



THE WELLNESS SALON

Musings on wellness from Donna Simmons, Feldenkrais® practitioner

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“Movement is Life” - Moshe Feldenkrais

Having just returned from a trip to Greece (to see dear friends in Athens) that included visits to Delphi, Bassae, the western Peloponnese and the magical island of Thira (Santorini) I find myself reflecting on how MOVEMENT is displayed in classical Greek sculpture. Particularly at Delphi, home of oracles for so many centuries, figures represented in seemingly static materials (marble, bronze) continue to exhibit a powerful sense of motion. I was particularly struck by a photo taken of the unearthing of a figure of a Roman man in the early part of the 20th century – the workers standing around in their dungarees, leaning on their shovels, and this shining figure lying in the ground (it had been buried in an ancient earthquake). It was as if a portal had been opened to a former age. At the mystical site of Bassae, the temple of Apollo Epikourios (“Apollo the helper”) still stands, although it was subject to extensive vandalism (the ancient Greek iron used to reinforce the structure was a precious commodity during the Dark Ages) and had been stripped of its marbles by the British in 1812-1815 (you can apparently still see them in the British Museum). Nevertheless, the sense of motion is still there in the organization of the spaces, the column arrays, the orientation of the temple towards the mountains and the sea. At the excavation of Akrotiri (4th millennium BC) located on the northern slope of Thira, I was impressed not only by the resilience of the structures; (five thousand years and counting!) but also the sense of imminent movement in mosaics, on decorated vessels and amphorae, and in figures, some small enough to hold in your hand. Folds of cloth moving in a slight breeze across a torso, a hand that seems about to brush away a strand of hair, a chest that is rising and falling ...all movements that we see, but don't see unless we train ourselves to look. These movements, captured as it were in stone, are echoed by the constant movement of the cobalt blue sea, the wind in the olive trees, the procession of the sun across the powder blue sky...so much of nature echoing MOVEMENT.

I am reminded of the human paradox: we yearn for change yet we tend to remain the same. What is the root of the resistance to self-transformation, to change? Can it be the idea that somehow our past actions, our habits, our principles are endangered by movement? Is it just fear of the unfamiliar? Is it simple inertia?

In “The Potent Self”*, Moshe advises: “...the maturing process should never come to a standstill in any place of human activity if life is to be a healthy process. Maturity itself is a process and not a final state; it is the process whereby past personal experience is broken up into its constituent parts and the new patterns are formed out of them *to fit the present circumstances of the environment and the present state of the body.*” (emphasis mine)

Moshe asks us to embrace change, using past experience (i.e., wisdom – see my September newsletter) to judge and negotiate the present circumstance; whether it be a change in our container (the body) or the self (contents). Bring movement to your thoughts, cycling back and forth between the known and that which feels unknown or unfamiliar.

Namaste, Donna

p.s. It is autumn now, a time for reflection and awareness. Many of us experience changes in our bodies with the seasons, some noticeable, some less so. In any case, note the changes, accept them, and be easy with yourself.

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* “The Potent Self”, Moshe Feldenkrais, The Feldenkrais Institute, Harper and Row, 1985, 240pp.