

EXCHANGE

Volume 16, Number 1

February 2008

G.R.O.W.
ATI KEYNOTE ADDRESS
October 21, 2007
Spanish Point, Ireland
Jamee Culbertson

G.R.O.W.

The theme for our conference this year is *Celebrating Our International, Multi-Cultural Diversity*. So, let's celebrate each other and ATI for a moment - yea! What a wonderful focus. The world, as well as this room, is full of people with different orientations, differing cultural, economic, racial, religious and ethnic backgrounds.

When I think about diversity I ask myself, "What sets us apart and what brings us together?" For both opposing and attracting influences, the yin and yang of the universe is always operating.

ATI defines itself as that which embraces the diversity of an international Alexander community and works to encourage international dialogue. The underlying tone of ATI is that *a diversity of perspectives is welcome*.

More often than not, it's easier to agree with someone. Would you agree? Agreements can surely bring us together. Yet, if each of us has an open mind *differences* can bring us together. Yet differences can also send us apart if we perceive reality from only our own individual perspectives. Learning to relate to one another despite *and* because of our differences is what allows us grow.

I was able to go to see the Zen Buddhist monk, Thich Nhat Hanh, a teacher, author and peace activist who had once been nominated by Martin Luther King, Jr. for the Nobel Peace Prize. He came to give a

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ATI Vision and Mission

To establish an open means of global communication for people to discuss, apply, research, and experiment with the discoveries of F.M. Alexander.

To foster the use of the F.M. Alexander Technique in social and environmental interrelationships.

To create a vital organization whose structure and means of operation are consistent with the principles of the F.M. Alexander Technique.

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From the Chair

Jennifer Mizenko
ATI Chair

January 14, 2008

In preparation to write my first “From the Chair” for *Exchange*, I have been taking several steps. These steps have included:

1. Procrastination
2. Reading other “From the Chair” essays
3. Pondering the future of ATI
4. Pondering my own future
and
5. Procrastination...again.

And then I stopped to consider, what does it mean — “From the Chair?” I guess I could go with the expected approach of “this is an official note from the new chairperson.” But that seems too stuffy for me.

So I decided to take a very literal approach ... from *my* chair... where I am in relation to the Alexander Technique and Alexander Technique International as I sit in this chair sharing my thoughts with all of my colleagues and peers around the world?

Here’s where I am –literally – in the moment –sitting in this chair ...

I sit at a precipice between completing an academic sabbatical leave and beginning a new semester.

I sit at the beginning of a new year, 2008, working on “letting go” of 2007, and “getting out of my own way” to go forward into 2008.

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EXCHANGE

ExChange is published three times per year by Alexander Technique International (ATI), the purpose of which is to promote and advance the F. Matthias Alexander Technique. *ExChange* is designed to disseminate information regarding the Technique to ATI members and the public.

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ExChange welcomes corrections, comments, and submissions. For publication, submissions in electronic format (as email or Word file attachment) are preferred. Contact: The Editor, ExChange at ati-exchange@ati-net.com.

I sit at the beginning of a new relationship with ATI. Since joining ATI in 2003, I have been mostly on the outer edge of the spiral. Now it seems I am completely in the center. And let me tell you, the view is very different.

So what is it that I want to share, from this chair, with all my colleagues and peers around the world?

Well –I had to laugh when I was considering a quote for this message, and found that Cathy Madden had already used it in the February 2004 *ExChange*. Ah, but what the heck! It's a quote I've been reading every day since January 1, bringing me into the adventure of 2008. So here it goes...

Fluid as melting ice. Do you have the patience to wait till your mud settles and the water is clear? Can you remain unmoving until the right action arises by itself? If you realize that all things change there is nothing you will try to hold onto. Less and less will you need to force things.

Lao Tzu (translated by Stephen Mitchell)

Thus, I want to share the following thoughts and hopes:

It is my hope that patience and principle will guide me and all ATI members in all of our activities, discussions and actions.

It is my hope the right actions will arise, when it is time.

It is my hope that our progression forward arises by itself, through acknowledging the inevitability of change, and the release of habit.

It is my hope that I will grow with ATI in this New Year, and that we will all flow like melting ice into the future.

Happy New Year!

From *this* chair – Jennifer Mizenko

Alexander Technique International

For membership information, please contact the Administrative Secretary, Linda Hein, at the address below or by email at: ati-usa@ati-net.com.

ATI general membership: \$60 per year.
Teaching membership: \$135 per year.
Trainees: \$30 per year. Membership includes a subscription to *ExChange*.
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talk in Boston recently. Since then I've thought about something that he said — that the root of all hate, anger, fear, suffering and despair was '*wrong perception.*' Remove wrong perception and we come together in understanding. Without discovering what the wrong perception is, we will tend to want to punish by being silent, closed, or unkind.

ATI is known for providing the space in which an international community of people can come together to share, learn, and witness from each other's experience and growth. All are welcome. ATI's membership attempts to run the organization guided by the principles of Mr. Alexander. Can it be done we ask?

I once knew a woman who knew a lot about diversity. Being a pioneer in the musical field, she was the first African-American hired onto the staff of the Metropolitan Opera.

She is America's first internationally renowned African-American classical vocal coach for concert, oratorio, and opera as well as a distinguished arranger and interpretive authority on Negro Spirituals. Her name is Sylvia Olden Lee. I first met Mrs. Lee when I had the opportunity to interview her for a video documentary about her life.

Mrs. Lee was a teacher and a trainer for world-acclaimed singers, such as Elisabeth Schumann, Paul Robeson, Dorothy Maynor, Jessye Norman, and Kathleen Battle. Her appearance on PBS Television with Kathleen Battle and Wynton Marsalis was called a fascinating critical interaction between artists and teacher.

As a singing coach on the staff of the Metropolitan Opera House in New York she encouraged the Met to invite Opera singer Marian Anderson to perform. In 1955, Anderson became the first black person to sing on that stage.

Being the first, a pioneer, is never an easy thing to do. Some people who end up being the first to carve a road where no one has gone before aren't really focused on being the first with all the prize that comes along with that. They are simply trying to live their dreams like all of us try to do.

F. M. Alexander was doing the same thing when he carved a new road, in attempting to live out his dream of being an actor, and in trying to improve his stage performance when he encountered vocal problems.

Mrs. Lee was a musician and a teacher who simply wanted to do just that, play music and teach. Lo! Did she let the color of her skin deter her

when no non-white person before her had performed, coached, or accompanied Opera singers on the professional stage? And, Lo! Did Mr. Alexander let the doctors tell him nothing was wrong, and that nothing could be done but to rest his voice for its return. Yet, there was something wrong, and the problem was never resolved by rest alone. And so, on he went, unfettered by the limited knowledge within the medical community of his time. Rather, he was impressed to find out why the loss of his voice kept occurring, and how to prevent it, so he could get back on stage and act, to live his dream of being an actor. Little did he know at the time that he would affect generations of people with his findings.

Oh, if the two of these pioneers had met, Mrs. Lee and Mr. Alexander!

Sylvia Olden Lee was also invited to play at the White House for the inauguration of the 32nd President of the United States, Franklin D. Roosevelt.

She has also been honored by the United Nations, and by the National Women's Hall of Fame.

In my interview with Mrs. Lee she said she had a message for the UN, in the form of an acronym that she had made up. Mrs. Lee past away last year and I don't know if she was ever able to get her message to the UN after all. So, I thought the least I could do is to explore it's meaning and present this acronym to the membership of ATI, a global organization that works to promote international dialogue. We are not the UN by any means, but united nonetheless in our desire to explore and share our experiences with the F.M. Alexander Technique worldwide.

I bring this message to you to demonstrate just how big a vision Mrs. Lee and Mr. Alexander carried throughout their lives, and just how big a vision I think that ATI has the potential to manifest; a vision inside a vision actually, one that asks to be explored consciously.

Yet, how does one live up to a vision that has not been done before, when there are no predecessors, no examples to use as models? I've never heard of a non-profit organization that is consistent with what we teach, or a business or corporation being run on Alexander principles.

So, how do the members of ATI run an organization governed by the principles of the F.M. Alexander Technique? In the beginning we mused...run an organization with concepts and principles that we apply to ourselves as individuals... and do it collectively? Well, hmm, it just might be possible!

So far we've promoted international dialogue as individuals engaged with

what we are learning and teaching- coming together to share our sameness, and our differences, and our open-hearted curiosity.

The acronym I mentioned that Mrs. Lee wanted to bring to the UN is this:

G.R.O.W.

GOLDEN - RULE - ONE - WORLD

It has a three fold meaning:

- 1. Golden Rule**
- 2. One World**
- 3. Growth**

G.R.O.W.

Golden Rule

The Golden Rule states: “*Do unto others as you would like them to do unto you,*” or, simply stated, “treat others as you would like to be treated.” This statement has global understanding.

In 1883, when F.M. Alexander was 14 years old, The Parliament of the World’s Religions proclaimed the Golden Rule as the common principle for many religions. A Declaration of Agreement was signed by more than 200 leaders from over 40 different faith traditions and spiritual communities.

But this agreement is more than a religious matter. I heard a Taoist Master, named Mantak Chia, recently say: “*Even if you don’t believe in God we still have a spirit to deal with.*” While agreements can cause ease, differing points of view can cause tension. Mr. Alexander himself said: “*We translate everything, whether physical, mental, or spiritual into muscular tension.*”

The Golden Rule describes a *behavior* of mutual respect for one’s neighbor. It’s an attempt at living a life treating all people with consideration, not just members of one’s own in-group. It’s an essential basis for human rights.

The Great Law of Peace says:
“*Respect for all life is the foundation.*”

A Native American Leader named Black Elk said:
“*All things are our relatives; what we do to everything, we do to ourselves.*”

The Dalai Lama says:

“If you want others to be happy, practice compassion. If you want to be happy, practice compassion.”

The golden rule is an expression of kinship. Amid the wide diversity of humans, it's a symbol of the process of growth. Whoever practices the golden rule opens himself or herself to a process of change. This process of change is a letting go of the self as a singular identity that can allow for a gradual transformation to take place, one that can bring a bright lightness to the individual and to the planet.

As I began to explore Mrs. Lee's idea of growth I began to wonder if Mr. Alexander ever said anything similar, since in order to be effective when giving an Alexander lesson one can only give what one is living in that moment.

I looked around and found the following within the ATI Professional Development Committee's comprehensive report. This is an excerpt from Part A, #II:

Alexander believed that his Technique was one of “education in the widest sense of the word, in that it deals with the control of human reaction.” (Universal Constant in Living, p. 37). He believed that true change in people's behaviour would come about only if people learned to use the principles of his Technique. He believed that by learning and using his Technique people could prevent themselves from reacting in an unconscious, habitual way, and instead make new conscious choices about how to respond to any situation.

It goes on to say:

Although other techniques may include some of the concepts, the Alexander Technique is the only method of improving human use and functioning which:

*(1) teaches an indirect method of consciously preventing interference with one's best use and functioning,
and*

(2) the only method where its teachers consciously use these principles at the same time they are teaching the Technique to others.

Aha, the Alexander Golden Rule! *“It's the only method where its teachers consciously use these principles at the same time they are*

teaching the Technique to others.”

Although, Mr. Alexander might have stated his version of the Golden Rule differently, I chuckle to think that Mr. Alexander might have said: “*Undo unto others as you would like them to Undo unto you.*”

This is also reflected in another version of the Golden Rule from Judaism that says:

When a man asked Hillel to teach him the whole Torah while he stood on one foot, outside Hillel’s door, Hillel replied, ‘Do not do unto others as you would not want done unto yourself. This is the whole Torah, the rest is only commentary. Go, learn it.’

It was nearly 125 years ago that over 200 world leaders from over 40 different traditions and communities around the world agreed that the underlying principle of the Golden Rule is something that *they all have in common*. We can all benefit from continuing to open our hearts and minds to recognize our sameness and especially our differences, to learn more about one another, and gain deeper understanding.

So, how does this translate into running an organization called ATI?

Well, I think it translates into ‘people,’ into individuals within a collective. But I’d like to see this collective also looking outward. Out towards those people and communities that have not heard about the Alexander Technique and what we have to offer.

G.R.O.W.

One World

In one of Alexander’s books entitled *Constructive Conscious Control* he wrote:

We had only to come to a full stop, and return to conscious simple living, believing in the unity of all thing.

In Taoism, the principle of the duality of yin and yang sprang from what they call Wu Chi, the oneness of all creation.

Psycho-physical unity is one of Alexander’s main concepts within the work. I don’t know if the word holistic was used in his day, but I think it is a meaningful term to describe the indivisible nature of mind and body, spirit and ecology.

When I first joined ATI, it was at that first meeting in Maryland back in 1992 when Eckart Schoff first suggested the name *Alexander Technique International*. At that time I was in my second year of training, and I thought the Alexander Technique was the best thing I'd found since learning to ski down a mountain or ride a bicycle, so I wanted to get to know and support a growing international community. Many of the visiting teachers during my training at the Center in Cambridge, Massachusetts with Tommy Thompson were from other countries and offered differing ways to convey the same ideas. This was at first liberating for me – “Wow, I can find my own way!” And then I thought, “Oh boy, I have to find my own way,” and that thought was a bit scary at the time!

In Alexander's book, *The Universal Constant in Living*, Patrick McDonald, a student of Alexander's, and trainer in Europe, wrote the forward and quoted from the Tao Te Ching:

The Way that can be told is not the real Way. The Name that can be spoken is not the real Name.

As both students and teachers, what we can rely on is that there *is* a 'Way,' and that there are a variety of places to go to learn the way of the Alexander Technique. The Technique is very specific, and very clearly asks for a demonstration that one understands the Technique, in order to convey the availability of improving one's 'Use' to a student. It is in conveying one's understanding that we find variances.

This is the wonderful level of diversity that exists for all of us. That we can each take in the teaching and the information in different ways. Some people have a dominant way of understanding through movement, and others receive information and learn by means of an intellectual or spiritual bent. Still, the same principles are only being offered through different styles: same principles, different styles.

G.R.O.W.

Growth

Growth is a natural event. David Gorman used to say, “We're born and we begin learning, we are learners, it's that natural. It happens unconsciously as a person engages wholeheartedly in the experiences of life.”

When we're engaged through our spirit, love enters in. When we are engaged through love, our emotional reactions are more spontaneous, and

we express the wisdom of affection and appreciation for everyone we meet.

Alexander also said: *“Every single thing we are doing in the work is exactly what is being done in Nature... the difference being that we are learning to do it consciously.”*

In the process of growth, nature will take us through several phases that I liken to the cycle of the seasons.

It was in the springtime of 1992 that ATI was established. And springtime is a time of sprouting, when we begin to see growth: *“A-ha! We have increased membership! The charter’s been established.”*

In summertime, our growth surges, *“Whoa! What a flurry! We have committees, publications, and public recognition!”*

Then Indian summer comes, bringing on a time of harvest and change, *“Wow! We’ve grown beyond our dreams with members from more than 19 countries.”*

And then it’s autumn, a time of returning. We reap what we have sown and gather again to reflect on the previous cycles, *“We’ve come a long way. Is it time to re-invent?”*

In winter we slow down to reflect. We rest and we dream, *“What might ATI truly become? What do we go to from here?”*

ATI is now 15 years old, some would liken it to a maturing teenager. We have much that we can celebrate for what we have been able to accomplish so far. Yet, we’ll need to continually take a fresh look, to implement refreshed strategies to meet our goals; for growth of freedom in thought and action.

In closing, I’d like to remember one of our members in the following way, for he too was a pioneer, Mr. Buzz Gummere. He had a wonderful sense of humor and touched all of our hearts in the ways that he encouraged all of us to grow and explore and learn from each other, knowing first hand that F.M. also did the same thing by sharing his Technique.

I smile to think that Mrs. Lee, Mr. Alexander and Mr. Buzz Gummere have now met, and are enjoying a good cup of tea together. In recognition of all our sameness, in the end what matters most is that a

person has a good sense of humor and a good heart, no matter what our differences.

Buzz, like each of us, was a pioneer in the “Use of the Self.” We are all pioneers on a road called consciousness. For each of us has a road within, not yet taken.

With all my heart, I want to wish you all a good journey. And, to all of us, a good journey together.

Thank you.

“The right thing does itself.” F.M. Alexander

From the Editor

My predecessor, Andrea Mathews, established an impressive record during her tenure as editor of *ExChange*. She has now decided to focus her considerable strengths on other opportunities. With the present issue I take over as the new editor, gently guided through the transition by Andrea, Debi Adams and Linda Hein. Also, I wish to thank the Information Technology staff of Hendrix College, especially Karen Fraser and her able student assistant, the imperturbable Derek Cash.

I hope that you will find stimulating reading in this first issue for 2008. James Culberson’s keynote address from the AGM at Spanish Point exhorts us all to share with one another our reflections, experiences and conundrums. In that spirit I invite you to submit your ideas to me to be considered for publication in future issues.

You will note that, not only the new chair, Jennifer Mizenko, from the University of Mississippi, but I, your new editor, from Hendrix College, Arkansas, are both resident west of the Mississippi, though the main US office remains in Cambridge, Massachusetts. We hope to maintain the high standards established by those whose shoulders we stand upon, and to prove worthy of the goals described in James Culberson’s rousing address. Look forward to hearing from you.

Eric Binnie, editor
e-mail: binnie@hendrix.edu

Remembering Spanish Point

Gabriele Breuninger recalls the excitement of arriving at Spanish Point and meeting up with old friends for the AGM. Several members shared and collaborated on a number of short poems, limericks, and even a haiku.

1. Aries (*The Ram*)

AGM of ATI
It's not long ago we said good bye
Happy not to gain an end
We aries like the time we spend

2. Taurus (*The Bull*)

A group in territory unknown
Inhibited eating a scone
They chose not to have jam
But had plenty of ham
Which they chewed right down to
the bone

3. Gemini (*The Twins*)

Our birthday gives summer a start
Our loving will open your heart
The days are the longest
Our passions the strongest
Lightening our life is our Art

4. Cancer (*The Crab*)

Sea the ocean
The breath of life
From birth
We crawl up the spine
Free to flow
Forward and up

5. Leo (*The Lion*)

Lions on an isle
Roaring so everyone can hear
Coming together (3 with the same
birthday)
Sharing our sun

6. Virgo (*The Virgin*)

At our annual splash (ATI),
Our spirits are pleasantly high,
Holed up in a joint
Upon Spanish Point -
So here is to mud in your eye!
(raise glasses)

7. Libra (*The Scales*)

A teacher from ATI
Was terribly horribly shy
He hated rhymes
And having good times
but -
He didn't stiffen his neck-
So it was OK

8. Scorpius (*The Scorpion*)

On a cliff overlooking the sea
Four scorpions met there with glee
Soon will be full moon
If you sing our tune
Then soon all your necks will be
free

9. Sagittarius (*The Archer*)

We are the group of the archers
We'd like to extend your our
faillte
To those who came by sea
For breakfast, lunch and tea
To those who came by land
To mystical Ireland
To those who came by air
To attend this magnificent affair

10. Capricornus (*The Sea-goat*)

On the waves of the ocean
We teachers set in motion
A desire for change
Within our range
This is our real devotion

11. Aquarius (*The Water-bearer*)

Spanish Point (Haiku)

Once again this year
Ireland beckons to us
We come to the Point

12. Pisces (*The Fishes*)

There was a young girl from AT
Who joined a group by the sea
She learned how to sing
And dance in a ring
But mostly she learned how to BE

Academic Validation

At a time when an increasing number of ATI teaching members are to be found teaching credit-bearing Alexander Technique courses in colleges and universities, many such members find themselves wondering about the value of institutional credits that inevitably rely upon a considerable amount of written work, such as reflective journals and written exams. Most college administrators perceive a need for such written proofs of understanding. Yet what do these tests prove in relation to Alexander work? Certainly such college credits are not likely to be accepted by ATI (or any of its sister institutions) as anything other than testimony of a general familiarity with the major principles of the work. For individual colleges and universities it provides some pleasing variety of course offerings. For the students it might provide, at best, the start of a life-long engagement with the pursuit of a less faulty kinesthetic awareness.

At this juncture comes timely news of a major investigation of Alexander certification theories and practices in a study by Terry Fitzgerald, an Australian ATI member that has culminated in his being awarded the degree of Doctor of Education (Ed D) for his thesis entitled *The Future of Alexander Technique Teacher Education: Principles, Practices and Professionalism*. Undertaken through the Faculty of Education at the University of Technology, Sydney, this is the first known doctoral study of the profession to focus on AT teacher education. Terry graduated from Patrick Macdonald's training course in 1978. He was Director of the Sydney Alexander School, Teacher Training Program from 1996 to 2006.

The thesis abstract reads:

The practices of Alexander Technique (AT) teacher education throughout the world are still largely based on those initiated by F. Matthias Alexander in the 1930s and modified slightly by his successors. Through the lens of contemporary educational theory and Alexander's own holistic principles, this study examines whether these practices should continue in an era when the contingencies of professional education are very different from those of Alexander's time. No academically viable research has ever been conducted into the value of these practices, despite debates about them becoming increasingly contentious.

Over 75 years ago, John Dewey praised Alexander for being in the forefront of what scholars are now calling the emerging paradigm of learning. In line with this paradigmatic perspective, I argue for a research methodology that is consistent with both Dewey's pragmatism and Alexander's principles of body-mind continuity and practical reasoning. This conceptual work also posits exemplary US school teacher education as a cognate model for AT teacher education.

Using critical pragmatism as a subsidiary methodology, I analyze the mandatory time-specific practices of AT teacher education and conclude that these practices are not only anachronistic; they are also flawed to the extent they are devoid of qualitative assessment standards. As well, I critique one of Alexander's most respected texts and produce alternative readings that more clearly locate it in the emerging paradigm.

The empirical work then focuses on interview data gained by e-mail from twenty AT stakeholders worldwide, who were asked about their desires for the future of the field. I conclude that most of the research

participants would like the following practices introduced into AT teacher education world-wide: (1) flexibility of attendance, (2) qualitative standards for beginning teachers, and (3) qualitative standards for teacher educators. While uncertainty still remains about whether participants would completely give up the existing time-specific regulations, I suggest an attendance structure which incorporates the first of these findings.

Following a review of exemplary US scholarship in the field of school teacher education and an analysis of three sets of AT teaching standards currently in circulation, I propose a provisional set of beginning AT teaching standards modeled on the holistic wording of the California Standards for school teachers. These proposed standards incorporate the conclusions drawn from the critical and empirical work done earlier. Subject to usage and further research, they should meet expectations of stakeholders for teacher education practices that honor Alexander's principles and meet public demands for professional accountability.

For further information, please contact Terry Fitzgerald at:

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or write to him at

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Terry would like to thank again those ATI members who participated in the e-mail interviews.

Editor's Query

In the three little film clips that show FM teaching in his London studio there hangs a lovely painting on the wall behind him. Probably it is an oil painting. Unfortunately, few members of the first generation of trainees are still with us. They would have studied with the founder in that room, and would therefore have been very familiar with its furnishings. Whenever I see those film clips I am intrigued by the painting, and wonder if anyone might remember the name of the artist, its title or theme, and whether or not FM ever discussed his liking for that work of art. I'd appreciate any reminiscences about it.

[binnie@hendrix.edu]

Beyond Mind and Body—The Radical Notion of Psychophysical Unity

PART 2

This is a continuation of Amy Yeager’s study “Work in Process” that was last seen in Volume 15, Number 3 (October 2007).

Work in Process

This is the second part of the third article in a series based on what I’m calling the “process paradigm” — a way of understanding ourselves and our world in terms of processes (what is happening) instead of entities (what is present). The focus of this article is the concept of psychophysical unity.

Psychophysical unity is one of the key principles that separates the Alexander Technique from most other approaches to health and well-being, including many that are commonly labeled as “mind/body.” Part 1 of this article analyzed the conventional mind/body approach, including its inherent lack of unity and its focus on mental entities: states, objects, and characteristics (*see sidebar*). In Part II, I’ll flesh out this entity view in more detail and compare it with a process-based view of the mind. I’ll illustrate how these two contrasting sets of assumptions lead to different strategies for helping others to change the way they think, act, and experience themselves and their world. Only from a process perspective can we and our students fully embrace the idea of psychophysical unity.

The Entity Perspective

From an entity perspective, things that happen in specific instances give evidence of generally present, enduring entities. In a healthcare context, a symptom that occurs in a particular situation is seen as evidence of an enduring thing or state within the body (see Table 1).

For instance, if an individual feels pain every time he gets up from a chair, we’d assume the cause was a problematic physical entity such as a pulled muscle or strained ligament. This condition would be there whether or not the person made that specific movement. Attempts to solve the problem would focus on directly treating the entity (e.g., performing massage or surgery on a muscle or ligament). We don’t need to know anything about what caused the injury in order to

What are mental entities?

- Discrete realities that endure over some period of time
- Mental states, objects, or characteristics
- Examples: beliefs, desires, ideas, thoughts, intentions, concepts, delusions, phobias, emotions, personality traits

Table 1. The Entity Perspective

Health problems	Mental life
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Symptoms in specific circumstances are evidence of an underlying physical entity. • The entity is there regardless of the specific circumstances in which it shows up. • Understanding those circumstances isn’t necessary to understand the physical entity. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Responses and perceptual experiences in specific circumstances are evidence of an underlying mental entity. • The entity is there regardless of the specific circumstances in which it shows up. • Understanding those circumstances isn’t necessary to understand the mental entity.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Addressing the health problem involves directly addressing the physical entity • Treatment doesn’t vary depending on what caused the entity problem 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Changing an aspect of mental life involves directly changing the mental entity • Methods of change don’t vary depending on what caused that entity to develop

treat it, though we may use that information to advise the person on preventing future injuries.

Here’s the basic causal reasoning:

Physical ENTITY → SYMPTOM

Change or removal of physical ENTITY → SYMPTOM Relief

In the context of mental life, we’re looking not at symptoms but at a wide range of perceptual experiences and behavioral responses (including verbal responses). Within an entity framework, these are seen as evidence for mental objects or states. For instance, Table 2 shows three examples of responses and experiences that can be viewed as evidence for specific mental entities (all related to the neck.)

Table 2. Behavioral responses and perceptual experiences seen as evidence of mental entities		
Behavioral responses	Perceptual experiences	Mental entity
We ask a boy to point to his neck, draw a picture of a neck, or explain what the neck is, and his responses seem to all observers to be accurate.	When the boy is asked to think about the neck, he hears the words “the part of the body connecting the head to the torso” (<i>auditory experience</i>) or pictures an image of his own neck (<i>visual experience</i>)	Concept or mental representation of the neck
When a woman is asked about her neck pain, she says, “I’m just stuck with this,” and falls into a slouch. She does not seek any therapeutic help for her neck pain.	When the subject of neck pain comes up, this woman feels a sinking sensation in her chest and a sense of emptiness behind her sternum. (<i>sensory experience</i>) If asked what she’s feeling, the word that comes to mind is “hopelessness.” (<i>auditory experience</i>)	Belief that the neck pain will never get better
When a man hears that his friend’s neck is hurting, his automatic response is to offer a quick Alexander lesson (or a massage, manipulation, muscle relaxant, or some other intervention). Or maybe his automatic response is to say, “How can I help?”	In talking to his friend, this man feels an impulse to place his hand on her neck. (<i>sensory/kinesthetic experience</i>)	Desire or intention to help relieve the friend’s neck pain

By taking the entity view in each of these instances, we’re assuming that some mental state or object is causally responsible for what the individual says, feels, does, or perceives. If we wanted to get the person thinking, feeling, or acting differently, we’d probably try to change the entity directly. To instill a new belief about neck pain, we might suggest repeating the affirmation: “My neck pain can change.” For this purpose, it wouldn’t really matter to us how that belief developed or what was going on at each moment when that belief seemed to be affecting the person’s experience.

Mental ENTITY → BEHAVIORS AND EXPERIENCES

Change or removal of mental ENTITY → Different BEHAVIORS AND EXPERIENCES

Another assumption here is that mental entities exist independently from the results they cause. For instance, an ability to draw a picture of a neck is seen as evidence for an ever-present concept or representation; drawing

pictures just helps us find out about it. The same is true for a belief that neck pain will never go away. Unpleasant perceptual experiences and the statement, “I’m just stuck with this” provide evidence of that underlying entity, which would exist whether or not we asked the person about it.

The Process Perspective

The process approach offers a less familiar and perhaps counterintuitive perspective. From a process point of view, we can’t fully understand any physical or psychological changes without considering the specific contexts in which they happen. With the example of a man who feels pain getting out of a chair, we’d look at the specific processes that precede, trigger, and accompany the act of standing up. Even if we do identify some sort of lesion in his body, only by looking at processes can we figure out how that lesion got there, why it’s not healing, and how (or if) it’s

contributing to pain. And there may not be a lesion at all. Imagine someone who was involved in a car accident while not wearing a seatbelt, and was thrown forward toward the windshield. Rising from a chair may cause a similar kinesthetic experience, triggering an involuntary bracing response. Or, for whatever reason, at some point during the standing process the person may dorsiflex his head, jutting his chin forward — which in turn compresses his spine and strains his back.

Take a look at how process-based causal reasoning might look:

STIMULUS → [affects] → ongoing Psychophysical PROCESSES → [leading to] → Ongoing EFFECTS

Specifically, what happens is:

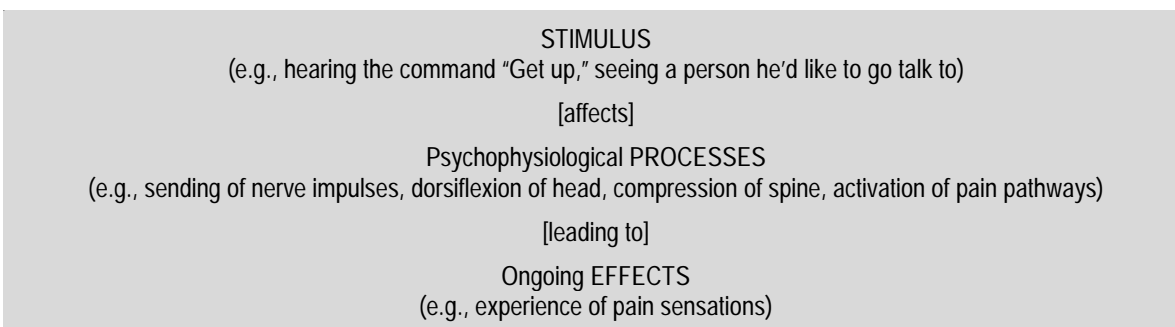


Table 3. The Process Perspective

Health problems	Mental life
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It’s impossible to fully understand symptoms outside the specific circumstances in which they occur. • At best, a physical entity is one part of a larger explanation of how psychophysical processes unfold. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It’s impossible to fully understand behavioral responses or perceptual experiences outside the specific circumstances in which they occur. • At best, a mental entity is one part of a larger explanation of how psychophysical processes unfold. Moreover, there are probably no mental entities that correspond precisely to most of the terms we currently use (belief, intention, concept, etc.).
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Addressing the health problem involves intervening in the processes contributing to symptoms • Similar symptoms in different individuals may have different historical causes that lead to different processes; each of these may require a somewhat different intervention. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Changing an aspect of someone’s mental life involves intervening in the relevant responses to various external and internal stimuli • Similar responses in different individuals may have different historical causes that lead to different processes; as a result, changing each of their behaviors and experiences may require a somewhat different intervention.

If we're not looking at the context in which the pain occurs (the act of getting up), we're not getting the full picture. We may be able to identify and heal some strained muscles or ligaments, but that wouldn't alter the underlying cause of the problem. It's likely that the same problematic psychophysical processes would lead to a different set of problems in the future. To devise a successful and lasting intervention, we'd need to focus on interrupting the habitual psycho-physical processes involved in standing. Notice that the two different possibilities mentioned here — one an involuntary bracing response stemming from a car accident, the other a habitual movement pattern — may involve very different processes, and therefore may respond to different types of intervention.

STIMULUS
(may remain unchanged)
PROCESSES
need to be changed in order
to bring about
EFFECTS
that are different from the ones
habitually experienced

We can apply this same type of thinking to mental entities, looking very carefully at the processes occurring before and during the relevant perceptual experiences or behavioral responses. Consider the belief that neck pain will never go away. There are many, many people who can be said to share this belief. They all have different life histories — including experiences with neck pain, other types of pain, healing processes, and success and disappointment. As a result, the psychophysical processes involved in expressing their beliefs may vary a great deal. When asked a question about his neck pain, one of these people might feel sad, as his shoulders round, his chest sinks, and he starts thinking about all the parts of his life that are going badly. Someone else might feel anxious and afraid, as her neck and back muscles tighten, and she begins worrying about what might make the neck pain worse. Another person might feel angry and frustrated, and yet another might “check out” or dissociate, losing touch with all sensation except for the pain. Each one of these people might say the same thing — “My neck pain will never go away” — but the processes that precede, trigger, accompany, and follow that statement will differ dramatically from person to person. Some of them may think about their neck pain all the time, while others hardly ever reflect on it.

What all of these people have in common is that they say the same words in response to one particular stimulus: a question about their neck pain. They may also tend to talk or think about their neck pain in similar ways. Beyond this, however, there may be no similarity. There is no reason to think that they all share some specific *thing*, a mental entity in their head corresponding to a belief about neck pain. Take a look at the causal reasoning here.

STIMULUS
(hearing a question about neck pain)
[affects]
PROCESSES
(activity in a wide variety of neurophysiological pathways — perceptual, sensory, musculoskeletal, verbal, etc.)
[leading to]
EFFECTS
(contraction or release of specific muscles; various perceptual/sensory experiences; verbal responses, including “My neck pain will never go away.”)

The psychophysical processes that follow a question on neck pain will always be somewhat different for different people. As a result, what changes one person's mind about the prospect of healing may do nothing to change another's. For someone who just got a bad prognosis from their doctor but otherwise thinks

optimistically, just a short conversation may help change pessimistic patterns of thinking. For someone whose pessimism is triggered by an experience of deep despair and hopelessness that has recurred regularly for decades, it will not be so simple.

Naturally, if everyone's neck pain went away, it's reasonable to assume all of them would change this particular belief. That is to say, they would all stop speaking and behaving in ways that suggest their neck pain will never go away. But as soon as a new pain or another health issue arose, we'd be likely to see similar psychophysical responses come up (one person feeling sad, others feeling fearful, angry, or dissociated, etc.), leading to similar types of thinking ("I'm stuck with health problems," "This knee pain will never go away," etc.). Only by looking more deeply at such responses can we hope to create lasting, sustainable change.

How can differing processes lead to similar responses?

In the example just described, we saw that individuals who seem to share the same belief may have very different experiences, leading to very different psychophysical processes. Given these differences, we might wonder how it is that they wind up saying the same thing, "This neck pain will never go away" — not to mention other related similarities they might show (various patterns of thinking and talking about the neck, failure to seek help for their neck pain, etc.). One appeal of a mental entity (here, a belief) is that it can seem to account for this similarity: different people respond in the same ways because those actions are caused by a shared, underlying thing.

We may be even more inclined to look for an underlying shared entity in the case of concepts or mental representations. Consider the concept of the neck, as shared by three different people — a 5-year-old child, an Alexander teacher, and a chiropractor. When asked to point to their neck, they'll point to the same general area. When we point to a neck and ask them to identify the body part, they'll all say "neck." Within an entity framework, this could lead us to assume that they all must share the same concept or representation of "neck" in their heads. However, it's also possible to explain those responses entirely in terms of processes. The key is to look beyond the brain and consider how these individual's responses are influenced by external factors, including their physical, social, and linguistic environments.

These people's responses to neck-related questions or commands are shaped by a wide variety of past experiences — observing and moving their own bodies, observing other people's bodies, pointing to things, and so on. Because they live in the same world, their experiences will be largely comparable. They're all humans, surrounded by other humans who share the same anatomy and, to a large extent, the same language. None of them will have grown up around people who don't have necks, who don't have a kinesthetic sense of the location of their head in space, or who don't use words to refer to specific parts of their bodies. At an early age, they all participated in activities related to learning the names for things and telling those names to others. Throughout their lives, they have heard people talking about neck pain, or about what's on or around their necks, and so on.

To the extent that these people's experiences are the same, they will respond in the same ways to stimuli. To the extent that their experiences are different, their responses will differ. When told to think about a neck, the 5-year-old might imagine a picture of a giraffe; the Alexander teacher might recall a quotation from one of F.M.'s books or hear the mantra, "let my neck be free so that my head can move forward and up"; the chiropractor might get an image of the seven cervical vertebrae, or notice what's happening in her own spine at the moment. If asked to talk about vertebrae, about free movement of the neck, or about giraffes, each person would give different responses.

From this perspective, it makes sense to think more about what people can *do* (use their bodies or their words in particular ways) than about they *have* (concepts, ideas, representations). This will affect the way we teach new ideas or correct ideas that we know to be mistaken. Suppose we want to share some information we have about the neck with a student. We could do this through a variety of processes — verbal, visual, kinesthetic, etc. The type of processes we use will affect the student’s ability to process that information, integrate it with past experience, and use it to guide future psychophysical responses. Each individual may respond differently. In some cases, a verbal explanation may be sufficient to change how a person thinks, feels, and moves. In others, visual cues and repeated kinesthetic experiences may be required to achieve the same effect. We will never be able to leave a student with the same exact understanding of the neck that we have; without sharing all of our relevant life history, that’s just not possible. What matters is to figure out what neck-related things we want that person to be able to do or experience after a lesson, and to focus there.

The Potential for Unity

The process approach to the mind, as I’ve explained it here, may be difficult for many people to accept, or even to fully understand. It represents a radical departure from the perspective taken both by mainstream psychology and by most “mind/body” medicine, at least within the United States. However, it is only when we focus on processes that Alexander’s conception of psychophysical unity truly makes sense. From an entity point of view, the only way for the mind and body to interact is for mental things to affect physical things, and for physical things to affect mental things. From a process point of view, we can explain everything we do, and everything that happens to us, as integrated psychophysical happenings.

Whenever we’re presented with new information from the external world, it comes as a whole, not separated into mental parts (e.g., abstract ideas) and physical parts (e.g., hard objects); we are presented with all aspects of our environment all at once. And we respond as a whole, with changes in the activity of a wide range of neurophysiological (i.e., psychophysical) pathways — networks of nerves interacting with our blood vessels, vital organs, musculoskeletal structures, and other tissues throughout our bodies. Such changes shape the ongoing flow of our attention patterns, musculoskeletal movements, verbal behaviors (speaking), breathing, digestion, and countless other processes. These processes all interact with one another, and there’s no need to label any of them as purely “mental” or “physical.”

From this perspective, we shouldn’t be at all surprised to see links between patterns of thinking or feeling and so-called “physical” changes, because thinking and feeling are not isolated mental events. They are just some of the phenomena resulting from complex psychophysical processes that also have many other effects. So, for instance, when we see a correlation between anger and heart disease, this doesn’t mean that a mental state (anger) is having a negative influence on a physical thing (heart). Rather, the same psychophysical processes that contribute to conscious experiences of anger and behaviors associated with anger (including verbal self-reports on a diagnostic test) also lead to changes in the functioning of the heart. Likewise, it should come as no surprise when Alexander students report changes in their thinking or their emotional experiences as a result of hands-on work, because the processes we’re affecting are not merely physical.

Conclusion

The arguments I’ve laid out here are hardly the last word on the subject of mental states, objects, and processes. Providing a fully satisfactory resolution of this issue would amount to solving the “mind/body problem,” which has plagued philosophers for centuries and is far beyond the scope of this article. However, I hope that what you’ve read has encouraged you to think a little differently about mental life, mind/body approaches, and the concept of psychophysical unity.

Amy Yeager

Book Review

by Robert Rickover

What qualities make for a good written introduction to the Alexander Technique?

My own answer is that it should engage readers and entice them to find out more from a teacher. When I first heard about the Technique in the mid 1970s, Wilfred Barlow's *The Alexander Principle* served that function for me, despite the fact that I had trouble understanding large parts of it. I can vividly remember reading and re-reading chapters with great interest and then realizing I did not really understand what he was talking about. What I did get was that there was something important for me there, and I somehow knew it was important for me to learn more about it.

In recent years, Michael Gelb's *Body Learning* and Jeremy Chance's *The Alexander Technique* (sadly, the latter is now out of print, although used copies are often available from Amazon) are the two books I've been recommending to my students who want a book they can give to friends or family members who they think might benefit from lessons in the Technique. Now, I'll be adding Missy Vineyard's *How You Stand* to the top of my list.

How You Stand is really three books in one, accompanied with helpful charcoal drawings, aimed at three overlapping audiences. The first portion of the book is written primarily for readers who know little or nothing about the Technique and it does this better than any other book I know. In addition to a clearly-written and very appealing introduction to the Technique, Vineyard's book does something I've not see elsewhere: it uses detailed descriptions of portions of lessons from her teaching practice to illustrate key Alexander concepts like use and misuse, faulty sensory awareness, ends and means-whereby. This makes for an extremely effective method of getting these ideas across, particularly for those many readers who - like me 30 plus years ago - would have a hard time understanding an abstract, factual description.

The second part of the book is aimed at a much wider audience - readers new to the Technique, students of the Technique and even Alexander teachers. Vineyard has very interesting and well thought out ideas about inhibition and direction that differ in some ways from traditional Alexander teaching. In this section she uses these as the basis for several simple "exercises" designed to teach the reader how to inhibit and direct.

I can picture the reaction of many Alexander Technique teachers to this last sentence. Certainly my initial reaction was to be a bit skeptical. However, after experimenting with them on myself, and with some of my students, I can say they are remarkably effective. Throughout the book, Vineyard emphasizes the importance of seeking the help of a trained teacher. Nonetheless, I believe some readers will be able to learn useful directing and inhibiting skills by following her suggestions.

A particularly interesting chapter is titled "Believing Is Not Seeing." In it Vineyard gives a detailed account of a lesson with her son, a Little League baseball player who often struck out when he was at bat. The process she used to help him is easy to understand and was highly effective in improving his batting. I believe anybody with

the same issue could, with a bit of experimenting, achieve similar results. More importantly, it suggests an approach to inhibition that can be transferred to all sorts of sports and performance activities.

The final part, directed mainly at readers new to the Technique, covers the role of consciousness and touch in our society. There are also some Alexander-influenced exercises designed to help people strengthen their back muscles. I found this to be the least interesting part of the book, although I am sure others will find it very helpful.

Although I do have a few quibbles (see Notes below), I believe *How You Stand* is the best written introduction to the Alexander Technique available today. Alexander teachers, and students who are already taking lessons, will find much of value in this book.

Notes: 1) In a couple of places, Vineyard talks about our body's centers of gravity but I believe she has some of them incorrectly located. She locates the center of gravity of the leg at the knee when, in fact, it is above the knee, and places the center of gravity of the trunk further back and lower down than its actual location.

2) In her descriptions of Alexander's directions, she describes "forward and up" as a vector, combining aspects of "up" and "forward". From what I've seen and experienced elsewhere, this is the Walter Carrington take on directions. It differs significantly from that of many other teachers, including Patrick MacDonald and Marjorie Barstow, who thought of "forward" as a tendency of the head to *tilt* forward around the AO joint - because of the location of its center of gravity above and forward of that joint. Because this version of "forward" is not a linear direction, it cannot be part of a vector.

Missy Vineyard, *How You Stand, How You Move, How You Live: Learning the Alexander Technique to Explore Your Mind-Body Connection and Achieve Self-Mastery*. New York: Marlowe & Company, 2007.

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“The readiness is all.”

Shakespeare, Hamlet, 5, 2.

(This phrase was known to be one of F.M.'s favorite sayings.)

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Alexander Technique International (ATI) is a worldwide organization of teachers, students, and friends of the Alexander Technique created to promote and advance the work begun by F. Matthias Alexander.

ATI embraces the diversity of the international Alexander community and works to promote international dialogue.

About the Alexander Technique

Experience of the Technique has led to praise from George Bernard Shaw, Aldous Huxley, Prof. John Dewey, Sir Charles Sherrington, Julian Bream, John Cleese, Kevin Kline, Roald Dahl, Robertson Davies, and many others. It is taught at the Juilliard School of Performing Arts in New York, and the Royal College of Music and the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art in London, the Stratford Shakespeare Festival and the Shaw Festivals in Canada, Boston University, Brandeis University, and many other centers.

The common factor in all aspects of life is that how we are using ourselves—the way we do things—affects the result we get. The Alexander Technique is a means of improving that use. It has been called a “pre-technique” that people can apply to furthering their own special skills and activities. It is also essentially a preventive technique with which we can learn to improve and maintain our health.

The individual is the focus of the Alexander Technique. We are all unique, with different bodies, different experiences, and different problems. We go about the process of change in different ways and at different rates. For these reasons, what happens in an Alexander Technique lesson depends very much on the needs of the student at the time. In the basic sense, though, you will learn an attitude of not trying to gain your ends at any cost, and, at the same time, how to prevent your harmful habits that cause unnecessary stress and restrict your capabilities. Obviously, since what you are changing are patterns built up over many years, a permanent change will not be brought about overnight. However, the person who learns to stop and take time, to think constructively about how he or she uses him- or herself in everyday life, will find that this simple procedure can have far-reaching results.

Further information about the Alexander Technique can best be gained from a teacher near you (see the list at right for the nearest ATI office, or visit www.ati-net.com for teacher listings), as your changing experiences through lessons are the only real way to understand the nature of the work and what change is possible.

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