Balancing at the Beginning of Words—Revisiting the Idea of Open Awareness in Qualitative Research

Helena Dahlberg

Abstract
In this article, my aim is to explain the phenomenological approach of openness in research. The understanding of open questioning is concerned with Merleau-Ponty’s analysis of the intimacy of siding with the world, and this relationship puts distinctive demands on researchers to be aware of the phenomena in the study. I also use the Feldenkrais approach that offers a body awareness practice that examines the border between humans and the world. The article shows how the phenomenological approach, together with the Feldenkrais practice, can guide researchers on the important road between nonverbal, lived experience and scientific, verbal activities.

Keywords
openness, bridling, body, Feldenkrais, phenomenology, qualitative research, methodologies, qualitative criteria, methods of inquiry

A Phenomenological Approach
My approach to research begins with the assertion that phenomenological philosophy is vital to every investigation that wants to meaningfully characterize and interpret human science issues that often are both multifaceted and convoluted. Integrating philosophical principles into qualitative research provides a way to interrogate and potentially reevaluate what we have taken for granted about everyday experiences and what we hold as true. I argue here that a fundamental role of phenomenological philosophy is to probe the relationship between researchers and the phenomena that we are investigating. The results of this endeavor can lead to research that is more open and sensitive to the phenomenon of study in that it guides researchers toward formulating important study questions and choosing the best methodological tools. In this article, building on previous analyses of phenomenological philosophy (Dahlberg, 2021; Dahlberg & Dahlberg, 2019a, 2019b, 2020), I further utilize phenomenological principles to explore the meaning of encountering a phenomenon in an open and questioning way, and by residing with the beginning of words.

The Beginning of Bridling
Beginning a research project, one wants to see a phenomenon in a new way and to understand its meaning. It implies research that includes seeing what has been hidden, or in other ways hard to find, since it is a part of our habits. A particular kind of openness is thus required; a kind of openness where we don’t jump into conclusions about what our senses tell us to believe. In previous analyses (Dahlberg et al., 2008; Dahlberg & Dahlberg, 2019a, 2019b, 2020), the concept of “bridling” has been used to illuminate the approach of openness in empirical research. The notion of bridling arises from Husserl’s investigations of perception and bracketing (Husserl, 1973/1948; Zahavi, 2005) and has been developed by including Merleau-Ponty’s description of radical questioning (Merleau-Ponty, 1995/1945, 1968/1964; Dahlberg, 2013; Dahlberg & Dahlberg, 2019a, 2019b, 2020). The bridling activity means an open and reflective attitude to the phenomenon throughout an entire research project. For example, bridling can facilitate to determine the best way to structure a project, apprehend the phenomenon in a unique way, find fruitful interactions with research participants, and carry out in-depth analysis of the data and comprehensive presentation of the results. From an epistemological perspective, bridling is a movement toward an original understanding of a phenomenon. The attitude

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involves both letting go and still being intentional; it includes problematizing the “natural attitude” of our everyday conceptualizations and understandings, and entails avoiding quick assumptions and accepted factual status of a phenomenon.

In this article, I want to further develop and describe how researchers can take the journey that begins by the open questioning attitude that we call bridling. I ask for embodied ontological principles and I am creating a patchwork between phenomenology and the Feldenkrais approach, and the body awareness has the power of strengthening the attitude of researching openness. Moreover, the Feldenkrais approach offers the ability to work practically with one’s own body and I translate it into philosophical understanding as well as research practice. Both the phenomenological and the Feldenkrais approaches put forward the idea of radically opening our understanding of a phenomenon through the beginning of words. Integrating such principles into research has the potential to influence the ability to describe or explain a phenomenon in a novel, more accurate, and more sophisticated manner than before. I am discussing how, and for what, the embodied methods are used.

The Beginning of Perception

Bridling belongs to the world of perception. The first moment of perception, according to Merleau-Ponty (1995/1945), is a passive action, that is, a state of being in which we say “yes” to world and what it can offer us. Merleau-Ponty’s understanding of perception is an experience that starts from a unique place in which the perceiver does not experience herself/himself initially as a subject:

Each time that I experience a sensation, I feel that it concerns not my own being, the one for which I am responsible and for which I make decisions, but another self which has already sided with the world, which is already open to certain of its aspects and synchronized with them. (Merleau-Ponty, 1995/1945, p. 251)

As Merleau-Ponty explains in this passage, the perceiver has already been siding with the world and this passive action constitutes a theme that is a part of every perception. We perceive the world where we are already in a relationship with it. Merleau-Ponty elucidates this idea of passive activity further by comparing the relationship between perception and perceiver with that of a person’s intent to sleep and the state of being asleep. When I’m trying to sleep,

. . . I am trying to breathe slowly and deeply in order to summon sleep, and suddenly it is as if my mouth were connected to some great lung outside myself which alternately calls forth and forces back my breath. A certain rhythm of respiration, which a moment ago I voluntarily maintained, now becomes my very being, and sleep, until now aimed at as a significance, suddenly becomes a situation. (Merleau-Ponty, 1995/1945, p. 246)

The message conveyed here is that instead of trying to sleep, one is embraced by the sleeping. Merleau-Ponty takes this one step further:

In the same way I give ear, or look, in the expectation of a situation, and suddenly the sensible takes possession of my ear or my gaze, and I surrender a part of my body, to this particular manner of vibrating and filling this space known as blue or red. (Merleau-Ponty, 1995/1945, p. 246)

At the start of every perception, this way of surrendering one’s body gives us the meaning of our perception, as blue or red. This way of seeing or hearing gives evidence of an original way of being, one in which we do not question our manner of perceiving. Instead, our perception is an affirmation; it is not a matter of choice. What Merleau-Ponty describes is that this way of perceiving doesn’t complete (or, end) the meaning of a phenomenon, instead it keeps on evolving. As human beings, our existence can be understood as taking place between this already understood and understanding anew (Dahlberg & Dahlberg, 2019b).

Merleau-Ponty’s interpretation about our human habits gives us the philosophical ground for understanding perception. A person inhabits (Fr. habite) the world, and the habituation makes our existence both limited and open for other perceptions. When a blind man moves his stick to feel the border of the street underneath him, his habit is part of moving and perceiving the world. The man doesn’t feel the stick, he feels the end of the road, or a stone that’s in the way of his walking. His stick is part of his body, and he’s moving toward his project. His movement limits him in the way that it is a “habit,” that is, a structure of not only moving himself, but it also makes him receptive for new things. His habit and movement open his world.

Merleau-Ponty (1995/1945) illustrates how our corporeality, that is, the lived body. is the zero point for our being (Husserl, 2000). We corporeally inhabit the world and the body is the center of orientation: “The ‘far’ is far from me, from my Body; the ‘to the right’ refers back to the right side of my Body, e.g., to my right hand” (Husserl, 2000, p. 166). Albeit, the perception of one’s own body is different: “I do not have the possibility of distancing myself from my Body, or my Body from me, and accordingly the manifolds of appearance of the Body are restricted in a definite way” (Husserl, 2000, p. 167). As said above, in our natural attitude, we do not experience ourselves as perceivers, as subjects. To change our natural attitude, I will turn to Merleau-Ponty’s idea of flesh.
The Beginning of Flesh

Merleau-Ponty’s (1968/1964) later development of flesh (chair) is crucial to the approach of understanding perception and its ontological dimension. With flesh, he describes the perceiver and the perceived as a formed couple, with the world as a background. The perceived is calling for the perceiving and the perceiving is responding. The perceiver is preparing her or his approach and the perceived is confirming the contact. The flesh is therefore an in-between space that is not empty; it is, as Merleau-Ponty says, not anything but neither something. It is rather a hanging in the air, a balancing on the edge between one and the other (Dahlberg, 2013). This balancing activity is foundational to phenomenological research. In research practice, for example, a project with interviews or observation, the notion of in-between and balancing activity is essential while performing the bridling attitude in planning, organizing, interviewing, doing observation, analyzing data, and presenting the new understanding of a phenomenon.

The flesh is not a concept in the common way, it does not only refer to the habitual way of understanding flesh as the human body (Dahlberg, 2013). The way that Merleau-Ponty uses the language is an attempt to say something fresh with used words. He uses his right hand to touch the left hand, where the paradox of being sensible and being sensed, at almost the same time, arises:

Either my right hand really passes over to the rank of the touched, but then its hold on the world is interrupted; or it retains its hold of the world, but then I do not really touch it—my right hand touching, I palpate with my left hand only its outer covering. / / I am always on the same side of my body. If these experiences never overlap, if they slip away at the very moment they are about to rejoin, if there is always a “shift,” a “spread” between them, this is precisely because my two hands are part of the same body, because it moves itself in the world, because I hear myself both from within and from without. (Merleau-Ponty, 1968/1964, p. 148)

The moments of being both sensible and sensed has a shift between them. If they are going away from each other when they are about to be joined, they are at the same time from the same body. The way of joining is at the same time a way of separating from each other. Merleau-Ponty is aware of the shared tradition, with the weight of the history, where “flesh” is a religious concept of the human body in relation to God (e.g., Peter 1:24: “For each flesh is hay, and all the glory of it is as the flower of hay; the hay dried up, and his flower felled down.”). But the question that Merleau-Ponty is asking for, is a new beginning. It is about the intermediate between the left and the right hand, on the verge of becoming one or the other. It is, perhaps, at the tip of your tongue, where you are familiar with a dream that you are looking for, but still, it did not arrive fully to your being. It is something that is right there, but you don’t have the expression for it. Merleau-Ponty speaks about this obliquity in the word that is known but at the same time unknown. It is something that is not completely expressible. It is a question but situated in a place where words are not yet found. It is a creation of the words.

Here we run into some potential difficulties because how can the philosophical meaning of flesh be understood in empirical research and, not least, how can it be practiced?

The Beginning of Words in the Embodied Practice of Bridling

Until now, my suggestion of understanding the role of bridling in empirical research is a theoretical beginning based on how Merleau-Ponty writes about the philosophical investigation of the in-between. Now I want to proceed by a more practice-based approach and I want to see how our experience of the movement of the body is involved in bridling and contributing to openness. I want to find out the specificities of the practical movements and how it can be a beginning for the open awareness that is at the core of bridling and, at the same time, a beginning of words.

Therefore, I want to share the Feldenkrais Method (FM), which was started in the 1940s by the engineer and physicist Moshe Feldenkrais with the aim to learn how to better organize oneself and how to move with minimum effort and maximum efficiency. He made “the impossible possible, the possible easy and the easy elegant in bodily movements” (Feldenkrais, quotation). The reason to choose this approach to movement attention has a specific value as it is open for the trust and the joyful new learning of movement. Furthermore, in recent years, there have been scientific contributions of FM (e.g., De Jaeger et al., 2016; Verrel et al., 2015) as well as a meta-analysis based on 20 randomized controlled trials (RCTs; Worley & Hillier, 2015). More specifically, my understanding of FM is due to my personal experience of Feldenkrais training. For me, the experience of moving my own body in FM explains Merleau-Ponty’s use of the concept of flesh in the practical feeling of one’s own body. It is a deep, felt sense of how the body is different from when it is standing, sitting, or lying on the ground and, at the same time, it is one with it. What I describe is a profound, deep-seated, and philosophically an untold way to move and feel the body in relationship to its surroundings.

Feldenkrais is originally a method that organizes the movement of a student1 (either in a group or individually) and it usually focuses on the improved awareness of how one moves (Buchanan, 2012; Feldenkrais, 1972, 1981; Kimmel et al., 2014; Verrel et al., 2015). The way that we use Feldenkrais knowledge gives us the theoretical openness described with Merleau-Ponty, but it offers more specifically a bodily and practical movement of openness. One
of the exercises is Awareness Through Movement (ATM)\(^2\) where one moves, for example, one’s feet, knees, and back, and listens to the Feldenkrais teacher and at the same time listens to what is happening in their own body. It promotes the learner with a personal awareness of how one’s own body moves as well as of one’s habits and different ways of moving the body. There are no “good” or “bad” ways of moving; they are just different and individual ways of movement. The knowledge gathered here is not static or unchanging, it is a knowledge in and through movement and its ability to change when exercised with mindful attention.

However, there is also a philosophic contribution by FM, even if it is not often found in the literature. The practice of moving the body in FM means an interrogation of the borders between one’s own body and its surroundings (meaning, for example, the mat, the air, the furniture around the room, and other human beings).\(^3\) When lying on one’s back on a mat and lifting and lowering one’s shoulder, one can, on one hand, remain focused on how the shoulder is lifting and in relationship to one’s back, but, on the other hand, one can also be attentive to how the ground is felt when lifting and lowering the shoulder. This second kind of attention is a search for the in-between, the verge, between the body and the ground. It is, what Merleau-Ponty is describing, a feeling of the flesh, but it is found in one’s own sensing and moving one’s body. It can make one feel the heaviness, straightness, and horizontal way of lying on the ground, as well as one’s own smoothness, applicability, and different ways of moving the shoulder. It is the feeling of one’s own body and its kinship to the ground, and the balance or flesh between them.

When focusing our attention on a special movement, our body moves in a habitual way and we perceive no other movement; we are actually not perceiving the movement. The movement in FM is the goal of our motivation, but we perceive different ways of moving to our goal; it is openness and curiosity. To follow this motivation, when a shoulder is moved by the movement of the leg and the leg by the movement of the shoulder, is to enter a space of curiosity: It is to see the many possible movements that begin and change at this movement.

The experience of doing FM gives attention to the body and its surroundings as the inauguration of new words. It makes one find the beginning of expressions that are not yet told, but is waiting for them. They are usually not said yet; it is the beginning in which the body is felt toward the ground and the ground is felt toward the body. It is, fundamentally, a way of doing bridling, but it is on the beginning of being, an aim that didn’t yet give one the words but that are expecting them.

Describing such an experience means to describe the in-between. The question is how to translate one’s bodily experience into words and of how to generalize the experience of intuitive feeling. One can feel the lightness of the head, when supporting one’s back on the ground, and one can also feel oneself from the ground underneath. For researchers, it means to be aware of the in-between in the organization of a project when observing a situation or when trying to understand the interviewee’s expression. It is also important when doing the analysis and focusing on what the interviewees are speaking about and from what, when understanding meanings and to see it in an open way that makes the other meanings possible, and when analyzing it in constituents and essences.

After focusing on the bodily way of preparing for the beginning of words, I will now return to the philosophical extension of writing the words. The beginning of the words is perceived when the body is moving, and I also want to describe the awareness of the body in scientific texts. I will continue with the idea of focused improvisation to see how these words are traveling through our way of speaking.

**Open and Focused Improvisation**

As a common way of human understanding, we expect the “things” or “objects” for attention to be an unquestioned part of our perception. We define, without asking, for example, a road that runs ahead of us, the cars in different lanes, and the trees at the resting place. The phenomenological attitude of bridling, which replaces a “taken-for-granted” attitude in research, allows us to be with openness and, at the same time, being aware of how we are open. Merleau-Ponty (1968/1964) describes such openness as a stillness in the movement, where there is a turning around the middle point, similar to a tennis player who is engaged in a match and is expecting the ball from the opponent (Dahlberg, 2021). The player is attentive to different perspectives on where the ball may land and she or he is positioned in a particular place in the tennis court but isn’t without movement; she must expect the unexpected. She doesn’t have to stand rigid in one place, but instead she is active and waiting, openly expecting the ball to come.

The professional tennis player is practicing improvisation in the way that she or he understands the structure of the game and the game itself, to be more open when the ball arrives. The player prepares for an activity that she or he cannot really be prepared for. A similar thing is the professional jazz improviser who, to get ready for improvisation, she or he has to learn to master the instrument. Cavalcante Schuback (2012) demonstrates how improvisation, compared with noted music, is not completely free and unattached; it is not beyond notations or other regulatory systems. What separates improvisational music (compare, for example, Miles Davies in *Bitches Brew*) with other noted musical pieces is the way that it relates to the system that it works within. It does not follow the notation but plays with it. But to play, the musician must know and
recognize the habits that are included with it. To be able to improvise, one must understand the regulatory systems and the habitual ways of composing the piece. In the way of establishing distance—or play—with the habitual ways of approaching, music improvisation creates an in-between space where something new and unexpected can arise (Dahlberg, 2021).

Cavalcante Schuback (2006) communicates that, in this special attention, we are putting aside our fixed perspectives on “things” or “objects”.

It is a strange operation, because openness can only catch our attention when we disregar the attention to pointed things. It is when and while attention to fixed points break down that attention to openness breaks through. (p. 6)

What Cavalcante Schuback explains is that the special attention and openness are not situating one’s eyes on a specific point, where one looks at an object. Instead of being fixed, we are attentive to the indeterminacy of the open horizon out of which something might, or might not appear. In this “open horizon,” we are not immediately focused on words. Instead, we are, in this openness, creating the words. According to Gendlin (2004), this way of being open is a physical apprehension of words, a place “where the implicit intricacy opens” (p. 131). Gendlin explains openness as a way of “carrying forward,” that is, “as philosophers and phenomenologists we want to think with, from, and into this unclear but more precise demanding edge, and think into this coming of words.” As Gendlin describes it, coming into words is not a matter of pure thinking, it is a matter of being aware from a sense of embodiment. As Gendlin (2004) states, “The ‘coming’ of words is bodily, like the coming of tears, sleep, orgasm, improvisation” (p. 132).

When incorporating the phenomenological philosophical movement of bridling into empirical research, it makes us “saying yes”; it makes us aware of how we perceive the world and its meaning. As researchers, however, we also focus on a specific phenomenon. To do this, we must integrate the active passivity of bridled openness. When being open, we are passive as waiting but, at the same time, perception is alert and active. When we relate to bridling, we move beyond the typical human responses of common certainty and everyday ways of thinking about things. With bridling, we also acknowledge the uncertainty of phenomena that allows us to go forward with a mindset of wondering and questioning. In addition, bridling means that, instead of assuming certain facts about things, we interrogate our own understanding, the genesis of that understanding, and the lack of understanding that we may have (Dahlberg & Dahlberg, 2020). Such an attitude is radically different from research that is characterized by a rigid use of methods, where researchers are bound by prefabricated categories or predefined questions and answers.

**Bridling as a Balancing Act**

For researchers to be bridled, one must keep an attentive focus, keep moving and keep a heightened sense of awareness open, and be prepared for improvisation. The questions about the phenomenon derive from one’s lived experience and the status as an embodied being. By practicing bridling with open awareness and attention, we have tools that enable us to question the taken-for-granted attitude of routine acceptance of truth. Bridling allows us to avoid seeing and accepting the state of a phenomenon as given, or as a matter-of-fact, and opens up the door to apprehend something novel about a phenomenon, seeing it from a new perspective, or discovering its meaning to other human beings. Bridling asks us to slow down the progression of our understanding and make space for the phenomenon to just be, and to show itself more fully. It entails that we do not make hasty conclusions, and that we dwell with perception and reflection, trying to grasp the meanings as they are revealed, always with the aim of understanding the phenomenon in a new way (Dahlberg & Dahlberg, 2020).

Bridling, therefore, is a balancing act. It is, what Merleau-Ponty expresses, a way to look for the verge or the intermediate between the one and the other. It is, what FM teaches us, on the foundation of bridling, a bodily place where we cannot express the words but are expecting them. To let the phenomenon be, or as Husserl (1977) prefers to see it, to “go to the things themselves,” the researcher cannot be an active knowing agent who is forcing the phenomenon in different directions and anticipating its ultimate meaning. The researcher can neither be a passive spectator nor be disengaged or hesitating. To balance on the edge with bridling as open awareness, the researcher must incorporate both the active passivity and the passive activity described above, which means to openly meet both the phenomenon and the research of the phenomenon.

It must be emphasized that bridling is interwoven throughout the whole research project from the beginning design to the final publication of results. Consequently, certain aspects of a qualitative study, based on phenomenological epistemology, cannot be predetermined or organized in great detail. It does not mean, however, that the study is without structure or principles. First and foremost, this type of study must be phenomenon-oriented, phenomenon-perceptive, and phenomenon-sensitive. In other words, we are interested in the lifeworld, how the world or something in the world is perceived by human beings. Such a study must move with the phenomenon and be open to the phenomenon showing itself differently and in other ways than previously embraced.
Conclusion and Implications for Research Practice

All kinds of research questions derive from our lived experience and our status as embodied beings. By practicing an attitude of open awareness and attention, we can find the tools that enable us to question the taken-for-granted attitude of routine acceptance of truth. Bridling can assist us with going back into the progression of our understanding, so that we make space for the phenomenon just to be and to show itself more fully. Supported by the Feldenkrais approach, the phenomenological attitude to openness asks of the researcher to hold an attentive focus, keep moving, and maintain a heightened sense of alert awareness, all without knowing what will happen. It entails that we do not make hasty conclusions, but dwell with perception and reflection, trying to grasp the meanings as they are revealed (Dahlberg, 2021; Dahlberg & Dahlberg, 2020).

In the bridled effort of open awareness, we put things “out of play” (Merleau-Ponty, 1995, xiii) but in a way that also puts them in play. Gadamer (1995/1960) exemplifies this by the word suspension. It is the usual and habitual meaning of a phenomenon that is suspended, the customary meaning, which we may normally take for granted, is thereby being postponed. The goal of reaching the meaning does not happen immediately, but it entails a strict open awareness, which is both active and passive. In this in-between space, a question is created and meaning may be revealed.

In an empirical project, we do not yet know what thoughts or impressions of the phenomenon we will confront or what previous insights that we will come to view as no longer valid. We do not know what is possible to learn about a phenomenon, what interviews may show, or what the textual data analysis will reveal. The goal is not to come to the final answer on what the phenomenon is forever defined. Instead, we hope to find essential although temporary and contextual answers that further drive our continued inquiry of a phenomenon.

The practical work for a researcher, whose beginning with words might seem to be a hard task to do, is especially difficult when the words are tentative about what to use, and when. We should use this tentativeness. I wanted to share the Merleau-Pontian beginning and his starting point in the flesh, and the Feldenkrais movement that is balancing on the edge between one’s own body and its surroundings. I am trying to find a place in one’s expression of the words and trust its new beginnings, where one should question about “What is the right expression here? Where should I go?” One way is to start from the Feldenkrais movement, where one’s body is moving with trust and inquiry. After Merleau-Ponty and Feldenkrais, we then moved to Cavalcante Schuback and Gendlin to see the special attention and the creation of words.

It can, hopefully, put better, more fruitful, and fresh words into your experience and your way of talking about the phenomenon in your project. Such openness supports the capacity to see meanings in words and phrases, remembering the participants’ nonverbal actions, and being observant to how some meanings are revealed by bodily reactions. The researcher can, through an initial beginning with Feldenkrais practice, be more confident about their own actions and habits. It can, hopefully, put old words into new meanings.

To finally put an end to this article, I want to cite part of a poem by T. S. Eliot (1943). This poem is between movement and stillness, and it is between the nonverbal physical actions and the coming to words:

> At the still point at the turning world. Neither flesh nor fleshless:
> Neither from nor towards; at the still point, there the dance is,
> But neither arrest nor movement. And do not call it fixity,
> Where past and future are gathered. Neither movement from
> nor towards,
> Neither ascent nor declined. Except for the point, the still point,
> There would be no dance, and there is only dance.

Thank you Eilat Almagor and Anat Krivine, my Feldekrais teachers, for teaching me to enjoy the magic and be open to my world.

Appendix

In the following, you will find an awareness through movement (ATM) that is for phenomenological openness. There are many more Feldenkrais movements to use, for example, on the internet (e.g., http://openatm.org/olena.html).

ATM and Phenomenological Openness

Lie comfortably on a hard mat (comparable to a yoga mat). If you want a pillow, use a firm one (usually a pillow composed of foam).

How can you feel your body? The heaviness of your body toward the floor? How are you lying?

Feel your pelvis. How is the right side compared with the left one? Is one more heavy, and the other lighter? Feel your legs, and how the feet and knees are pointing in or out. Is one foot closer to your center than the other?

If you think of your shoulders, are they lying flat or pointy to the floor? Is one pointy and one flat?

Roll your head from left to right. Is one side easier to roll than the other?

Put your two feet standing. Feel the heaviness (or lightness) down in your feet, and your legs. Let them tilt to the left side and back to the middle, many times. How do you feel the touch between the feet and the ground?

Put your feet down and rest.

Put your feet standing again and tilt your knees to the right side, many times. How do you feel the weight in the

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Put your feet down and rest.

Put your feet standing again and tilt your knees to the right side, many times. How do you feel the weight in the
pelvis? In your feet? Is the weight different from left and right side of your feet? How are you moving your legs? Do you use your belly and back muscles, or is it the feeling of gravity that makes your legs fall? Do you feel how your back muscles are at work? When you are tilting the knees to the side, do you feel the flat side of your pelvis?

Put your legs down and rest.

How does your heaviness feel now? Is it the pelvis, and your legs?

Put your two feet standing again and do the same movement, but now move your legs to left and right.

How do you feel your side of your body? When you are moving your legs to the right, do you feel your left knee going further away, toward your feet? Can you feel the left side getting longer? What happens to your shoulders? And the head?

Put your legs down and rest.

How do you feel the shoulders now? Are they pointy or flat? How do you feel the body against the ground? How do you perceive the ground?

Put your feet standing again. This time you keep the legs a little bit more apart. Keep your left foot standing while you tilt your right knee inward, toward the middle, and back. The right knee, when it is tilted, will be pointing a little bit more to the toes.

Put your legs down and rest. Do you feel any difference between the right side of your body, and the left side? Which side is heavier? Which side is closer to the ground? How do you feel the ground with your body?

Put your feet standing. Do the same thing with the other side. When the right knee is standing, you move your left knee to the inside and back to standing. How is your left side? Your left hip? Your left shoulder? How is your chest? Do you feel a movement in your head?

Put your feet down and rest. Feel how your body is touching the ground. How is your breathing?

Move your head from left to right. Is it different from before?

Think of a baby, she is a few months old, lying on her back. She is reaching out, trying to catch something that is exciting and suddenly she is fascinated, she looks at her own hand that is moving in space. At the same time, she is discovering herself and the world. A moment before, she didn’t recognize the hand. It was on with her being. Now she perceives the hand and feels the difference between her hand and the space around it. She puts herself in relation to her surroundings. Can you feel the same connection between yourself and the ground? Can you feel yourself one with the ground and at the same time separate from each other?

Sit up, and then stand up. Feel how you stand? How is your balance? How do you feel the weight down in your body? How do you feel the feet, and the feet to the floor? Walk a little bit, and feel how you are walking.

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Notes

1. The “students” here are taught by a Feldenkrais teacher.
2. The “students” are taught by a Feldenkrais teacher.
3. At the end of this article, you will find an appendix with “ATM for phenomenological openness.”
4. The terming of “objects” in science is arriving from positivism, where scientific enquiry must be objective and value-free. The objects are empirically watched and are told to be easily judged and described (van Wijngaarden et al., 2017).

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