Journal of Somaesthetics

Somaesthetics and Phenomenology

Volume 7, Number 1 (2021)

somaesthetics.aau.dk

Editorial Board

Published by
Aalborg University Press

Journal website
somaesthetics.aau.dk

The Journal of Somaesthetics was founded by Richard Shusterman, Else Marie Bukdahl and Ståle Stenslie. The journal is funded by The Joint Committee for Nordic research councils in the Humanities and Social Sciences, NOS-HS and Independent Research Fund Denmark.

ISSN: 2246-8498

Contents

Editorial

Somaesthetics and Phenomenology – a Handful of Notes

Max Ryynänen

"What is the difference of somaesthetics and phenomenology?" This is the question a teacher of body philosophy encounters when s/he presents somaesthetics, the less known of these two approaches to the philosophy of the body.

The answer might look simple. Phenomenology, when focused on the body, has been the main academic tradition of philosophical body-consciousness. Phenomenologists have mainly aspired to stay academic and theoretical with an epistemological objective and the approach has not originally been established for practical use. Somaesthetics, a much later concept, has been right from the beginning fueled by an aspiration to lead theory and bodily practices into a dialogue – where both could enhance their (for the body often just tacit) knowledge with the help of the other. And if phenomenology, although later actively adapted in e.g. Japan and South Korea, is very (broadly speaking) Central European by its nature, somaesthetics, with roots in the pragmatist philosophy that developed in the United States, has right from its very beginnings, in the early 2000s, encouraged dialogue between different philosophical traditions, both 'Western' and 'non-Western'.

However, the issue becomes complicated when looking at the communities working on and with the approaches. Some phenomenologists today are actually dancers, karateka and/or yogi, others apply phenomenology to e.g. robotics and interface and interaction design, and so actually put phenomenology into practice in a way somaesthetics has made programmatic for itself. Contrary, many who write about somaesthetics are actually classical academic philosophers in the sense that their main bodily practice is to sit behind a desk and drink (too much) coffee.

Both traditions take pride in their roots, phenomenology in the philosophical springs of the Brentano-Husserl connection (without forgetting the threads of reflections that have made e.g. René Descartes a central figure in the corpus), and somaesthetics in Dewey's philosophy of experience and his moderately experimental attitude (without forgetting the way already Peirce and James built approaches to the body). Practically, many who are into phenomenology have not actually much looked at its very beginnings (although the interest in Husserl is somehow rising in importance again), and they start from Merleau-Ponty or Heidegger. The same way, for example Dewey's original life work is for many somaestheticians known only through the work of later thinkers of pragmatism, most notably of course Richard Shusterman, the initiator of the discussion of somaesthetics.

What could a comparative and/or critical and/or synthetizing inquiry into the relationship of these two approaches bring forth? What are the key differences (historical sources, practical writing, applications) – and could somaesthetics and phenomenology profit from having more philosophical dialogue? What about their very origins? Pragmatism could historically be seen as an offspring of earlier continental philosophy that was imported to the new world through European diaspora. Dewey also went to China for a period and applied some of his Eastern learnings to his philosophy of art and phenomenology had already in Husserl an Asian

(Japanese) connection that became stronger with Heidegger (who, besides his dialogues with Japanese thinkers, started to translate *Tao Te Ching*). Has Asian thinking shaped the emergence of both philosophies in a way that unites them in some respect already quite early – and to what extent? The same could be asked about the continental European philosophies that were imported to Harvard, the birthplace of pragmatism, but served also as a background to the evolution of phenomenology. Peirce attacked Cartesians that dominated Harvard's philosophical atmosphere, but Husserl engaged in reinterpreting Descartes. Still the source is the same.

One of the original main sources for the birth and early development of phenomenology, the work (i.e. teaching and research) of psychologist and philosopher Franz Brentano, featured intense reflection on the unity of consciousness (see, e.g. Brentano 1995, see, e.g. 57). This same awe about the way we are able to keep focus and to feel mentally centralized, despite all fragmentation, despite being bombarded with random impulses, thoughts and multi-faceted stimulation – in other words, these 'problems of oneness and unity occupied [Edmund] Husserl throughout all the phases of his philosophical development' (Sawicki 2001). Husserl, like Sigmund Freud (another theorist of the mind), was Brentano's student, and the philosopher who appropriated Brentano's term 'phenomenology', which was originally reserved for descriptive psychology. Husserl used it for his new take on scientific thinking by adapting Brentano's view that being is intentional – and, e.g., challenging his students and readers to take up a new craft of philosophy by systematically dropping perceptional prejudices through reduction (see e.g. Husserl 1990), i.e. through taking away all uncertainties from our accounts of what we sense (which could of course also be read as also one new way to gain more focus for perception and experience).

According to Daniel Dennett, unity of consciousness is needed for survival. Unity of consciousness is, though, still over-emphasized, according to Dennett, as we are not as much in control of our consciousness as we might think, and nor are we even able to grasp it strongly enough to claim possession of it (see e.g. Dennett 1991). It might be that Dennett's comment to the phenomenologists is true, and that (to make a banal point) those who were able to focus better were more often able to pass their genes to the next generation, but, still, the way 'things' sometimes just 'come together' into focus, in a way that also *feels* remarkable, has perhaps been a *key experience* that has fueled the active, systematic introspection of both Brentano and Husserl. A pragmatist reader might also easily think that it shares some key components with Dewey's idea of *an experience*.

The way we are able, with all our fragmented impulses, thoughts and multi-faceted stimulation, to sometimes intensify and build focused experience, feeling not just mentally centralized but also somatically centralized, is a main tenet in Dewey's aspiration to theorize moments when all our fragmentated memories, impulses, and mental and sensuous stimuli come together in *an experience* (Dewey 1980). He simply left the narrow intellect behind, and went for a broader unity, but also drags in the organic rhythms of the body – and accentuates memories, (aesthetic) skills and the active construction of the experience. One cannot of course equate consciousness and experience, but both threads of thinking share the same interest in mental focus.

Both phenomenology and pragmatism have mainly worked without empirical data, and they have focused on philosophical descriptions (and introspection), argumentation and speculation (which I have nothing against). If (the significantly later) Dewey described activities as different

as cleaning the house and gazing at paintings to make his point, while never particularly detailing the organic rhythms of the body that he mentioned several times, and not being interested in working out taxonomies of holistic experience, Brentano worked only, and restrictively, in the sphere of the mind. The body, though, gained increasingly focus in the work of the line of phenomenologists that starts from Edmund Husserl.

From Descartes's Masonry Heater to Heidegger's Hammer

Although the soma is not just 'bubbling under' in the life work of Edmund Husserl – the body as the 'lived here', a locus of sensations, embodiment and situatedness is already actively present in, e.g., his 1913 *Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and to a Phenomenological Philosophy* (1983) – in my personal reading of phenomenology, the body has always stood out in a remarkable manner first and foremost in Martin Heidegger's *Being and Time* [Sein und Zeit] 1927, in the philosopher's description of the tool/equipment [*Zeug*]:

> *The less we just stare at the hammer-thing, and the more we seize hold of it and use it, the more primordial does our relationship to it become, and the more unveiledly is it encountered as that which it is – as equipment. The hammering itself uncovers the specific 'manipulability' of the hammer. The kind of Being which equipment possesses – in which it manifests itself in its own right – we call 'readiness-to-hand'.* (Heidegger 1962, 98)

Heidegger's tool/equipment is something that other philosophers like to mention when they present his lifework (Gianni Vattimo seems to pay most attention to it: See Vattimo 1973, 23-25), but the concept itself has not attracted analysis that would open up its somatic potential. It is not that Heidegger would in any way hint upon the bodily side of the example he started lecturing about in 1919, and which then became an integral part of *Being and Time* (1927).

Heidegger's issue is not the use of any single tool. He discusses the whole cultural network of reliable tools. 'Taken strictly, there "is" no such thing as an equipment. To the Being of any equipment there always belongs a totality of equipment, in which it can be this equipment that it is,' he writes (Heidegger 1962, 97). Using tools, one is not attitude-wise vis-à-vis the world of 'objects.' In use, the hammer becomes 'transparent'. We notice the role/meaning of it when it is, e.g., broken.

The act of using the hammer is of course a somatic practice (although Heidegger does not underline this) – and it is polarized against the horizon of works of art, which Heidegger paints with sort of radical conservative (idealist) brushstrokes, reserving 'art' (aesthetically heretically) for works that have only a constitutive role in the local (Greek, German) culture, and which pull us out from our everyday to an unsafe position, to meet our existential 'abyss' (Heidegger 1971). While art might sometimes bring materials like stone in the spotlight of experience (Heidegger mentions Barlach's sculptures), it looks like there would be no somatic side to the appreciation of it, and in this sense Heidegger's art does not depart from e.g. Kantian ideals of disinterestedness. But the use of equipment does, although Heidegger does not work on it.

Human beings have used hammers for at least 3.3 million years (Harmand & Lewis 2015) and even the nailing hammer was created 3000 years ago. By using a tool that is so very much down-to-earth, is easy to use (not requiring much reflection) and insignificant, though important, and culturally ancient (I guess this is part of the point), one's cultural modality goes 'hands on' in-

depth when using it. The bodily engagement with a cultural product that transmits historicity takes one to the core and base of culture itself, and we can here think of culture in broad, shared terms: Heidegger's thinking was still, at this early phase of *Being and Time*, intended to explain *Dasein* without the restricted ethno-nationalism that marked *The Origin of the Work of Art*.

Heidegger polarized presence-at-hand (*Vorhandenheit*) and readiness-to-hand (*Zuhandenheit*), and meant with the former concept phenomena in consciousness, but with the latter term he referred, for example, to tools (i.e. equipment, *Zeug*), like the hammer mentioned above. It is not that one could not mention Heidegger's list of tools which appear in his later work, i.e. 'equipment for writing, sewing, working, transportation, measurement' (Heidegger 1962, 97). The hammer just happens to be the most somatically laden of all of them and he chose it to represent the whole network of tools. A pen (in Heidegger's list) would have been the classical philosophical example ('I sit here in my office and look at my pen'). A needle would restrict the soma to very small movements and to the fingers only. But grabbing tools, e.g. a hammer – this major motoric action – is central for us and for monkeys. Even simply seeing someone grabbing a hammer activates our mirror neurons, whether we were to see it 'live' or on film (see e.g. Lankinen, Smeds, Tikka, Pihko, Hari & Koskinen 2016 or Ghazanfar & Shepherd 2011). The example is even, in a sense, a good example of cultural reduction, if one desires to look at it from that perspective. When one hammers, one mainly just hammers – and through that somatic act one dives under the surface of culture, both to the historicity of the tool as a part of a whole network of tools, that we rely on, a safe haven of pragma, and (this is something that Husserl the wannabe scientist would have liked) then also through the cultural layers, not to our existential abyss, but our biological roots. Husserl, though, wrote about something that could be considered to be close to tools in his "Renewal: Its Problem and Method" (1923-1924), where he discussed e.g. commodities (*Gut*) (Husserl 1988). For Husserl man's interest in building houses and producing commodities was about becoming immortal, which is, of course, a very different stance regarding Heidegger's in a sense down-to-earth discourse on the tool/equipment. Husserl was more, though, into discussing perception.

One of the sources of Husserl's at first quite lonely auto-wrestling with the issue of reduction is the work of René Descartes, whose 1637 *Discourse on the Method* (Descartes 2006) featured dreadful doubts about the existence of the body and 'outer reality.' (In his later work, Descartes, famously, also discussed in a practical spirit the way the mind and the body connect, but his early work really fed dualistic thinking.) Descartes's dysfunctional body-relationship – he enjoyed meditating in a masonry heater (or some kind of oven) but doubted dreadfully the existence of his body – led to a (neurotic) systematic questioning of what he saw. For example, he asked if he saw a house or just a facade, when he walked by (ibid.). Husserl turned this epistemological experimentalism – at least Descartes himself talks about all those years that he spend going beyond facades to really see what he saw (a whole house or just a façade) – into an initiative for a scientific method, where reducing transcendentalism and understanding critically that we 'fill in' the reality we perceive with our imagination (e.g. I am now taking it for granted that the cup on my right side is whole, and not just a (from the other side) broken one that my eye just cannot conceive) would make our scientific work clearer and better based. The *phainomenon*, things appearing to view, had, according to Husserl, to be understood as things in themselves so that we could arrive at a greater clarity about reality.

Heidegger, in Husserl's footsteps, with his example of the hammer turned phenomenology upside down in a sense to what lay beyond cultural perception. His 'reduction' was probably not consciously about our biological base, which I mentioned above, but in some sense about the

way we are 'being culture' through the act of using a tool. With this neologism I desire to apply the 'being body' and 'having a body' framework of Husserl to the use of the tool presented by Heidegger, and the way one connects in-depth and 'loses oneself' to culture through somatic action (not reflection, i.e. 'having a culture'). As the tool seems to fascinate those philosophers who walk in Heidegger's footsteps, but is virtually never applied or reflected upon further, one can speculate on whether the icebergs of somatic practice, and our primal sense of empathy that is connected to grabbing and seizing, have somehow made it lucrative, although it might be hard to build anything new on this idea.

Phenomenology, of course, found its body, more famously and in a more dominant manner in the work of Maurice Merleau-Ponty, who, Richard Shusterman writes (an quotes) in *Thinking Through the Body: Essays in Somaesthetics* (Shusterman 2012), "powerfully foregrounds the body's value while intriguingly explaining the body as silent, structuring, concealed background: 'Bodily space… is the darkness needed in the theatre to show up the performance, the background of somnolence or reserve of vague power against which the gesture and its aim stand out.'"

In Merleau-Ponty's sensitive, reflective inquiries, some of today's ways of thinking about the body – e.g. seeing clothes as its extension – find their first expression. Merleau-Ponty also writes (I continue quoting Shusterman as he gives Merleau-Ponty a major role in building some of the fundamental thoughts that today define also somaesthetics): "The body is also mysterious as a locus of "impersonal" existence, beneath and hidden from normal selfhood. It is "the place where life hides away" from the world, where I retreat from my interest in observing or acting in the world "lose myself in some pleasure or pain, and shut myself up in this anonymous life which subtends my personal one. But precisely because my body can shut itself off from the world, it is also what opens me out upon the world and places me in a situation there" (ibid.).

Merleau-Ponty's work explored the dialogue of the lived body and the world, where the body was not just a source of tacit knowledge but now also the locus of consciousness. He was followed by, e.g., Luce Irigaray and Jean-Luc Nancy, who took philosophizing through the body to new levels, exploring breathing, forgotten somatic potentials and morphologies of gender (Irigaray) and touch (Nancy), among many other issues. These names have made phenomenology, at least in the Western world, *the* philosophy of the body, although many phenomenologists have not accentuated the body at all.

From Peirce's Pragmatist Reading of Descartes to the Global Nature of Somaesthetics

Another reading of Descartes stimulated the birth of pragmatism. The Presbyterian circles at Harvard and its environs added to the somatic skepticism of Descartes so much that the founder of pragmatism, Charles Saunders Peirce turned his gaze aggressively against the local (religiously laden) rationalists, and said to his students that upon meeting a Cartesian they should go and punch him in the face – and then ask if he still doubted the existence of his body (for more see Menand 2001). Peirce explored the body as, e.g., firstness, secondness and thirdness, firstness being the spontaneous, automatized level of bodily experience and thirdness, the other end of the triad, just reflection (for an introduction to this, see e.g. Mittelberg 2019). In his footsteps, William James conceived vital energy as one central particle in his view on religious experience. But only Dewey made the body present also through practice – as he trained in the Alexander technique – and then, various authors from Joseph Kupfer (Kupfer 1983) to Arnold Berleant (Berleant 1991) left traces (of e.g. sport and environmental thinking) in the holistic vision of

bodily life in pragmatism, all focusing in a way or another on Dewey's 'an experience', before Richard Shusterman created the concept and practice of somaesthetics, where both practice and theory had a major role.

Interestingly, not many have taken Shusterman's practical call so seriously that they have come out with their own practices – and only theoretical debate has flourished in his footsteps, even that often only lightly connected to Dewey. On the other hand, practically engaged phenomenology has recently been emerging, for example, in artistic research (see e.g. the experimental work of Esa Kirkkopelto, e.g. 2017) and in connection with disabilities and robotics[1].

It might be, though, that both phenomenologists and pragmatists have taken too much for granted that the dualism of the mind and the body is the fault of Descartes. As Daniel Dennett writes, "if we look carefully at the ideology of folk psychology, we find it pretty much Cartesian – dualist through and through" (Dennett 1998, 84) and one can ask if this would have been the case even without Descartes. Whether one would live a holistic life or not, or aim at holistic harmony, there are also strong moments of experience for all of us, moments when we experience the split. These moments, reflected upon in the first part of the 'having a body' and 'being a body' division of phenomenology, are often perhaps less conceived of as pleasant, as most people who aim for well-being work through yoga, food practices and sport to experience the body-mind creature as a whole. On the other hand, while commenting on folk psychology (and folk physics), Dennett also reminds the reader that people's reflective ideas on their beliefs and practices do not mirror the practices and experiences always particularly well, so that one should not take the discourse too seriously (Ibid. 85).

Somaesthetics kicked off with Richard Shusterman's attempt and model of combining bodily practice with philosophy, so that one could, through an interaction of these practices, make them learn from each other. Of course, in some sense, this is not news in China, Japan or India, where philosophical reflection has always consciously been a part of holistic systems of art, health and religion – but one must remember that academic (Western) philosophy is another issue. One could perhaps say that combining academic philosophy with practical exercises is truly news.

Although thoughts on the body and philosophy had in many, sometimes very somaesthetic ways, already appeared earlier in the work of Shusterman, the original manifestoesque text, *Somaesthetics: A Disciplinary Proposal* was published in 1999 and set out a challenge, asking whether theoretical American thinking could produce a tandem with practical exercises, and what a pragmatist body philosophy could be like. It set the tenet for basing a new philosophical practice and practical form of philosophy on John Dewey's pragmatist legacy, which Shusterman re-popularized in aesthetics (it never ceased to be a living classic in art education) with his 1992 *Pragmatist Aesthetics: Living Beauty, Rethinking Art.* This book brought aesthetic experience (back) into the center of Anglo-American academic aesthetics. As Shusterman was very global in his approach, not just taking part in philosophical debates in Germany and France, but also studying and learning in Japan and China, the landscape of the new debate became immediately very much a global phenomenon. This definitely makes somaesthetics a different plane of thinking (and doing) from phenomenology. Although there are interesting combinations of, e.g., phenomenological thinking and Buddhism (see Parkes 1987), the old "main ingredient", a product of the Central European scholarly scene, remains quite unmixed with these friendly approaches.

1 See e.g. some of the names and (titles of) presentations at the Phenomenology of Changing Life-Worlds conference in Konstanz in 2018 (organized by Yvonne Förster). Young phenomenologists seem to be quite open-minded for practical applications: Phenomenology_Program_Förster3.pdf (yvonnefoerster.com).

There are some noteworthy offsprings of Shusterman's work to mention in somaesthetics, in this sense, such as the 2020 *Somaesthetics and Yogasutra* by Vinod Balakrishnan and Swathi Elizabeth Kurian (see also Fiala and Banerjee, 2020, for a great take on Indian dance tradition), without forgetting Richard Shusterman's (ed) *Bodies in the Street: The Somaesthetics of City Life* (2019), which includes witty articles by noteworthy philosophers and art educators like Pradeep Dhillon (who writes about somatic religious rituals in Varanasi; see Dhillon 2019), and others such as takes on somatic performance in Iran (Fakhrkonandeh 2019). It is not that phenomenology would not have been applied globally, but that the tenet has been more open to other *approaches*, i.e. other theoretical roots and cultural realities, in somaesthetics. Catherine F. Botha's (ed.) *African Somaesthetics: Cultures, Feminisms, Politics* (2020) has also rapidly taken somaesthetics as a frame and a partner in dialogue to Africa, a continent that is seldom a visible entrant to the world of academic philosophy. In phenomenology one does not usually see phenomenology happen in a sense or another in another traditions, but in somaesthetics this is a typical way of thinking.

Traditions Shaking Hands

Some phenomenologists have taken the opportunity to publish through the platform offered by the community that has gathered under the multi-disciplinary umbrella of somaesthetics. Authors such as Madalina Diaconu (Diaconu 2019), and the work of Tonino Griffero (who also has a text in this special issue); see also e.g. the work of Timo Klemola (Klemola 2004), whose mix of phenomenology and artistic research has been also open for somaesthetics) exemplify how easy it is to come in from the 'other side', and this also remains one of the differences: phenomenology has never created a space for discussing just the issues, like somaesthetics. Even though they are sometimes about the same thing, i.e. the phenomenology of the body is relatively often about the same issues as somaesthetics (the latter has of course learned much from the former), the way phenomenology has a strong exegetic tenet makes it mostly impenetrable for most people, who do not have a rigid philosophical education. In somaesthetics, maybe at least partly following the way most scholars who use the tag do not really dive deep into its Deweyan roots, but also following the very basic idea of staying down-to-earth and learning from all traditions that has always marked pragmatism, it is all the opposite. This school of thought has been able to transform into a relatively global platform of discussion for anyone who is ready to enter its looser, but also more multi-disciplinary, discourse. Authors in somaesthetics mostly come from different backgrounds. In this sense, it would not be totally wrong to answer those students who ask what is the difference between phenomenology and somaesthetics by saying that somaesthetics is a platform and phenomenology is a rigid school of thinking. There are less scholars in somaestehtics who study in depth its Deweyan roots. Phenomenology is sometimes a tag word too, of course – one that brings together different approaches. I recall throughout my years of study that there were people writing about a variety of issues, always adding that they worked in the phenomenological tradition, though their work had little to do with any roots of the school of thinking. These were often and still are often of course ignored by the strong exegetical wing of phenomenology that dominates the atmosphere in phenomenology to an unfruitful extent in many universities. This type of a purist margin is lacking in somaesthetics.

The accent on aesthetics, the arts, and experience in some sense marginalizes somaesthetics in the broad field of philosophy, where phenomenology roams just as much in the territories of epistemology and philosophy of science. (This might of course change.) Artists have actively

taken part in building the discussion of somaesthetics (Jean-Francois Paquay, Sue Spaid, Olafur Eliasson), and this is something that perhaps institutionally separates it again from the phenomenology of the body, and the same can be said of the way different themes lead, through the basic research done, to practical bodily reflection, not the Husserl archives.

As phenomenology often seems just to dig deeper into its textual origins, to the extent that joining the discussion craves for years of reading, somaesthetics might, in my opinion, have actually use of more and deeper discussion about its theoretical base. For example, the way Dewey reflected on the organic rhythms of the body and the way the body took part in *experience* (and especially *an experience*) is something that could offer more on the topic, than what we have seen so far, but most commentators have not really delved into the roots of what originally constituted Dewey's pre-somaesthetics.

As phenomenology has mainly stayed as a (broadly speaking) Central European tradition that sometimes has dialogue with 'others', somaesthetics has, like already mentioned, in reality become something substantially global, and also something that has as its main purpose to be applied to new issues all the time. In Shusterman's *Thinking Through the Body: Essays in Somaesthetics* (2012) he discusses the roots of today's body philosophies (and aesthetic practices) not just in Europe, but in Asia, e.g. China and Japan, which have an immense tradition of philosophical thought and practice on the issue. Although the tradition of phenomenology has had a great many fantastic body thinkers, such as Maurice Merleauy-Ponty and Luce Irigaray, in reality it took decades before it started to have effects through applications that we can see today (see, e.g., the already mentioned work in artistic research by Esa Kirkkopelto, or in fashion studies by Yvonne Förster, see e.g. Förster 2018).

As already noted on the practical side of somaesthetics, interestingly, testing out different body practices has been something notable in some seminars and artistic acts, but reflection on practical somaesthetics has stayed in the background, at least until now. That is probably partly due to the fact that not many have taken part in Shusterman's practical somaesthetics sessions, which might leave students of the discipline thinking that they have not really mastered the basics, even though there seems to be no tight formula attached to it.

Concluding the Discourse

I hope the notes made here shed light on some of the shared origins of the traditions and classics (e.g. Descartes) that form the base and root of the phenomenology of the body (and its applications) and somaesthetics, and I have attempted to sketch out the way these two approaches work on a multi-cultural, multi-disciplinary and theory vs. practice (or an attempt to mix the polarity) scale. As a personal note I could add, that although I read more phenomenology, for myself I have found somaesthetics a better working philosophical environment, as I am more interested in applications of philosophy and global interests, but the text corpus of the tradition is still quite narrow in scope, partly due to the fact that it is still very much new in comparison to the over a century old tradition of phenomenology. The development of phenomenology is not, at the moment, as fast as the development of somaesthetics, which seems to cross lines both in relation to philosophical schools (somaesthetics has been intertwined recently with, e.g., Marxism and Patanjali alike) and finds followers in a variety of disciplines, who will take its learnings to the practical challenges of, e.g., tech, cooking and martial arts – and this happens much faster than it ever happened in the much more introverted and exegetic tradition of phenomenology. On the other hand, phenomenology is a deep, and already very detailed and broad theoretical base,

which somaesthetics cannot ignore, and some of its main learnings come from the tradition. Time will show how the interaction, distance and mashing-up of these approaches and platforms will continue to develop. I am not really interested in keeping them differentiated, and I myself would never 'support' either of them alone, but simply find them clusters of routes, communities and methods for understanding the body, which keeps perplexing me both as a locus and as a site of knowledge and experience.

The authors of this issue seem to share my view, at least to some respect. Tonino Griffero compares Hermann Schmitz's new phenomenology and Richard Shusterman's somaesthetics in his "Corporeal Landscapes: Can Somaesthetics and New Phenomenology Come Together?". Griffero notes that both approaches transgress disciplinary boundaries and take a critical stance towards Western ideas of the body. Griffero compares Shusterman's somaesthetics and Schmitz's new phenomenology in terms of the central theme of the lived body. He writes, e.g., that both approaches share to some extent an idea of intercorporeality and bodily styles. Carsten Friberg's "Practical Phenomenology? Does Practical Somaesthetics Have a Parallel in Phenomenology?" asks if we can find a practical phenomenology which would be analogous to practical somaesthetics? Friberg's answer is mainly negative, though he writes that "it may prove to be more of a difference in what we can expect from the practical dimension between them than an absence of practice in phenomenology". He also claims, that both traditions have insufficient descriptions/answers to what is "practical". Nicole Miglio and Samuele Sartori write in their "Perceptual and Bodily Habits: Towards a Dialogue Between Phenomenology and Somaesthetics" about the synergies of the traditions based upon their notions of "habit". The authors reflect on the nature of habit in the work of Merleau-Ponty and Dewey, and then attempt to compare critical phenomenology and Shusterman's somaesthetics, and to find analogies in their ways of discussing the transformational dimension of habits. The issue features also Ruth Anderwald's, Leonhard Grond's and Maria Auxiliadora Gálvez Pérez's dialogical essay "Getting Dizzy: A Conversation Between the Artistic Research of *Dizziness* and *Somatic Architecture*", where the authors, inspired by somaesthetics, discuss (aesthetic) dizziness (*Taumel*) as a concept together with what they call "somatic architecture". Many practical and theoretical points emerge in the discussion. I hope the issue as a whole stimulates thoughts about synergies of philosophical traditions, which have, throughout history, stayed unrewardingly differentiated for political, geographical and stylistic reasons.

References

Balakrishnan, Vinod & Kurian, Swathi Elizabeth. (2020). *Somaesthetics and Yogasutra: A Reading Through Films*. New Delhi: Vishvanatha Kaviraja Institute.

Berleant, Arnold. (1991). *Art and Engagement*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.

Brentano, Franz. (1995 [1874]). *Psychology from an Empirical Standpoint*. London: Routledge

Dennett, Daniel C. (1991). *Consciousness Explained*. New York: Little, Brown & Co.

Dennett, Daniel C. (1998). Two Contrasts: Craft versus Folk Science, and Belief versus an Opinion, in *Brainchildren: Essays on Designing Minds*. London: Penguin Books. 81-94.

Descartes, René. (2006). *Discourse on the Method*. Oxford: Oxford Classics.

Dewey, John. (1980). *Art as Experience*. New York: Pedigree Books.

Dhillon, Pradeep. (2019). The Somaesthetic Sublime: Varanasi in Modern and Contemporary

Indian Art. In Richard Shusterman (ed), *Bodies in the Street: Somaesthetics and Street Life*, 294-314. Leiden: Brill.

Diaconu, Madalina. (2019). The Weather-Worlds of Urban Bodies. In Richard Shusterman (ed), *Bodies in the Street: The Somaesthetics of Street Life*. Leiden: Brill.

Fiala, Jessica & Banerjee, Suparna. (2020). Performative Somaesthetics: Interconnections of Dancers, Audiences, and Sites. *The Journal of Somaesthetics, 1*, Vol 5, 91-111.

Förster, Yvonne. (2018). From Digital Skins to Digital Flesh: Understanding Technology Through Fashion. *Popular Inquiry: The Journal of the Aesthetics of Kitsch, Camp and Mass Culture*, Vol 2, 2018: 1, 32-44.

Gallese, Vittorio, Guerra, Michele & Anderson, Frances. (2019). *The Empathic Screen: Cinema and Neuroscience*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Ghazanfar, Asif & Shepherd, Stephen. (2011). Monkeys at the Movies: What Evolutionary Cinematics Tells Us about Film. *Projections. 5*. 1-25. 10.3167/proj.2011.050202.

Harmand, Sonya & Lewis, Jason. (2015). 3.3-million-year-old stone tools from Lomekwi 3, West Turkana, Kenya. *Nature* 521 (7552), 310-315.

Heidegger, Martin. (1962). *Being and Time*. Oxford: Blackwell.

Heidegger, Martin. (1971). *Poetry, Language, Thought*. New York: Harper & Row.

Husserl, Edmund. (1983). *Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and to a Phenomenological Philosophy.* The Hague – Boston – Lancaster: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers.

Husserl, Edmund. (1970). *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology.* Evanston: Northwestern University Press.

Husserl, Edmun. (1988). Erneuerung als individualethisches Problem, in *Aufsätze und Vorträge (1922-1937), Husserliana Gesammelte Werke, Band XXVII*, edited by T. Neoon and H.R. Sepp, 20-43. Haag: Kluwer Academic Publishers.

Kirkkopelto, Esa. (2017). Species-Beings, Human Animals, and New Neighbors: Non-human and inhuman in contemporary performance. *Performance Research 22*: 87-96.

Klemola, Timo. (2004). *Taidon filosofia*. Tampere: Tampere University Press.

Kupfer, Joseph. (1983). *Experience as Art*. Albany: State University of New York Press.

Lankinen, Kaisu; Smeds, Eero; Tikka, Pia; Pihko, Elina; Hari, Riitta & Koskinen, Miikka. (2016). Haptic Contents of a Movie Dynamically Engage the Spectator's Sensorimotor Cortex. *Human Brain Mapping 37* (2016), 4061-4068.

Menand, Louis. (2001). *The Metaphysical Club: A Story of Ideas in America*. New York: Farrar, Strauss and Giroux.

Mittelberg, Irene. (2019). Peirce's Universal Categories: On Their Potential for Gesture Theory and Multimodal Analysis. Semiotica, Vol 228: 193-222.

Parkes, Graham. (1987). *Heidegger and Asian Thought.* Honolulu: UH Press.

Ryynänen, Max. (2019.) Sending Chills Up My Spine: Somatic Films and the Care of the Self, in Kevin Tavin, Mira Kallio-Tavin & Max Ryynänen (Eds), *Art, Excess, and Education Historical and Discursive Contexts*. New York: Palgrave, 183-197.

Sawicki, Marianne. (2001). Edmund Husserl. *Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy.* https://iep.utm.edu/husserl/

Shusterman, Richard. (1992). *Pragmatist Aesthetics: Living Beauty, Rethinking Art*. London: Blackwell.

Shusterman, Richard. (1999). Somaesthetics: A Disciplinary Proposal, *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, Vol 57, No. 3, Summer 1999: 299-313.

Shusterman, Richard. (2012). *Thinking Through the Body: Essays in Somaesthetics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Shusterman, Richard. (2018). *Aesthetic Experience and Somaesthetics*. Leiden / Boston: Brill.

Shusterman, Richard. (2019). *Bodies in the Street: The Somaesthetics of City Life*. Leiden / Boston: Brill.

Shusterman, Richard. (2021). *Ars erotica*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Vattimo, Gianni. (1971). *Introduzione a Heidegger*. Milano: Laterza.

Corporeal Landscapes: Can Somaesthetics and New Phenomenology Come Together?

Tonino Griffero

Abstract: *The paper compares Shusterman's somaesthetics and Schmitz's new phenomenology in terms of the central theme of the lived body for the first time. It shows, first, that the criticisms made by the former on the latter (which only would aim at revealing the alleged primordial, foundational, and universal embodied dimension, as well as merely describing its essence) do not fully capture the neo-phenomenological approach, which is much more rooted in the life-world and proprioceptive praxis of traditional phenomenology. Although starting from very different languages, philosophical assumptions, and relations to the natural sciences—without ignoring the difference between a phenomenological return to "things themselves" and a pragmatist melioristic aesthetics—the following can be shown: both theories transgress disciplinary boundaries; oppose the Western repression of the (especially lived) body and exclude a disembodied conception of consciousness; oppose the thesis of performative forgetfulness of the body and pay original attention to intercorporeality as well as the bodily styles of individuals, groups, and epochs (even in an atmospheric sense); aim not only at better explaining our experiences, but also improving it by somatic training (not with the same intensity and confidence for both of course) based in the conviction that philosophy can be an art of life or, at least, an attempt to change one's life through the awareness of how one feels affectively-bodily in the world. However, these unexpected and, at least, partial convergences certainly do not eliminate a different global attitude towards philosophical research and confidence in the potential of meliorism. Nevertheless, they do suggest the possibility of a fruitful dialogue in the name of the lived body and the critique of the excesses—both spiritualistic and materialistic—of Western culture.*

Keywords: *phenomenology, somaesthetics, Richard Shusterman, Hermann Schmitz, new phenomenology.*

This paper is dedicated to Hermann Schmitz, founder of the New Phenomenology, who passed away a few months ago and whose reflections, always radical and against the current, I will miss.

* * *

Corporeal Landscapes: Can Somaesthetics and New Phenomenology Come Together?

It is rather strange that the most body-oriented philosophy of the twentieth century, Hermann Schmitz's New Phenomenology (hereafter: NP), and the most body-oriented aesthetics of the last thirty years, namely Richard Shusterman's Somaesthetics (hereafter: SA), have never yet been compared and contrasted with each other.[1] Of course, it is easy to understand the reason for that if one does not only read a few occasional pages but widens one's gaze to the broader theoretical-existential context. On the one hand, in fact, there is a wide-ranging philosophical system, filled with themes of continental philosophy and available almost exclusively in German.[2] On the other hand, there is a pragmatist path promising extra-disciplinary applications (science, morals, politics, religion, history, and design technology) but essentially limited to the aesthetic horizon (although in a broad sense). This seemingly irreducible difference—certainly also due to the crucial but often overlooked role that moods play in philosophical thought—explains why my attempt to sketch a tentative comparison between these two philosophical proposals[3] must be restricted to their approach to the body, which is understood as the soma or lived body.

Undoubtedly, working together as border crossers and transgressors of disciplinary boundaries—analytic philosophy for Shusterman and orthodox German phenomenology for Schmitz—these two philosophers consider the body as the biggest repressed topic of a Western intellectual culture that is triumphantly driven towards scientist reductionism. Further, both place the body at the center of their research and more generally, at the heart of our being-in-the-world. More specifically, from 1964, Schmitz constructed a vast philosophical system around the body, based on affective, situative, and involuntary life experiences. Additionally, he also developed a first-person phenomenology of felt space, whose original condition is the "primitive present/presence" as irrefutable proof of that which concerns us personally. Meanwhile, Shusterman advocated for a theoretical as well as practical meliorism by virtue of which an enhanced awareness of corporeality and art experience should lead to far-reaching ethical consequences and genuine well-being. However, given that Schmitz and Schusterman were never in personal contact—which would have helped them understand each other better[4]—I certainly cannot compare SA and NP in general (let alone, SA and the phenomenological philosophy in a general sense). Thus, I can only identify that which seems really worth comparing in these two approaches to bodily life.

1. Rectifying a Millenary Repression

The first and more general point that these two paradigms have in common is surely the critique of the Western intellectual tradition and the forms of life that are derived from it. In fact, both NP and SA aim at rectifying the body-negating philosophical-theological tradition, but they do so in different ways.

NP traces this repression back to the Platonic introjectionist and dualist (body/soul)

1 To avoid being repetitive, I chose not to provide any textual citations here. The texts which I will constantly refer to and sometimes even paraphrase, limited in number for the same purpose, are the following: Schmitz (1965, 1966, 1969, 1992, 2011, 2019) and Shusterman (2000, 2008, 2012).

2 For a wide-ranging introduction to Schmitz's neo-phenomenological theory, see Griffero (2019a, pp. 45–65; 2019b).

3 For a comparison between Shusterman's SA and my pathic aesthetics—focusing more on the themes of aesthetics but also inevitably anticipating some of the topics that will follow—see Griffero (2021).

4 This is a general requirement for a real philosophical understanding, which Shusterman emphasises following the work of William James.

metaphysics in particular—which is largely dominant in our culture—and promotes an aggressive campaign of depsychologization of the emotional sphere and externalization of feelings. These should be understood not as interior affects projected outside but as environmental constraints that, like climate conditions, modulate the lived and predimensional space and resonate through their authority in our felt body. Moreover, against the dominant "psychologistic-reductionist-introjectionist paradigm"—required by the pedagogical-instrumental need to make human beings more rationally autonomous from the otherwise uncontrollable felt-bodily resonance of a transcendent affective sphere—Schmitz suggested reconsidering the archaic perspective of felt-bodily dynamism. This view was common until extrapersonal feelings (*thymos* as overwhelming *daimons*) were relegated to a fictional private psychic sphere (*psyché*) and recognized that the felt body, irreducible to the unitary-physical body, not only makes an active contribution to all phenomena but may also be a perfect seismograph of one's own emotional situation. On the other hand, while criticizing the same tradition and the socially-physiologically conditioned ways we use our soma in perception, performance, and self-fashioning, SA is instead more focused on developing an improved somatic understanding and mastery (I will return to this several times in this paper).

Both approaches undoubtedly think that culture and history shape (the quality of) our bodily appearance, behavior and experience. However, NP—by investigating how a person and even an entire historical climate is determined by the kind of bodily resonance that motor suggestions and synaesthetic characters find in individuals[5]—aims above all to present a view of the world entirely alternative to the dominant rationalist-scientist one. Meanwhile, SA—being much less averse to the natural sciences—traces the cultural anti-somatic bias back to the desire to avoid the fundamental existential ambiguity[6] and instrumentality (mistakenly equated with inferiority) that the body reveals, without attempting to construct a systematic philosophical vision based on principles entirely alternative to the dominant ones.

At the center of both approaches, a redefinition of the body, conceived as *Leib* (NP) and soma (SA), can be seen. This is a means to focus the attention on a lived-experienced dimension of the body as opposed to the physical-anatomical one? However, the question to be asked is: do *Leib* and soma really mean the same thing. The answer is that in many ways, they certainly do. For Schmitz, the "felt body" (*Leib*) is what one experiences subjectively, without drawing on the five senses (in particular, sight and touch) or the perceptual body schema; it has a predimensional-surfaceless voluminosity that is not spatially-physiologically delimited within the boundaries of the material body (*Körper*). It is indeed very close to what Shusterman calls "soma" (or *shintai* in Japanese), meaning the living, sentient, and purposive (not merely physical) body one experiences from within as the indispensable medium for all perception. Yet, Shusterman conceives the soma also as an intelligent corporeality involving both the intentional mind (the spiritual) and the external-physical body, in order to improve and render both dimensions more aesthetically satisfying (somatic intelligence results in gracefulness, which goes hand-in-hand with physical-bodily efficacy). Whereas, Schmitz strongly denies that phenomenology can/should deal with the material-organic body.

5 About the current debate on resonance, see Griffero (2016, 2017c, 2020). The convincing somaesthetic analysis of our perception of architecture, for example, seems to me perfectly in tune (apart from the different lexicon, of course) with the analysis that NP offers on the architectural lived space.

6 The body, in fact (as Shusterman claims), is always caught between power and fragility, dignity and brutishness, etc.; it is something we are but also something we have (that is, something objective-subjective) and a symbol of both freedom and unfreedom and vulnerability; it is universal but also irreducibly individual; it is the condition of possibility of all knowledge but it simultaneously offers knowledge that is always limited and perspectival; it is a primal and indispensable tool, but because of the humanistic prejudice against instrumentality, it seems to be inferior to the mind, just as mechanical means are believed to be inferior to more noble (i.e., spiritual) ends.

In general terms, this leads to a number of rather significant differences. In fact, NP embraces a clearly anti-scientific lifewordly essentialism, focused on a bodily experience that is completely different from any sensory-organic performance and that can interact with it only in exceptional cases. Meanwhile, the pragmatist SA instead ecumenically attempts to bring together lifewordly experience and scientific research, highlighting that even neuroscience increasingly refers to the bodily senses other the traditional ones: feelings of skin (touch), proprioception, kinaesthesia, bodily temperature, balance, pain, etc. Both approaches fight against the dangerous uniformity with which we think of the body and do justice to the diversity of its everyday experience (including gender, age, and ethnicity). However, whereas Shusterman conceives the soma as a unity of mind and body (a real "body-mind" whole), which also deserves to be investigated by the natural sciences, Schmitz sees the mind and the psyche as artificial (post-Platonic) constructs, whose only purpose is a better scientific-pedagogic-prognostic (rationalistic) control of involuntary bodily-affective life.

These differences concerning the role of physiology (basically accepted by SA and radically excluded by NP), must certainly be noted, but ought not to be exaggerated, if only because Shusterman sometimes seems to consider some "reflections" (sense of rhythm, sense of balance, etc.) as physiological that Schmitz would easily rather consider to be full-fledged felt-bodily reflections. However, this does not change the fact that SA places inner-nonreflective somatic experience and external-cognitive somatic representations on the same level. Instead, for NP, the radical distinction between lived body and physical body implies an equally radical distinction between a first-person phenomenological investigation of our involuntary felt-bodily life experiences and a more artificial third-person scientific-experimental research on the body, thus considered as an externally perceptible material object. This is indeed an irremediable theoretical difference.

2. Being Aware (Dramatically or Not)

A somaesthetic project so inclusive as to take into account both the lived body and the physical body must necessarily also view the body both as an object and as a subject. For this reason, Shusterman identifies four levels of consciousness: a) unconscious consciousness (one does something intentionally while asleep); b) awakened but unreflective, unthematized perception (one does something absentmindedly, that is, without focusing on it); c) explicit awareness (one does something attending carefully to it), and d) consciousness of how (and that) one is conscious of what one is doing (one's attention to an object also transforms it, so to speak). Here, an example dear to Shusterman can be cited: one might inexplicitly be conscious of breathing, be explicitly conscious of breathing without focusing on one's different tasks, be consciously focused on one's breathing, and finally be conscious of one's breathing to the point of influencing and possibly improving it.

Meanwhile, NP certainly lacks such a brilliant and articulated theory of consciousness. Thus, while admitting that there are a thousand shades, it only clearly distinguishes between the awareness of the "primitive present-presence"—triggered by a pathic, immediate, overwhelming "catastrophic" event (think of a fright, laughing, and crying)—and the consciousness of the unfolded present-presence. Here, for the former, one must sometimes regress to for personal re-subjectivization, while the latter by (even propositional) singularization explicates worldly situations marked by internally and holistically diffuse, chaotic-manifold significance. However, it must be kept in mind that, for Schmitz, one is alive and self-conscious only if one is not

completely emancipated from (and can still access) the primitive present/presence. The unfolded (linguistic-singularizing) present-presence, in fact, is just a labile stage and "fortunately" that is never acquired once and for all, so that a person never ceases to be a chaotic and ambivalent phenomenon infinitely oscillating between personality and prepersonality. However, one's substantial profile depends on one's inability to ever detach oneself from the indisputable and urgent "subjective facts" that reveal that what happens concerns, indeed, oneself. For the same reason, one can never truly be detached from atmospheric spatial feelings, which contribute to these subjective facts.[7]

Moreover, it is difficult to compare NP and SA in terms of the theory of consciousness, given their very different philosophical assumptions, which mean that their convergence cannot go beyond the fact that they both exclude an overly cognitive and disembodied conception of consciousness. Here, it is necessary to simply address the first questions that come to mind: why does Shusterman de-dramatize self-awareness and avoid the most intense affective expositions that could prove it? Is the personal regression promoted by Schmitz something that happens anyway and should simply not be repressed, or is it something that should even be favored, with the pain of a flat and depersonalized existence? Thus, it is important to now see whether the comparison between NP and SA becomes more fruitful on a different level—namely, when dealing with the thorny question of the so-called "absent body."

3. Forgetting the Body or Making it Increasingly Aware?

As is well known, the more traditional (Sartre's and Merleau-Ponty's) phenomenology of corporeality assumed that the lived body functions better, the more it is absent—i.e., the more it remains in the background and is not focused on as such by consciousness. This also fits with Husserl's pioneering theory that one's own body is the invariant point of view through which one perceives and experiences any other thing, and exactly for this reason one simply cannot perceive it in the absence of an additional and external perspective. In this context, while starting from different assumptions, both NP and SA oppose the thesis of performative forgetfulness of the body (already proposed by Kant and James, according to Shusterman, perhaps as a product of their avowed hypochondria) by instead claiming the possibility of a reflection on the lived body that does not automatically hinder its fluidity and effectiveness. Here, I will explore their premises.

NP assumes that, for a phenomenological philosophy, it is essential to be able to, in principle, observe and describe a pre-reflective phenomenon without modifying it. If it were not possible to describe the lived body due to the fact that it is an extra-linguistic phenomenon, then (applying the principle of *adeaquatio* to the letter), the most adequate expression of a felt-bodily pre-reflective behavior (of pain, for example) would only be a gestural one (for instance, a cry to express pain). Thus, one would be forced, paradoxically, to speak exclusively of linguistic entities, *de facto* excluding the lived body on grounds that it is "too marvelous for words!" (as an old song goes). Additionally, NP does not seem to view the possible discrepancy between felt-bodily introspective experience and reflection on it as a problem—all the more so as Schmitz's approach goes beyond both body performances and genetic-causal explanations of the felt-

7 The primitive present-presence is the fusion point of five elements (here, now, being, this, and I) and, through a felt-bodily resonance, it ensures an awareness whose certainty is not about one's self-attributed and slightly abstract properties or the real nature of what appears, but only about one's being emotionally concerns as a subject. Through the five-fold unfolded present, human beings (unlike animals) doubtlessly go beyond the present situation, but it is only due to the collapse of their personal emancipation and the resulting regression to their primitive present-presence (personal regression) that they feel and know with certainty that they exist. In other words, only when meanings suddenly fall back into their internally diffuse significance, do the subjects have full confidence in reality and fully experience it.

bodily phenomena one experiences.

Meanwhile, SA goes much further and questions the supposed fluidity of our body habits. First, it recognizes that a skillful performance of bodily action—which is so free-flowing and natural that it seems miraculous—does not rely much on too reflective somatic awareness, but rather on a non-cognitive self-monitoring established through sensorimotor schemata[8] and habits. Second, and above all, it claims that this bodily spontaneity as product of habit could sometimes even be completely inaccurate and dysfunctional. Hence, it follows that it would be best to integrate unreflective and reflective bodily consciousness (the latter for a limited time)—as various disciplines of body training and even Daoist texts aim to do—in order to correct bad habits and improve our self-perception and self-use (including the plasticity and efficiency of the brain's neural networks, for some reason!). This crucial defense of the usefulness of reflective awareness of soma behavior relies on the important distinction between two aspects. On the one hand, there is a (bad) reflection that interferes with the fluidity of bodily performance without being a clear somatic sense of self. It is conceived as a ruminative introspection and neurotic self-attentiveness inclined to depression, and is obscured by anxiety (of failing or making a bad impression). On the other hand, there is a (good) reflection usually trained to undertake the multitasking that our everyday experience testifies to (one is usually able to drive a car while listening to the news, for example). Following Dewey's claim that bad habits can be amended, and that true bodily freedom necessarily means having control over one's bad habits, SA, nevertheless, underestimates an important fact: when one surrenders (*cum grano salis*) to what happens and "accepts" a certain smooth somatic habit—which is the starting point of my pathic aesthetics[9]—even a not-so-good habit is less oppressive when one does not paranoidly resist it and try to transform it.

While being well aware that complete transparency is nothing but a harmful cognitive illusion, SA, therefore, seems to consider the thesis of an operating "absent body" as only apparently founded on real experience. It further postulates a two-stage process, whereby the early phases of learning a sensorimotor skill actually need careful and critical bodily attention, but then give way to a new and successful spontaneous body habit. Additionally, SA also notes, in fact, that critical self-attention to our somatic behavior is also needed after the end of the learning process, as the latter is never entirely complete. This means, of course, that a fully spontaneous-unreflective bodily behavior cannot (must not) ever exist; it is given only partially and momentarily, for example, when one focuses only on the ends of action and not on the somatic means for attaining them. However, other problems arise here. The very fact that what someone experiences as a fluid behavior appears to someone else as bad might imply that the best judge of a "good" bodily habit is not the person who experiences it, but an external observer—be it a master of bodily training or even oneself through mirror self-observation.

Moreover, in this case, Shusterman tried to avoid too rigid positions: a) a somatic self-examination is not always achievable, and it is worth achieving only in appropriate circumstances; b) a somatic self-examination does not necessarily interfere with smooth behavior for two reasons—b1) "muscle memory" (or "procedural memory", "motor memory") is not mindless at all, provided that the mind should not be identified with a deliberate-focused awareness; and b2) a critical self-awareness as a decentered perspective acquired accidentally or through

8 As opposed to the perceptual body schema (the habitual conception of one's own body) that modern psychology derives from sensorial experiences, Schmitz proposed a felt-bodily motor schema based on irreversible directions of vital impulse and on the swaying of diffuse felt-bodily isles (see below).

9 See Griffero (2019a) in particular.

exercise does not require being entirely outside the situation being critically examined—this is the most relevant philosophical point for me. Thus, somatic awareness can promote good body performance because, on the one hand, the unreflective behavior is not entirely mindless and, on the other, the somatic reflection is not entirely disembodied. Further, it goes without saying that this suggestive proposal by SA gives far too much preference (from a phenomenological point of view) to the external postural appearance and its efficiency in relation to external goals. We actually feel our felt-bodily behavior even when not acting or performing tasks!

However, claiming that a foreground (self-monitoring) cannot do without a background (absent body) and proposing to consider this distinction as simply functional and flexible is something that even NP could accept. Nevertheless, the latter could never adopt the principle that the involuntary background is something a) always perfectible and b) that may gradually come to the fore. This is just as it could never accept the idea that language plays a decisive role in body awareness. NP would not only criticize linguistic essentialism—as Shusterman also does when talking about Rorty, recognizing the importance of the nondiscursive dimension of experience. It would also criticize Shusterman's idea that language—which for Schmitz is basically a strategy necessary for personal emancipation, but a seriously reductionist option compared to the manifold-chaotic qualitative reality of the situations we inhabit—can improve our perception of what we feel and enhance our body habits.

4. Felt-bodily Interaction

Perhaps, the most counterintuitive idea proposed by NP is that our felt body constantly generates a ubiquitous embodied communication[10] (or interaction) with the outside world thanks to bridging qualities (motor suggestions and synesthetic qualities) that we can experience in our own felt body as well as in forms we encounter—whether at rest or in motion, and be they animate or inanimate. According to this theory, an experiencer felt-bodily communicates with everything that is other in the sense that they experience the other's presence-present through their own felt-bodily presentness—that is, through a resonance understood as one of many possibilities contained in the inter- and intra-corporeal economy of contraction (incorporation, extending up to narrowness) and expansion (excorporation, extending up to vastness). By virtue of this simultaneous presence of communication partners—and regardless of whether the subject thus embodies something or is disembodied into something—everyday experiences (walking down a street, contemplating a landscape, waiting for the train, and even feeling our own heartbeat) seem to mainly consist in generating and feeling the whole felt body *ad hoc*, each time.

Furthermore, even this conception—which goes far beyond today's all-too-trendy theories of embodiment—is not entirely foreign to SA. In fact, for Shusterman, the implicit somatic-affective memory is the feeling of one's own identity-location in time or space, but also the feeling of the intercorporeal relationship with other bodies (excluding inanimate objects) or of the right bodily attitudes one incorporates according to one's social role. This means that even when we ignore the organic senses and have a pure feeling of our body as such, we also always feel something of the external world—if only the surface on which we are lying or the force of gravity acting on our organs. This suggestion—due to which SA can also refute any accusations of (even social and political) solipsism—seems to be a very promising starting point for a theory

10 I have explained and somewhat adapted this theory by Schmitz elsewhere (Griffero, 2017b).

of embodiment that would further unite SA and NP.[11]

Nevertheless, SA's correct statement on embodied aesthetics that is not obsessed by (post-Kantian) distance and animated by a bias in favor of active engagement seems to misunderstand that a distanced (even contemplative) relationship with the environment does not exclude an embodied interaction at all. It is only different, of course, from the one triggered by a direct and close involvement. Further, SA doubtlessly comes much closer to NP's theory of felt-bodily communication when Shusterman acknowledges that we are always able to proprioceptively and/or empathetically perceive the somatic styles of others and thus experience them or react to them emotionally (even if there is no need to invoke the testimony of mirror neurons as Shusterman does). In fact, what SA refers to as proprioceptive and motor-affective imitation of others' movements can easily fall under what Schmitz instead defines as "motor suggestions" and "synesthetic characters." This especially applies when Shusterman mentions—as an alternative to the neuronal explanation to a minor extent—an adequate affective appreciation of the others' somatic styles, and even of their special auras.

5. Somatic Meliorism and Felt-bodily Style

This paper cannot exclude the fact that the greatest difference between the two approaches is SA's melioristic approach, which is very unusual in (especially continental) philosophy. SA is actually a body-respecting, experience-oriented theory but above all a melioristic enterprise. It is based on methods that may vary but are always aimed not only at better explaining our experience but also improving it by somatic training—not least in order to cope with the rapid changes imposed by the technological society.[12] The hoped-for improvement would be achieved on a more theoretical level by overcoming the fatal body/mind and materialist/spiritual schisms of our culture and cultivating the soma in its integrating material, mental, and spiritual dimensions. On a more practical and pragmatic level, betterment is achieved by acquiring a more liberating and rewarding sense of who we are and what matters to us. This would also provide social hope, given that an enhanced bodily awareness is never only a private, selfish affair, aimed at generating greater perceptual sensitivity and powers of action, but always also essentially environmental—something that can sensitize us to improved social relations to which we bodily contribute and from which we draw our significance.

NP would have little to object to some important consequences of somaesthetic meliorism—for example, to the contribution to tolerance that can be derived from overcoming the somatic-visceral prejudices that exist even when we reject them at a cognitive level, or the re-evaluation of the means used to achieve an end, which are normally considered to be something inferior (all the more so after the ruthless condemnation of the instrumental reason by Critical Theory). Besides, NP would fully agree that only a new body philosophy can criticize the troubling ways in which all bodily dimensions have been distorted, exploited, and abused in the superficially estheticized contemporary culture. And perhaps, NP would also welcome SA's campaign to overcome the predominantly bookish nature of philosophy, which it rather conceives as an art of living (even as an *ars erotica*) aimed at enriching the perceptual awareness of everyday meanings, feelings, and potentials without resorting to supernatural aids. Further, both SA and

11 Think of the interesting and almost perfectly neo-phenomenological somaesthetic interpretation of our articulated bodily interaction with photography (Shusterman, 2012).

12 Shusterman, for example, mentions both chronic excessive tension in the neck and orientational bias as everyday somaesthetic pathologies.

NP are independently convinced that they contribute to living better lives.

Meanwhile, the idea that art performance and experience can benefit (in terms of gracefulness or appreciative skills, for example) from an improved somaesthetic knowledge is certainly alien to NP. And yet, when reflecting on the connection between artistic style and corporeality, NP goes potentially further than SA. Being less interested than SA in refined aesthetic perception and the subtle gymnastics necessary for (among the others) sports, sex, rap, and dance music, NP aims at extensively examining how the felt-bodily disposition (or style, in a broad sense) of a certain era acts as a bridge-quality linking an artist and their creations to the intended audience, who are already somehow attuned to it (Schmitz, 1966). However, it is on a different (not strictly artistic) idea of style that Schmitz and Shusterman could agree. The latter especially focuses on the creative self-stylizations merging body schemata and various aspects that are both generic and personal (genre- or age- and ethnic-based movement, dressing style, music, ways of speaking, eating habits, etc.), deliberate and spontaneous as well as sedimented, and also can be appreciated through our five traditional senses and in a transmodal, proprioceptive, and kinesthetic way.

This idea of a somatic style as the not-necessarily-ephemeral tendency to behave or look a certain way is very close to NP's concept of inner attitude (*innere Haltung*), if it were not for a) Shusterman viewing this somatic style as a sedimentation of the body schema, whose role Schmitz instead downsizes in favor of the motor schema; b) for his appealing to the somatic style's intentionality—a concept that the German philosopher considers misleading and replaces with a dynamic-Gestaltic relationship between anchor point and zone of condensation of affective states (See Griffero, 2019a, pp. 45–55); c) and for his considering "style" as the equivalent of what is traditionally called a person's "spirit," while this notion is totally absent from neophenomenological externalism and is fully rethought of in terms of "personal situation." For NP, "style" is therefore nothing but a formal-creative objectification of the felt-bodily resonance to environmental expressive qualities arousing impressions due to a specific felt-bodily communication. But here we need to go a little deeper.

Schmitz aims at explaining the history of styles (in a broad sense) without resorting to the traditional psychological-spiritual perspective, which is, as such, too intentionalistic and confusingly Cartesian in its inevitably psychosomatic approach. The historical becoming of vision or perception, *Kunstwollen*, worldviews, or an indeterminate bodily feeling, in fact, would never adequately explain, for example, the coexistence of different styles in contemporary artists or the rapid stylistic change in the same artist as well as the ornamental analogies between completely unrelated peoples or the stylistic diversity in authors who share the same worldview. Moreover, for Schmitz, a sort of *Zeitleib*—that is, the historicity of the *Leib*'s involuntary dispositions—explains the collective imposition of a style. Thus, art would precisely be the outcome of an encounter between the felt body's specific "gestures" and the feelings, which are, however, understood anti-introjectively as objective powers effused atmospherically in a lived space. Neophenomenologically speaking, it is then the felt-bodily disposition that, acting as *tertium comparationis* between a cultural sphere (in a broad sense) and artistic style should be considered as the origin of every stylistic change.

Of course, at stake here is not the *Körper*—as such physiologically unchanged for millions of years—but the *leiblich* feeling in the framework of a process that is neither teleological nor oculocentric or autonomously formal (as posited instead by the mature Wölfflin, for example)—which is important to keep in mind. In other words, the felt-bodily disposition, by ensuring a structural analogy between the formal processes embodied in the perceived (also artistic)

figures and the felt-bodily feeling of the percipient, can explain, also by virtue of a finite number of variables, every stylistic innovation (in a broad sense). However, it can also account for the analogies between styles that are heterogeneous and far away in time, as well as the unpredictable and involuntary reappearance—which is in this sense very "climatic"—of a style even in the absence of an attestable tradition. Using three fundamental dimensions, such as linear, angular, and rounded, in a hierarchically different way, while interweaving them with felt-bodily factors (narrowness and vastness, contraction and dilation, direction, intensity and rhythm, protopathic and epicritic tendencies), Schmitz uses the felt-bodily arrangement as a fluid criterion.

This means that the prevalence of a certain arrangement in a given style does not at all mean that the subordinate arrangement does not also play a significant role in it. It follows that, in the dynamic processes of an artistic form, one never perceives absolute contraction and expansion. It is more likely, to give a few examples, that one experiences the following: an intense and rhythmic competition of tension and expansion (as in Baroque buildings); a protopathic tendency with a strong felt-bodily intensity combined with the relevant and mostly predominant role of tension (Romanesque); an epicritical-contractive tendency that loses its oppressive character due to a directionality that is nevertheless oriented towards privative expansion (Gothic); or the alternation of contraction-narrowness and protopathic expansion in spiral-shaped decorative elements. In these and many other examples, Schmitz aimed to prove that even beauty, far from being heaven-sent, would be nothing but the historically contingent solution of a competition between antithetical tendencies immanent to the mentioned felt-bodily disposition.

However, it must be noted that this approach raises epistemological difficulties, such as those normally afflicting all historicist theories (temporal demarcations, geographical limits, relevance of exceptions, etc.), which also somewhat invalidate (or at least weaken) the neo-phenomenological perspective. Nevertheless, tracing styles back to the felt-bodily feeling rather than to the so-called scopic regimes seem really promising, provided, of course, that this method is not to be brandished as an omni-explicative monolith. For this reason, Schmitz preferred to compare his tentative approach to a "polyphonic concert" and a constellation in which all the categories of lived bodiliness, albeit with different and variable relevance, are implicated and interacting.

To sum up, given the very different extent of the reflections that NP and SA have devoted to the examination of (personal and collective) bodily style, I can content myself with noting that both agree in considering somatic style that which—underlying people's felt-bodily and bodily dimensions of sensory appearance and helping define their personality—animates the various ways persons and groups act, feel, think, and desire. Here, only a comparison referred to a concrete case (impossible here)—e.g., to Winckelmann's ekphrasis—could better clarify whether this convergence is really promising or an only apparent line of development.

6. Different (philosophical) Moods

Proving that very different philosophers also have very different philosophical approaches is not a very surprising discovery. Yet, in this case, given their apparently convergent purpose (a philosophy of the body), even a simple reflection on their different contexts (theoretical but also existential) and findings might not be entirely useless.

Taking a look at his extensive bibliography as well as his book titles, Schmitz might first appear as a theory-focused "philosophy professor," against whom Shusterman would set "real philosophers," who truly embody their thought and live according to it. However, this is a

wrong impression. It is true that, by integrating theory and practice through disciplined somatic training, SA certainly insists more than NP on the link with praxis, and is not at all content with affirming the (attested from a phenomenological, analytical-philosophical and sociological point of view) central role of the embodied background.[13] Indeed, SA leads philosophy in a (post-puritan) melioristic-pragmatic direction, thus actualizing the (especially) late-ancient idea of philosophy as an art of living rather than a mere discursive-abstract theory, and merging it with Asian philosophical traditions based on (ritual-artistic) bodily self-cultivation. Moreover, philosophy's traditional goals of knowledge, self-knowledge, virtue, happiness, and justice are promoted together here with the aim of enhancing the experience and the use of one's body as a locus of sensory-aesthetic appreciation (aesthesis) and creative self-fashioning.

Nonetheless, as an anti-Platonist philosophy taking the non-anatomical body seriously, NP also aims to be more than a purely academic practice, as shown by the numerous applications of its lived body theory: from architecture (theory of dwelling, interior spaces, and urban environments) and geography (designed spaces) to medicine (chronic conditions, e.g. diabetes; orthopedics), from phonetics (conversations as embodied communication) to Gestalt-psychology, psychiatry, and psychotherapy (personality and embodiment disorders, e.g. schizophrenia). Other potential fields of application include pedagogy (situations and atmospheres in education, e.g., classrooms), nursing (the felt body, embodied communication, emotions as atmospheres) (See Griffero, 2014, 2019a, 2021), sinology (the Chinese view of man), applied theology, aesthetics (Gernot Böhme's aisthetics[14] as well as my own pathic aesthetics), and even law (brought back to its primary affective-corporeal situations).

Moreover, Shusterman justified the difference between his SA and phenomenology by claiming that, unlike the latter, SA does not aim to reveal an alleged primordial, foundational, and universal embodied consciousness, or merely describe our somatic consciousness and practice, but instead is focused on improving them, also through practical training. However, while these arguments might certainly be valid for traditional phenomenology, they do not apply to NP, which, as such, is as opposed as SA to the fetishism of disinterested knowledge. Here, it is also true that NP does not delve too deeply into a critical-comparative evaluation of practical methodologies designed to improve our body in a representational, experiential, and performative way—that is, what Shusterman calls "pragmatic somaesthetics," including diets, meditative, martial, and erotic arts as well as even bodybuilding and psychosomatic (both self-directed and other-directed) disciplines. However, Schmitz was also unafraid to make references to yoga, meditative practices, and autogenic training, although he leaves the details to others.

The most crucial difference is then that NP hardly pays any attention to the external bodily aspect, in which SA instead sees at least a means for spiritual ends, thus vindicating the coexistence and interaction between inner and outer self-sculpting. Here, too, the difference is due to the different cultural backgrounds. While NP is committed to identifying an eternal "alphabet of corporeality" beneath its obviously different historical and cultural declinations (whose "letters" include: angst, vastity, contraction, expansion, direction, tension, dilation, intensity, rhythm, privative expansion, privative contraction, protopathic tendency, epicritic tendency, felt-bodily isle formation, and felt-bodily isle decrease), this inevitably somewhat essentialist approach "seems" to be absent from (or at least not investigated by) SA's theoretical branch. Analytic

13 In the case of analytical philosophy, Shusterman's recognition seems to me as far too generous, since Wittgenstein's and Searle's reflections are, in fact, very circumscribed and, in any case, limited to its causal-biological dimension. Instead, the revival of Bourdieu's notion of habitus as a set of social (also bodily) embedded thoughts and lifeforms is certainly far more promising.

14 See Böhme (2001, 2017a, 2017b).

SA, in fact, does not go beyond the first and (as such insufficient) qualitative-phenomenal description of the unintentional-pervasive bodily background of mental life. Besides, it takes into greater account sociological-cultural studies and shows how bodily behavior and values reflect and sustain social conditions to a greater extent than philosophical ones, focusing more on "bad" and perfectible habits—if they can always be improved, they may always be kind of bad—than "good" and fulfilling ones.

Additionally, yet, despite all these undoubted differences, SA's and NP's approaches could be found to also be similar in underlining the centrality of proprioception. More specifically, SA's idea of a body scan or introspection—based not on visual perception but proprioceptive perception and focused on feelings of different body parts or areas—could easily be reconciled with NP's theory of multiple felt body isles.[15] The latter are voluminous, yet surfaceless quasi-things (on this topic, cf. Griffero, 2017a) that we perceive as the sources of our impulses, and which should not be identified with the discrete parts examined within a naturalistic analysis. As they incarnate an existential and symbolic salience, which in part is also culturally and historically variable, such isles are sometimes relatively stable (oral cavity, anal zone, chest, back, belly, genitals, soles, etc.), while at other times, they can come forward or dissolve on the basis of excitement (itch, palpitation, burst of heat, ache, etc.), or can even be subsumed in general movements (vigor, prostration, pleasure, and uneasiness). These isles are perfectly revealed in strictly phenomenal experiences or when we verify what we feel about our own selves and our surroundings, while leaving the five senses aside and exceeding the physical-cutaneous boundaries. It is precisely in this context that, for instance, our chest—as a felt-bodily isle in which emotional involvement resonates—becomes other than the organs thereby located, etc. The only difference with respect to this proprioception of non-organic bodily areas is perhaps that Schmitz's thesis seems to promise a better understanding of how such isles—irreducible to strictly physical-anatomical parts (actually not so strictly excluded by Shusterman)—are aroused or extinguished (i.e., resonate in this or that way) in relation to a person's affective involvement in externally diffused feelings (or atmospheres).

Anti-essentialistic perfectionism, an optimistic drive to transform and improve situations, flexibilization of excessively rigid distinctions, strategies to phase analysis and practice, a disavowal of any necessary (existentialist) link between self-reflection and melancholia (explained as the outcome of an illusory presumption of perfection to which human beings are not entitled), and the moderate use of any instrument and practice (too much of any good thing can be bad!) are part of the pragmatist toolbox enacted by Shusterman. It seems frontally opposed to Schmitz's continental-existentialist (in a broad sense) background, which in principle rejects neuroscience and neurophysiology, which are understood as third-person perspectives, in which experimentation aims at artificial evidence and reductionist constructs of exclusively statistical-prognostic value.[16] Further, NP appears more focused on the dramatic forms of affective-bodily involvement, starting from the basic idea that the world is given to us first and foremost pathically—that is, mostly in the form of a resistance and an obstacle to our natural and unidirectional expansive impulse (thus, proving to be truly real after all). Even if they do not mean exactly the same thing with the term "borderline-experiences," it is nevertheless crucial that Schmitz saw them as an essential certification of a subjective-involved existence, while for Shusterman as the risk of reducing the power to perceive and appreciate

15 A central notion in Schmitz's work (since 1965).

16 It remains inexplicable as to why SA's oft-repeated thesis that the soma is inner subjectivity as well as outer form still needs notions such as mind, spirit, and neurons.

smaller sensory differences.

Upon examining Shusterman's interesting objections to Burke's (1998) physiological aesthetics (Shusterman 2012), one might imagine that they also apply to Schmitz's "alphabet" of the felt body, which is accused of compensating for rationalistic reductionism through a different but not better somatic reductionistic naturalist essentialism. As already mentioned, Schmitz, however, never underestimated the individual (and historical) differences of "felt-bodily disposition," but certainly does not require a "more accurate physiology" (as Shusterman does) for a better approach to it. Even the concepts Shusterman uses to criticize Rorty's rejection of a pre- and extra-linguistic experience—"contingent necessities" or "historicized essences"—seem to me to also express (at least partially) SA's need for some "essentialism." The same can also be said of some key points of American transcendentalism (Emerson and Thoreau), much appreciated by SA: simplicity, slowness, and the "here and now," in fact, could actually turn out to be relatively convergent with a neo-phenomenology ("slow" in its investigations and strongly focused on bodily and affective exemplifications), in which every stage of unfolded presence must occasionally stop and regress to primitive presence (where "here" and "now" are integrated by "being," "this," and "I").

To sum up, the intention of this paper is not to ignore the differences between a phenomenological return to "things themselves" (certainly elemental, pristine, and universally shared through perception and involuntary life experiences) and a pragmatist melioristic aesthetics, according to which all our experiences are significantly shaped and changed by the cultures and environments we inhabit and should be transfigured into a more intensified perceptual experience by virtue of a better appreciative awareness (which however implies, again, that ordinary experience is in itself devoid of "sufficient" beauty and value!). Ultimately, for a philosophy of the lived body (or soma) to be able to reject the excesses of Western rationalism and the naturalistic reductionism leading to real body-phobia, both NP's most radical frontal attacks on the foundations of millenary intellectual culture and SA's most mitigated lateral attacks on a daily life schizophrenically split between the rejection of corporeality with its pleasures and its consumerist-superficial exploitation because of an inadequate (and perfectible) somatic awareness, could really be useful and potentially able to interact fruitfully.

Finally, one might guess that SA has broader aims than NP, which, however, does not aspire to an impossible regression to a pre-introjectionist way of life but simply to a healthy rebalancing of the predominant ontology. However, here, one should also mitigate the somaesthetic optimism by recalling that, despite the explicit intent to revive the late antique and Oriental attitude to philosophical thought as an art of living, by following the ideals of a melioristic self-monitoring, this optimism seems to be largely subordinate to what is at the heart of that modern Western rationalism, from which SA aims at distinguishing itself. In fact, for Sloterdijk—a philosopher who is not always right, but neither always wrong—the program of Modernity consists essentially in "making the implicit" (i.e., what were previously simply living conditions) "even more explicit." Here, the question to be asked is: are we sure we want to inadvertently accept this modern diktat. In this context, the Great American Songbook contains many sermon-like upbeat standards like "Ac-Cent-Tu-Ate the Positive[17]: "You got to accentuate the positive / Eliminate the negative / Latch on to the affirmative / Don't mess with Mister In-Between", etc. Again, the questions to consider here are as follows: do we really want to follow such optimistic lessons? Is it not this "in-between" that a critical philosophy should actually deal with?

17 This is an example of popular music (Arlen/Mercer, 1944) aimed at helping people in the midst of World War II to focus on something other than the war, and is one that Shusterman, always attentive to the values of popular music, should not underestimate.

References

Böhme, G. (2001). *Aisthetik: Vorlesungen über Ästhetik als allgemeine Wahrnehmungslehre*. München: Fink.

Böhme, G. (2017a). *The Aesthetics of Atmospheres*. London – New York: Routledge.

Böhme, G. (2017b). *Atmospheric Architectures. The Aesthetics of Felt Spaces*. New York: Bloomsbury.

Burke, E. (1998). *A Philosophical Enquiry Into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* (1757). London – New York: Penguin.

Griffero, T. (2014). *Atmospheres. Aesthetics of Emotional Spaces*. London - New York: Routledge.

Griffero, T. (2016). Atmospheres and Felt-bodily Resonances. *Studi di estetica, 44*(1), 1–41.

Griffero, T. (2017a). *Quasi-things. The Paradigm of Atmospheres*. New York: SUNY.

Griffero, T. (2017b). Felt-bodily Communication: A Neophenomenological Approach to Embodied Affects. *Studi di estetica,* 45(2), 71–86.

Griffero, T. (2017c). Felt-bodily Resonances. Towards a Pathic Aesthetics. *Yearbook for Eastern and Western Philosophy,* 2, 149–164.

Griffero, T. (2019a). *Places, Affordances, Atmospheres. A Pathic Aesthetics*. London – New York: Routledge.

Griffero, T. (2019b). Introduction. How Do You Find Yourself in Your Environment? Hermann Schmitz's New Phenomenology. In H. Schmitz (Ed.), *New phenomenology. A brief introduction* (pp. 9–41). Milan – Udine: Mimesis International.

Griffero, T. (2020). Better Be in Tune. Between Resonance and Responsivity. *Studi di estetica,* 48(2), 90–115.

Griffero, T. (2021). *The Atmospherical "We": Moods and Collective Feelings.* Milan – Udine: Mimesis International.

Griffero, T. (in press). *Somaesthetics and Pathic Aesthetics*.

Schmitz, H. (1965). *System der Philosophie, Bd. II: 1. Teil: Der Leib*. Bonn: Bouvier.

Schmitz, H. (1966). *System der Philosophie, Bd. II: 2. Teil: Der Leib im Spiegel der Kunst*. Bonn: Bouvier.

Schmitz, H. (1969). *System der Philosophie: Band 3. Teil 2: Der Gefühlsraum*. Bonn: Bouvier.

Schmitz, H. (1992). *Leib und Gefühl. Materialien zu einer philosophischen Therapeutik*. Paderborn: Junfermann.

Schmitz, H. (2011). *Der Leib*. Boston – Beijing – Basel – Vienna – Warsaw – Munich: De Gruyter.

Schmitz, H. (2019). *New phenomenology. A brief introduction*. Milan – Udine: Mimesis International.

Shusterman, R. (2000). *Pragmatist Aesthetics: Living Beauty, Rethinking Art*. 2nd Edition. Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield.

Shusterman, R. (2008). *Body Consciousness: A Philosophy of Mindfulness and Somaesthetics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Shusterman, R. (2012). *Thinking Through the Body: Essays in Somaesthetics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Perceptual and Bodily *Habits*: Towards a Dialogue Between Phenomenology and Somaesthetics

Nicole Miglio and Samuele Sartori

Abstract: *The aim of this paper is to examine synergies between somaesthetics and phenomenology by investigating the concept of* habit *in lived experience. The first section will compare the notion of* habit *in John Dewey's aesthetic philosophical-pedagogical project with Maurice Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology. The second section will demonstrate this link through a comparison between critical phenomenology and Richard Shusterman's somaesthetics, showing a synergy in their respective understanding of the transformative dimension of bodily habits.*

Keywords: *somaesthetics, phenomenology, habit, John Dewey, Maurice Merleau-Ponty.*

Perceptual and Bodily Habits: Towards a Dialogue Between Phenomenology and Somaesthetics

1. Introduction

The concept of habit is a central topic within philosophical tradition. In this context, Carlisle (2014) argued that in the Western philosophical tradition, there are widely diverging views on habit. Different thinkers conceive of habits as indispensable guides both to knowledge and action, but also highlight how habits may also represent obstacles to overcome. For example, she stated that "Aristotle thinks that habit lies at the heart of moral life. Spinoza argues that it leads us astray and prevents us from perceiving the deep intelligibility of nature. Hume regards custom as 'the great guide of human life', since it helps to make our world orderly and predictable. Kant suggests that it undermines our innate moral worth, making us 'ridiculous' and machine-like" (Carlisle, 2014, p. 3). Further, she mentioned that habits are like Plato's *pharmakon*: "both a poison and a cure" (p. 5).

Even though it is important to be aware of the long history of this concept, in this article, we are mostly interested in perceptual and bodily habits and their related ethical implications. Moreover, a rather recent theory that emerged in American pragmatist philosophy at the end of the nineteenth century, following its popularization in Europe, was that by Bergson, "who first attempted to distinguish 'habit memory' from 'image memory'" (Casey, 2013, p. 196). However, in this article, we will focus on Merleau-Ponty and not Bergson. This decision is due to his notable perspective that "habit has its abode neither in thought nor in the objective body, but in

the body as mediator of a world" (Merleau-Ponty, 2002/1945, p. 167). Thus, for Merleau-Ponty, the focus is not, as it is with Bergson, on the distinction between different kinds of memory; it is instead on the vital activity and capacity of the body to perform, learn, and teach habits.

However, a preliminary conceptual clarification that is crucial to understanding the concept of the performative body is required here: of it is evident that perceptual and bodily habits can be learned and taught, what does it mean that they are performed? In this context, in Merleau-Ponty's and Dewey's theoretical framework, the flesh is not simply a substantialized ontological thing within its boundary, but is instead a relational entity that interacts with the world due to its perceptual and agentive abilities. Based on this perspective, we will argue that the performativity of a body is its power to perceive, feel, and act, reflexively and pre-reflexively, in a specific environment. Thus, the body is performative because it is always open to learn and embody new attitudes and practices. In this sense, every kind of biological determinism is firmly rejected. Furthermore, this performative dimension is sensitive to the very situatedness of the embodied subject—namely, the phenomenological being-in-the-world of the self.[1]

Given this foreword, in the second section of the article, we will compare the concept of perceptual and bodily habits in Dewey's and Merleau-Ponty's respective philosophies. Even though some comparisons between the two have already been made (Shusterman, 2008; Dreon, 2007), they do not adequately focus on the problem of habits. More specifically, Dreon mainly analyzed the aesthetic, bodily, and evolutionary emergence of human language in terms of the aforementioned authors. Meanwhile, Shusterman (2008) criticized Merleau-Ponty's theoretical position on the body as a pre-reflexive, silent, and speechless space (pp. 49–50). Additionally, he also argued that Dewey is a better representative of somatic reflection due to his idea of continuity between the body and mind, as indicated by the latter's compound term "body-mind."

As will be shown in the first section, we think that this comparison between Merleau-Ponty and Dewey is required at least for three reasons. First, they share a common background—i.e., the critique of behaviorism—at the basis of their re-elaboration of the concept of body. Second, this common target of criticism will lead Merleau-Ponty and Dewey to share a relational epistemology and ontology. Precisely because these two philosophers never met each other, nor was Dewey ever cited by Merleau-Ponty in any of his studies and lectures, they each developed original concepts on perceptual and bodily habits with synergies that are still largely unexplored. Third, we will show the fruitfulness of this comparison for somaesthetics by allowing the latter to embody Merleau-Ponty's perspective on these habits, their transformations, and the ways in which such habits shape the body.

On the subject of the transformative openness of bodily performance, in the third section, we will explore contemporary synergies between phenomenology—especially in the declension of critical phenomenology—and somaesthetics, through Shusterman's attention to the analytical premises of bodily transformation. This section, thus, aims to open up a space of mutual connection and dialogue. In particular, we will show that critical phenomenology conceives of processes of marginalization and discrimination as primarily performed and experienced within the corporeal dimension. This allows us to highlight that both approaches take the body seriously and recognize the epistemic value of lived experience. At this point, the notion of habit discloses the entirety of its critical potential: as performative ways of living our own corporeality, our habits are always open to further adjustments through learning, teaching, and reframing. This awareness helps us rethink the racialized and gendered body in a new way: it recognizes

1 For a rigorous panorama of the concept of performativity within phenomenology, see Rentsch and Guidi (2020).

that racialization is not only a social phenomenon, but is also constituted at the level of lived experience (e.g., Fanon, 1967/1952); it also attends to the fact that gendered impositions over one's body are always modifiable and strictly contingent (e.g., Young, 2005). The somaesthetic focus on the transformative power of somatic experience may then offer powerful strategies to become aware of and eventually imagine new possibilities of being-in-the-world.

2. Dewey and Merleau-Ponty: The Experience and Body in Perceptual and Performative Habits

In this paper, we argue that the concept of habit is developed along a somatic axis within both Dewey's and Merleau-Ponty's thought processes. The aim of this section is then to show how the ideas of these thinkers are comparable, since both focus their analysis on the genesis and transformation of perceptual and performative habits, taking lived bodily experience as the primary locus of investigation. By doing so, they approach this issue from an aesthetic perspective or better, from a somaesthetic one. Moreover, while the issue of performative and perceptive bodies has been neglected since Baumgarten, and by Kant, Hegel, and Schopenhauer thereafter, this topic is the main focus in Shusterman's (2007) analysis (p. 137). More specifically, somaesthetics is not only the study of categories of taste, but rather it is the inquiry into bodies and their affective spheres, within their social, perceptual, and practical transformations. Thus, from this perspective, it is the effort to define the processes by which human beings modify themselves, their feelings, forms, and futures (both reflexively and pre-reflexively); it also addresses the agentive potential of environments over human beings. Therefore, one of the main research topics of somaesthetics is understanding the body as a social, anthropological, and ongoing production, through an understanding of perceptual and performative habits.

First, it is crucial to understand the common theoretical framework from which Dewey and Merleau-Ponty thematized perception and action of bodies as a continuum. The former developed this idea in his critical assessment of the reflex arc concept. This notion had interested Dewey since his reading of James' book *The Principles of Psychology* (1890)[2] and consequently, in 1892, at the University of Michigan, his Spring class was focused on behaviorism (Dewey, 1969/1892). However, only after four years of elaboration and research, he published the article *The Reflex Arc Concept in Psychology* (Dewey, 1896)—a cornerstone for his philosophical conception of habit.

In this article, the stimulus-response model is understood and criticized as a replacement of the sensation-idea dualism. Here, Dewey (1896) argued that in behaviorism a new polarity is established: peripheral functions and central structures are presented as opposing each other, reproposing the old dualism between body and soul in the distinction between stimulus and response (pp. 357–358). The artificial division therefore consists in separating the sensory stimulus, the intellectual elaboration, and finally, the physical movement into three separate and autonomous entities, whose individual existence is independent and characterization takes place in radically discontinuous terms. According to this model, sensation is an ambiguous element. It is a blur between body and soul, physical and psychic, or the intellectual elaboration and movement of the body. Within this framework, stimulus is mainly characterized by passive features. Moreover, such a framework does not consider perceptual-relational activity and instead takes it as an uncritically substantiated given that mechanical input—to the first psychological

2 There is evidence that Dewey developed his reflex arc concept idea from this book: while he was in close collaboration with James, Dewey took an example from *Principle of Psychology*, which is cited in *The Reflex Arc Concept in Psychology*, and in this essay, he tried to solve an issue already underlined in James' theoretical proposal: it "probably makes the lower centres too machine-like and the hemispheres non quite machine-like enough" (James, 1983, p. 39).

and then physical process—will autonomously lead to a response.

Dewey's starting point for criticizing and overcoming behaviorism is the concept of "coordination". This idea appears first in his course at the University of Michigan in 1892 and then, is more fully formulated in the article *The Theory of Emotion, The Significance of Emotions* (1895). Here, coordination is defined as follows:

> *[…] the mode of behavior is the primary thing, and […] the idea and the emotional excitation are constituted at one and the same time; that, indeed, they represent the tension of stimulus and response within the coordination which makes up the mode of behavior* (Dewey, 1895, pp. 18–19).

This concept is, therefore, fundamental for describing and reimagining the way our body, in its perceptive and performative capacities, interacts with the world. Here, coordination does not simply work as a bridge between perceptual and motor moment, but rather it innervates and constitutes the sensori-motor circuit. Only sensori-motor coordination can facilitate a natural and organic link between the double activity of perceiving and acting, and can direct both towards a teleological end. At the same time, it is important to remember that, in Dewey's view, perception and action cannot be split, and moreover, they cannot even be substantiated as apart. This is because, in their pragmatic function, perception and action respond to each other; the continuum between them is, thus, established through a concept that is not substantial, but pragmatic and relational—i.e., that of coordination (Dewey, 1896).

In *The Reflex Arc Concept in Psychology* (1896), the concept of coordination is further explored: it does not only involve perceptual and performative abilities, but also intimately constitutes the relationship between the individual and the environment. As Bredo (1998) pointed out, the relationship between perception and reality can be described "like a dance with a partner that acts back, then like conforming to a fixed thing, or forcing to conform to oneself" (p. 458). This circular mutual modeling involves the continuous rearticulation of perception and the world. Hence, experience underlies a psycho-physical situated activity, which cannot be reduced to physicalist, idealistic, or substantialist terms. Furthermore, the concept of situated bodily activity was also developed in Dewey's philosophy. More specifically, in his *Logic: The Theory of Inquiry* (Dewey, 1938) "situation is not equivalent to the environment – it also always includes the agent in such a way that agent and environment are co-defined" (Gallagher, 2020, p. 13). This holistic concept of situation steers away from a new dualism, such as a strict distinction between subject and environment. In the situated framework, it is impossible for any agent in a given situation to escape it without also transforming it, and this is because all possible bodily movements involve the situation itself (Gallagher, 2020, p. 13).

Merleau-Ponty's book *The Structure of Behavior* (1942) similarly regarded the perceptive and agentive capacities of the body as a unitary and active process in a situated environment. His main critical point relates closely to that forwarded by Dewey: behaviorism is an atomist, objectivist, consequentialist, and determinist perspective. They both contended that, for these reasons, behaviorism is unable to account for the complex relationship that is established in the human situation.

In particular, in the first section of the volume, Merleau-Ponty explicitly engaged with supporters of the theory of the reflex arc, showing how this model raises major critical issues. Further, he required that behaviorist psychologists have a radical change in perspective based on a scientific principle: the economy of explanation. The principle adopted by behaviorists—

especially by Charles Scott Sherrington—is as follows: to overcome the charge of unidirectionality stimulus-response, they are limited to increase—both theoretically and experimentally—the number of the ranges through which the stimulus is determined, while maintaining the consequential relationship between this and the response (Merleau-Ponty, 1967/1942, pp. 16–26).

Instead, Merleau-Ponty further developed *Gestaltpsychologie*'s concept of form. This psychological movement regarded form mainly as a concept able to describe the object of perception and how it is synthesized by humans. Therefore, it focuses on the exosomatic sphere which, due to the concept of form, appears as an organized and structured whole. Here, it is worth considering the renewed proposition of a dualistic structure: the human law of perceptual organization versus exterior environmental space. Merleau-Ponty was looking for the lowest common denominator to avoid this dualism. He found it in the concept of form [*forme*], which is able to describe not only perception but also the body and psychophysical activities. Thus, bodies are forms, which are organized and structured within their specific ontogenetic ability. Such shifting from an exosomatic perspective to an endosomatic one is crucial because it allowed Merleau-Ponty and phenomenology to find a common background for both the perceptual-performative body and the environment.

Even if "vital forms" and "physical forms" are comparable, thanks to the common denominator described briefly above, they also have specific ontological characteristics. In particular, in vital form, the virtual and pragmatic possibilities of interaction with the environment are presented as essential for maintaining life. These are given through a dialectic relationship:

> *Aided by the notion of structure or form, we have arrived at the conclusion that both mechanism and finalism should be rejected and that the 'physical', the 'vital' and the 'mental' do not represent three powers of being, but three dialectics. Physical nature in man is not subordinated to a vital principle, the organism does not conspire to actualize an idea, and the mental is not a motor principle in the body; but what we call nature is already consciousness of nature, what we call life is already consciousness of life and what we call mental is still an object vis-a-vis consciousness* (Merleau-Ponty, 1967/1942, p. 184).

Thus, form, as a dialectic between the physical, vital and mental, introduced Merleau-Ponty's philosophical work on the body. It plays active roles in the dialectic with the environment—the body structures fields of forces and is plastically formed by them (Malabou, 2009/2004, 2012/2009). However, not all life forms have the same agency. In this context, Merleau-Ponty recognized that when going up in the evolutionary chain, behavior becomes more and more differentiated. This means that the most complex organisms, within their bodies, are able to structure a greater number of dialectical relations with the situation, and so exhibit different behaviors as compared to less complex organisms.

Moreover, human habits are distinguished from the behavior of other animals by more than just the linguistic break.[3] The difference is more specifically traceable in the plasticity of our bodies' interactions—i.e., the ability to modify our form and radically transform the pragmatic dialectic between us and our situation. Further, such an idea of form is developed in another key

3 In this continuous perspective, there is no linguistic break, but only more or less complex behavior. Even becoming a speaker is enabled by our capacity to embody and perform habits; the letters feedback and constitute other, different, and new behaviours.

concept of Merleau-Ponty's philosophy: "body schema" (*schéma corporel*),[4] which is a pragmatic knowledge that allows us to perceive our body and its actions at a pre-reflexive level (Merleau-Ponty, 2002/1945, p. 113). For example, I can grasp the glass of water on the desk without thinking about the action my body is taking, nor do I have to focus my gaze on the glass or on my hand. I know this because while I am drinking, I am simultaneously looking at the computer, reading, and correcting this paper. I know where my body is, its peripersonal space, its movements, and its possibilities through the habits that I perform in such situations.

However, this description of the body schema may lead to a misunderstanding: it seems to assume biological form as a transcendental a-priori— the condition of possibility for any kind of experience. This idea is bypassed in Merleau-Ponty's *Phenomenology of Perception* (1945). If the form of the body is the body schema, then a different "form […] is a new type of existence" (Merleau-Ponty, 2002/1945, p. 114). This new existence could be created by different kind of incorporations, such as the embodiment of a plumed hat by someone who is used to wearing it, the pre-reflexive knowledge of a car's size for an expert driver, and, famously, the blind man who uses a cane as an extension of his own perceptive body. All these examples show that the body schema is not simply a biologically given, but is created by situated, specific, and cultural interactions with technological objects that surround us. However, mostly, these examples show that this process of embodiment is possible only due to constant practice, which allows "the acquisition of habits as a rearrangement and renewal of the corporeal schema" (Merleau-Ponty, 2002/1945, p. 164).

Moreover, the interaction between the human body and technologies is currently taken into consideration by post-phenomenology. This interaction is not read only in instrumental terms, but also according to the generative abilities and unprecedented experiences and practices that technologies have created (Rosenberger & Verbeek, 2015). Since the seventies, Ihde put how human intentionality is shaped by inorganic tools at the core of his research. Nevertheless, in the first section of *Techniques and Praxis* (1979), he described a phenomenological model where he rejected the Husserlian "consciousness of ---" version of intentionality for the more existential Heideggerian "'Analytic of Dasein' which has 'being-in-the-world'" as its interpretation of intentionality. He enriched this with the idea that experiences and intentionality with machines themselves are diverse and not simply reducible to any single conceptual modelling (Ihde, 1979, p. 4).

By connecting phenomenology and pragmatism, Ihde (1979) defined four different ways in which technology affects intentionality: embodiment (pp. 6–11), hermeneutic (pp. 11–13), background (pp. 13–15), and alterity relations (1990, pp. 97–108).[5] In all these instances, technologies are media: they stand between body and world, actively modelling the situation. Further, each set of human-technology interactions models relational ontology. Technologies transform our experience of the world, our intentionality, and consequently, our perceptions and interpretations of our world. Human beings, in turn, become transformed in this same

4 Although, in the translation of *Phenomenology of Perception* that we used, *schéma corporel* is translated to "body image", we think it is more appropriate in this paper to replace it with "body schema." This is not only to remain more faithful to the original French text, but mainly because body schema and body image are distinguished in post- and critical phenomenology.

5 A brief definition is in order: "We embody technologies (producing 'embodiment relations') when they extend or amplify our basic perceptual capacities [...]. By contrast, when we use technologies like clocks and dashboard speedometers we pay attention to the technologies themselves, which represent the world through readouts or other symbolic displays. Since they require us to engage in interpretive work, Ihde terms these 'hermeneutic relations'. In other cases, we relate to technologies as though they are quasi-human, such as when we ask questions of virtual assistants like Apple's Siri or Microsoft's Cortana. These Ihde calls 'alterity relations'. And finally, some technologies operate wholly out of sight, without soliciting any interactions from users. Our relations to technologies like air conditioners and the electric grid Ihde calls 'background relations'" (Susser, 2017, pp. 32–33).

situated process through the material history of things.[6]

If Merleau-Ponty and after post-phenomenology had mainly considered habits from an endosomatic perspective, Dewey approached habits from an exosomatic one due to his concept of experience. In *Experience and Nature* (1925), habits are presented as a force that shapes experience—i.e., the mutual dialectic between a human body and the situation (Dewey, 1929/1925, pp. 279-280). They are not fixed, rather they are defined as follows:

> *Habit is formed in view of possible future changes and does not harden so readily. […] Each habit demands appropriate conditions for its exercise and when habits are numerous and complex, as with the human organism, to find these conditions involves search and experimentation; the organism is compelled to make variations, and exposed to error and disappointment. By a seeming paradox, increased power of forming habits means increased susceptibility, sensitiveness, responsiveness* (Dewey, 1929/1925, p. 281).

Moreover, habits look like vital forms. They change through time to fit better with the social, political, economic, and biological situations. This characteristic—i.e., the plasticity of habits—is something that emerges only through their pragmatic application. Habits open the door to new habits, possibilities, and virtual experiences as well as practices, performances, and perceptions. The human body is, in this regard, like an art object in its classical Kantian definition: an object "that is purposive in itself and, though without an end" (Kant, 2007/1790, § 44), and that is always in a process of genesis.

Furthermore, both the authors being discussed account for perceptual and bodily habits in two different ways: Dewey from the *exosomatic* point of view and Merleau-Ponty from the *endosomatic*, but both from a dialectic perspective. Further, the perceptual and bodily habits raise, for both, a new philosophical interest: they become key concepts in analyzing and demonstrating the plasticity of body perception and practices. In doing so, they also rethink the agency of experience, situation, technology, and social language. This perspective is exactly the common ground where somaesthetics, our comparison, and our further analyses have their epistemological value. Somaesthetics, due to its closeness to Dewey's thought, is mainly focused on what has been defined here as the exosomatic perspective[7]—i.e., how sociocultural habits are embodied in practical everyday life. This framework on perceptual and performative habits may be enriched by some concepts taken from phenomenology and post-phenomenology: form and body-schema, transparency and proprioception as well as intentionality and media-intentionality are powerful conceptual tools that may help constitute a new idea of the bodily and situated subject.

Finally, this analysis could allow us to distinguish, in somaesthetics, habits that positively implement emotional and agentive possibilities for the body, rather than annihilate them. If the analyses carried out in this section are fundamentally related to somaesthetics' analytical project,[8] they also lead to a guiding principle able to determine an ethical boundary between

6 "Things" may seem a generic term, but on this occasion, it is based on Ian Hodder's definition: "Thing is an entity that has presence by which I mean it has a configuration that endures, however briefly. But this is also true of all entities and objects. I have been using the word 'thing' so far, but why not use the word 'object'? [...] The term 'object' is very tied up in a long history which opposes subject and object, mind and matter, self and other." (Hodder, 2012, p. 7).

7 In somaesthetics, there is a particular focus on education (Shusterman, 2004), pop culture such as Rap (Shusterman, 2000/1992, pp. 201–236), and Chinese and Japanese techniques (Shusterman, 2017). So far, this discipline has mostly inquired into how different sociocultural and environmental (i.e., exosomatic situations) feeds back and shapes human beings.

8 Shusterman defined it as follows: "analytic somaesthetics describes the basic nature of our perception and practices, and their function in

practices that enrich embodiments and those that are underdeveloped in these processes (issues inquired in pragmatic and practical somaesthetics).[9] It is in fact a matter of preserving, in the application of habits, the virtuality and the genesis of experiences. However, this is not to make our possibilities of movement, action, and thought unidirectional. This project, far from being solely focused on Merleau-Ponty and Dewey, is resumed, re-articulated, and discussed by critical phenomenologists. This discipline will be central in the next section as it examines the reciprocal transformations between material, scientific, and social technologies and bodies.

3. Bodily Habits Today: Towards Transformative Tools of Theory and Praxis

In Merleau-Ponty's phenomenological project, habits are our pre-personal ways of living and navigating the world through our lived body (*Corps Propre*). They are constructed and reinforced via the sedimentation of actions to which we become accustomed and which become part of our body schema. As Crossley (2013) pointed out, habits are properly "structures of behaviour, attaching the embodied actor to their world which take shape and are reshaped (and sometimes extinguished) in the dynamic and always ongoing process of interaction between actor and world" (p. 147).

In this context, Merleau-Ponty's definition of body schema can be considered as intrinsically related to motility and spatiality—namely as a way of expressing that our bodies are in the world (2002/1945), and that they move and perceive (2003/1995). According to him:

> *We grasp external space through our bodily situation. A 'corporeal or postural schema' gives us at every moment a global, practical, and implicit notion of the relation between our body and things, of our hold on them. A system of possible movements, or 'motor projects' radiates from us to our environment. [...]. For us the body is much more than an instrument or a means; it is our expression in the world, the visible form of our intentions* (Merleau-Ponty, 1964, p. 5).

By regarding the body as our primary way of being in the world and interacting with the (natural, social, historical) environment, the Merleau-Pontinian account of corporeality refuses to view the body in a reductionist way, recognizing instead the (imperfect) continuity between our intentions, desires, objectives, and the expression of such structures. Here, we suggest complementing Merleau-Ponty's traditional account by turning to critical engagement with issues of gender and race. From there, we will conclude by highlighting how critical phenomenology and somaesthetics are similarly concerned with the process of transforming and re-signifying our being in the world.

Perceptual habits are deeply informed by complex and multi-layered structural conditions that are quasi-transcendental as per Guenther (2019). According to her analysis, there are some structures which are not a priori "in the sense of being absolutely prior to experience and operating in the same way regardless of context," but otherwise that they have a key role in constitution our experience of ourselves, others, and the world and "in shaping the meaning and the manner of our experience" (Guenther, 2019, p. 11). Patriarchy, white supremacy, and heteronormativity,

---

our knowledge and construction and reality" (1997, p. 37).

9 "Pragmatic somaesthetics is the dimension concerned with methods of somatic improvement and their comparative critique" and it is divided into "representational", "experimental", and "performative" methodologies of practice. "Representational somaesthetics emphasizes the body external appearance while experiencial disciplines focus not on how the body looks from the outside but on the aesthetic quality of its experience [...] performative somaesthetics could be introduced to group methodologies that focus primarily on building strength, health of skill" (Shusterman, 1997, p. 38). These distinctions for Shusterman (1997) are not rigidly exclusive. Then "practical somaesthetics [...] is about physically engaging in such care not by pushing words but by moving limbs" (p. 39).

for instance, are "ways of seeing" that actively inform our natural attitude and shape the quality of our experiences, and that become ways of "making the world" (Guenther, 2019, p. 12). These structures shape our bodily experiences, often in insidious ways, but accounting for these can reveal the power relations and socio-political structures at play (Weiss et al., 2019). Within the constitution of habits, these structures inform intercorporeal and intersubjective encounters with others, which are lived through in a multi-sensorial way, more specifically through the gaze of an (oppressive) other.

We would like to highlight the following: the constitution of habits is not neutral in terms of one's particular embodiment in a given social, historical, and cultural circumstance. Classical phenomenology has paved the way for recognizing that some traits of one's embodiment are particularly salient in intersubjective encounters: the cases of gendered and racialized embodiments will be briefly noted here. This is done, first, because of the historical legacy that phenomenology has with these analyses (see in particular Beauvoir, 1949 and Fanon, 1967/1952). Second, the contemporary urgency calls phenomenologists to engage with these bodily experiences, which are too often marginalized and underrepresented in academic reflections.

As classical phenomenological investigations have shown, an objectifying gaze prevents the self from moving freely and from being in tune with the environment. A *locus classicus* is Fanon's analysis of the interrupted intentionality and disturbed body schema in a racist context. Here, he assumed that racial objectification is a form of "amputation […] that spattered my whole body [...] They objectively cut away slices of my reality" (Fanon, 1967/1952, p. 85). Further, in *White Masks, Black Skin*, he carried out an analysis of the racial embodiment moving from the Sartrean ontological framework, describing the sense of objectification due to the (white) others' gaze, as "nonbeing" or alternately "being through others" (Fanon, 1967/1952, p. 137). In this context, the other's gaze objectified the racialized subject insofar as it grasped the skin as the element which defines, in a univocal sense, the whole subject. In doing so, the person is merely reduced to their skin color, which entails a loss of their bodily integrity:

> *Below the corporeal schema, I had sketched a historic-racial schema. The elements that I used had been provided for me… by the other, the white man, who had woven me out of a thousand details, anecdotes, stories… I could no longer laugh, because I already knew that there were legends, stories, history, and above all historicity…* (Fanon, 1967/1952, pp. 111–112).

These fundamental insights show how our bodily being in the world is not neutral, but instead built via intersubjective relationships with the others. Further, contemporary frameworks have applied Fanon's insights to racialized embodiment, highlighting that the lived experience of racism is inscribed into one's body schema, and problematically, can become an unconscious way to navigate reality. The embodied racism is then a form of habitual perception as Ngo (2017) outlined: "[…] Racist gestures and responses can become inscribed on the level of the body schema through habits and habituated bodily orientation" (p. 25). Thus, the racialization of others starts basically within the visual register, and it is expressed through the sedimentation of routine acts against racialized groups.[10]

Phenomenologists of race have also reframed the Merleau-Pontinian idea that the body is simultaneously natural and cultural, by highlighting that our ways of perceiving should be grasped as culturally and historically situated habits. Relatedly, Fielding (2019) noted that this

10 See, for e.g., Yancy (2016).

strategy is compelling for unveiling presuppositions tacitly implied by our gestures, as well as the responsibility this entails:

> *Ways of perceiving are also habits at a cultural and historical level—new ways of perceiving are instituted, and these institutions found new ways of moving and hence understanding, becoming part of the background against which things, people, and relations appear. Analyzing racialization as just such a cultural habit of perception, for example, allows us to understand why its structure recedes into the background, making it appear natural, but nonetheless shapes the ways in which we respond to one another* (p. 156).

The central idea is that "I can" relies both on our biological body (the body-object of phenomenological investigation) and situation. In this context, our body schema is built through sedimentation and stylization of gestures, attitudes, and stances, which are themselves subject to social and cultural dynamics. Further, the so-called quasi-transcendental structures make some postures possible or impossible to acquire, and some acts possible or impossible to perform. In other words, it means that our bodily intentionalities, as well as our performative agentive potentials, are molded on an endosomatic level.

Feminist phenomenology has also worked in this direction, from its very origin as an epistemic field: Young (2005) showed how women's movements in a patriarchal society (specifically in the US in the eighties) are basically limited by social environment and education, giving life to peculiar bodily schemas, defining "typically 'feminine' styles of body comportment and movement" (p. 28). Consequently, "women often approach a physical engagement with things with timidity, uncertainty, and hesitancy," which is symptomatic of a general lack of trust in their own bodies (p. 34). Relying on Merleau-Ponty phenomenology, Young also noted the following:

> *The possibilities that are opened up in the world depend on the mode and limits of the bodily "I can". Feminine existence, however, often does not enter bodily relation to possibilities by its own comportment toward its surroundings in an unambiguous and confident 'I can'. […] Typically, the feminine body underuses its real capacity, both as potentiality of its physical size and strength and as the real skills and coordination that are available to it* (p. 36).

However, it is important to note that these are *gendered* limitations and not sex differences. Young made it clear that education and social milieu are key in shaping women's style of movement as interrupted: the body schema is then influenced by one's gender and by how this gender role is performed in a given society. Moreover, the main finding of her analysis entails an explicit acknowledgement of how one's overall situatedness reinforces certain styles of movement.

There are some similarities between Young's account of gendered body schema and Fanon's attention to racialized embodiment: both show that our body schema is not neutral, by engaging with traditional phenomenological accounts (in particular with Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology), where differences of gender and race are not extensively considered salient in the definition of one's body schema. Critical phenomenology has pushed this investigation further, following Crenshaw (1991), by assuming an intersectional attitude towards people's lived experiences and recognizing that the axes of privilege and marginalization work together in molding one's experience.

These classical accounts are central because they consider the constitution of bodily habits as intrinsically intersubjective, open to further adjustments, and possibly moldable through education and adjustment. Further, the surreptitious *naturality* of our bodily habits is disclosed as deeply cultural and historically-related. This means that, in principle, it is possible to become aware of our gestures, be educated in changing them, and inaugurate processes of teaching.

We will now try to show that somaesthetics and contemporary instances of critical phenomenology share a space of dialogue in two ways: first, somaesthetics may provide critical phenomenology with crucial insights into the formation of habits, thus supporting practices of conscious self-knowledge; second, critical phenomenology brings a radically transformative agenda to somaesthetics through awareness of how structural conditions as well as social, political, and cultural phenomena often serve to maintain the status quo, and also by showing how sedimented habits must be changed on the micro-political level.

Somaesthetics and critical phenomenology share the awareness that bodily habits are flexible and potentially transformative, precisely because they are learnt, sedimented, and changeable. Thus, since habits are learned and taught, they are open to transformation. Cuffari (2011) examined this point by arguing that it is not only doable but also advisable to actively engage in transformative practice. In particular, she stressed that embodied habits are "rooted in the past and open to alteration in the future" (Cuffari, 2011, p. 536). That means that a certain habit may be acquired through temporal repetition and continuous performance. Moreover, it is not fixed or immutable, but rather modifiable through new bodily acts: "If habits are experienced as lived ambiguities capable of ameliorative transformation, then conscious habit cultivation offers a situated practice of resistance to stagnation" (Cuffari, 2011, p. 536).

The process of becoming-conscious of our bodily habits is therefore a practice of resistance and simultaneously of responsibility in facing our being in the world as embodied subjects. From this point of view, Shusterman (2003) recognized "the productive power of pragmatic somaesthetics for woman's liberation" (p. 115). The hermeneutical lens with which he read *The Second Sex* (Beauvoir, 1949) may be fruitfully added to the epistemic toolkit of the critical phenomenology. Moreover, somaesthetics as discipline and practice has many declensions, whose combination aims to take seriously Western theory and *praxis* "devoted to the knowledge, discourses, and disciplines that structure such somatic care or can improve it" (Shusterman, 2000, p. 533). More specifically, in a concise but explanatory sentence, somaesthetics is "the critical, meliorative study of the experience and the use of one's body as a locus of sensory-aesthetic appreciation (aisthesis) and creative self-fashioning" (Shusterman, 2000, p. 532). To discover the unexplored continuity between somaesthetics and critical phenomenology, a primary common ground is given by the explicit recognition that the structures of power are active in an insidious and capillary way, often not easily identifiable as noxious and dangerous (in this context, see: Weiss et al. 2019; Guenther, 2019; Stanier & Miglio, 2021). Furthermore, in dialogue with Beauvoir, Shusterman (2003) argued that "[...] entire ideologies of domination can be covertly materialized and preserved by encoding them in somatic norms that, as bodily habits, get typically taken for granted and so escape critical consciousness" (p. 111). In recognizing and challenging the "taken-for-granted" nature of our bodily habits, somaesthetics is perfectly compatible with the question of our "natural attitude" and with taking a position towards others' assumptions and our own implicit, automatic, and unconscious habits.[11] No differently from

11 "However it is construed, this phenomenological intentional consciousness is not easy to come by; it is an achievement - a radical alteration of everyday and theoretical consciousness. Our most common ways of understanding are motivated by biases and habits that can originate individually or culturally. Phenomenology is, as the name implies, an account of appearances, and it begins as a reflection upon experiences as we live them. Lived experience (Erlebnis) is transient, fleeting, and not intrinsically reliable as a form of understanding. Yet

somaesthetics, critical phenomenology conceives philosophical practice as primarily embodied, an exercise in *skeptism*, and the progressive acquisition of an attitude towards reality.

This emphasis on the plasticity of bodily habits allows us to question and re-imagine the norms of our communal living—for instance, by providing concrete alternatives to historically-legitimated praxis of domination and marginalization. Oppressive relations inform bodily habits and the subjective "I can," and they do so primarily through the body as the very site of these practices of domination. In this regard, the somatic dimension of our subjectivity is not only expressed in quasi-transcendental structures (*à la* Guenther, 2019), but also in the possible site of liberation and renegotiation. As Shusterman (2003) noted:

> *The norms that women of a given culture should speak softly, eat daintily, sit with closed legs, and walk with bowed heads and lowered eyes both embody and reinforce such gender oppression. However, just as oppressive power relations are encoded in our bodies, so they can be challenged by alternative somatic practices* (p. 111)

Moreover, the call for "alternative somatic practices" starts from the awareness of the centrality of our bodily and perceptual habits in making the world and ourselves. The preliminary work shared by critical phenomenology and analytical somaesthetics is then to recognize such habits and to focus on the somatic aspects of our being in the world. In this context, Shusterman (2008) insisted on the relevance of the neglected dimension of bodily lived experience, instead of attending only to the "body's external form or *representation*" (p. 533). Moreover, he argued that somaesthetics may lead to practices of social action stating the following: "Somaesthetics is helping to initiate a change here, suggesting how sensitizing, consciousness-raising somatic training can deal with issues of racism, sexism, homophobia, and violence" (Shusterman, 2014, p. 10).

Similarly, critical phenomenology engages with the lived experience of marginalization and oppression as lived through one's flesh. Moreover, critical phenomenology and somaesthetics not only share some theoretical premises—as partially considered in the first section of this paper—but also some toolkits for actively resisting bodily normalization and reimagining the oppressive dimension of some habits.

4. Conclusion

In this paper, our primary goal has been to explore the synergies between somaesthetics and phenomenology along two parallel paths: historical and epistemic.

The first line of investigation was deployed in the second section. Our thesis is that traditional phenomenological accounts and pragmatic projects have some substantial continuities in understanding the epistemic and existential roles of experiences. Here, we compared the perspectives of Merleau-Ponty and Dewey, putting into dialogue their respective understandings of habit by disclosing the continuities and specificities of their respective approaches. This analysis showed how both authors have a specific conception of the lived body as open to transformation, plastic, and positively renegotiable, but that they differ in their discussion of the dialectic relationship between human beings and their situated environment. More specifically, we showed that Merleau-Ponty took an endosomatic perspective, while Dewey and somaesthetics

this is the kind of understanding that prevails in our everyday ways of acting and interacting in the world. Husserl's name for this uncritical affirmation of the world is the natural standpoint, to which he contrasts the phenomenological standpoint. Phenomenology involves a radical alteration of consciousness—a complete shift in attitude toward what appears that involves a suspension of the natural attitude" (Davis, 2019, p. 4).

are instead interested in the exosomatic. However, they both argue for a third way to understand the human subject—one that profitably avoids the intrinsic aporias of attitudes like physicalism and mentalism.

This definition of the subject as embodied, and of bodily potentials as malleable, allowed us to investigate a contemporary relationship between somaesthetics and critical phenomenology. From there, we showed that the relationship between somaesthetics and phenomenology may be also understood under the sign of an epistemic continuity. On a theoretical level, these approaches value bodily experience as a central concept for understanding human beings, recognizing the power-knowledge nexus that informs our corporeal behavior. In this regard, the notion of habit is particularly appropriate, since it discloses the intrinsic possibility to imagine new ways to conceive ourselves, our being in the world as well as our interactions with others (human, non-human, things). Moreover, critical phenomenology is particularly involved in the explicit recognition that our bodily habits are core elements of our and others' experience of the self. This is done by highlighting that axes of marginalization and discriminatory attitudes are both perpetrated and lived through in bodily experience. This central awareness has compelling social and political goals, and aims specifically to imagine alternative forms of resistance. In this context, taking up our role in the world as embodied subjects is the first step for developing more sustainable, more respectful, and less discriminatory practices. Here, we strongly believe that somaesthetics' call to take somatic experiences seriously is central to this step. In fact, Shusterman himself has read phenomenological texts through a somaestethic lens: while his analysis of Merleau-Ponty (1945) is focused on other topics (Shusterman, 2005), his reading of Beauvoir's (1949) is completely in line with the theoretical approach we proposed in this paper (Shusterman, 2003).

Thus, the plasticity of our bodily habits, and the potential to reframe them through bodily practices, along with the awareness that our embodiment is not neutral, but instead shaped by social, cultural, historical circumstances, open up a space for thinking about and examining the bodily performative in all its political potentials.

Acknowledgments

We would like to thank the two anonymous reviewers, as well as the Editor of this special issue. We are very grateful to our research group PIS – Performing Identities Seminar (Università degli Studi di Milano) for the enlightening discussion on the notion of performativity. Parts of the insights developed in this paper has been previously discussed there.

Author's note

We contributed equally as authors to this paper. In particular, Nicole Miglio worked on §3, while Samuele Sartori wrote §2. We conceived the main ideas of this paper together and co-wrote the Introduction and Conclusion.

References

Beauvoir, S. (1949). *Le Deuxième Sexe I. Les faits et les mythes*. Paris: Gallimard.

Beauvoir, S. (1949). *Le Deuxième Sexe II: L'expérience vécue*. Paris: Gallimard.

Bredo, E. (1998). Evolution, Psychology and John Dewey's Critique of the Reflex Arc Concept.

The Elementary School Journal, 98(5), 447–466. https://doi.org/10.1086/461908

Carlisle, C. (2014). *On Habit*. London – New York: Routledge.

Casey, E. S. (2013). Habitual Body and Memory in Merlau-Ponty. In T. C. Lockwood (Ed.), *A History of Habit: From Aristotle to Bourdieu* (pp. 196–210). Lanham: Lexington Books.

Crossley, N. (2013). Habit and Habitus. *Body & Society, 19*(2-3), 136-161. https://doi.org/10.1177/1357034X12472543

Crenshaw, K. (1990). Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence Against Women of Color. *Stanford Law. Review, 43*(6), 1241-1299. https://doi.org/10.2307/1229039

Cuffari, E. (2011). Habits of Transformation. *Hypatia, 26*(3), 535–553. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1527-2001.2011.01186.x

Davis, H. D. (2019). The Phenomenological Method. In G. Weiss, A. V. Murphy, & G. Salamon (Eds.), *50 Concepts for a Critical Phenomenology* (pp. 3–9). Evanston: Northwestern University Press.

Dewey, J. (1895). The Theory of Emotion. *Psychological Review, 2*(1), 13–32. https://doi.org/10.1037/h0070927

Dewey, J. (1896). The Reflex Arc Concept in Psychology. *Psychological Review, 3*(4), 357–370. https://doi.org/10.1037/h0070405

Dewey, J. (1929). *Experience and Nature.* 2nd edition. Crows Nest: George Allen & Unwin LTD.

Dewey, J. (1938). *Logic: The Theory of Inquiry.* New York: Henry Holt and Company.

Dewey, J. (1969). Introduction to Philosophy: Syllabus of a Course. In J. A. Boydston (Ed.), *The early work, vol. 3* (pp. 211–235). Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press.

Dreon, R. (2007). *Il sentire e la parola: Linguaggio e sensibilità tra filosofie ed estetiche del novecento*. Milan: Mimesis.

Fanon, F. (1967). *Black Skin, White Masks* (C. L. Markmann, Trans.). New York: Grove Press. (Original work published 1952)

Fielding, H. A. (2019). The Habit Body. In G. Weiss, A. V. Murphy, & G. Salamon (Eds.), *50 Concepts for a Critical Phenomenology* (pp. 155–160). Evanston: Northwestern University Press.

Gallagher, S. (2020). *Action and Interaction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Guenther, L. (2019). Critical Phenomenology. In G. Weiss, A. V. Murphy, & G. Salamon (Eds.), *50 Concepts for a Critical Phenomenology* (pp. 11-16). Evanston: Northwestern University Press.

Hodder, I. (2012). *Entangled: An Archaeology of the Relationships Between Humans and Things*. London – New York: Wiley-Blackwell.

Ihde, D. (1979). *Techniques and Praxis: A Philosophy of Technology*. Dordrecht: D. Reidel Publishing and Co.

Ihde, D. (1990). *Technology and the Lifeworld: From Garden to Earth*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

James, W. (1983). *Principles of Psychology.* Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Kant, I. (2007). *Critique of Judgement* (J. C. Meredith, Trans.). Oxford: Oxford University Press. (Original work published 1790)

Malabou, C. (2009). *What Should We Do With Our Brain?* (S. Rand, Trans.). New York: Fordham University Press. (Original work published 2004)

Malabou, C. (2012). *The Ontology of the Accident: An Essay on Destructive Plasticity* (C. Shread, Trans.). London: Polity. (Original work published 2009)

Merleau-Ponty, M. (1967). *The Structure of Behavior* (A. L. Fisher, Trans.). Boston: Beacon Press. (Original work published 1942)

Merleau-Ponty, M. (2002). *Phenomenology of Perception* (C. Smith, Trans.). London – New York: Routledge. (Original work published 1945)

Merleau-Ponty, M. (2003). *Nature: Course Notes from the Collège de France* (R. Vallier, Trans.). Evanston: Northwestern University Press. (Original work published 1995)

Merleau-Ponty, M. (1964). An unpublished text by Maurice Merleau-Ponty: "A prospectus of his work" (A. B. Dallery, Trans.). In J. M. Edie (Ed.), *The Primacy of Perception: And Other Essays on Phenomenological Psychology, the Philosophy of Art, History, and Politics* (pp. 3-12). Evanston: Northwestern University Press.

Ngo, H. (2017). *The Habits of Racism: A Phenomenology of Racism and Racialized Embodiment.* Lanham: Lexington Books.

Rentsch, T., & Guidi, L. (2020). *Phenomenology as Performative Exercise*. Boston – Leiden: Brill.

Rosenberger, R. & Verbeek, P. (2015). A Field Guide to Postphenomenology. In R. Rosenberg & P. Verbeek (Eds.), *Postphenomenological Investigations: Essays on Human-Technology Relations* (pp. 9–42). Lanham: Lexington Books.

Shusterman, R. (2000). *Pragmatist Aesthetics: Living Beauty Rethinking Art*. 2nd edition. London – New York: Rowman & Littlefield.

Shusterman, R. (1997). Somaesthetics and the Body/Media Issue. *Body and Society, 3*(3), 33–49. https://doi.org/10.1177/1357034X97003003002

Shusterman, R. (2000). Somaesthetics and Care of the Self: The Case of Foucault. *The Monist, 83*(4), 530–551. https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511802829.003

Shusterman, R. (2003). Somaesthetics and The Second Sex: A Pragmatist Reading of a Feminist Classic. *Hypatia, 18*(4), 106–136. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1527-2001.2003.tb01415.x

Shusterman, R. (2004). Somaesthetics and Education: Exploring the Terrain. In L. Bresler (Ed.), *Knowing Bodies, Moving Minds: Towards Embodied Teaching and Learning* (pp. 51–60). Berlin: Springer Science & Business Media.

Shusterman, R. (2006). The Silent, Limping Body of Philosophy. In T. Carman & M. B. N. Hansen (Eds.), *The Cambridge Companion to Merleau-Ponty* (pp. 151–180). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Shusterman, R. (2007). Somaesthetics and the Revival of Aesthetics. *Filozofski Vestnik, 28*(2), 135–139.

Shusterman, R. (2008). *Body Consciousness: A Philosophy of Mindfulness and Somaesthetics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Shusterman, R. (2014). Somaesthetics and Politics: Incorporating Pragmatist Aesthetics for Social Action. In L. Koczanowicz & K. Liszka (Eds.), *Beauty, responsibility, and power* (pp. 3-18). Boston – Leiden: Brill.

Shusterman, R. (2017). Somaesthetics and Self-Cultivation in Chinese Art. In E. Fischer-Lichte & B. Wihstutz (Eds.), *Transformative Aesthetics* (pp. 83–109). London – New York: Routledge.

Stanier, J., & Miglio, N. (2021). Painful Experience and Constitution of the Bodily Self: A Critical-Phenomenological Analysis. In S. Ferarrello (Ed.), *Phenomenology of Bioethics: Technoethics and Lived-Experience* (pp. 101-114). Berlin: Springer.

Susser, D. (2017). Transparent Media and the Development of Digital Habits. In Y. Van Den Eede, S. O'Neal Irwin, & G. Wellner (Eds.), *Postphenomenology and Media: Essays on Human-Media-World Relations* (pp. 27–44). Lanham: Lexington Books.

Yancy, G. (2016). *Black Bodies, White Gazes: The Continuing Significance of Race in America.* London – New York: Rowman & Littlefield.

Young, I. M. (2005). *On Female Body Experience: "Throwing Like a Girl" and Other Essays*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Weiss, G., Salamon, G., & Murphy, A. V. (2019). *50 Concepts for a Critical Phenomenology*. Evanston: Northwestern University Press.

Practical Phenomenology: Does Practical Somaesthetics have a Parallel in Phenomenology?

Carsten Friberg

Abstract: *This article focuses on whether a practical phenomenology that is similar to practical somaesthetics can be found. Phenomenology and somaesthetics both have an interest in the body as well as feelings, perceptions, and presence in the world. Thus, the question here is whether this leads to practice suggestions in the former such as those in the latter. However, while the short answer is largely negative, there may prove to be more of a difference between them in terms of what can be expected from the practical dimension than an absence of practice in phenomenology. Furthermore, I believe both disciplines provide insufficient answers regarding the practical dimension and should consequently now consider aesthetics.*

Keywords: *practical somaesthetics, phenomenology, body, self, aesthetics.*

Practical Phenomenology: Does Practical Somaesthetics have a Parallel in Phenomenology?

I will approach the difference between somaesthetics and phenomenology through what appears most significant—namely, the practical aspect where "practical" means implementing the discourses on the body into practice. This is an important aspect of somaesthetics, and my question is whether we find anything similar in phenomenology when considering the recent decades' *Leibphänomenologie*—i.e., phenomenology of the body. Here, "*Leib*" implies an understanding of the body that is not apparent in the English word "body". In German, one differentiates between *Körper* and *Leib*. Prusak (2006) suggests that "*Körper* is the body as it is *alive*, *Leib* is the body as it is *alive to* what is around it: reaching out beyond itself, encountering others, investigating and discovering what there is to be done and had" (p. 55, italics in original).

However, despite the everyday use of *Leib* and *Körper* in German, the implications of their differentiation are not straightforward. According to Schmitz (2009), *Leib* is something that has an absolute place [*Ort*] because we are the absolute center of our experiences while *Körper* is something that has a relative place because it is located relative to other elements and positions (pp. 17 f.). Waldenfels (2000) notes how the *Leib* is a viewpoint, and something that we cannot distance ourselves from (p. 31). Moreover, even though our viewpoint is located in physical space as the point from where we stand and have our view on things, this place of our spatially

located *Leib* is to be understood in a different way than our *Körper*—which is a physical object in space and determined by spatial coordinates. Further, we find ourselves with a physical body, which qua *Leib* exceeds the strict physical characteristics as we, qua sentient and feeling, fill the place and feel the place affecting us. In this context, Schmitz (2009) mentiones that feelings are "islands" in our body that are voluminous without being three dimensional (pp. 15 f.). Further, Böhme (2019) referres to *Leib* as an extended feeling (p. 46), which also implies an extension into our environment. This is somewhat similar to what we read in Merleau-Ponty (1945/2010, pp. 270 ff.).

Although the differences between *Leib* and *Körper* are complicated, I will only add one short note. Waldenfels (2000, pp. 272, 280) and Fuchs (2000, pp. 81 ff.) criticize Schmitz for differentiating between *Leib* and *Körper* to the degree where he reintroduces a Cartesian mind-body dualism within the body, between the felt islands and the physical body. Instead, here, it is more illustrative to think of the bodily dynamics of exchange with the environment as breathing with the corresponding expanding and contracting of the body. Moreover, both Schmitz and Fuchs will describe this exchange as centrifugal and centripetal dynamics for the centrality of the body (Fuchs 2000, p. 120). Consequently, breathing is not merely a mechanical operation; it relates to how we are present and how we feel present—for example, when feel calm or anxious. Thus, the body is inseparable from our sentient, experiential, and thinking existence.

Regarding somaesthetics, it is important to note that it is not merely aesthetics with "soma" added. Thus, a somaesthetic interest is a "critical, meliorative study of the experience and use of one's body as a locus of sensory-aesthetic appreciation (*aisthesis*) and creative self-fashioning" (Shusterman 2000a, p. 267, italics in original). Somaesthetics is about practicing care for one's somatic self-improvement (Shusterman 2000a, p. 276), and is not a mere description of the body as it is an intervention into our bodily existence for the sake of improvements. This meliorative practice is the point of difference between somaesthetics and *Leibphänomenologie*. Moreover, somaesthetics is not about aesthetics for the sake of art; it is for the sake of living. Even if this interest is not as explicitly expressed in phenomenology, I will argue it is, nevertheless, the case.

Aesthetics is a discipline with surprisingly little consensus as to its definitions. Nonetheless, it involves a high degree of reciprocal expectation of one's understanding. In this text, aesthetics is considered as a discipline about how we come to sense, perceive, and exercise our faculty of judgement. I will not elaborate on this view on aesthetics but only suggest that consideration be given to the subtitle of Perniola's (2013) book on 20th century aesthetics—"towards a theory of feeling" as well as the themes of its six chapters—life, form, knowledge, action, feeling, and culture. Thus, aesthetics is about characterizing objects and situations that are present in intuitions; they are indeterminate yet we wish to determine them. Further, it concerns the role of the body in terms of our presence as well as how and what we sense, feel, and perceive.

I will begin with an example given by Shusterman, demonstrating the importance of the practical approach. I will then proceed to the perspective on the body in *Leibphänomenologie* to identify a possible practical perspective that is comparable to somaesthetics. Here, a critical point that will be noted is the idea of meliorative practice. Cultivation and self-improvement do not come as easy in phenomenology. Next, the lack of hindrance to developing a practical phenomenology as such, and its probable benefits from somaesthetic experiences will be examined. Here, I very briefly suggest that both would benefit from a more elaborate understanding of aesthetics as sensorial cognition.

The Question of Practicality

Shusterman's aforementioned example concerns why hierarchies of power, such as gender oppression, are maintained and reproduced despite explicit desires to do differently. The answer is that such hierarchies become bodily habits and as such, escape our awareness as we see it when "the norm that women of a given culture should speak softly, eat dainty foods, sit with their knees close together, keep the head and eyes down while walking, and assume the passive role or lower position in copulation" (Shusterman 2000b, p. 140; cf. 2012, p. 32).

The example above addresses how perceptual skills are developed along with bodily training. We learn to perceive—i.e., to distinguish among impressions to filter out the irrelevant from what is considered relevant—after which we learn to act accordingly. Hence, when training perceptual skills, we also acquire a world interpretation that determines what is considered irrelevant and relevant. However, because this training implies a bodily dimension, we must pay attention to how we embody and reproduce the social order we necessarily adopt and adapt to. The woman in the aforementioned example acts in accordance with explicit and implicit social expectations and rules. As long as we embody the implicit rules, we maintain the associated world interpretation, even though it is we explicitly speak against it. Consequently, it is insufficient to only describe forms of bodily presence. We must modify them through practice and exercises.

The example demonstrates how my physical presence as an individual cannot exclusively be characterized by spatial coordinates and metric specifications. Although they are helpful in indicating someone's physical presence in, for example, a legal situation—who was present, where, and when—determining my physical presence does not to determine my presence as an individual person. I am not merely present in a room like an object. I am present to others who affect me like I affect them. The room itself is also not neutral; any room and location will present itself with an ambience or an atmosphere that affects those in it. Thus, we are tuned (*gestimmt*) by rooms (Böhme 1995, p. 15). We always find ourselves in both locations and emotional and mental states, for which Heidegger's term "*Befindlichkeit*"—variously translated to attunement or disposedness (Slaby, 2021)—can be used. Moreover, my presence—physically, emotionally, and perceptually—is affected by the physical environment as well as people and social norms. We spend entire lifetimes learning how to practice accordingly and exercise to embody the social rules we sense, including how to walk, sit, and eat. As sentient and bodily beings, we cannot perceive a room or a social situation without being subject to influences that affect how we perceive. Consequently, we come to participate in and exercise the embedded structures of power.

I will illustrate the aforementioned idea with a personal example. For years, I worked with dancers and actors who were involved in research and told me their encounters with academia were often uncomfortable. The unease was not about the language and format of academic work—such as the implicit references to theories one should apparently know—but rather a discomfort with the bodily codes of one's presence within academia. At first, I did not understand this. While I could relate to feeling uncomfortable about academics' "showing off," which is apparent in many academic settings, the bodily aspect of performing along with these codes was invisible to me. However, after years away from traditional philosophical meetings, on my return, I realized what they meant and could subsequently, experience these dancers' and actors' discomfort regarding their bodily presence among philosophers.

Unfortunately, this example may remain a mystery to some readers like it was to me. To provide a clearer picture, another example may help. A dancer, Tiusainen explains how her

experimenting with slowing down her body during performance conflicts with spectators' expectations for getting what happens next "in order to move on to the next thing." When performers in "slow performances" do not move on, it can "frustrate the spectators as they [the performers] insist on staying with the activity that the spectator has already recognised," the spectator may, impatiently, think to herself "I get it. Now what's next?" (Tiusainen, 2010, p. 150).

Such episodes and experiences belong to everyday situations where we, upon entering a social setting, feel alien to it because we sense the difference between our and others' presences. We feel lost and like we are attracting undesired attention. Here, situations can be rather banal, like entering a fast-food restaurant, where everyone is acting like they feel at home; subsequently, we feel that by entering, we are interrupting the flow of the space. On the other hand, situations of power are less banal, like a job interview, where we desire to perform according to the stipulated rules. Meanwhile, it is most critical when we are not even aware of the powers that we function within, and thus, actively participate in maintaining them. This is what makes Shusterman's example of the woman experiencing a conflict between explicit ideals of gender equality and the practice of submission interesting. His important point about becoming aware of how submission is reproduced is where bodily awareness and training proves crucial.

In this context, "training" is the keyword. We learn to perceive in a process of socializing; hence, how and what we perceive depends on our educational and social background. However, this dependency does not imply relativism as the following example demonstrates. Whether I read a text by Heidegger while sitting in a metropolitan café or in the south German hills, the interpretation should be the same. Further, Heidegger could have written it in either place. The question is not whether his thinking would have been different if he had been a professor in Berlin or working from his wooden hut in Todtnauberg. The question is whether he would have been the Heidegger we know. Thus, the question is, would the sense I make of his text be the same had my life experiences been different. Culturally formed perceptions enables a reader to acknowledge certain factors and ignore others, like the example of the dancers in academia. In this context, Ahmed (2007) demonstrates this conflict in relation to "whiteness" when she considers "whiteness as a category of experience that disappears as a category through experience, and how this disappearance makes whiteness 'worldly'" (p. 150). More specifically, the idea of whiteness becomes an invisible category to classify perception and orientation, and while our focus is on what it is, we simultaneously become blind to what it does. Learning to perceive is not merely to perceive something but to perceive through that something, and the difficulty is in seeing what that something does to our perceiving. Thus, there is no discussion on relativism regarding perceived facts; instead, there is one on how the idea of something becoming factual is relative to the interpretation making it apparent. A culturally formed perception makes a distinction perceptible to one but imperceptible to another—a mathematical order is not relative to a cultural environment, but the significance that it has for a culture is.

Returning to the importance of becoming aware of how perceptual skills are developed along with bodily training, the act of reading can be considered. It is an activity where we are absorbed in mental work, for which we usually believe the body has little or no relevance. However, Shusterman (2012) highlightes how readers can "improve their functioning as thinkers by improving their awareness and regulation of their somatic instrument of thought" (p. 37). Moreover, we know that in physically stressful situations, it is difficult to fully absorb a text, and we thus request silence in library reading rooms. It is easy to believe that bad sitting habits cause tensions in the neck and that headaches are merely the annoying side effects of reading practice and irrelevant to the reading itself. However, this is not true, and it is important that we learn to

relax "certain muscle contractions that are not only unnecessary but distractive to thinking" as it will allow for "strengthen[ing] the focus of our mental concentration" (Shusterman, 2012, p. 38). Relaxation will not cause a different interpretation of Heidegger, but it may help in concentration and reading more thoroughly, consequently allowing the reader to obtain a better interpretation.

Furthermore, as per Shusterman's examples, we undertake both problematic habits as well as biases and discrimination despite the belief that we act differently because bodily schema works differently from our conscious awareness. This emphasizes the importance of the bodily training which constitutes the practical dimension of somaesthetics in addition to an analytical and pragmatic (Shusterman, 2000a, pp. 271 ff.). In brief the analytical is descriptive; the pragmatic proposes methods for remaking the body and covers a wide field of disciplines; the practical requires us to do what we otherwise only say. Here, the question to be asked is whether anything similar to that of practical somaesthetics exists in relation to *Leibphänomenologie*.

Leibphänomenologie and Practice?

The interest in the body in *Leibphänomenologie* is concerned with how perceiving and being bodily present is influenced by the environment and further, the impact of this influence on perceptual and bodily skills. This interest can be approached from Gallagher's (1995) discussion of what he calls the "prenoetic," which is defined as "the body's nonconscious appropriation of habitual postures and movements, its incorporation of various significant parts of the environment into its own experiential organization" (p. 226). More specifically, a prenoetic factor is body schema—a notion that comes from psychology—that combines with body image, which is the perception, actual or at least potential, of one's body (Gallagher, 1995, pp. 226, 229). However, the use of body schema and image is not entirely consistent in the literature. For instance, Merleau-Ponty uses body schema only to highlight the development from an understanding of "physiological representation" as a "focus of images" to it becoming "an attitude directed towards a certain existing or possible task" (Merleau-Ponty 1945/2010, pp. 114 f.). Variations in definitions are not a concern here. Shusterman asks, in his review of Gallagher's book *How the Body Shapes the Mind* —whether the distinction between body schema and image adds something new to the "more familiar 'folk psychology' distinctions such [as] conscious/unconscious, personal/subpersonal, explicit/tacit, willed/automatic" (p. 153). So far, it can be recognized that the notions play a role in phenomenology as a point of reference, though they are not constitutive of discussions, and it can also be added here that there are parallels between these notions and the pragmatist approach as well (Shusterman 2012, pp. 61 ff.).

An important difference for Gallagher is between body image, i.e. the phenomenal body that we are attentive to or aware of, and the body schema as unconscious. The latter "operates in a holistic, unified way" that allows us to move around objects without bumping into them. It is not something that can be singled out and perceived as a particular part of the body, hence, "the body image is not a veridical representation of the body schema" (Gallagher, 1995, p. 230; see Fuchs, 2000, pp. 111 ff., and 128 ff.). Furthermore, the often excessive interest in the phenomenal body, the *Körper*, as an object for training and exercises, can hide the *Leib* (Böhme 2003, p. 120 f.).

Gallagher (1995) suggests that the body schema is "selectively attuned to its environment" (p. 236). He exemplifies it with the various selective factors involved in catching a ball, such as the physical environment, the effects of one's practice, and the rules of the game that will "define how I jump to make the catch" (Gallagher 1995, p. 236). This can be related to the observation

of a gender-related difference in the throwing of objects that Young (1980) discusses. More specifically, she rejects the idea that the difference between how girls and boys throw an object should be attributed to a "feminine essence," and alternatively suggests three modalities of feminine motility appearing in a specific cultural setting: "that feminine movement exhibits an ambiguous transcendence, an inhibited intentionality, and a discontinuous unity with its surroundings" (Young 1980, p. 145). Here, it is not her characterization that is interesting—as it can be challenged—but her suggestion that "there is a specific positive style of feminine body comportment and movement, which is learned as the girl comes to understand that she is a girl" (Young 1980, p. 153). Thus, a girl throws like a girl because of the acquisition of "bodily capacities, habits, and dispositions as they have developed in the course of one's life" that Fuchs calls "body memory" (2012, p. 10). The girl has learned to act according to the specific cultural setting's expectations integrated into her body schema. Thus, a girl throwing an object is not the way through which another person learns that she is a girl as she learns to make use of her body in the way she is expected to as a girl. She feels and perceives that she, through and through, is a girl. The question here is how she comes to appropriate the behavior of a specific cultural idea—like what it is to be a girl—to the extent where she feels it to be a natural thing to do.

This question points at the relation between body, emotions, and acting. And whilst this is a point of agreement, it also highlights a difference regarding a possible meliorative practice between *Leibphänomenologie* and somaesthetics. In this context, I believe compliance exists consistent with Goldie's (2000) critique of views that over-intellectualize emotions to see them only as "added-on" (pp. 3 f.). It becomes more complicated to say, like Slaby, that the body "as the feeling body [...] is the basis of our deep existential evaluations, and through this the very core of our being as persons" (Slaby, 2008, p. 441). We come to discussions about an inner self that may be beyond a meliorative practice yet is essentially related to practice.

According to Ratcliffe (2005), being a sentient individual "does not simply consist in an experience of being an entity that occupies a spatial and temporal location, alongside a host of other entities. Ways of finding oneself in a world are presupposed spaces of experiential possibility, which shape the various ways in which things can be experienced" (p. 47). He calls this background "an existential feeling." I believe this perspective emphasizes the relation of body and self and highlights why the inquiry regarding practical phenomenology is important, while also going beyond the ideals of a meliorative practice. The problem resembles a debate in phenomenology on the difference between a narrative and minimal self—i.e., "an embodied self of which we have a non-observational and non-objectifying awareness" (Bortolan 2020, p. 74). Perhaps a minimal self is a mere formal structure, in which case it does not influence our self-perception or could be seen as the source of a meliorative practice. Additionally, Bortolan (2020) argues that if a minimal self is more than a formal structure, it "is to be expected that changes occurring at the level of the narrative self, by impacting on various aspects of affective experience, may have the potential to modify also pre-reflective self-consciousness" (p. 82). Meliorative practices in somaesthetics are about deliberately modifying bodily habits. In this context, the debate about a minimal self illustrates whether there is a limitation to the extent of such modifications. Further, exercises to modify bodily habits make sense when we are made aware of them; however, it is a different matter when it concerns what is pre-reflective.

Our feelings and emotions are, as existential feelings, constitutive of our relations with ourselves and our environment, and these sentient aspects are acquired through our bodily existence. In this context, an illustrative example of emotions as constitutive in our relation to others is shame. Shame makes us aware of ourselves, as well as our presence to others as we

sense our own physical reactions, such as turning red and sweating, which reveal our feelings of shame. However, shame is no mere feeling, as it is a matter of *Befindlichkeit*, which affects our perceptions of ourselves, others, and our relations to them as well as our own bodily dispositions (Böhme, 2001, pp. 81 ff.). Here, the understanding of *Leib* as a centrifugal and centripetal dynamic exchange with the environment in breathing is worth noting. More specifically, breath relates to how we are present and how we feel our own presence.

Thus, when emphasizing the fundamental character of body, feelings, and emotions in terms of presence, perception, and acting, it can be asked whether *Leibphänomenologie* is only descriptive and falls within what Shusterman calls "analytic somaesthetics." In this context, Böhme (2003) speaks of *Leibphilosophie* from a pragmatic point of view as the subtitle of his book *Leibsein als Aufgabe* is. However, what about the step from pragmatic to practical? If the way a girl throws an object is a consequence of a culturally informed training that forms her somatic appearance in the process to make her subject to ideologies of domination encoded in somatic norms, the obvious next step would be to provide guidance for awareness and intervention for the sake of changing such habits. Thus, the question to be asked here is does *Leibphänomenologie* offer such guidance.

In Search for a Practical Phenomenology

An apparent difference between somaesthetics and *Leibphänomenologie* is between the meliorative cultivation and somatic self-improvement of the former and the, apparently, largely descriptive character of the latter. Shusterman (2008) states that "[d]isciplines of somaesthetic awareness are usually aimed not simply at *knowing* our bodily conditions and habits but at *changing* them" (p. 65, emphasis in original). In a discussion of Merleau-Ponty, Shusterman calls it "an unfortunate conclusion" (2008, p. 74) when a philosopher makes an effort toward understanding the role of the body and then withdraws from actively engaging in exploring the body's significance and influence on perception and thinking. The problem with such a conclusion is further stressed upon by Ratcliffe's (2005) idea of existential feelings as basic "ways of finding oneself in the world," which are importantly "bodily states which influence one's awareness" (p. 48). Here, Slaby's (2012) embodied sense of ability is worth noting in terms of "I can" and "I cannot" being one's way of feeling "relatedness to the world," which "shapes the way the world, others, and oneself are apprehended" (p. 153). Consequently, it is clear why we should then actively seek to work with bodily presence.

Thus, if *Leibphänomenologie* brings about the recognition of the importance of bodily exercises, similar to somaesthetics, the question is does the need for a practical dimension then resonate with *Leibphänomenologie*. As I have suggested, the difference betrween somaesthetics and *Leibphänomenologie* may be regarding the somatic self-improvement of somaesthetics rather than with the practice itself as such. However, here, it is important to first take a brief look at how Shusterman presents practical somaesthetics before examining *Leibphänomenologie*.

a. I believe the meliorative cultivation and somatic self-improvement of somaesthetics concern both the art of living—i.e., physical well-being and presence to others—and the art of knowing—i.e., achieving knowledge. Moreover, knowing how to be present in a social context requires instruction and training of the senses and the body. Here, the pragmatic somaesthetics of describing practices and sharing related experiences is insufficient. Instead, we need practical somaesthetics that instructs us on what to do and how to do it. However, currently, I find the literature on somaesthetics is not sufficient in this regard. In light of the aforementioned example

on embodied hierarchies of power, we should be offered suggestions on how to intervene and create changes. In a chapter on muscle memory, it is emphasized how "intersomatic memories […] can help explain why ethnic and racial prejudices prove extremely resistant to rational arguments of tolerance" (Shusterman 2012, p. 97). The chapter is rich with concrete examples, but no guidance if we want to know how to prevent acting with prejudices against others because they are part of somatic presence and behavior. Can I discover the prejudices by myself through a series of awareness-building exercises? Or is it necessary for others to tell me? What exercises can I undertake in order to prevent myself from reproducing behavior that I wish to distance myself from?

The most concrete chapter on this is probably "Somaesthetics in the Philosophy Classroom" (Shusterman 2012, pp. 112 ff.). It opens with an example of what a lesson in practical somaesthetics could sound like. Still, it does not resemble what I can read about actors' training in which concrete exercises are done for specified purposes. For example, Chekov enlists specific exercises in his *On the Technique of Acting* so why not a similar book on practical somaesthetics? I am sure it would be something of a challenge to the standard class in philosophy, and Shusterman (2000a) expresses his skepticism about asking students to lie on the floor, lift weights, and perform yoga postures or even just sing and dance (p. 279). Nevertheless, uncommon as it is, it is not impossible. I have, in my own teaching practice, asked university students to step out on the floor and do simple exercises. The purpose has been to make them experience a change in their awareness and perception in relation to performing simple tasks.

Of course, such small exercises only demonstrate my claim that bodily postures and actions affect perception. Classroom exercises will not change a girl's way of throwing objects as it is not a matter of swinging the arm, but of embodying a cultural ideology. The matter is complex, and Leibphänomenologie offers awareness of this complexity, not for the sake of self-improvement but to prevent self-improvement from becoming self-delusion.

b. Böhme speaks in terms of bodily existence, *Leibsein*, from a pragmatic point of view because he sees the body as a task (*Aufgabe*). We are not simply our bodies, but we are confronted by it in a practical and interpretive manner. Moreover, we experience our bodies as independent—sometimes helping and otherwise resisting us (Böhme, 2003, p. 34).

Our bodies are given to us in different ways, and very directly in responses such as pain; however, even pain is a matter of interpretation. While all probably feel it in a similar manner, some can explain it as meaningful tests coming from the Creator, while others as functional signals in the biological organism (Böhme, 2003, p. 107). Böhme (2003) states that the body is the nature we ourselves are (p. 63). Further, nature is not a pre-cultural phenomenon but is given to us when we differentiate between nature and culture. Drawing on this opposition, the body is experienced as something external *for* us though it is something also present *with* us. The experience is one that we ourselves make as well as one that is of ourselves (Böhme, 2003, p. 68; cf. Waldenfels, 2000, p. 189). Moreover, there seems to be an endless internal conflict between something given to us that is called nature and our subsequent interpretation of it that aims to conquer nature by making it ours, while we still experience it as something external. The endlessness of this conflict makes it a task—one that involves bringing our consciousness into existence rather than becoming conscious of our existence (Böhme, 2003, p. 116).

There is an interesting parallel to what the Danish philosopher Sørensen writes in the introduction to an edition of Kierkegaard's *Begrebet Angest (The Concept of Anxiety)* about the Fall and sin. Whenever such a Fall is experienced in our lives, a consequence of it is to

become aware of our sexuality and the beginning of doubts regarding what has been, until then, taken for granted. However, Kierkegaard is not concerned with when it happens, but Sørensen suggests that it may be in puberty, which, of course, is paradoxical because we then "fall for the temptation to perceive our Fall which for Kierkegaard is a manifestation of human freedom, as the most determined of all" (Sørensen, 1960/1982, p. 19, my translation). However, freedom is not about acting despite given conditions—this is called defiance, and defiance is considered a sin in the Christian tradition. Instead, freedom is to interpret acts as self-inflicted. Thus, the self can be interpreted to be in discord from the outside as a biologically determined development in an object, or from the inside as a psychologically inexplicable leap from innocence to guilt—i.e., when it is experienced as a subject (Sørensen, 1960/1982, pp. 20 f., cf. Böhme, 2003, pp. 320 ff.).

Even if Kierkegaard is not writing about the body but the subject as spirit, which is a synthesis, a parallel can be drawn to the experience of struggling with synthesizing nature that we are despite also feeling that we are not. Here, it is worth noting that Böhme (2003) also acknowledges this parallel (p. 72). Experiencing the bodily changes in puberty is an experience of our bodies that is still ours even though we feel alienated by it, and an interpretation is required to make it ours again. Although this task does not require the help of God, like the spiritual drama does for Kierkegaard, it is still a dramatic and life-long task. It is an experience of confrontation with the body formed through the influences of society, cultural norms, and education that we actively participate in. It is an experience where we come to feel it natural to feel and act as well as acquire a habitus, like we do: "the habitus becomes a second nature which effectively guides one's behaviour, all the more as it is not conscious *as* a habitus" (Fuchs, 2016, p. 204, emphasis in original). The aforementioned example on shame can again exemplify the meeting point between the body and feelings, which are formed and intermediated by norms.

Considering shame briefly, it serves well to demonstrate how fundamentally social ideals leave traces in us, forming our world-relations beyond our conscious control. Throughout our lives, we adopt and adapt to such ideals. Thus, we undergo training that later may need practical somaesthetic adjustments to be corrected. This process of learning is not about acquiring instrumental competences to handle the world; instead, it is a type of learning through which we change our world-relation. Here, it could be said that we take the world into possession (Waldenfels, 2000, pp. 167 f.) and that "the body [*Leib*] is the medium through which a world as such appears" (Waldenfels, 2000, p. 249, my translation).

However, what we do not take into possession but rather takes possession of us, is the other person. Our response to the other is a "bodily resonance that feeds back into the feeling itself" where our "body is affected by the other's expression, and we experience the kinetics and intensity of his emotions through our own bodily kinaesthesia and sensation" (Fuchs, 2016, p. 198). The other, Waldenfels adds, appears as something I feel (*spüre*) in me (Waldenfels 2000, p. 272), and the gaze of the other is not something in my world but what reveals and discloses my world to me (Waldenfels, 2000, p. 384). A very banal but nevertheless fundamental observation here is that we do not know most of our own different gestures and facial expressions—we have never seen them ourselves, and we only know of them through others (Waldenfels, 2000, p. 221).

This importance of the other is recognized as being significant in more phenomenological analyses, perhaps best known is in the third part of Jean-Paul Sartre's *Being and Nothingness*. Waldenfels elaborates on it in relation to discussions of gender. With the examples of gender-biased hierarchies and girls throwing objects, the question of how these hierarchies form our bodily habits and perceptual skills should be kept in mind. The questions to be asked here are how they become embedded into our world-relation and how we can change them, which seems

an obvious consequence of examples like Shusterman's about hierarchies of power. Moreover, following Waldenfels' (2000) work, we do not experience the particular character of ourselves before the other, but in relation to and as a response to the other (p. 340). Gender and sexuality are inseparable and fundamental to any social role and essential for forming identities in the eyes of others. Shame can again be considered an example of how this education and struggle with norms is inextricably bound to the body that can reveal insecurities about our positions in relation to social rules—or how they have been embodied and reveal a conflict between embodied conscience and intended acts. We find these interests and conflicts to appear in the body, *Leib*, which Waldenfels (2000) calls a web of different, multiple, gender relations and gender roles (p. 357).

Imitation is a fundamental element when learning how to throw an object, through which we can learn the best instrumental use of the body to avoid overstraining muscles and doing harm to ourselves. However, it is something different when we imitate power structures and through that imitation, also participate in them. The learning process also implies the forming of our body schema beyond enabling us to perform practical tasks. Like that of our body schema, we likewise form sexual schema (Waldenfels, 2000, p. 327).

c. We do not, or so it seems, find something in phenomenology that directly answers the request for meliorative cultivation and somatic self-improvement. On the other hand, it seems that we do also not find that in somaesthetics either. Nevertheless, while both ask for the awareness of the importance of practical somatic training for social beings who appropriate social norms, the idea of self-improvement in somaesthetics may fall short of the more complex aspect of the self as the examples of bodily alienation, shame, and sexuality ought to illustrate. More specifically, becoming aware of bad body posture while reading and writing—which causes pain in my neck and affects my concentration and, consequently, my intellectual work as I lose track of what I should focus on to perform well—is not comparable to becoming aware of socially embodied powers. Shusterman addresses the latter and makes it clear that it is a matter of bodily awareness and training to intervene in such situations and perhaps, change them. However, there is a lack of suggestions that move beyond analytical and pragmatic somaesthetics to the practical.

Searching for a practical phenomenology that resembles a practical somaesthetics seems to be the wrong choice because the complexity of the bodily structures conditioning our presence in the world are not easily targeted in the quest for self-improvement and cultivation. Further, a phenomenological approach is more cautious about what improvement means and is concerned about the danger of becoming blind to how somatic training is itself embedded in practices. Additionally, bodily training is in danger of being directed towards the *Körper* at the risk of forgetting the *Leib*. In fact, forgetting the *Leib* can sometimes be the condition for improvement of the *Körper* (Böhme, 2003, p. 121).

When Shusterman directs his critique at Merleau-Ponty for not taking an interest in changing bodily conditions and habits, he addresses the impression that phenomenology is a descriptive endeavor. Above all, we get this impression from the widespread confusion of phenomenology with phenomenality—i.e., descriptions of phenomena. Writers call such work "phenomenological," but phenomenology is no mere description and is instead a philosophical investigation of the origin and legitimacy of descriptions. Furthermore, phenomenology is not exclusively descriptive.

If the answer to whether we find a practical phenomenology that resembles practical somaesthetics is negative, that to a possible practical phenomenology is not. Phenomenology

is often a partner to empirical and experimental work in other disciplines, and there is no hindrance for such work to proceed into practice. Fuch's aforementioned concept of body memory forms a theoretical basis for investigating the influence of movements on cognition regarding the quality of memories (Koch et al., 2014). This can inform studies of the impact of movement patterns on depression, where Qi Gong movements are used for experiments, and hence, it belongs to the pragmatic somaesthetic perspective (Michalak, 2018). An obvious step further after learning about the impact of such exercises on depression is to develop concrete practices. Another example is in relation to psychological disorders such as schizophrenia, where "a phenomenological perspective could be helpful not just in the understanding, but also in the treatment of similar pathologies. As a matter of fact, conceiving schizophrenia as a disturbance of the basic embodied self allows us to think about the possible development of new bodily and movement-oriented therapies" (Bizzari, 2018, p. 50). Finally, a last example is the use of phenomenology in relation to therapeutic empathy (Bizzari et al., 2019; Fernandez & Zahavi, 2021).

Moreover, we must, of course, distinguish between different disciplines learning from and cooperating with phenomenology, but there is nothing to stop *Leibphänomenologie* from developing a practical aspect. In comparison to somaesthetics, it will appear less ambitious regarding ideals of self-improvement, but a practical dimension will contribute to investigating and training somatic habits to gain awareness of elements constitutive of feelings and perceptions and to intervene into them and change them. We already do this, and it is how we come to adopt them in the first place. However, a clearer focus is needed with regard to our practices, including awareness of how to direct them towards our acquisition of concrete habits. Thus, at this point, *Leibphänomenologie* should move toward somaesthetics and aesthetics.

A Final Note on Aesthetics

When asking for practices, the accompanying question is what should be asked for. Perhaps, it is too much to ask for a concrete program of exercises, even if it could be said that it would be much appreciated as a means of addressing hierarchies of power in bodily habits. Here, some may object that asking for concrete exercises is therapy and not philosophy. However, such objections can be rejected as they are made on the basis of the assumption that perceiving, interpreting, and thinking are performed independently from sensorial and bodily relations. However, we have established that this is not the case. During our lives, we do, in fact, practice multiple exercises to learn to perceive and socialize. These practices are often sensorial—i.e., aesthetic.

Here, two brief notes on aesthetics will be my concluding suggestion. Aesthetics is a discipline of the "in between." As Kant claimed, the starry heavens and moral law can fill our mind with wonder and awe, but in between the stars and the law, we stand as sensorial and bodily beings. The theoretical and practical knowledge bringing us to the heavens and the law are universal, yet we wish this knowledge to be at the disposal for us as concrete beings. The in between is about finding meaning in the concrete and making the universal meaningful for us; it is to ensure that knowledge, which is intense in its logical clarity but poor in its concrete presence, is complemented with something that is impure, yet rich in phenomenal presence. The intensity of concepts and the extension of phenomenal quality is what Baumgarten calls "logic" and "aesthetics," respectively. In something concrete and present, we may feel the presence of something more, which we come to understand, even if it is, to some extent, different from

conceptual understanding. This is why, as Aristotle mentiones in his *Poetics*, we enjoy looking at images (1448 b15). Thus, aesthetics is a form of knowledge related to feelings, which leave an impact on us and form us.

Shusterman (2012) offers a wonderful reflection on somatic style that captures this double aspect of aesthetics that includes knowledge and education (pp. 315 ff.). The reflection appears as a conclusion to the importance of the body for education in the humanities, with which he opens his book. The style is not simply a style of writing and thinking as one may be tempted to think in relation to humanistic education. Style is the full presence of the other person, where a somatic style can be one of gender (Shusterman, 2012, p. 323). Such a style is obviously not a superficial performance that can be randomly picked up and exchanged with other styles. It is one we exercise and appropriate; further, we make it ours. We exercise and perform because "somatic schemata of perception, action, and feeling should be central to one's personality rather than being a superficial adornment" (Shusterman, 2012, p. 333). Thus, when the style really becomes our personality, it starts to look natural.

We exercise and perform because we want to be included in social groups and recognized by their members. However, we cannot always foresee what the outcome will be, and often, we do not even care because our primary concern is the recognition. And just as often, we are not even aware of the implications and consequences of what we do, such as participating in maintaining structures of power that we do not want to be part of or want to be existing.

I believe this is a point of shared interests between somaesthetics and *Leibphänomenologie*, where awareness of the need for a practical dimension is generated. However, I believe that both disciplines stop short of it. Further, an inclusion of aesthetics as a philosophy of sensorial cognition—i.e., a theory of feeling—offers an awareness of practices that we, in fact, already engage in. Thus, the request of practical somaesthetics or *Leibphänomenologie* is perhaps more a matter of paying attention to what we already practice to increase awareness hereof, take possession of it, and exercise accordingly.

Acknowledgements

I wish to thank Liselotte Hedegaard and Nele Kadastik for language suggestions and corrections.

References

Ahmed, S. (2007). A phenomenology of whiteness. *Feminist Theory, 8*(2), 149–168. https://doi.org/10.1177/1464700107078139

Bizzari, V. (2018). Schizophrenia and common sense: a phenomenological perspective. In I. Hipolito, J. Gonçalves, & J. G. Pereira (Eds.), *Schizophrenia and Common Sense* (pp. 39–53). Springer.

Bizzari, V., Dambha-Miller, H., Lauhaey, W. F., & Carvalho, C. (2019). Defining therapeutic empathy: the philosopher's view. *Journal of the Royal Society of Medicine, 112*(3), 91–95. https://doi.org/10.1177/0141076819831869

Bortolan, A. (2020). Affectivity and the distinction between minimal and narrative self. *Continental Philosophy Review, 53*, 67–84. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11007-019-09471-y

Böhme, G. (1995). *Atmosphären*. Suhrkamp.

Böhme, G. (2001). *Aisthetik. Vorlesungen über Ästhetik als allgemeine Wahrnehmungslehre.* Fink.

Böhme, G. (2003). *Leibsein als Aufgabe. Leibphilosophie in pragmatischer Hinsicht.* Die Graue Edition.

Böhme, G. (2019). *Leib. Die Natur, die wir selbst sind.* Suhrkamp.

Fernandez, A. V., & Zahavi, D. (2021). Can we train basic empathy? A phenomenological proposal. *Nurse Education Today, 98*. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.nedt.2020.104720

Fuchs, T. (2000). *Leib, Raum, Person. Entwurf einer phänomenologischen Anthropologie.* Klett-Cotta.

Fuchs, T. (2012). The phenomenology of body memory. In S. Koch, T. Fuchs, M. Summa, & C. Müller (Eds.), *Body memory, metaphor and movement* (pp. 9–22). John Benjamins.

Fuchs, T. (2016). Intercorporeality and interaffectivity. *Phenomenology and Mind*, (11), 194–209.

Gallagher, S. (1995). Body schema and intentionality. In J. Bermúdez, N. Eilan, & A. J. Marcel (Eds.), *The body and the self* (pp. 225–244). Oxford University Press.

Goldie, P. (2000). The emotions. A philosophical exploration. Clarendon Press.

Koch, S. C., Fuchs, T., Summa, M. (2014). Body memory and kinesthetic body feedback: The impact of light versus strong movement qualities on affect and cognition. *Memory Studies, 7*(3), 272–284. https://doi.org/10.1177/1750698014530618

Merleau-Ponty, M. (2010). *Phenomenology of perception* (C. Smith, Trans.). Routledge. (Original work published 1945)

Michalak, J., Chatinyan, A., Chourib, H., & Teismann, T. (2018). The impact of upward versus downward movement patterns on memory characteristics of depressed individuals. *Psychopathology, 51*(5), 326–334. https://doi.org/10.1159/000492788

Perniola, M. (2013). *20th century aesthetics. Towards a theory of feeling* (M. Verdicchio, Trans.). Bloomsbury.

Prusak, B. G. (2006). The science of laughter: Helmuth Plessner's *Laughing and Crying* revisited. *Continental Philosophy Review, 38*, 41–69. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11007-005-9003-0

Ratcliffe, M. (2005). The feeling of being. *Journal of Consciousness Studies, 12*(8–10), 46–63.

Schmitz, H. (2009). *Der Leib, der Raum und die Gefühle*. Edition Sirius.

Shusterman, R. (2000a). *Pragmatic aesthetics. Living beauty, rethinking art*. Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.

Shusterman, R. (2000b). *Performing live. Aesthetic alternatives for the ends of art*. Cornell University Press.

Shusterman, R. (2007). Book review: How the body shapes the mind. *Theory, Culture & Society, 24*(1), 152–156. https://doi.org/10.1177/026327640702400111

Shusterman, R. (2008). *Body consciousness. A philosophy of mindfulness and somaesthetics*. Cambridge University Press.

Shusterman, R. (2012). *Thinking through the body. Essays in somaesthetics*. Cambridge University Press.

Slaby, J. (2008). Affective intentionality and the feeling body. *Phenomenology and Cognitive Science, 7*(4), 429–444. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11097-007-9083-x

Slaby, J. (2012). Affective self-construal and the sense of ability. *Emotion Review, 4*(2), 151–156. https://doi.org/10.1177/1754073911430136

Slaby, J. (2021). Disposedness (*Befindlichkeit*). In M. A. Wrathall. (Ed.), *Heidegger lexicon* (pp. 242–249). Cambridge University Press.

Sørensen, V. (1982). Introduktion. In S. Kierkegaard, *Begrebet Angest*. (A. B. Drachmann, Editor). (pp. 7–23). Gyldendal. (Original work published 1960)

Tiusainen, L. (2010). Being present – Meditations in movement. In C. Friberg. R. Parekh-Gaihede, & B. Barton (Eds.). *At the intersection between art and research. Practice-based research in the performing arts* (pp. 145–164). NSU Press.

Waldenfels, B. (2000). *Das leibliche Selbst. Vorlesungen zur Phänomenologie des Leibes*. Suhrkamp.

Young, I. M. (1980). Throwing like a girl: A phenomenology of feminine body comportment, motility and spatiality. *Human Studies, 3,* 137–156.

Getting Dizzy: A Conversation Between the Artistic Research of Dizziness and Somatic Architecture

Ruth Anderwald, Leonhard Grond, and María Auxiliadora Gálvez Pérez

Abstract: *Getting dizzy is an essay in the format of a conversation between two experimental fields. Here, the fields of dizziness and Somatic Architecture are in dialogue in order to go deeper into their interconnections. Together they form also relationships to somatics and somaesthetics. Dizziness can be understood as a resource but also as a somatic state. Somatic Architecture uses somatic states in order to create systems of co-constitution of bodies and environments. In this conversation, the individual research fields intertwine with artistic, philosophical, medical, ethnographic, or architectural sources and case studies. This in-between field of the conversation appears in itself as an epistemic territory.*

Keywords: *Dizziness, Somatic Architecture, Somaesthetics, Somatics, Art, Architecture.*

Getting Dizzy: A Conversation Between the Artistic Research of Dizziness and Somatic Architecture

This conversation begins an exchange and cooperation between the artistic research project *Navigating Dizziness Together* led by Ruth Anderwald and Leonhard Grond (RALG), (University of Applied Arts Vienna) and the *Platform of Somatics for Architecture and Landscape* (PSAAP) directed by María Auxiliadora Gálvez Pérez (MAGP), (Faculty of Architecture San Pablo C.E.U. University, Madrid). It serves to clarify and understand how the fields of dizziness, *Somatic Architecture*, and somaesthetics overlap and connect, while examining the underlying thoughts on which the prior two are based in eight loosely tied chapters, following the expertise of the authors. The chapters are based on the reflection on previous work to not only clarify the authors' approach to their collaboration but also attempt to highlight the possibilities of a comparative as well as transversal consideration of the three fields.

1. *Dizziness*

RALG:

To begin, we will summarize our artistic research focusing on dizziness and its definition; we have expanded the original meaning of the term, which is laid out in detail in our book *Dizziness-A*

Resource (Anderwald et al., 2019). However, we translated the German word *Taumel* into "dizziness," and their meanings are not strictly identical. *Taumel* describes the positive, negative, and ambiguous feelings of being dizzy as well as the staggering movement of a body that is dizzy. Moreover, it is often used metaphorically—for example, the German expression "*im Taumel der Gefühle*" means acting inconsiderately while overwhelmed by emotions, such as rage, fear, sadness, joy, or love. The word is used on different scales, from the personal and emotional up to systemic levels, and can encompass an entire world that is out of kilter (e.g., "*die Welt im Taumel*"). Meanwhile, in the context of our artistic research, the word "dizziness" is used equally in a positive, negative, and ambiguous manner to describe a situation where an individual, or a group, even a society, is overwhelmed by being overloaded, or by the lack of sensory, cognitive, or emotional stimuli or input, and thus, unable to grasp the possibilities of reality in a habitual manner. According to Plato, dizziness creates the constitution of all philosophical thought by destabilizing the basis of knowledge to a state of uncertainty (Plato, Timaeus, 49e).

Conceptualized as an unpredictable movement or the feeling of such a motion, dizziness happens to and within the body. Moreover, it happens temporarily, conditionally, and situationally and could be aligned with Lucretius' *clinamen*, which is called the unpredictable swerve. As such, dizziness is not a theoretical concept only, and the physicality of the phenomenon is germane. The sensory organs that control our poise in relation to gravity and our surroundings and help us stay upright, oriented, and balanced are located in the inner ear. In this context, vestibular balance refers to the vestibules in the cochlea of the inner ear. In humans, equilibrioception, our sense of balance, is based on vestibular balance, sight, and proprioception, which is the ability to sense our body. Not only humans, but all mammals, birds, fish, and even plants have sensory organs for balance and gravity and the ability to react to its input, be it in terms of poise or direction of growth.

As a medical symptom, the sensation and intensity of feeling dizzy can only be described by the subject experiencing it, and it cannot be measured from the outside, like a fever can. At the same time, dizziness is a very ambiguous symptom and can lead to a variety of diverse diagnoses—from low blood sugar and problematic blood pressure to being indicative of a heart attack, stroke, or inner ear problem. Therefore, to get a precise diagnosis, it is necessary to explore and observe the factors that can be perceived from the "outside" by a physician, for instance, in addition to the patient's description. Meanwhile, psychobiological research goes even further by suggesting a deeper connection between our ability to maintain emotional and corporeal equilibrium and flexibility, further indicating remarkable comorbidity between anxiety disorders and a deficient sense of balance and orientation. Thus, by training our balance organ, we may very well train ourselves to be less anxious and easily disoriented; even more, it appears to have positive effects on our memorization capabilities[1].

The aforementioned remarks are meant to highlight that our artistic research on dizziness is cross-disciplinary, and our focus is not only on developing our theoretical concept, but also on creating a practice-based approach.

1 For example in: Rogge, A.-K. et al., "Balance Training Improves Memory and Spatial Cognition in Healthy Adults," Scientific Reports 7.34. Erez, O. et al., "Balance Dysfunction in Childhood Anxiety: Findings and Theoretical Approach," Journal of Anxiety Disorders 461 (2002): 1–16. See also Shefer, S. "Progressive Vestibular Mutation Leads to Elevated Anxiety," Brain Research 1317 (2010): 157–64.

2. Dizziness and Somatic Architecture

MAGP:

Dizziness, through the prism of my primary interest, is a somatic tool. I develop what I call "somatic architecture" (SA), which is a field where research, design, and creativity are based on "soma" experiences.[2] Further, its scope has been developed within the book, *Espacio Somático. Cuerpos Múltiples (Somatic Space. Multiple Bodies)* (Gálvez, 2019). In this book, I examined SA from the perspective of five aspects that should be considered when designing under its principles: "spatial navigation"—dizziness is deeply interrelated with this aspect in terms of orienting or disorienting architectures or devices; "living systems"—an understanding of the systems of the body and other organisms is necessary to apply this knowledge in architecture; "anthropology of the senses"—it is important to understand how different cultures and bodies give sense and meaning to their experiences as embodied organisms in space; "imagination"–it is necessary to be aware of the imageries that underlie our actions to be able to build new ones that can change our approach to architecture; and "embodied and situated cognition"–this aspect is particularly interesting when embodiment is being related situationally as happens in dizziness.

In this context, I believe that SA can be a methodology that changes the role of architecture in our time. The planetary climatic crisis is only one reason for this. Others may be linked to how architecture establishes political hierarchies between spaces and bodies and how architecture deals with the idea of "the natural." With SA, another way of building is possible—one that is able to create synergies between architecture and living matter and human and non-human organisms. All these capabilities are embedded in the five aspects mentioned previously. Additionally, in SA, we think that all bodies are original, equally valuable, and should be empowered by the same possibilities, and we also believe that our architecture must enhance the nature-culture continuum as is developed in post-human discourses.[3] Moreover, SA is differentiated from other approaches in architecture and theories of architecture by the systems that we study and implement, as they come directly from the soma experiences designed by us. Thus, SA can be seen as a theory and practice, but also as a design strategy. This will be further examined over the course of this conversation.

Through the process of somatic ethnography[4] and our own somatic awareness, we discover new ways of transforming the environment and building SA. Dizziness, in this frame, is one within our collections of experiences that is able to open new possibilities; indeed, it is very powerful. Additionally, it is a resource for us as it is in your artistic research project. Moreover, the drawing of one of our projects during the stage of somatic research is presented in Figure 1. Here, we propose a specific sensory-motor experience based on spatial navigation, including

2 "Soma" is understood here as equivalent to the body-mind conjunction. I will also use "body" under the same considerations; this includes the assumption of the body as subject, not as an object. The processes of the nervous system are part of this corporeality. In somatic experiences, through awareness, we can understand and study "soma" from its own way of operating. Giving voice to soma experiences, *SA* celebrates the value of otherness—as this experience may be different for any of us, is idiographic and recognizes original values – and allows the morphogenesis of the new to appear—it does not work with pre-conventions of forms but with the observation of the existing dynamics of the alive.

3 Rosi Braidotti specifies perfectly the approach to post-human considerations within her book *Nomadic Subjects. Embodiment and Sexual Difference in Contemporary Feminist theory*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1996.

4 We develop somatic ethnography following different methods from anthropology and the social sciences. On the one hand, we use interviews with semantic ethnography—a qualitative method—as Galen Cranz defines it in *Ethnography for Designers*, New York: Routledge, 2016. We also question specific groups about their embodied life experiences concerning architecture and landscape. We combine it with more detailed interviews about specific somatic experiences that we design through the Feldenkrais Method of Somatic Education, using IPA (Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis) methodology. In this case, the goal is to probe deep into how different people give different meanings to the same experience.

disorienting situations—that are dizzy—and observe which socio-political and cultural structures unfold from it and are meaningful for architecture. More specifically, in the experience, bodies have to follow a complex movement pattern that changes their planes of movement very quickly to face up and down and move laterally. At the beginning, this can be frightening and cause disorientation, but after some time, playful ways of doing it can be used to show that a clear orientation and security is not always the only option, but also that we can adapt our navigation using disorientation as a resource for richer spatial or socio-political relationships. Further, we experience this same event with different socio-cultural groups, and we learn together to develop the architectural project hosting these specific groups. In this case, we observe how ego and world are perceptually inseparable (Neisser, 1976) through cognitive maps and body images as well as how this affects our reading of, and acting in, the environment.[5] More specifically, the drawing is used as an interface to add parameters according to the ethnographical study. The universe that is unfolded here is architectural material. In this context, regarding dizziness, we then discover that maybe disorienting spatial structures can be used as a tool to include bodies with different capacities as agents of design. In this manner, we challenge the everyday present conventions of ableism.[6]

Thus, dizziness is a tool connecting—or disconnecting— us from our environments. It is a tool that allows us to challenge them.

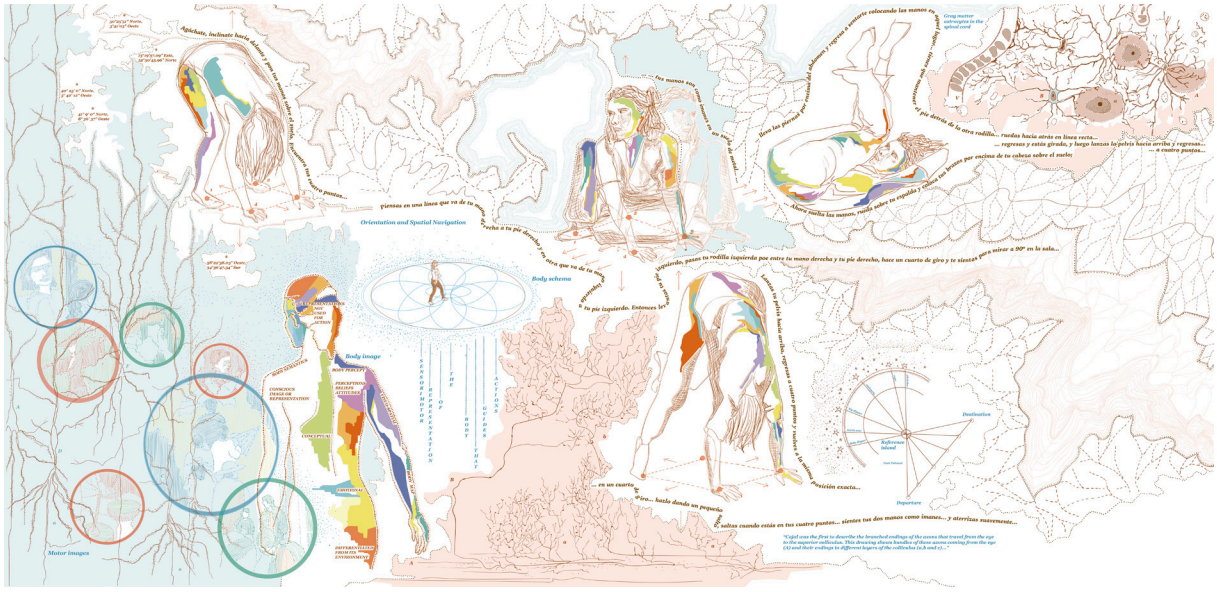


Figure 1 *María Auxliadora Gálvez (PSAAP), Pop-Up Somatic Architecture: Spatial Navigation (2018)*

RALG:

As much as it disconnects us, dizziness connects us with our environment and thus influences how we move and are being moved. Ahmed so accurately noted that "thinking about what

5 Psychologist Ulrich Neisser develops deeply the connection between ego and world, talking about the *ecological self: "I am the person here in this place, engaged in this particular activity"* (Neisser, 1987).

6 As other kinds of discriminations (racism for example), *ableism* is used in order to express exclusion produced on bodies with different capacities. The root of this is political. Disability is not located in the supposed disabled body in itself. What normally happens is that we establish that disability in comparison with a model of the supposed normal body, a privileged one. Normally in our western society, the privileged body is masculine, white, middle-aged and healthy. The election of this body as the model is not relaying in average but in an underlying political decision.

emotions do cannot be thought about without the sense of being in a body." Thus, her work examines "emotions in terms of ideas and values, that is as judgments about things: To hate or to fear is to have a judgment about a thing as it approaches" (Schmitz & Ahmed, 2014, p. 99).

However, when we become dizzy, our awareness might play tricks on us—for example, when we are drunk, we may think of ourselves as being stable when we are not. It presents a liminal state, where knowing or even creating knowledge can become ambiguous and confused. Therefore, purpose and intention might help us better our awareness in a state of dizziness. Here, to understand the connection of the individual and collective, the "inside" and "outside" as well as the personal and surrounding space and to navigate these interdependencies, we rely on the salutogenetic model[7] with its *sense of coherence*, which is seen as an adaptive disposition within the personality, as well as a global construct (national sense of coherence).[8] Thus, it expresses the degree to which we have a pervasive, dynamic conviction that the internal and external stimuli of our environment are comprehensible, manageable, and most importantly, meaningful. However, dizziness does not only take place on different scales but also at different intensities. It destabilizes, and as you said, blurs what we categorize as inside and outside (Feyertag, 2015). Further, the dizzying present moment may generate feelings equivalent to how philosopher Timothy Morton described being inside a hurricane:

> *To be inside a hurricane is to inhabit a "present" [...]. This is because a hurricane has its own temporality, not ours. We endure it, undergo it, in a nowness that is more like a slightly nauseating feeling of relative motion* (Morton, 2018).

Analogous to this description, dizziness seems to distort not only our proprioceptive awareness of ourselves, reality, space, and time but also overwhelms our emotions and sense-making.

MAGP:

The "body image" and "body schema"[9] that we have of ourselves can foster or inhibit our actions, dictate what we feel as possible or not, or what is going to be accepted in society. Here, it is probable that we find that purpose and intention can take us further from our sense of self and, as you say, create an unexpected action in the middle of the turmoil that allows us to gain a different self-perception. Indeed, this process can deconstruct not only what once was objective and subjective, but also *the body imaginary*[10] from where we build our environments; so, as I said, it becomes a tool to deconstruct these environments and constructions. Let me give you

7 Salutogenetic orientation is a model that can be applied at different scales from the individual to the societal. In principle, it is an interdisciplinary approach focusing on factors that support human health and wellbeing in a chaotic world, with an emphasis on coping mechanisms.

8 The sense of coherence is the core concept of the salutogenetic model developed by the American-Israeli sociologist, Aaron Anatovsky. It is considered an adaptive disposition within the personality that enables one to cope with negative experiences such as stress or illness. Based on the sense of coherence, "the sense of national coherence and its role as a mediator between levels of conservativeness and the tendency to delegitimize the 'other's' collective narratives," it is a recently developed concept in conflict research (Mana, 2019).

9 *"... this conceptual distinction between body image and body schema is related respectively to the difference between having a perception of (or believe about) something and having a capacity to move (or an ability to do something). A body image involves more than occurrent perceptions, however. It can include mental representations, beliefs, and attitudes, where the object of such intentional states (that object or matter of fact towards which they are directed, or that which they are about) is or concerns one's own body. The body schema, in contrast, involves certain motor capacities, abilities, and habits that both enable and constrain movement and the maintenance of posture."* As Shaun Gallagher explains (2005, p. 24). I would like to add here that body schema includes the environment, while body image does not.

10 The expression "body imaginary" is the translation of the Spanish expression "*imaginarios del cuerpo*," sometimes also translated as "body imageries." "*Imaginarios del cuerpo*" would collect all the assumptions that, consciously or unconsciously, we have about our own bodies. Following the thesis of SA, these assumptions affect the way we design and build the environment. By changing "body imageries", we can change our design actions and vice versa.

an example from the architectural world that can also be understood as an antecedent of SA. In the sixties, Ugo La Pietra created a collection of devices and texts conforming to what he called the "disequilibrating system."[11] As part of this, he designed "moments of rupture within the programmed base" in his devices called "immersions" or in projects like *Il Commutatore*. More specifically, the conventional perception was altered and bodies felt discomfort, so they had to question their reality. This discomfort is not an invented one, but an amplified discomfort related to what is already present in society; here, it is just enhanced. In this manner, La Pietra built to deconstruct, and the result was innovation in bodies and constructions.

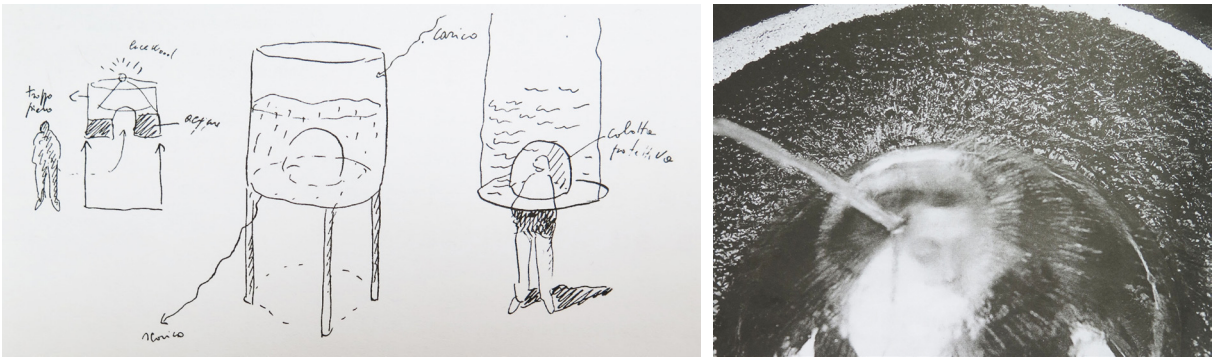


Figure 2 *Ugo La Pietra, Nell'Acqua (1970).*

RALG:

It seems we are inevitably exposed to dizziness in various contexts and intensities, and the following question remains: how can we or to what degree do we need to regain control? Moreover, somatic learning is based on the movement of the body in its environment, as the research on place cells and hippocampal maps have shown (Martig & Mizumori, 2010). Clearly, orientation and conscious awareness are bound to our sense of self, but the latter is bound to the awareness and orientation of our body (Chater, 2018). The sense of agency and ownership of our limbs is very much part of who we are as well as how we bond and operate in the world, but it can be lost. If, according to Shusterman, we have to understand soma as the lived, sentient, purposive body rather than merely the physical body that is "encompassing both subjective intentionality and material objectivity in the world," (Shusterman, 2011, p. 314) we need to ask the following question: what impact does the liminal state of dizziness have on our soma?

Here, let us consider an example. At 30 years old, Polish performance artist Karolina Wiktor suffered a stroke. After she came out of her coma, on the long road to recovery, she not only felt lonely due to her difficulties in communicating but also like she was coming from a different, dizzying world—from "planet aphasia" as she called it. Later, she even created passports and an app for "aphasians" to mark the difference. In this way, she took her experience of being affected and vulnerable to ameliorate her and her peers' day-to-day lives. Moreover, she launched her project *Cultural Neuroscience* to educate herself and initiate a dialogue between neuroscience and cultural actors. However, Wiktor found that being overwhelmed and restricted by this sort of physical manifestation of dizziness—that of not being able to move, communicate, and think—may also represent a capitulation to one's body and emotions, which brings with it a

11 Projects about the "disequilibrating system" can be consulted here : Rui, A. (ed.), "Ugo La Pietra. Progetto Disequilibrante. Disequilibrating Design," Milan: Triennale Design Museum, 2014.

corresponding conflict with social and architectural norms and a shift in what we regard as meaningful. Nevertheless, she also noted the potentiality of artistic practice as a significant possibility to navigate dizziness due to the fact that, as Finnish philosopher, Varto put it: "Artistic practice is extremely social; it […] seeks contact with others, and likes to be exposed. The arts practitioner is never completely detached: a connection will always be created, albeit by misunderstanding" (Varto, 2018, p. 12).

In a similar manner, this claim seems to apply to the practice of architecture that designs the private and public spaces we live in. However, and in keeping with Arendt, it is only in the public sphere that one can distinguish oneself from all others while being completely with others (Arendt, 1998). Again, a loss of movement, gravity, direction and/or connection can, under specific circumstances, serve as a resource to re-orient, rethink, and reconnect. However, to become a resource—be it for an individual or a group—resources are needed from within themselves and their physical and/or social environments.

3. Somatic Learning Through Dizziness

MAGP:

Somatic learning is certainly related to this question that you pose: How can we be exposed to dizziness—as inevitable as it is—and still feel that we have everything under "control"? I am not sure if control would be the word I would use. I would say that to have control, from my perspective, is to feel that we are still connected to our environment in a situation of coalescence and intertwining. I make this point because this is precisely somatic learning, which transforms something that once seemed unstable and threatening to us into a situation that we can easily inhabit. Further, it is at the root of SA to establish alternative synergies to make us feel safe like we are in a place where change is ever-present—this is something essential in any living process, and SA seeks to be a part of it as a manifestation of the nature-culture continuum.

Moreover, the breaking of habits and the training of embodied thinking in action, no matter the challenge, is interwoven with somatic learning. This is precisely why somatic learning uses instability as a way of giving us the impression of increased stability once the stimulus of being unstable decreases. Here, it could be said that somatic learning uses dizziness as a means to learn to comfortably inhabit any kind of situation. If you are able to do this, dizziness immediately becomes an incredible resource for discovery. Further, somatic learning uses dizziness to identify new possibilities for our soma but also for the environment, as we suggested before. It brings new "affordances" and creates different affective relationships. Additionally, it not only reveals new "body images" and "body schemas" but also new "environment images" related to action—"effect images" of the world according to von Uexküll.[12] It produces different time movements, inhabiting the present through immersive situations: going into the past—by means of memory—but also into the future so as to embrace uncertainty as one of the optimal terrains for obtaining new resources. Here, aspects of phylo- and ontogentic development are recalled to give us different perspectives on our time, knowledge, and being-with-the-world.

12 Jakob von Uexküll reflects on how the environment can have a certain "tone" for allowing actions (Uexküll, 1934 reprinted 2010). It is a similar concept that precedes today's well-known concept of affordance by Gibson (1966, 1977, 1979). Thus, somatic learning enlarges the "effect image" of the environment and the possibilities for action within it.

Figure 3 *María Auxiliadora Gálvez (PSAAP), Pop-Up Somatic Architecture: Multiple Body Memories (2018)*

Somatic memory acts primarily in critical moments. It becomes automatic based on previously learnt experiences, so that your system repeats the same responses and is thus related to habits. Contrarily, somatic learning is present when, within uncertain situations, you try out new responses to inhabit dizziness. In these moments, you do not prepare yourself in advance to take any action, nor do you use already trained actions. Thus, in somatic learning, you just think in action along with dizziness—you embody dizziness. In this context, SA works with all these modalities of somatic experiences. In the drawing shown in Figure 3, through a somatic experience based on very specific movements that are shared with other species and related to a specific medium like water—like the pulse of contraction and expansion of our hand acting like a jellyfish or the origins of crawling—we have the opportunity to recognize our deep relations with the planet and its living forms. We can relate this experience to the scientific data that tells us that the human genome is only found in 10% of our cells.[13] Thus, how can we design with disregard for nature and the non-humans once we become aware of this? When our body image changes, the vision of our environment changes, and so do our designs. However, to be within this experience can bring confusion but with it, a fusing in another way with the environment, like during dizzy situations. I would say that this is a kind of biological dizziness shaking our preconceptions and showing us a different way of navigation as organisms in this world.

13 Donna Haraway reminds us of this fact (Haraway, 2008).

4. The Compossibility of Construction and Destruction

RALG:

As a symptom of, and providing potential for, such transformative processes, dizziness has a destructive impact. At this point, we would like to emphasize its inherent ambiguity, even when it is resourceful. Thinking about your work concerning buildings and designs, the process of creation and ensuing innovation is a process of transformation, which affects our orientation and understanding of ourselves and the world. However, a resource such as dizziness is neither constructive nor destructive but needs to be extracted, which points to the means needed to facilitate its resourcefulness. Moreover, in the process of building, construction and destruction are necessarily intertwined, and even condition each other. To give an example from our artistic work: the becoming of an architectural space becomes manifest in the cultural activity of building, which includes destructive (tearing down the present) and constructive (building up the future) elements. In photographic series, we focus on construction sites. We show the transition of becoming, with its dangers and debris and its needs and desires as depicted in the following images (Figures 4–8).

Figure 4 *DC Towers (2013);* **Figure 5** *Hope of Glory (2007–2009).*

Figure 6 *From the series Construction Site As Far As The Eye Can See (2010–11).*


Figures 7 and 8 *From the series The Construction Site of Remembrance (2018–21). This set of work is by Ruth Anderwald and Leonhard Grond.*

Here, the construction site itself, with its scaffolding, acts as a cocoon. Moving from one form of existence to another—from idea to realization and from plan to building and then, later to occupancy—silent and resounding transformations occur (Jullien, 2011). The becoming of a construction site is the first step of the existential operation of an emerging space via a process of spatial differentiation. In becoming, the burgeoning space oscillates between an outside, from which it is not yet clearly distinguishable, and an inside, which has not yet been fully created. This transitional phase, between not-anymore and not-yet, is a moment of existential dizziness and compossibility and as such, is not restricted to sites of building but also applicable to other forms of growth, development, and coalescence. Nevertheless, the ultimate goal of a construction site, like that of a cocoon, is its own obsoleteness and disappearance. So, the question remains as to whether we can really "inhabit" dizziness. Here, it is worth noting that we are all subjected to the unpredictable borderlands of our experience, but "to inhabit" suggests stability in terms of a continuity of space and time.

5. Inhabiting Dizziness?

MAGP:

What you say about the transitional phases of the processes of construction-destruction is very interesting, and I would like to make their relation with coalescence more explicit. When matter is fuzzy under destabilizing forces like dizziness, objects and bodies tend to be mixed, so the limits are not very clear. In SA, we think of coalescence—the property of bodies of whatever kind being able to melt together, or at least to perform together—as a key aspect. Moreover, it is quite revolutionary to posit that architectural materiality is also the materiality that builds us and vice versa. Further, coalescence in SA is also a way of inhabiting dizziness. When multiple forces and attractions affect us, we could use them to come together with all of our bodies performing the actions of life and growing in architectural terms, like a chorus. In our project *The Skin in the Air* (2020) (Figures 9—11, 16), the architectural body is intertwined with others. Here, skin sensors are architectural sensors, and non-human organisms and living matter are the components of the material elements of these constructions. In this way, we did not talk about construction-destruction but about cycles of blooming and decay. SA does not want to remain fixed but to be part of the continuous metamorphosis of bodies and environments evolving

together.

Figure 9 *María Auxiliadora Gálvez (PSAAP). Image from the Project The Skin in the Air… Somatic Coalescence, (2020).*

RALG:

Coming back to the question of how to inhabit dizziness, writer, Franz Kafka seems to be the expert to turn to. In his work, dizziness is *conditio humana* to his literary characters affected by social and spatial occurrences. Further, he highlighted the interrelatedness of our sense of self, orientation as well as emotional and physiological balance.[14] In *Zürau Aphorisms*, he wrote: "The true path is along a rope, not a rope suspended way up in the air, but rather only just over the ground. It seems more like a tripwire than a tightrope."

The "true path" does not mean looking down from above, but refers to being more earthbound and also means tripping and staggering—as his words could be interpreted. This leads us toward an examination of this movement of the body using staggering triggers reflexes that are located in the lower region of the spinal cord. When staggering, we instantly relax the tripping, unsteady leg and simultaneously, tense the other one in an effort to regain our balance. Thus, this reflex opens a space-time of possibility and a compossible space-time of simultaneously falling, staggering on, and regaining equilibrium. Without the reflex of staggering, we must fall—just like when fainting, we simply fall. However, the compossibility of staggering affords us with additional—albeit uncertain—possibilities. Further, by taking away the certainty of falling, we gain new but uncertain possibilities. Thus, the resource of the compossible space is to open up a space-time within dizziness, from where the primacy of experiencing it can be acknowledged and addressed via an increase of possibilities.[15]

14 Franz Kafka can be perceived as an expert in narrating states and conditions of dizziness. Some of his works connect architecture and dizziness, such as his novel *The Castle* or his short story *The Burrow*. In his novels *The Trial* and *Metamorphosis*, it is an unbridgeable disparity between individuals' possibilities and the demands of the social surroundings that create dizziness.

15 The theoretical concept of the compossible space was further developed from an in-depth examination of the philosophy of, and in direct exchange with, French philosopher, François Jullien, and formulated with philosopher, Karoline Feyertag. See also: "Dizziness and the

Moreover, the corporeal motion of staggering and Kafka's aphorism remind us that all movements of the body (and building) relate to gravity. After leaving the low gravity space of the womb and being born, gravity becomes our main force of attraction. This groundedness is the reference point for our bodies and all the actions we undertake. To feel grounded, break ground, or lose ground are just a few examples of the many metaphors that show how predominant the feeling of gravity is—not only in our bodies and buildings but also in terms of how we organize our communication and thinking. Our thinking, acting, and environment as well as our "inside" and "outside" are intrinsically intertwined and permeable, but by becoming dizzy, their borders can become blurred beyond recognition. In this context, artist Hito Steyerl stated the following:

> *[…] free fall can trigger a feeling of confusion […]. While falling, people may sense themselves as being things, while things may sense that they are people. Traditional modes of seeing and feeling are shattered. Any sense of balance is disrupted. Perspectives are twisted and multiplied. New types of visuality arise* (Steyerl, 2011, no pagination).

Even more, dizziness can become entangling, as our colleague, the performance artist and artistic researcher, Laura Brechmann stated in her description of her experience of doing artistic research on dizziness:

> *The different episodes of the long-term project "In/Out Balance" focus all on the question of* dizziness *as a cultural, medical and subjective phenomenon. The project, started 2017, was originally planned to be one solo performance which examines* dizziness *from different angles […], the aim was to analyse, to encircle, to "catch" this fluid experience. Already in the concept, however, I made a methodical mistake: I got involved in the topic. A topic (a* dizziness*) became my topic (my* dizziness*). It attacked, seized, captured me. A distant, observational attitude was impossible, and the project developed a momentum whose alignment and outcome was beyond control* (Brechmann, 2021, no pagination).

MAGP:

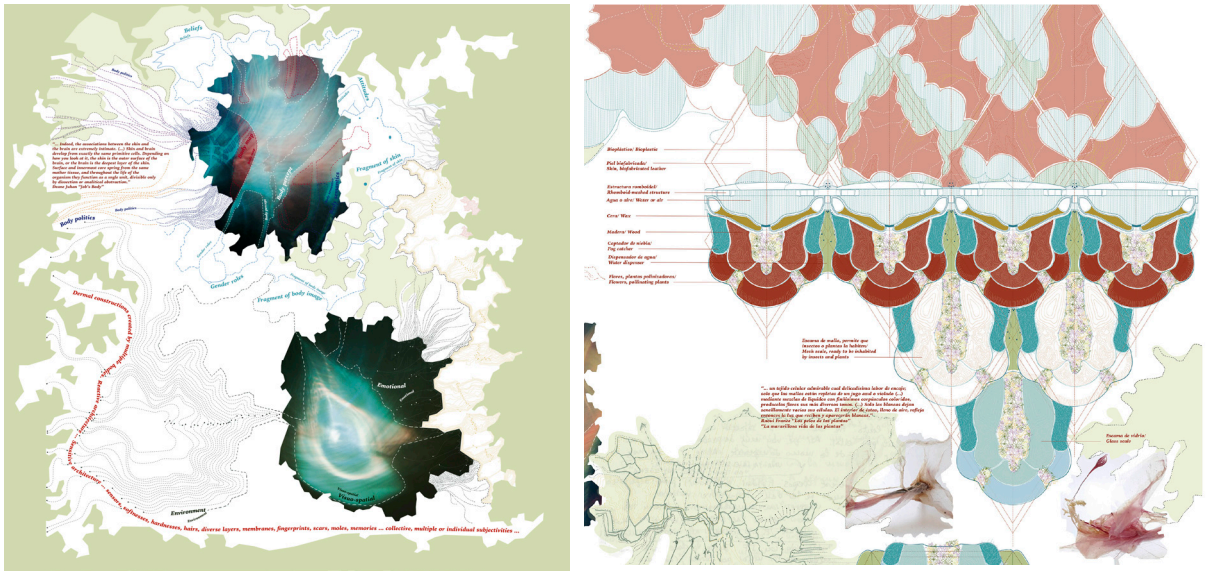
To inhabit dizziness has to do with feeling grounded—no matter how unstable it is out there. The orientation toolkit of a body can set its reference system in the environment, as happens with the place cells you previously mentioned. Alternatively, it can be set within the body itself, as happens with somatic considerations and with the navigational systems that our body uses that relate to the parietal and pre-motor circuits. Thus, both systems, geocentric and egocentric, work together. When you inhabit dizziness, your reference system goes with you to allow you to find alternative relationships with the world and bodies around you. In addition, I would say that as far as you can still set relationships of whatever kind with bodies and surfaces, you can inhabit dizziness. Further, bodies also ground to each other. That is why navigating dizziness together is especially relevant.

Moreover, I think that feeling grounded is connected to gravity. Gravity is an attraction force. Every time you feel an attraction and every time you feel compelled to be in touch with a surface or a body, you are grounded. Therefore, here, we will consider an expanded version of gravity as we will name *any* attraction force as such. From my perspective, dizziness needs

compossible space in research-creation," (Anderwald et al, 2017).

gravity—I defined it as the consequence of being under multiple attractions—and as you can imagine, SA inevitably always works with gravity as it puts attractions, surfaces, and bodies into play. Following this line of thinking with grounding, we establish an action-reaction dialogue between us and other "bodies"[16] in continuous interactions. Here, gravity is at play for at least two entities. However, when you have more participants, the movement accelerates. Gravity is a creative force but can also be destabilizing when density, direction, and velocity of forces increase. In such moments, dizziness takes place.

In Figure10, we map the different kinds of attraction or repulsion forces that different bodies feel in environments and spaces. In this context, architecture is not an inert material but also creates structures of power, ecological cycles, or affective moods. All those dynamic forces also "build" architecture, and SA then becomes a performative expression of the dynamic possibilities of architecture. More specifically, through somatic ethnography, we understand these dynamics, and through mapping, we can start transferring that material into spatial structures and constructive systems (Figure 11). Further, it is through this process that you can still feel grounded even when uncertainty is dominating the circumstances. The materials here are, as you see in the next figure, Wax, Wood, Water, Flowers, Insects, Bio-leather, and Grids to be Colonized by Non-humans like Birds. The unexpected and the dynamics of life co-constitute this architecture.



Figures 10 and 11 *María Auxiliadora Gálvez (PSAAP). Left: Bodies "with Multiple Attractions"; Right: Constructive System Following the Dynamics of the Attractions and Interactions. These are from the Project The Skin in the Air… Somatic Coalescence, (2020).*

From the point of view of SA, only when you cannot establish any action-reaction dialogue and when you are not under any kind of attraction force, can you feel that you are no longer grounded. Thus, here, you can feel groundlessness.

Moreover, SA tries to work with desire as an attraction force—as gravity. Without forcing them to, the different organisms function within this architecture together. We do not consider a state of groundlessness as being hosted by SA and setting the conditions for bodies.

16 I understand "bodies" not only refering to human bodies, but to any kind of entity able to establish relations within the described activity around gravity.

6. Un-thoughts: Groundlessness

RALG:

Exchanging ideas with you, we cannot be entirely sure whether we understand whether the consistencies we create are those that you aim for. Nonetheless, this is the dizzying basis of all interaction, directly linked to dizziness or not, that we often cannot be sure as to what the contact zones, communication channels, and languages we establish with each other mean to either of us or how to interpret them correctly. However, it is worth noting here, as Wittgenstein asserted, that "if I want the door to turn, the hinges must stay put" (Wittgenstein, 1969, §343). We have to make certain assumptions to start, even if we will possibly have to retract them as the process plays out. This problem concerns words, images, metaphors, underlying ethics and values, to name a few. So, let us try to lay bare the basics of our thinking and the places we start working from when thinking about dizziness. Let us also try to retrace what Jullien called the "un-thought."[17]

First, when considering "groundlessness" and the experience of the abyss, three philosophers come to mind: René Descartes, Søren Kierkegaard, and Marcus Steinweg.

Descartes described his state of mind as a state of soma, we would claim, at the beginning of his *Second Meditation*:

> *The Meditation of yesterday has filled my mind with so many doubts, that it is no longer in my power to forget them. Nor do I see, meanwhile, any principle on which they can be resolved; and, just as if I had fallen all of a sudden into very deep water, I am so greatly disconcerted, as to be unable either to plant my feet firmly on the bottom or sustain myself by swimming on the surface* (Descartes, 1903, pp. 224-225).

He does not only use the metaphor of suddenly falling into deep water, a space of reduced gravity, but, even more so, his soma seems deeply affected by his doubt in a way that his emotions become sensations that are transferred to the reader in his writing. On the other hand, Kierkegaard described "dizziness" as the anxiety that arises when realizing one's freedom, by giving the example of looking down from a vantage point. He went on to state that when looking down into the abyss, we are looking into "the possibility of possibility" (Kierkegaard, 1980, p. 188).

However, this was transported with allusions to the body in connection to its environment when he wrote:

> *He whose eye happens to look down the yawning abyss becomes dizzy. But what is the reason for this? It is just as much in his own eye as in the abyss, for suppose he had not looked down. Hence, anxiety is the dizziness of freedom, which emerges when [...] freedom looks down into its own possibility [...]. Freedom succumbs to dizziness* (Kierkegaard, 1980, p. 75).

17 "The un-thought or non-thought is the basis from which I think and [that which I, therefore] do not think. Actually, I tried to show the un-thought in this opposing tension of European philosophy and Chinese thought." François Jullien in 'Making Ambiguity Fertile is the Present Mission of Thought,' http://on-dizziness.com/francois_jullien/. Accessed 2021, 07.07.
"French philosopher Jullien goes off to China to find what is the un-thought of Greek thought – and Japanese philosopher Nishida turns towards the Occident to find what is maybe the un-thought of Oriental thought. Both are moving on this "common ground", creating and thinking out of this common source." Karoline Feyertag in 'Inside/Out and the Ground beneath our Feet,' http://on-dizziness.com/insideoutside/. Accessed 2021, 07.07.

Taking up the notion of the abyss and developing Kierkegaard's thought, Steinweg wrote in *Inconsistencies*:

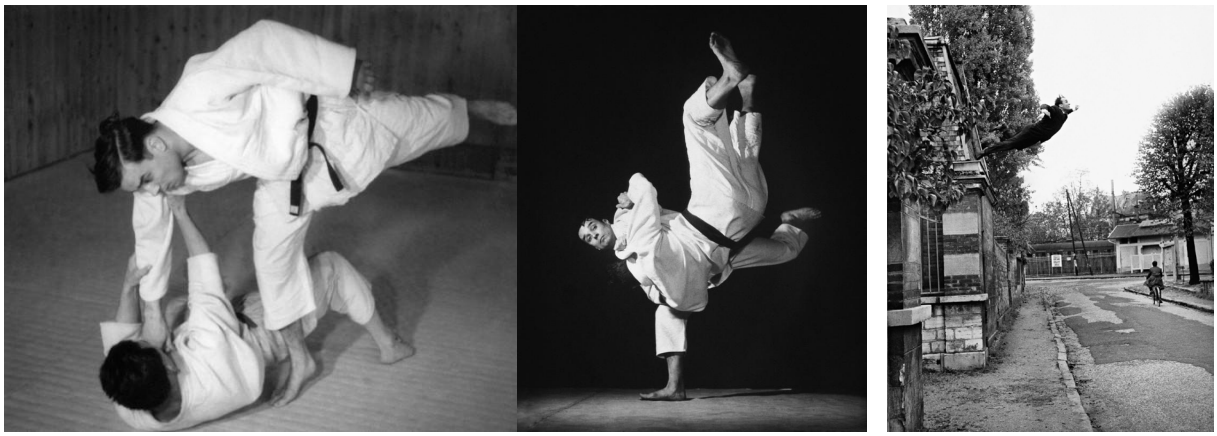
> *The experience of the abyss becomes the experience of an elementary disorientation and freedom […]. It is the experience of ontological incommensurability, which denounces the incommensurability of everything the subject holds as commensurable—all its certainties, values, evidence, and consistencies. In the existential philosophical sense, it is confronted with nothingness, which is another index of its desolation […]* (Steinweg, 2017, p. 16).

Moreover, the metaphor of losing ground, falling, or losing one's footing is ubiquitous, not only in philosophy but in our everyday language. As you said, you try to avoid groundlessness in SA, but what meaning do groundlessness, falling, and abysmal heights bear in connection to SA? Of course, a loss of gravity, direction, and connection can, under specific circumstances, serve as a resource to re-orient or reconnect, but to become a resource, an individual or a group needs support from within and the surrounding physical and social environment. Thus, the condition's inherent unpredictability clarifies why dizziness cannot be seen as a means of "self-design" (Groys, 2008).

MAGP:

I will try to clarify my approach using the somatic case study of Yves Klein from 1947, the year when he started to practice Judo. Within somatic practices, and specifically in Judo, gravity is an allied force. It does not matter if you are comfortably standing up on the ground—or lying on it—or if you are falling or traversing the air, you feel gravity, and so you are oriented, grounded, and intertwined in the dynamics of a medium you know. In this context, Klein explained that jumping into the air—into the void—is inevitably attached to falling, which he accepted. Additionally, the event of the "fall"- when you are suspended in the air for a while but feeling the force of gravity—gave him security to face the "vertigo of life."[18] He would go further, as for him, these moments without the support of the ground provide the foundation for his material imaginations. Thus, immateriality through falling was the way that he was able to use to open the door to that place where the body—material flesh—immateriality, and transcendence met. Moreover, the *Saut dans le vide* (Jump into the void) is the action that made him feel grounded. This is explicit in his statement, "*Un homme dans l'espace ! Le peintre de l'espace se jette dans le vide !*" (A man in space! The space painter throws himself into the void!) from 1960, or in his text, *Obsession de la lévitation* (Obsession with levitation). Here, I want to specifically note that if you feel gravity and you can deal with it through somatic learning and SA, then you can feel grounded. Soma needs a process, some time for training, and a lack of fear of it, but you have to feel it in your flesh as there is no other way to do it. Thus, we could say that groundlessness is a quality—or a problem—of soma and not only a quality or problem of the surrounding environment. Additionally, groundlessness exists when gravity does not exist, which I will further elucidate.

18 For a more in-depth insight into these ideas, see: "Yves Klein. Corps, Couleur, Immatériel," the catalogue of the exhibition of the same name set at Centre Pompidou in 2006. You can also visit the Yves Klein archive: http://www.yvesklein.com/. Accessed 2021, 07.07.



Figures 12 and 13 *Photos from the Online Yves Klein Archive. Left and center: Yves Klein practicing Judo in 1953 and 1955. Right: Un homme dans l'espace ! Le peintre de l'espace se jette dans le vide ! (1960).*

One could think that groundlessness and a sense of feeling lost and not being able to orient oneself can be created by doubt—as you referred to in the Descartes' passage—and it could have nothing to do with gravity as we conventionally understand it. But from a somatic perspective, and more specifically, based on SA considerations, we are again talking in terms of attraction forces and "gravities"—allow me to use the word in the plural—and so, in terms of dizziness. Moreover, here, I would like to visualize the "mind doubt" by Descartes as literally his soma in space being under multiple attractions. Here, it is worth noting that soma can be affected through different channels, but the dynamics are the same. Further, skin and nervous tissue are more closely related than we normally think; it is not in vain that they come from the same embryonic layer.

In addition, concerning these thoughts, I would like to refer to the text written by Steyerl that you already mentioned: *In Free Fall: A Thought Experiment on Vertical Perspective* (Steyerl, 2011). At the end of this essay, Steyerl wrote about Adorno's discussion on the vertiginous and how he questioned the repetitive philosophical fear of groundlessness, as philosophy would need ground or earth to be sustained. Here, we can understand that philosophical statements need solid support, but in this point, following Adorno, Steyerl proposed "a fall toward objects without reservation, embracing a world of forces and matter, which lacks any original stability." Therefore, it can be said that without the preconception of original stability, doubt is not necessarily a vehicle for groundlessness. So maybe, here, we can reformulate our words—we already said that groundlessness is a question of soma and not only of the environment and that in the presence of gravity or gravities, we do not necessarily feel groundlessness, but we could add that groundlessness is also a question of preconceptions and imageries.

On the other hand, I would like to address how bodies operate in the world where gravity is ever-present—planet Earth—as SA works within that hypothesis. I would like to do so by referring to the theoretical roots of SA. Their origins can be found in phenomenology and more specifically in the term, "somatology," coined by Husserl in 1912 who defined *somatology* as the science of the animated organism:

> *The perception and experience of animate organism- somatology, as we say- can be that which adopts the mode of theoretical experience and determines theoretical thinking. Since the specifically somatological is not a separate reality, but rather a higher stratum of being that is built upon material reality, the theoretical*

> *experience and cognition of the somatic being also requires material experience and corresponding material cognition.]…] somatology […] systematically establish relationships to the spheres of sensation in the physiology of the sense organs and the nervous system. The foundation is finally the direct "somatic perception" that every empirical investigator can effect only on his own body and then the somatic interpretation that he performs in the interpretive apprehension of perceived alien animate organisms as such […] According to this presentation, therefore, the whole doctrine of sensation dealt with by physiology and psychology forms a unity with all the well-known doctrines concerning the various peculiarities of the sense regions in their dependence on the sense organs and sense centers as well as on the nature of the physiological sense stimuli, a unity which, with the corresponding doctrines of "affective sensations", of sensations in the broadest sense, belongs to somatology* (Husserl, 1912, pp. 7-8).

In relation to these words, it would be the embodied experience, undertaken with "awareness" that helps us to build our theories and grounds our interpretations of otherness. Thus, the capacities, affections, and actions of the multiple bodies—that I understand here always as soma—are the ones defining, from my perspective, dizziness and grounding.

Further, this somatic embodiment also has political implications. Unfortunately, not all bodies have the same value in our societies. Some bodies are continually exposed to a supposed groundlessness that is only understood as such by privileged bodies that always feel safe. Some other bodies are not allowed to be grounded because of specific situations of the socio-political environment. Groundlessness, for this reason, is therefore a situated experience. It is because of this that SA works both, to give support to the more vulnerable bodies and to regulate – through somatic learning and awareness – the excessive requirements of the privileged bodies. Therefore, from phenomenology, we move into somatics with consideration of authors like Berleant and his aesthetics of the environment (Berleant, 1992); this is important because he sets the environment as something that grows in continuity with bodies. Moreover, if with somatics, we overcome the distinction between mind and body, with SA. we also overcome the distinction between body and environment: both participate in each other. It is in this way that SA operates, and the experience of feeling grounded is supported. In this context, Berleant remind us that "In architecture, there are not spectators: there are only participants" (Marsden Fitch, 1965, p. 706).

Finally, we think of SA as an animated organism in itself, and one that is acting in coalescence with others. Thus, we could say that SA "becomes" with them.[19]

7. Un-thoughts: Soma

RALG:

Some years ago, when we became interested in what comes before the explicit and reflective seeing, we started to read Maurice Merleau-Ponty. His writing about the primacy of the unreflective experience was highly influential as was his occupation with the artistic process—specifically that of Paul Cézanne, which to him felt like precariously walking in a dense fog where "no one can say where, if anywhere, it will lead" (Merleau-Ponty, 1964, p. 3). This served as the basis to define dizziness in the artistic working process as well as in our collaboration with

19 I further develop these ideas within the architectural project *The Skin in the Air… Somatic Coalescence* (2020) *http://psaap.com/en/the-skin-in-the-air-somatic-coalescence/*. Accessed 2021, 07.07.

creativity research.[20] Nevertheless, we see the phenomenological approach as limited whenever we cross the border to losing ourselves completely or becoming unsure of ourselves, as it may happen in states of dizziness when (self-)awareness is increasingly altered if not lost. Moreover, the examination of dizziness needs both the recounting of the experiencing subject and the reflection, response, or observation from a different perspective. We can assess this both in medicine and artistic expression. Thus, we need experience and reflection in both divergent and convergent ways of thinking. Self-examination and awareness can make somatic knowledge more explicit and reflective. However, if "somatology […] systematically establish relationships to the spheres of sensation in the physiology of the sense organs and the nervous system" (Husserl, 1912, p. 8), the question is where does the reflection come in and what does it mean? From the viewpoint of dizziness research, we can say that the definition of the "sensations in the broadest sense," based on the work of Husserl, lacks the notion of reflective and implicit sense-making in contrast to the field of somaesthetics. We discovered somaesthetics after reading about (and practicing) Feldenkrais. Similarly, dizziness affects us on an individual level but also has an impact on a greater scale, as it can be shared and always exists within a system of relations (Scheler, 1913). In this context, Feldenkrais substantiates our criticism of Husserl's quote when he connects vegetative and nervous states of the body with cognition and reflection, strengthening the fact that we need to take the following into consideration:

> *[…] the structure of the nervous system is such that it is hard to imagine purely sensory or motor or vegetative impulses. The most abstract thought has emotional-vegetative and sensory-motor components. Abstract thinking is possible only in conjunction with a special configuration or pattern or state of the body* (Feldenkrais, 2005, p. 36).

Understanding soma as an instrument of perception, experience, and cognition, as well as a site of expression for and communication with the surrounding environment is indispensable for an examination of dizziness, which is a problem of the soma. More specifically, it affects our soma and within our orientation, our emotions, judgment, behavior, memory, and cognitive capabilities as well. Thus, that which had felt right or seemed clear and meaningful later loses relation and meaning.

Furthermore, somaesthetics gives significance to the notion of ambiguity. Apart from becoming constructive, dizziness clearly has destructive potential. Within this multi-faceted potential, the notion of ambiguity is essential, and it was first introduced to us by French philosopher, François Jullien when discussing dizziness. Here, it is here understood to create a fundamental ambiguity that brings all elements back to their non-separated state, allowing all categorization to become fuzzy, temporary, and confused. Jullien reframed our approach of productive dizziness as "making ambiguity fertile." Moreover, he insisted that "making ambiguity fertile is the present mission of thought" (Jullien & Feyertag, 2015, no pagination). His approach has been germane to our understanding of dizziness as a force that creates uncertainty, confusion and instability and within that, ambiguity and possibility. This space-time of ambiguity that we also call the compossible space, as per Jullien, allows for new perspectives, elements, and experiences to emerge.

20 This study served to locate dizziness in artistic working processes. Benedek, et al. (2017). *Creating art: An experience sampling study in the domain of moving image art*. Psychology of Aesthetics, Creativity, and the Arts, 11(3), 325–334. https://doi.org/10.1037/aca0000102.

> *But there is a dimension, which seems fertile in this moment of dizziness, when things become confused because they lose their equilibrium and find themselves suspended from clarity—this dimension is ambiguity. […] This is the moment when the precedent determinations and oppositions, by which we have been thinking, are fusing – "con-fusing." From this "con-fusion" emerges a fundamental ambiguity, the non-separation of opposites that is fertile because it enables an outside of our current oppositions, and from this outside, other determinations could result* (Jullien & Feyertag, 2019, pp. 57-58).

In terms of somaesthetics, Shusterman mentioned the soma as the "fundamental ambiguity of human being in several ways. First, it expresses our double status as object and subject […]" Then, there is "the ambiguity of human existence as both shared species-being and individual difference" (Shusterman, 2006, pp. 3-4). Following Shusterman's work, it can be said that soma as an instrument of subjective perception has intentionality and knowledge, but it is simultaneously an object in the world and part of a world of objects, which is how it knows things. It experiences and knows things from a particular perspective and can be experienced, observed, and known. In this manner, it seems closely related to SA, and we think it a good starting point for our collaboration, despite our different points of (theoretical) departure. Furthermore, this connects to your elaboration on the space of somatic learning in SA. However, due to this existential confusion, a community affected by dizziness is deprived of a shared ground or basis. Thus, a capacity to tolerate ambiguity must first be achieved in the individual, as your practice proposes.

MAGP:

Your discussion proved to be very interesting. In my case, I started to become familiar with Maurice Merleau-Ponty years before knowing that Husserl conceived of the foundation of a science called somatology. I appreciate the original definition given by him in relation to the confluence of physiology and psychology. Nevertheless, I would like to strengthen the differences between phenomenology and somatics, as I have already suggested. Phenomenology mentions accessing the flesh of the world through experience, but in somatics, you are also impelled to pay attention to how you do what you do in the world; this can be done through reflection or through embodiment, which is the option actually chosen by somatics—recognizing multiple and diverse bodies. Concerning extreme states of dizziness, maybe you do not have self-awareness in a conscious way, but you are directly embodying dizziness, and that in itself has meaning. However, it is true that self-examination is sometimes not possible when dizziness is present. But sometimes, it is not exactly what we call awareness or self-examination (which are different matters), it is what is involved in an action or event that is somatically meaningful to us, and we are just embodying it. Further, this moment becomes meaningful at the very instant of embodiment without necessarily a subsequent reflection. During somatic experiences, it is true that we cannot maybe talk about being aware of something or that we are unable to find the words, but the meaning emerges anyway without rationality, and sometimes, soma knows in advance. Further, sometimes changes appear first in the flesh—for example, in an accident or physical trauma—and this affects our way of thinking and feeling before we can reflect on it and extract conclusions. However, sometimes we are never able to extract conclusions from a reflective point of view. Nevertheless, this does not mean that the effects on our soma do not exist. Thus, the question to be answered is how can we work with somatic or phenomenological experiences considering your observations about sense-making? Let me steer the conversation again—by going back to the beginning—into the methodology we use in SA.

At the Platform of Somatics for Architecture and Landscape (PSAAP), when designing a device, architecture, or landscape, we need to have an idea about how this design can act in synergy with a multiplicity of bodies. In this way, the design can sustain and create collaborations between organisms and the architectural systems in themselves. This is how, some years ago, we started working on a project about the anthropology of the senses.[21] The focus here was that while biology or neuroscience can define how our perceptive apparatus works, perception also has cultural and personal dimensions, and with the same physiological apparatus, different people perceive different things. Thus, if I want to make a situated design, I need to know more about the anthropology of the sensorial and for that, the already mentioned methods of somatic ethnography have to be used.

In the end, the question here is regarding how people give sense and meaning to their own experiences, which are also understood in a diverse way by different bodies. The methodology to answer this question also includes my/our interpretation of it, so idiographic, hermeneutic and phenomenological approaches can collaborate to research and understand somatic knowledge and discoveries, so that we can design using this information.

Thus, I think that this combination of approaches considers the different stages of sense-making, including not only those that are ongoing but also their deeper sedimentations.

Figures 14 and 15 *María Auxiliadora Gálvez (PSAAP), Participatory Processes for Somatic Ethnographies in Bilbao and Hamburg (2019).*

Figure 16 *María Auxiliadora Gálvez (PSAAP), The Skin in the Air… Somatic Coalescence (2020).*

21 An example of this can be seen at: http://psaap.com/en/pop-up-somatic-architecture/. Accessed 2021, 07.07.

8. Concluding Thoughts

RALG:

As you pointed out, environments are not only built or constructed by us, but deeply connected with us and in reciprocity, shape us as we shape them—affecting our thinking, agency, abilities, and imaginary capabilities. However, these interdependent relations between our environment and us are inherently ambiguous. In this context, the elemental confusion that dizziness spreads may help us to overcome thinking in dichotomies as well as the clear-cut gaps between individualism and collectivism or humans and non-humans, for instance, because this is what thinking in dizziness means: not to think in a distinct, categorized, and orderly manner, but to allow confusion to enter our thought, so that we can stumble, stagger, and shift from what we habitually use as our basis and un-thought. Moreover, dizziness as a "concept in motion" needs a mode of thinking infused by movement—one that is not relying on fixed points but on moving relations and shifting anchor points (Anderwald et al., 2018, p. 123). This mode of thinking in motion is present in both SA and somaesthetics.

More specifically, SA, as a theory, as well as a performative practice and design strategy, can put this concept and its artistic, architectural, social, political, environmental, and health-related implications to the test. In this context, somaesthetics' attention to somatic expression might act as a missing link between our approaches. As addressed artistically and architecturally in our exchange, embodied thinking-in-motion holds the potential to overcome the traditional oppositions of certainty and uncertainty, groundedness and groundlessness, construction and destruction, knowing and not-knowing "because there is space and movement in-between professed opposites, which can become productive" (Anderwald et al., 2017, p. 129) in moving towards new knowledge, abilities, and meaning.

Acknowledgements

This conversation took place in the framework of the FWF-funded project Navigating Dizziness Together. The authors would like to thank Fiona Wooton and Laura Brechmann for their contributions

References

Ahmed, S. (2004). *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

Anatovsky, A. (1979). *Health, Stress and Coping*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Inc Pub.

Anderwald, R.; Feyertag, K.; Grond. L. (eds.). (2019). *Dizziness-A Resource*. Berlin: Sternberg Press. https://doi.org/10.21937/9783956795213

Anderwald, A.; Feyertag, F.; Grond, L. (2018). Dizziness and the compossible space in research-creation. *Emotion, Space and Society.* (28). 122-130. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.emospa.2017.07.001

Arendt, H. (1998) *The Human Condition*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Benedek, M.; Jauk, E.; Kerschenbauer, K.; Anderwald, R; Grond, L. (2017). Creating art: An experience sampling study in the domain of moving image art. *Psychology of Aesthetics, Creativity, and the Arts. 11*(3). 325–334. *https://doi.org/10.1037/aca0000102*

Berleant, A. (1992). *The Aesthetics of Environment.* Philadelphia: Temple University Press.

Braidotti, R. (1996). *Nomadic Subjects. Embodiment and Sexual Difference in Contemporary Feminist theory*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Brechmann, L. (2021) *The Future is in Question*. Website. https://www.on-dizziness.com/resources-overview/the-future-is-in-question. Accessed 2021, 07. 07.

Cage, J. (1961). *Silence: Lectures and Writings*. Middletown: Wesleyan.

Chater, N. (2018). *The Mind is Flat*. London: Allen Lane.

Cranz, G. (2016). *Ethnography for Designers*. London – New York: Routledge.

Descartes, R. (1903). *The Method, Meditations and Philosophy*. W. M. Dune. Website. https://oll-resources.s3.us-east-2.amazonaws.com/oll3/store/titles/1698/1325_Bk.pdf. Accessed 2021, 07. 07.

Erez, O. Gordon; CR. Sever, J.; Sadeh, A. & Mintz, M. (2002). Balance Dysfunction in Childhood Anxiety: Findings and Theoretical Approach, *Journal of Anxiety Disorders 18*(3). 341-356. https://doi.org/10.1016/s0887-6185(02)00291-8.

Feldenkrais, M. (2005). *Body and Mature Behavior; A Study of Anxiety, Sex, Gravitation and Learning.* Frog Books.

Feyertag, K. (2015, 09. 22.). *Inside/Outside and The Ground beneath Our Feet*. Website. http://on-dizziness.com/insideoutside/. Accessed 2021, 07. 07.

Gallagher, S. (2005). *How the Body Shapes the Mind*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Gálvez Pérez, A. (2019). *Espacio Somático. Cuerpos Múltiples*. Madrid: Ediciones Asimétricas.

Gálvez Pérez, A. (2018). *Pop-Up Somatic Architecture.* Website. http://psaap.com/en/pop-up-somatic-architecture/. Accessed 2021, 07. 07.

Gálvez Pérez, A. (2020, 03. 15.). *The Skin in the Air... Somatic Coalescence.* Website. http://psaap.com/en/the-skin-in-the-air-somatic-coalescence/. Accessed 2021, 07. 07.

Gibson, J. (1966). *The Senses considered as perceptual systems*. Crows Nest: Allen and Unwin.

Gibson, J. (1977). The Theory of Affordances. *Perceiving, Acting, and Knowing*. 67-82. Mahwah: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Gibson, J. (1979). *The Ecological Approach to Visual Perception*. Boston: HMH.

Groys, B. (2008). The obligation to self-design. *E-flux.com #00*. Website. https://www.e-flux.com/journal/00/68457/the-obligation-to-self-design/. Accessed 2021, 07. 07.

Haraway, D. (2008). *When Species Meet*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Husserl, E. (1912) Reprinted (1980). *Phenomenology and the Foundations of the Sciences*. Leiden: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers.

Jullien, F. (2011). *The Silent Transformations*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

Jullien, F. & Feyertag, K. (2015). *In Conversation with François Jullien. Making Ambiguity Fertile is the Present Mission of Thought.* http://on-dizziness.com/francois_jullien/ Accessed 2021, 07. 07.

Kafka, F. (1946). *The Borrow*. New York: Schocken Books.

Kafka, F. (1930). *The Castle*. London: Secker & Warburg.

Kierkegaard, S. (1980): *The Concept of Anxiety*. Princeton: University Press.

Klein, T. (1980). Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and to a Phenomenological Philosophy, Book 3: Phenomenology and the Foundation of the Sciences, *Edmund Husserl Collected Works.* (1). Leiden: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers.

Mana, A.; Srour, A. & Sagy, S. (2019). A sense of national coherence and openness to the "other's" collective narrative: The case of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict. *Peace and Conflict: Journal of Peace Psychology, 25*(3), 226–233. https://doi.org/10.1037/pac0000391

Marsden Fitch, J. (1965) The Aesthetics of Function, *Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences vol.128*, art. 2.

Martig, A. & Mizumori, S. (2010). Place Cells. *Encyclopedia of Behavioral Neuroscience*, 70-78. https://doi.org/10.1016/B978-0-08-045396-5.00154-8

Merleau-Ponty, M. (1964). *Sense and Non-Sense*. Evanston: Northwestern University Press.

Morineau, C. (ed.). (2006). *Yves Klein: Corps, Couleur, Immateriel*. Paris: Centre Pompidou Edition.

Morton, T. (2017, 10. 25-2018, 05.01). Apologies for the Delay: Time Junction. Wall text for the exhibition *After the End of the World*. Barcelona: Centre de Cultura Contemporània de Barcelona.

Neisser, U. (1976). *Cognition and Reality. Principles and Implications of Cognitive Psychology*. New York: Freeman.

Neisser, U. (1987). Five Kinds of Self-Knowledge. *International Society for Ecological Psychology*.

Plato, Timaeus. *On Physis*. Translated by B. Jowett. Elpenor Online. http://www.ellopos.net/elpenor/physis/plato-timaeus/default.asp. Accessed 2021, 07. 07.

Rogge, AK.; Röder, B.; Zech, A. et al. (2017). Balance Training Improves Memory and Spatial Cognition in Healthy Adults. *Scientific Reports 7*.34. https://doi.org/10.1038/s41598-017-06071-9

Rui, A (ed.). (2014). *Ugo La Pietra. Progetto Disequilibrante. Disequilibrating Design*. Triennale Design Museum.

Schedlmayer, N. (2018). Change Stagings. *Between History. An Artistic Construction Site Inspection*. 25-32. Vienna: Austrian National Library.

Scheler, M. (1913) *Zur Phänomenologie und Theorie der Sympathiegefühle und von Liebe und Haß*. Tübingen: Niemeyer.

Schmitz, S. & Ahmed, S. (2014). Affect/Emotion: Orientation Matters: A Conversation between Sigrid Schmitz and Sara Ahmed, *Freiburger Zeitschrift für GeschlechterStudien* (20). 97–108.

Shefer, S. (2010). Progressive Vestibular Mutation Leads to Elevated Anxiety. *Brain Research 1317*: 157–64.

Shusterman, R. (2011). Soma, self, and society: Somaesthetics as pragmatist meliorism. *Metaphilosophy*. (42). 314 - 327. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9973.2011.01687.x

Smith, B. [fowlerpoetry]. (2016, 07. 22.). *States of Mind: Tracing the edges of consciousness* [Video]. Website. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3LTauPbY6dU. Accessed 2021, 07. 07.

Smith, J. (2009). *Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis*. Sage. Website. http://www.ipa.bbk.ac.uk/. Accessed 2021, 07. 07.

Steinweg, M. (2017) *Inconsistencies*. Cambridge: MIT Press.

Steyerl, H. (2011). In Free Fall: A Thought Experiment on Vertical Perspective. *e-flux Journal #24*. e-flux. Website. https://www.e-flux.com/journal/24/67860/in-free-fall-a-thought-experiment-on-vertical-perspective/. Accessed 2021, 07. 07.

Uexküll, J. von. (1934) Reprinted (2010). *A Foray into the Worlds of Animals and Humans: with A Theory of Meaning (Posthumanities)*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Varto, J. (2018). *Artistic Research: What is it? Who does it? Why?* Helsinki: Aalto University Publishing.

Wiktor, K. [Centrum Sztuki Współczesnej Zamek Ujazdowski] (2017) Dizziness is Art and Life. *Balancing Togetherness - The Conference 02/12/2017* [Video]. Website. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4prduCdKiDw. Accessed 2021, 07. 07.

Wittgenstein, L. (1969) *On Certainty*. Oxford: Oxford Press.

RELATE (Research Laboratory for Art and Technology), Aalborg University
Rendsburggade 14, 9000 Denmark

ISSN: 2246-8498