written over the span of a year, we witness a period of integration of judo and the Feldenkrais Method. We clearly see how Moshe guides the judoka, coaching according to ideas and principles that we now know as the fundamental theories of the Feldenkrais Method. These principles indicate the trajectory that will provide the judoka motivation for mature self-learning.

These ideas and principles can be summarized in a simple list:

1. Make mistakes.
2. Start learning with slow movements.
3. Attain reversibility in action.
4. Attain good posture for freedom of movement and breathing.
5. Reduce effort to increase sensitivity (Weber-Fechner law).

We should not forget that Moshe’s thinking about the principles of learning coalesced through his practical experience as a martial artist. His encounter with Kano and subsequent dedication to judo was a significant turning point in his outlook. I believe that judo delineated the path that led to the development of what is known today as The Feldenkrais Method.

I noted the change in how Feldenkrais related to using oneself; use less effort, use more sense. Dr. Feldenkrais taught martial arts and from 1933 he taught judo. In Judo and the Art of Self-Defense (1941) he wrote extensively about the image of action and the importance of orientation. His thoughts on the importance of executing an action slowly during the learning process can be found in Practical Unarmed Combat (1942). It is obvious that he developed his basic principles long before he devoted himself exclusively to developing the Feldenkrais Method.

Some of the main principles are:

1. Kano's words about the "Efficient use of the Mind over the Body" became Moshe's leading principle that mind and body are not separated as we act.
2. Seiryoku zenyo (minimum effort, maximum efficiency) leads to effortless action.
3. Shizen tai, the natural stance as a basis for understanding good posture.
4. Balance and Stability are the key factors for successful action.
5. The primary importance of awareness and learning. The amalgam of judo and the Feldenkrais Method "In judo the body is educated to respond faithfully and materialize the mental image of the desired act" (1941).

When I decided to write an article about Dr. Feldenkrais' judo series, I did not realize what I had taken on. This was not such an easy mission and I feel that what I have written is dwarfed by the power of Dr. Feldenkrais' insights. I hope that my writing will provide some benefit for the Feldenkrais community, martial artists, and anyone who has taken the time to read the article.

I feel that it would honor Moshe Feldenkrais to close with words of G. Koizumi, his most valued Judo teacher: "Indeed, we realize as we make progress in training that self-confidence is the first line of defense and the factor for disarming; security is not secured by security measures alone; contentment is not obtainable by gaining, but by giving. Happiness is found not by external seeking, but by researching within. All things are necessary components for man's advance toward maturity". Gunji Koizumi (My Study of Judo, 1960)

Endnotes

¹ Translated from the Hebrew edition.

² Mind over Muscle (writings from the founder of judo), Gyaku-juji (pages 47-50).

³ Pro. Jigoro Kano, Introduction to Moshe's Jiu-Jitsu La Defense du Faible Contre L'agresseur (French version of Jiu-Jitsu and Self-Defense) "At that time a Jewish scholar named Feldenkrais happened to be in the audience. His remarks to me after the lecture were very enlightening. He brought a book he had written about judo with him and asked me to take a look at it.....I realized that though this book does not exactly confirm with the concept of my Judo, **it is the best publication in another language than Japanese...**I feel assured that the author, by a study of the true Judo, will progress rapidly towards a perfect possession of this method".

⁴ Brousse, M. (2002), *Le Judo, son histoire, ses succès*, préface de Jacques Rogge, Paris: Liber, 212 p. Édition revue et augmentée. This book was written for the celebration of the 50th anniversary of the French Judo Fed.

⁵ Gunji Koizumi (1885 –1965), was a Japanese master of judo who introduced this martial art to the United Kingdom, and came to be known as the 'Father of British Judo'. He was the founder of the Budokwai.

⁶ G. Koizumi knew Dr. Feldenkrais as a Judoka – a student, a teacher and a scientist. He appreciated Moshe's contribution to the Judo community. Quoting from Koizumi's forward to Higher Judo: "Dr. M. Feldenkrais has made a serious study of the subject, himself attaining Black Belt efficiency. He has studied and analyzed Judo as a scientist in the light of the laws of physics, physiology and psychology, and he reports the results in this book which is enlightening and satisfying to the scientific mind of our age. Such a study has been long awaited and is a very valuable contribution to the fuller understanding and appreciation of the merits of Judo. Dr. Feldenkrais, with his learned mind, keen observation and masterly command of words, clarifies the interrelation and the intermingled working of gravitation, body, bones, muscles, nerves, consciousness, subconscious and unconsciousness and opens the way for better understanding."

⁷ T.P. Leggett – The first Chairman of the European Judo Union. Notes from the First General Meeting of the European Judo Union - July 26th 1948: The election of officers resulted in Leggett being appointed Chairman and Lt. Thieme of Holland as Vice-Chairman. The next move was to form a Judo Council (a technical body as opposed to the General Committee). Those elected were: Mr. G. Koizumi, Dr M. Feldenkrais, Mr. P. Bonnet-Maury, Mr. E. Mossop, Mr. T.P. Leggett. France intervened with the suggestion that each of the important judo countries should be represented on the Council. As Chairman, Leggett pointed out that the purpose of the Council was not to represent national interests but to be composed of real judo experts.

At that time Moshe was a man with no country (Moti Nativ).

⁸ Dr. Michel Brousse, "The encounter of these two men [Kano and Feldenkrais] is a decisive moment in the history of Judo in France. The relationship of mutual esteem united the two men. Feldenkrais reoriented the teaching of jujutsu in France." (Translated from French).

⁹ Judo books by Moshe Feldenkrais: A.B.C. du JUDO (1938), JUDO – the Art of Defense and Attack (1941), Higher Judo (1951)

¹⁰ Self-defense books by Moshe Feldenkrais: Jiu-Jitsu and Self-Defense (1930), Practical Unarmed Combat (1942)

¹¹ Dr. Mike Callan (m.callan@chi.ac.uk) - Holds the judo grade of 7th Dan. The President of the International Association of Judo Researchers, and a Scientific and Didactic Expert for the European Judo Union. He founded the Richard Bowen Judo Archive at the University of Bath.

¹² The Budokwai (武道会 The Way of Knighthood Society) in London is the oldest Japanese martial arts club in Europe and the first judo club in Europe. It was founded in 1918 by Gunji Koizumi. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Budokwai>

¹³ "Turning Point" – foreword by Moti Nativ to Higher Judo: Groundwork (2010).

¹⁴ Foreword to Thinking and Doing (2013), were chapters that Feldenkrais added to the original. These chapters were published in the English translation in 2013 and appeared in the original translation into Hebrew in 1929.

¹⁵ Kōdōkan Goshin Jutsu (講道館護身術) is the Judo skills of self-defense. This is a set of prearranged self-defense forms in Judo. It is the most recent kata of Judo, having been formally created in 1956. It consists of several techniques to defend oneself from: unarmed attack, attack with a dagger, with a stick, and with a gun.

¹⁶ M. Feldenkrais, The Master Moves, Lesson One: Twisting to the Floor, page 38.

¹⁷ Balance: Judo, as a combative art, or a means of mental and physical training, or of moral and spiritual education, fundamentally evolves on the principle of balance, as do all things in the universe. In action, balance must be retained: yet to achieve an object, one must run the risk of losing it.

¹⁸ Myamoto Musashi (1584-1645), The Book of Five Rings (五輪書 *Go Rin no Sho*)

¹⁹ <http://www.bujinkan->

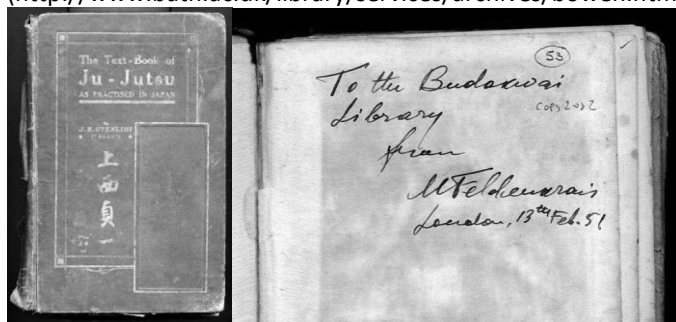
[israel.co.il/image/users/46250/ftp/my_files/PDF/The Paradox Of Unstable Stability 2015.pdf?id=21135740](http://www.bujinkan-israel.co.il/image/users/46250/ftp/my_files/PDF/The_Paradox_Of_Unstable_Stability_2015.pdf?id=21135740)

²⁰ Stability from ABC du Judo (1938) – “In physics one distinguishes two kinds of balance: stable and unstable balance. A book lying on a table, or a stick or man lying down is simple examples of stable balance. . . . Unstable balance occurs when the center of gravity is high but directly above its support. . . . Such balance is easily broken up; the body falls into a stable equilibrium position. . . . This very simple scientific fact is the very basis of judo. It is perfect knowledge of balance, the manner of breaking it and of recovering it which enables the jujitsian to throw the opponent to the ground with ease without using “force” in the usual sense of the term” (translated from French).

²¹ Higher Judo, Chapter 1 – Judo Practice, page 21 – 28.

²² Gigoro Kano - <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Judo>

²³ Moshe presented the book to his teacher Koizumi when he left for Israel in 1951. You can find it, with Moshe’s dedication to the Budokwai, in the Bowen collection treasured at Bath University (<http://www.bath.ac.uk/library/services/archives/bowen.html>).



²⁴ Takuan, The Unfettered Mind: Writings from a Zen Master to a Master Swordsman

²⁵ M. Feldenkrais, The Potent Self, Chapter 12- Correct Posture, pp 108-126

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