

**The idea that you must survive in order to pride yourself of being a survivor
is one of the key secrets of survival.**

Judea Pearl, Father of Daniel Pearl Beheaded in Pakistan

Hope and survival

Baranovich in Belarus, where Moshe Feldenkrais grew up, was an important railway junction between Moscow and Warsaw, and Vilna and Lviv. The Russian headquarters was stationed there during WWI. In the spring of 1915, the young Moshe Feldenkrais witnessed the expulsion of Jews from Latvia and Lithuania passing by rail to Ukraine. Deeply moved, he wrote a letter of hope to the expelled children he saw at the station. This letter, published from his school notebook, reflects the importance of hope in difficult situations, a hope for a better future that was clearly influenced by his religious upbringing.

I am struck by how early he showed concern for his fellow man, a trait that later developed into a systematic approach to stimulating the elusive place in humans where hope is born and nourished.

A decade later, when he faced a daunting disability, everything changed overnight when his brain adapted. While such spontaneous changes do not occur in all brains, we know that attitude plays a crucial role. I argue that the ability to hope in challenging times is essential. Contributing to this nocturnal turnaround was his practice in self-hypnosis. He translated the textbook of Coué's teaching by Brooks, which his brother Baruch published in 1929. Moshe Feldenkrais expanded it with two chapters of his own in an epilogue named "The Thought and the Deed." He never abandoned these early formulations of thought, republishing them in 1977 and continuing until 1981.

The second of his two chapters is titled "Last in Deed, First in Thought," a stanza from a kabbalistic poem. It means that when God created the universe in seven days, He had already planned to create the sacred Sabbath from the start. God's plan is prediction. The day of rest is the fulfillment, giving meaning to the ability to cease, to inhibit, to play.

Yochanan Rywerant summarized the Feldenkrais model of learning with the statement "the image precedes the action." He had access to Hebrew sources and was a close associate and assistant to Moshe Feldenkrais.

In Moshe Feldenkrais's textbook for teaching groups, "Improving the Ability: A Theory That Can Be Put into Practice" from 1967, he concludes the first chapter "Our Self-Image/Personality/Character" with the heading "Systematic Character Improvement is More Effective than Improving Individual Actions." In the important chapter 5, "The Structure and Virtues of Its Function," Moshe Feldenkrais has not changed his thoughts about prediction, reusing the same stanza as a heading.
[which is completely lost in English translation]

I cite some of my newly translated headings from the Hebrew:

§9. Last in Deed, First in Thought

§10. Achievement Does Not Indicate Knowledge

§11. Awareness Correlates Between Intention to Achievement

The last sentence should once and for all dispel the misleading clichéd expression "awareness through movement." It is a correlative act that changes prediction. Thinking means new means for action.

February 20, 2025, By Eva Laser