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Editorial

Somaesthetic Self-Care and the Politics of Taste and Transformation/Methodologies for Exploring Embodiment and Aesthetics

Falk Heinrich, Anne Tarvainen

Volume 9 (2023) takes the form of a double issue. Its first part is titled: "Somaesthetic Self-Care and the Politics of Taste and Transformation." The thematic focus of the second issue is "Methodologies for Exploring Embodiment and Aesthetics."

Issue 1: Somaesthetic Self-Care and the Politics of Taste and Transformation.

This issue was not the result of a special call for papers but the Journal's interest in papers that advance somaesthetic research in useful, innovative ways. The four papers collected here relate to central somaesthetic issues of self-care, self-transformation, and the sociopolitical structures and hierarchies that shape somatic experience and values. Despite their variety, they all display how somaesthetics functions as a medium, framework, and critical method of transformation.

Phengphan, Elstad & Bjorbækmo's article, 'Yoga as an Auxiliary Tool in Students' Lives: Creating and Re-creating Balance in Mindful Bodies,' begins with the recognition that student mental health is a global public health issue. This study operates on the premise that yoga constitutes a low-barrier, health-promoting activity relevant for students. Based on individual interviews with five students who participated in a 12-week yoga program and informed by phenomenology and somaesthetics, the findings reveal how practicing yoga involves learning and establishing new habits across several dimensions. The article sheds light on the broader significance of yoga as a self-care practice with the potential to promote health, well-being, and equilibrium in life.

Gao's essay, 'The Implicit Politics of Physical Beauty and of Artistic Taste in the Aesthetics of Winckelmann,' critically examines Winckelmann's celebratory analysis of the beauty of the 'Greek profile,' showing its implicit political implications regarding racial, ethnic, and social privilege. She shows how Winckelmann connects the superiority of Greek physiognomy and Greek culture while relating both these forms of superiority to factors of environmental, social, and racial privilege. Gao then examines how such implicit sociopolitical factors inform Winckelmann's theory of artistic taste and education.

Horvath's essay, 'The Clamorous Silence of the Body: On Shusterman's Somaesthetics"

examines the transformations somaesthetics has introduced in various fields of philosophy and culture by examining the impact of Shusterman's work. She takes as her main focus the topics raised in a recent anthology devoted to Shusterman's work. Those topics extend from ontology, pragmatism, and politics, to ethics, aesthetics, and the arts. Particular attention is paid to Shusterman's work in performance art with the Man in Gold, who is described as the philosopher without words, who strongly expresses his thought through action and gesture. This explains Horvath's title about the clamorous silence of the body.

The last piece of article in Issue 1 of our double issue is Shusterman's "Self-Transformation as *Trans*-formation: Rilke on Gender in the Art of Living" that discuss the idea of transcending the limits of one's given identity or current self. Among the very different ways of pursuing self-transformation, this essay explores the idea of gender transformation that seeks to transcend the conventional male/female gender binary, a transformational transcendence to something *trans*. It explores this idea through a close reading of Rilke's famous poem "Archaic Torso of Apollo" and his Letters to a Young Poet in which Rilke seems to gesture toward such transformation.

Issue 2: Methodologies for Exploring Embodiment and Aesthetics

In antiquity and the Middle Ages, philosophy was at the center of knowledge acquisition and comprised many different subject fields such as morals, mathematics, astronomy, and music. The differentiation of the sciences only accelerated in modernity, forming many different disciplines. Philosophy remained concerned with fundamental questions about the nature and values of various phenomena and concepts. Today, there is even a discussion about whether philosophy counts as science or whether it belongs to the arts. Some branches of philosophy have developed methodologies with the objective of validating their findings analogous to scientific standards. Conceptual analysis, phenomenological reduction, pragmatic methods, and experimental philosophy are very different methodologies, but all of them are trying to incorporate ways of validating their philosophical theories and their truth value. Other strands have developed methods that do not try to cater to scientific validity but prioritize common sense or intuition in an attempt to transcend existing discourses and discover new ones. Not surprisingly, the choice of the validation format characterizes not only the philosophical approach but also its subject field.

Philosophical aesthetics follows a similar pattern. Originally, Baumgarten states that "[a] esthetics (as the theory of the liberal arts, science of lower cognition, the art of beautiful thinking, and the art of analogical thought) is the science of sensory cognition" (Baumgarten, translated by Shusterman, 1999). Yet, Baumgarten's use of the term science is questionable since he perceives aesthetics as made up of analogical thoughts, which is a very different modality of knowledge than the rationality of science. Baumgarten is not proposing aesthetics as an investigation of lower cognition but as lower cognition proper, including the art of beautiful, analogical thought, which brings aesthetics close to poetics. This somehow excludes it from science proper. However,

Baumgarten asserts in § 10 that aesthetics does not exclude science; rather, they should be thought as belonging together and practiced jointly. For him, aesthetics also comprises practical exercises with the aim of sharpening the aesthetic sensibility and creating artful expressions.

Since Baumgarten's initial ideas, at least in a European context, philosophical aesthetics has solidified its place within academic research with a methodological focus on primarily analyzing cultural artifacts and expressions (mainly works of art) to base the development of aesthetics as a theory of art and, recently, also of other aesthetic artifacts such as design and everyday objects.

Only recently, aesthetics as a practical form of knowledge acquisition has been rediscovered by artistic research, claiming that aesthetic perception plays a formative role in artistic creation and realization. When defined as research, this form of knowledge generation must reflect on its methodologies and knowledge bases. This brings it closer to academic research than often wished for by proponents of artistic research.

Somaesthetics and pragmatist aesthetics form part of philosophical aesthetics. As a philosophy (Kremer), it often quite naturally applies philosophical methods such as critical and analytical reflection and contemplation, presupposing that existing knowledge is incomplete or obsolete and in need of further elucidation or a whole new theory. Yet, one of the founding ideas of somaesthetics is the inclusion of not only pragmatics but also practice. Somaesthetics' ameliorative ambition of self-fashioning cannot be accomplished as an analytical and cognitive endeavor but needs practical somatic exercises. For philosophical aesthetics, somatic exercises are not part of philosophizing proper but are rather treated as objects of analysis. One's own somatic experiences are the empirical data if collected in a structured and consistent way, but as a research activity in its own right and sometimes even only the context or background of the philosophical investigation. Somatic practices such as yoga, tai chi, and dance, on the other hand, have their own methods and methodologies.

But what about somaesthetic practice, understood as the integration of analysis and practice? Which types of methodologies can be applied to explore the aesthetic nature of embodied practices, habits, norms, and experiences? How can we examine the aesthetic realms of embodiment in detail—for example, in the arts, sports, politics, religion, health care, or everyday life? In which ways have various approaches—such as philosophical reflection, conceptual analysis, phenomenological reduction, pragmatic methods, experimental philosophy, thematic analysis, ethnography, or artistic practices—been used to address embodiment and aesthetics? What are the methodological difficulties of investigating somatic practices, especially their experiential dimensions? Is practice itself an academic methodology, and how can its experiential findings be validated academically?

Somatic practices and embodied reception are notoriously difficult to account for academically because neither physiological data nor philosophical theory can capture the experiential dimensions of embodied aesthetics. This special issue of the Journal of Somaesthetics deals with methodological aspects of investigating and applying somaesthetics, embodiment, and somatic experiences.

The issue begins with Anne Tarvainen's article "How to Apply Somaesthetics?— Practices and Methods in the Somaesthetic Approach." It proposes ways to methodically apply the analytic, pragmatic, and practical dimensions of somaesthetics by considering what defines a somaesthetic inquiry, how we could evaluate our methods, and why it is essential to articulate somaesthetic knowledge in an accessible and credible way. The article illuminates the main characteristics of

somaesthetics and outlines some possible methodological directions, especially for researchers, pedagogues, embodiment practitioners, artists, and students.

The next articles shed light on concrete somaesthetics practices. Shira Berger's "Art as 'The Third Skin': A Methodology for Exploring 'Spatial Repetition' in Trauma" explores the potential of using art-based research to analyze repetitive paintings made after trauma, to understand psychological mechanisms that stem from the body. She proposes a multi-disciplinary approach combining psychoanalysis and art to describe the concept of the "third skin" as a psychological-spatial repetitive mechanism originating in the body and striving towards healing, which provides the basis for a methodology that enables us to see repetitive artwork as a visual embodiment of repetition in trauma, as well as a lens through which to understand it.

The article "Weeping out Loud – Embodiment in the Contemporary Lament Learning Process" by researcher Elina Hytönen-Ng and artist Emilia Kallonen explores the role of somatic practices and experiences in the process of learning to lament. The authors introduce us to the ancient Karelian lamenting tradition, its manifestations in contemporary Finland, and the ways laments are taught today in workshops and lamenting circles. The article shares Hytönen-Ng's autoethnographic observations from her participation in such a circle facilitated by Kallonen. The authors emphasize the significance of somatic and somaesthetic approaches in teaching lamenting.

Jiyun Bae and her paper "How closer can methodologies approach life?: The study of 'bodily knowing' in Japan" looks at the concept of "bodily knowing" or "shintai chi" that has emerged in Japan since the 1990s in sports and exercise science, education, and cognitive science. Bodily knowing encompasses skills, movements, and knowledge rooted in the body. The paper highlights existing methodologies in bodily knowing research, including analyzing sports and movement skills, exploring aesthetics in everyday life, and self-support research by individuals with disabilities, revealing aspects that traditional scientific approaches may neglect and offering insights into constructing a potent methodology for bodily knowing research.

Ulrik Søberg's "The Somaesthetic Body and the Phenomenological Consciousness: Fundamentals for Embodied Experience as Knowledge" describes fundamental idea-historical and philosophical-anthropological connections between the body and consciousness and how they still form the basis of the concept of "man" today. Through analyses of ancient body perspectives, a Hellenistic and a philosophical Taoist, a methodical philosophical practical approach to being human is outlined that aims at a philosophical involvement of all modalities of the individual. It is a view on knowledge in which the body exists as a central somaesthetic fixation point. Søberg's analyses outline the potential for the place for the body and emotion and their role in educational philosophical practice, as more than a tool for health and learning and more than a medium for the self to express itself through but as a crucial part of the foundation of human knowledge.

The last article, "Somaesthetics and Methodology: A Dialogue," is comprised of five separate parts that together form a dialogue. The contributing authors are Falk Heinrich, Max Ryynänen, Stefano Marino, Aurosa Alison, and Elena Romagnoli. The dialogue's topic is somaesthetics and methodology, addressing questions such as: What are the relevant methods for somaesthetic inquiries and practices? What are the methodological difficulties? Which important dimensions do methods and methodologies exclude? The article consists of five pieces, each addressing questions and propositions presented by the other participating authors.

Trans-formations

Section 1

Yoga an auxiliary tool in students' lives: creating and re-creating balance in mindful bodies

Suki Phengphan, Tiril Elstad, Wenche Schrøder Bjorbækmo

Abstract: *Student mental health is a global public health issue. This study was carried out on the premise that yoga constitutes a low barrier health-promoting activity of relevance for students. Data was generated through individual interviews with five students, aged 20-27, participating in a 12-week yoga program. Informed by phenomenology and somaesthetics the findings show how practicing yoga involves learning and establishing new habits across several dimensions. The findings shed light on the broader significance of yoga as a self-care practice with the potential to promote young people's health, well-being and equilibrium in life.*

Keywords: *Students, Yoga, Phenomenology, Somaesthetics, Health*

Introduction and background

In this article we examine how university students in Norway attending a 12-week yoga[1] program (involving twice weekly sessions) experience performing yoga as part of their student life.

The article presents findings from a qualitative, interview-based study conducted within the framework of a larger Norwegian research project. The point of departure for the larger project is the view, supported by research, that a young person's transition to university coincides with a critical developmental stage: that of individuation, separation from family, development of new social connections, and increased autonomy and responsibility (Patton et al., 2016). Thus, the student years represent a critical period in life, one of rapid change and high levels of personal, financial, and social pressure (Duffy et al., 2019; Kessler et al., 2007). Brain development, accelerating in this period, is sensitive to risk, to which students are particularly exposed by virtue of their age (Chung & Hudziak, 2017). Most lifetime mental disorders have their onset before the age of 25 (Sæther, Sivertsen, & Bjerkeset, 2021), and university and college students have been found to be more vulnerable to such health problems than the general population (Nerdrum, Rustøen, & Rønnestad, 2006).

1 While there are many definitions of what yoga is and many different yoga traditions, in this article yoga is defined as a practice that consists of physical positions (asanas) based on Ashtanga Vinyasa, breathing techniques (pranayama), meditation (dhyana) and yoga philosophy. Yoga provides training for taking control of body and mind (Elstad et al., 2020).

Distress levels among university students, already rising rapidly over the past decade, increased exponentially during the Covid-19 pandemic (Sivertsen, 2021, p. 38). Students' lived experience of the pandemic, like that of people in general, has included uncertainty, a sense of endangerment, fear, misery and grief (Stanley, Zanin, Avalos, Tracy, & Town, 2021). There is general agreement that adverse symptoms of stress, depression, and anxiety, commonly referred to as distress (Viertiö et al., 2021), pose a threat to students' health (Auerbach et al., 2018), suggesting that students' health needs should be given a greater priority (Qin et al., 2021). Early intervention is seen as crucial if the adverse effects of distress, among them lower academic achievement, higher dropout rates, and enhanced risk of suicide (Eisenberg, Speer, & Hunt, 2012), are to be avoided . Of significance in this context is a tendency for mental disorders emerging during early adulthood to remain untreated for long periods of time (Kessler et al., 2007). Such lack of treatment can contribute to the development of more complex disorders (Hawton, Saunders, & O'Connor, 2012; McGorry, Purcell, Goldstone, & Amminger, 2011; Sæther et al., 2021). Therefore, investing in the mental health of young people is likely to yield both short-term and long-term health-related and economic benefits (Patton et al., 2016; Eisenberg et al., 2012).

However, research has found that young people with depression and anxiety symptoms seldom (18-34 %) seek professional help (Gulliver, Griffiths, & Christensen, 2010), even in countries where many mental health services are provided free of charge (Zachrisson, Rödje, & Mykletun, 2006). Young people are more likely to seek help from informal sources such as friends and family (Rickwood, Deane, Wilson, & Ciarrochi, 2005). Known barriers to help-seeking include fear of stigmatization, embarrassment, negative attitudes (including towards seeking professional help), difficulties recognizing symptoms, lack of emotional competence, and a preference for self-reliance (Eisenberg et al., 2012; Gulliver et al., 2010; Rickwood et al., 2005).

All of the above suggests that students in places of higher education require low-barrier activities that promote their mental health (Winzer, Lindberg, Guldbrandsson, & Sidorchuk, 2018). One such activity is yoga, which has become increasingly popular over recent decades (Elstad et al., 2020). Although research on the impact of yoga remains limited, two studies have suggested that yoga may be an effective intervention to alleviate symptoms of depression and anxiety (Elstad et al., 2020; Falsafi, 2016). This finding is in line with the results of one-to-one cognitive therapy and other mental health interventions among university students (Bailey, Hetrick, Rosenbaum, Purcell, & Parker, 2018; Cuijpers et al., 2016; de Vibe et al., 2017; Harrer et al., 2019; Winzer et al., 2018).

As part of a wider public health effort to improve student mental health, calls have been made for more research, including qualitative studies, into students' experiences of yoga (Hagen & Nayar, 2014; Jeitler et al., 2020; Taylor, Gibson, & Conley, 2019; Wang, Hagins, & Qidwai, 2017). While a number of studies have explored the experiences of yoga among pre-school, primary and secondary schoolchildren (Butzer et al., 2017; Conboy, Noggle, Frey, Kudesia, & Khalsa, 2013; Hagen & Nayar, 2014; Jeitler et al., 2020; Wang et al., 2017), little is as yet known about how university students experience practicing yoga and how these experiences might be understood to relate to health, mental health and well-being.

Qualitative research in this area is particularly thin on the ground. One qualitative study, which sought to assess the impact on university students of an MBSR (Mindfulness-based stress reduction), drew its participants from a borderline clinical population whose members self-referred to the student counselling service (Hjeltnes, Binder, Moltu, & Dundas, 2015).

Another qualitative study highlighted yoga's positive effects on physical and mental health and well-being, but only in relation to adults (Taylor et al., 2019). Further research has explored the impact of yoga on a clinical population in primary healthcare, highlighting yoga's role in deepening participants' sense of identity and capacity for self-reflection (Anderzén-Carlsson, Persson Lundholm, Köhn, & Westerdahl, 2014). Other yoga-based studies have examined further important health-related aspects of practicing of yoga. These include an exploration of yoga as an aesthetic practice (Korpelainen, 2019), and research highlighting the intimacy of the yoga mat and its space in everyday life (Lemermeyer, 2017).

To our knowledge, however, there has as yet been no qualitative study on how students *without* a mental health diagnosis experience practicing yoga. To address this gap in the literature, our study seeks to examine young university students' lived experience of practicing yoga as part of their everyday student lives.

Methodology

The main inspiration for our study is phenomenology, a philosophy and method which focuses on how things (phenomena) appear and are experienced. As a method, phenomenology implies a way of seeing, a methodological guided way of seeing (Gallagher, 2012): in the case of our research, a way of understanding students' lived experiences of practicing yoga as part of their student lives and the significance these experiences may have for their health and well-being.

Theoretical framework

We are particularly inspired by the phenomenology of Merleau-Ponty (1962/ 2002), and his view that being a situated body-subject is what constitutes our total existence, so that the body is the site of all our experiences and, knowledge.

Another source of inspiration is somaesthetics, an interdisciplinary field of inquiry that seeks to integrate the theoretical, empirical, and practical disciplines related to bodily perception, performance, and presentation. The term, coined by Richard Shusterman in 1996, derives from the concept of soma as the living, feeling, sentient, purposive body, implying the essential union of body-mind (Shusterman, 2012, p. 188). Somaesthetics recognizes the cultivation of the body through the integration of the material, mental and spiritual dimensions of human life (Shusterman, 2012, p. 189). Rather than a single theory or method, somaesthetics is an open field for "collaborative, interdisciplinary, and transcultural inquiry" (Shusterman, 2012, p. 8).

Sources of inspiration for the development of somaesthetics (Shusterman, 2012, p. 11) have included yoga, a traditional Asian somatic practice, and contemporary Western counterparts such as the Alexander Technique and the Feldenkrais method.

Shusterman (2005) contends that somaesthetics explicitly contributes to self-conscious awareness (the ability to recognize what one feels in one's own body), an insight of particular relevance to this study. As we see it, this insight into how bodily feelings and experiences are not simply silent background knowledge but also something one focuses on, listens to and applies complements and enriches Merleau-Ponty's earlier insights into the body's fundamental role in our existence. Shusterman argues that somaesthetics goes beyond the tacit level of bodily consciousness, which Merleau-Ponty regarded as primary consciousness and described as the life of unreflected consciousness (Shusterman, 2005, p. 157). Referring to Merleau-Ponty's insights regarding the habit body and the problematic fact that we can develop bad as well as good habits, Shusterman notes that the philosopher may have been less concerned with the development of bad habits, so that his theory contributes fewer insights here:

> *Lacking in Merleau-Ponty's superb advocacy of the body's philosophical importance is a robust sense of the real body as a site for practical disciplines of conscious reflection that aim at reconstructing somatic perception and performance to achieve a more rewarding experience and action* (Shusterman, 2005, p. 177)

In contrast, somaesthetics focuses explicitly on the need for, and usefulness of, conscious reflection on one's own body. This becomes a way of being able to work with oneself and one's bodily habits, towards the possibility of making beneficial changes.

Combining somatic theory with Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology, argues Shusterman, is made possible by the latter's pragmatic flavor, including its insistence that consciousness is primarily an "I can", rather than an "I think". In addition, the combination is facilitated by Merleau-Ponty's understanding of philosophy not simply as theory but also as a personal way of life (Shusterman, 2005, p. 177).

Following Shusterman's suggestion, we have attempted to combine the two approaches for the purposes of this research. In addition, we have adopted an understanding of health as explained and described by Hans Georg Gadamer: the notion that health is something which manifests itself by virtue of escaping our attention, so that the mystery of health lies in its hidden character (Gadamer, 1996). To be healthy is about being involved with the world, being together with one`s fellow human beings; it's about active and rewarding engagement with one`s everyday tasks (Gadamer, 1996 / 2004, p. 113). Health encompasses a totality in which body and mind are as one; the mind or soul is the living power of the body itself (Gadamer, 1996, p. 173).

Method

In pursuit of our goal of exploring how students experience practicing yoga, along with the significance this activity may have for their health and well-being, we opted to ground our study in hermeneutic phenomenology: the reflective study of pre-reflective experience (van Manen, 1997). According to van Manen (1997, p. 346), this means focusing not simply on *what* is said in the transcribed text (its semantic, linguistic meaning and significance) but also on *how* the text speaks: how it divines and inspires our understanding of the spoken words. In hermeneutic phenomenological studies, both these forms of meaning are of critical methodological importance.

In human science research of this type, the emphasis is on adopting a phenomenological attitude or orientation rather than on employing a specific methodology (Gallagher, 2012). The phenomenological attitude requires researchers to bracket their natural attitudes and to suspend or put aside their beliefs, judgments, opinions and theories (Gallagher, 2012, p. 43).

The yoga program the participating students attended was based on *Ashtanga Vinyasa* and consisted of *asanas* (yoga postures), *pranayama* (breathing exercises), and *dhyana* (meditation). Physical exercises were designed to promote strength, flexibility, stamina, and balance. The students were also introduced to yoga philosophy and ways to apply yoga to their everyday life (Elstad et al., 2020). This is in line with yoga classes conducted in other settings (both clinical and non-clinical), which usually include *asanas*, *pranayama*, meditation and yoga philosophy (Brems et al., 2015) in an effort to train both mind and body towards the goal of emotional balance (Hagen & Nayar, 2014).

All three authors of this article have personal experience of practicing yoga. The first author (who also conducted the interviews) is a trained yoga teacher, but played no role in shaping the yoga program at the center of our research. The second author, also a trained yoga teacher,

has been involved in designing both the yoga program and the larger research project. The last author has only limited experience of practicing yoga and has not been involved in either the design or implementation of the program.

Recruitment of participants

All participants were selected from students assigned to the intervention group within the larger project. Participants were to have no serious mental health diagnosis, no recent major life crises, and no experience of systematic yoga practice in the preceding six months. A total of 62 students met the inclusion criteria and an email was sent to them all. The first five who responded by accepting the offer were included in the study. The participants, four of whom were women, were all university or college students aged 20-27, living in the Oslo area.

The study was approved in June 2017 by the Regional Committee for Medical Research Ethics in Norway (2016/1751). Written consent was obtained from all participants prior to their inclusion in the study.

Data generation

Research data was gathered through individual interviews with five students. All interviews were conducted by the first author at the yoga intervention location over a 4-month period (October 2017- January 2018). Each interview lasted 45-60 minutes and was audio recorded with the participant's permission. An interview guide was developed, based on the following two thematic open questions: What is it like for you to do yoga? How was it for you to participate in the yoga program? The aim of these thematic questions was to facilitate a conversation where the participants felt free to share their experiences in their own words. The interviewer asked follow-up questions and made sure to keep the conversation within the study's topic.

While some participants had completed the yoga program when interviewed, others were halfway through it. Some participants had previous yoga experience, and some had started to integrate yoga into their everyday life after completing the yoga course. When talking about yoga, participants also included experiences from their lives outside the course. The data therefore includes experiences of yoga in general, experiences from the specific yoga program and episodes from participants' individual lives. All interviews were transcribed verbatim by the first author shortly after each interview.

Analysis

Our reading and analysis of interview transcripts involved the application of a phenomenological research method inspired by van Manen (2014, p. 320). Each text was read through several times by all three authors. As we read, we posed the question: What statement(s) or phrase(s) seem particularly essential or revealing about the phenomenon of practicing yoga as described by the participants? The text was then coded inductively and analyzed, guided by hermeneutic reflection to uncover meanings rather than facts (van Manen, 1997). Following van Manen (1997), this involved phenomenological reduction and reflection in respect of four lifeworld existential dimensions: lived body, lived time, lived space and lived relation.

On this basis a number of experiential themes emerged. "Theme" in this context involves a focus: that of a meaning, a point or a "punctum" in the described experiences (van Manen, 2014, p. 320). Phenomenological themes draw attention to the *eidos* of the experience; they represent possible fragments of experiences that are unique but also in a human sense shared as they may bear similarity with the experiences of others. In other words, analysis involved identifying

meaning structures (van Manen, 1990, p. 87) in participants' descriptions of their experiences with practicing yoga. This process involved reflective writing, re-writing and tightening the text to reveal the meaning of the various experiences. However, experiential descriptions are not easy to distinguish from descriptions that include opinions, views, and interpretations, suggesting that even the most evocative experiential description is unlikely to capture the fullness and subtleties of participants' actual experiences, as felt in the moment (van Manen, 2014, p. 54).

Despite the difficulties in describing lived experiences, we have sought throughout both to invoke and to explain participants' experiences of doing yoga, as expressed in their own words.

Findings

We present the themes that emerged from our analysis in the form of processed excerpts from interviews, followed by our subsequent interpretations and analysis. Processed excerpts are set in italics, while our subsequent analysis appears in plain text.

Practicing yoga is to adapt to space and atmosphere

> *When I entered the door, the atmosphere was very calm. I was forced to be quiet. Then I found it easier to get into the right mood to do yoga.*

Entering the yoga class is a step into serenity. The calm atmosphere in the room is experienced by the student as a forceful invitation to be quiet. Being required to be quiet is then experienced as helpful to getting into a mood they perceive as appropriate and in which doing yoga feels possible and good.

This reflects that we, as bodily subjects, are not only in the world but are also part of it (Merleau-Ponty, 1962/ 2002, p. 94). When we enter a room, an environment, or a situation, we are always influenced by the prevailing mood or atmosphere. We will also, without necessarily consciously thinking about it, adapt or not adapt to the situation we now inhabit. "To be a body is to be tied to a certain world," observed Merleau-Ponty (1962/ 2002, p. 171), highlighting our inter-relational, reciprocal and interconnected way of being in the world. "Our body is not primarily *in* space" but part of it.

Practicing yoga is looking for an atmosphere of presence in oneself

> *I am looking for some kind of tranquility and try to imagine my mind as a blue sky. Then there will be dark clouds in the sky. The clouds might represent a to-do list or worries such as studying for an exam, calling my boyfriend, washing the dishes and so on. My goal is to blow away all the clouds, so the sky becomes clearer. The sky should be as blue as possible when I am in yoga class. As if I am trying to breathe away the dark clouds in my head.*

The student describes yoga as about seeking to achieve a calm and peaceful existence. To do so, it is important to leave behind the problems of daily life for a while. Still, thoughts arise about things one must do. Yoga is about using one's breath, about (as the student says) 'blowing' distracting thoughts away so that existence under a blue sky is restored.

Our existence is always in the present. As bodily beings we combine, include, and belong to both time and space (Merleau-Ponty, 1962/ 2002, p. 162). But while our existence is always

in present time and space, we also belong to the future and to the past; the present holds a past and a future within its "thickness" (Merleau-Ponty, 1962/ 2002, p. 321). The present is in a broad sense the horizon of past and future, and a zone in which being and consciousness coincide (Merleau-Ponty, 1962/ 2002, p. 487).

The practice of yoga seems to involve an effort, if not to stop time, then at least to maintain the present, the "fresh" present, for a definite period. Practitioners use their breath to take control of their consciousness and flow of thoughts and thereby achieve a felt bodily tranquility.

Practicing yoga is to adopt and adapt a non-competitive attitude towards oneself

> *The most helpful benefit of yoga is realizing that it's not me against the world (...). After all, there is competition in almost everything in life, right? Clothes, hair, academic performance, relationships and how many fancy pictures you have on social media. We came here to the class and the instructor said: "There is no competition here, it is only you and your body."*

This student experiences yoga as an activity that encourages practitioners to focus on their own experience, without fear of being rated by others. As both personal and relational beings, we are in constant exchange with our surroundings. Merleau-Ponty (1962/ 2002, p. 121-122) explains that there are two views of oneself and one's body: "my body for me and my body for others". He continues:

> *"It is indeed not enough to say that the objective body belongs to the realm of 'for others', and my phenomenal body to that of 'for me', since the 'for me', and the 'for others' co-exist in one and the same world…"*

Yoga therefore can be understood to be about directing attention to oneself as a phenomenological body, rather than as an objective body for inspection and observation, not by only others but also by oneself. Our intertwined position of being personal and at the same time always in relation to our world is an embodied position of continuous shift between being directed inside-out and outside-in. We are always both subject and object, never either/or (Merleau-Ponty, 1962/ 2002).

The experience of practicing yoga can be understood as one of being invited to discipline one's directness, to focus attention on one's own subjective experience of own body and movement, and let the outside world just be for a while. Attending to oneself as a phenomenological body is to perceive one's existential and phenomenological bodily being in the world. This is what Shusterman (Shusterman, 2000, 2008, 2012) calls somaesthetic awareness. By disciplining our somaesthetic awareness, the aim is not simply to know our body and habits, but to change them (Shusterman, 2008, p. 65). Yoga can thus be understood as a practice which enables practitioners to refine or change some of their habits.

Practicing yoga is to kindly take care of oneself

> *About just a year ago I went through a really hard time. Every day when I got up in the morning, I would tell myself things like 'you are so big, you are fat' and stuff like that. But now I rarely say such mean things to myself. I may still be dissatisfied with my body, but now me and my body are friends. So, I think I got a really precious gift… a yoga course for free where my head and body became friends.*

By practicing yoga, this student experienced body and head (mind) becoming friends, no longer fighting against or devaluing each other. As social beings we always notice how we are seen by others. If we constantly turn this gaze of others (the socio-cultural gaze) towards ourselves, we risk over-objectifying ourselves. The attention we devote to being and living as the bodies we are can then fade into the background, overshadowed by an evaluating, sometimes critical gaze directed at ourselves.

When Merleau-Ponty (1962/ 2002, p. 122) points out that we are what others think of us and what our world is, he draws attention to something very significant for all humans, and especially so for those who in various ways do not comply (or are perceived as not complying) with societal norms; for example, humans whose bodies are judged fat or disabled. Here, practicing yoga becomes a way to be more friendly and accepting towards one's self. In the same way that working with the surface and appearance of the body can lead to beauty, working on turning the attention inwards towards bodily consciousness can render the body — the experiential dimension of one's body — more beautiful (Shusterman, 2012, p. 337).

Practicing yoga promotes a sense of gratitude towards one's own body

> *I remember we had a yoga class with [name of the yoga instructor] where she told us: 'feel your toes, feel the soles of your feet…' And then she said: 'thank your toes, feet and legs for carrying your body'. Then I started to think like... I have never been grateful for my toes and my legs. Never been grateful for this (...). There were many little things that I became aware of, through focusing on different body parts.*

This student describes experiences while practicing yoga that encourage realization of how little awareness one has of one's body. In our day-to-day life, our body is mostly absent from our consciousness; it passes in and out of our awareness. This lack of consciousness is an integral part of our ability to engage with the world around us, and to carry out many routine actions (Leder, 1990, p. 69). Usually, our body is only brought to our attention during moments of dysfunction or pain. This means that we take our body for granted when it is functioning as usual. Yoga, however, challenges us to pay attention to the body, a unique and important experience. Practicing yoga as described by the student seems to raise a deep bodily awareness of gratitude for being the body one is.

This sense of gratitude to one's own body might relate to yoga's propensity to encourage us to cultivate our own body, both in terms of sensory appreciation (aesthesis) and of creative self-fashioning of the body, a process that might be understood to relate to the aesthetic of the body's external representations and also to the body's perceptual inner experience: in this instance, a perceptual inner experience where cultivation of improved aesthesis means feeling better in the sense of enjoying better feelings while also perceiving what we experience more accurately (Shusterman, 2012, p. 111).

Practicing yoga is to put everyday life on hold

> *It is fantastic to have yoga in my everyday life. Having time where I can focus on being present, breathing and exercising my body. A time where I can let go of worries about my academic performance and stress. Where I can take time out to distance myself from the world for a little while.*

Practicing yoga through breathing and moving seems to allow practitioners to be present in the here and now. It functions as a shelter or sanctuary, one in which everyday worries can be placed on hold. Being present in the moment also seems to be about receiving and creating what some participants called an 'atmosphere' or mood within oneself. Atmosphere, according to Shusterman (2012, p. 234) can best be understood as an experienced, bodily felt quality of a situation emerging from and pervading the situation one is part of. The yoga room, the yoga setting with its atmosphere and distinct environment: all this taken together seems to offer participants the possibility for certain kinds of actions, behaviors or ways of being in the world (Gallagher, 2012, p. 71).

Practicing yoga is to find belongingness

> *Yoga is like a religious place where I can find my inner peace and where I belong. I think it's strange, but at the same time very pleasant, to suddenly feel that I fit into a place where I previously thought that I didn't fit in.*

This sense that practicing yoga has a religious dimension appears in tune with Johnson's (2008) description of embodied human spirituality and the human experience of transcendence. Johnson describes two forms of transcendence. In its vertical form, transcendence involves something high above one's embodied situation. This can be compared to a religious experience that elevates our existence to something beyond our bodily existence, mortality, and finitude. But transcendence can also take a horizontal direction, a spiritual transcendence "that recognizes the inescapability of human finitude and is compatible with the embodiment of meaning, mind, and personal identity" (Johnson, 2008, p. 281). For Johnson, horizontal transcendence consists of our ability to "go beyond" our present situation through transformative acts that can change both our world and us.

In line with this, Nancy (2008, p. 69) argues that being a body also means being a body of spirit. In situations where the practice of yoga resembles a religious experience, this could reflect the fact that the practitioner has made contact with their (Shusterman, 2012) own body of spirit. In doing so, they reveal an ability to transcend the present and therefore change their experience of both self and the world. Practicing yoga seems to raise the possibility of getting in touch with one's own bodily spirit and by that means achieving a new sense of belonging: both to oneself and to the world in general.

Working with getting in contact with one`s own spiritual life may even render the body more beautiful (Shusterman, 2012, p. 337). In an interview, Shusterman elaborates on the concept of beauty related to aesthetics and to the notion of "living beauty", explaining that he has chosen this notion due to its semantic richness and embrace of two distinct meanings: one that refers to beauty as lively, vivid and/or energetic and the other to the idea of living one's life as an aesthetic project and as an art of living a beautiful life (Heinrich & Marino, 2020, p. 6).

Practicing yoga is to let go – dare to let go

> *After all, I find meditation difficult (...). It becomes difficult when I have a lot of things in my head that I need to do. What should I eat? What should I do tomorrow? Then you have to put all the thoughts away, and this won't happen without effort. I really have to work with myself and my head to be present.*

As this participant notes, not letting yourself be distracted by thoughts when meditating involves hard work. Clearing one's mind of disturbing thoughts does not come easy. The focused concentration needed in meditation is described as an " alert attentiveness" that might be very tiring for beginners (Shusterman, 2012, p. 307). Breathing is always in the here and now. As a result, a focused attention on breathing during meditation may help break the habit of letting thoughts of past events and future projects distract us (Shusterman, 2012, p. 312). The 'hard work' referred to by the student can be understood to be about focusing on one's own breathing in order to control and discipline one's flood of thoughts.

Practicing yoga is to become aware of hidden emotions and habits

> *I think it's [meditation] a little scary. Just sitting there thinking or not thinking. It's hard to put aside the things I think I might do then... like sending messages to my friends. Yes, letting go of all the things I might need to do.*

This student experiences meditation as difficult and a bit scary. The scariness may derive from the strangeness of focusing on own breathing. In everyday life we rarely notice the breaths we draw. However, our way of breathing -- its rhythm and depth – can provide us with rapid and reliable evidence of our emotional state. Focusing our consciousness on our own breathing can therefore make us aware of our emotional state, of which we otherwise might have remained unaware (Shusterman, 2008, p. 20). Becoming aware of our own felt emotions could well be a bit scary. Increased bodily consciousness of our own breathing can also make us aware of our unconscious habits: for instance, holding our breath, or breathing fast.

Practicing yoga encourages body-mind harmony

> *When I do yoga, I focus on how I breathe. I do it before I go to bed... I think it's sort of a way to get the brain and the body to communicate.*

This student reflects on how breathing during the practice of yoga may help overcome what we might call a body-mind split. Practicing yoga and breathing is something the student does before falling asleep, because it seems 'a sort of way' for body and mind to communicate. This body-mind communication might be understood as body-mind harmony, a state in which the individual is freed from evaluating either their thoughts or their body. Merleau-Ponty argues that we must acknowledge the unity of the mental, physical, and spiritual as inherent in our existence:

> "*The union of soul and body is not an amalgamation between two mutually external terms, subject and object, brought about by arbitrary decree. It is enacted at every instant in the movement of existence*" (Merleau-Ponty, 1962/ 2002, p. 102).

For Merleau-Ponty, unity of body and mind is something that must at every moment be created and restored as part of our existence. The experience described by this student indicates that practicing yoga can contribute to just this.

It is interesting that the word yoga means binding together and uniting (Strauss, 2020), and that a common understanding is that yoga refers to the association of the individual self with the universal self. This reveals interesting similarities between yoga philosophy and phenomenology. Somaesthetic lack of awareness (that is to say, inadequate perception of our

somatic comportment and feelings) can lead to minor everyday problems. One example could be finding it difficult to fall asleep because of lack of awareness that one`s breathing is too shallow or one`s body too tensely held to induce a sleep-inducing state of repose (Shusterman 2012, p 101). In yoga, focusing one's attention on one's own breathing, body and bodily reactions seems to help raise awareness of one's own habits, thereby opening up the possibility of changing them.

Practicing yoga provides strength and courage

> *On social media I have unfollowed a lot of yoga ladies who typically show totally crazy poses that we never did here in class (...). I've protected myself from these fancy yoga ladies who really just made me scared and nervous about never being good enough.*

For this student, yoga as 'dis-played' and performed on social media is something unattainable, something at odds with one's perception of one's own body. The positions and movements shown are seen as out of reach and impossible to perform. To protect their own self-esteem and self-image, the student has chosen not to follow such 'yogis'. Participating in the project's yoga program seems to have given the student the strength and courage to rely on their own body, with its possibilities and limitations. As social and relational beings we engage with others, even when the other is on a screen, in ways that are linked with our embodied sensorimotor processes, and with the physical and social affordance the other presents us with (Gallagher, 2012, p.78). In other words, when we perceive something, we perceive it as actionable -- as something we too can reach and perform, or not. The action of others therefore shapes how we perceive the world and our own possibilities for action (Gallagher, 2012, p. 114). Inter-corporeity means that in-between individuals there is a reciprocal and dynamic response to the other's action in which such action can be taken as an affordance for own action and interaction (Gallagher, 2012, p. 200). Participation in the yoga program seems to have strengthened the student's determination not to strive for the unattainable.

Practicing yoga encourages the cultivation of new skills and habits

> *Now I can master yoga poses and breathing without thinking too much. Then I feel like I can just totally calm down... it feels like a pause button in life.*

For this student, yoga has made it possible to master new poses and breathing techniques without having to think about it. When something is learned, the body has understood and incorporated it into its world (Merleau-Ponty, 1962/ 2002, p. 160.161). For this participant, the learned poses and breathing have become habitual. For Merleau-Ponty, habit is "knowledge in the hands, which is forthcoming only when bodily efforts is made, and cannot be formulated in detachment from that effort" (Merleau-Ponty, 1962/ 2002, p. 166). When an action has become habitual, it has been incorporated into our own body. This capacity expresses the power we have to shape our way of being-in-the-world by learning new skills and habits. The phenomenon of habit prompts us to see that to understand is to experience the harmony between intention, performance and our bodily anchorage in the world (Merleau-Ponty, 1962/ 2002, p. 167). It is when new skills have been learned and habits cultivated that the body has understood and significant new meaning has been absorbed (Merleau-Ponty, 1962/ 2002, p. 169). Practicing yoga seems to involve learning and establishing new habits across several dimensions. This requires practice, courage, and perseverance. On the way to greater mastery, students experience yoga as difficult and a little scary, but also as a gift and a 'pause button in life'.

Discussion and final remarks – yoga and health

The findings of our inquiry touch upon some of the ways in which yoga may promote young people's health and well-being. Paying disciplined attention to body and mind through yoga movements, postures and breathing requires practice and endurance. Practitioners learn to be present in the here and now, and to kindle an appreciative attitude towards self and body. All the same, practicing yoga can also be experienced as difficult and a little scary.

These findings suggest that present-moment awareness may partly be about what Shusterman (2008) calls "reflective awareness", something that never stops at our skin since we cannot experience our body as separate from our environmental context (Shusterman, 2008, p. 215). Indeed, our findings reveal the environment in which yoga is practiced to be highly relevant to how the practice is experienced. The atmosphere that yoga teachers create and facilitate must therefore be understood as important for how the practitioner experiences doing yoga. The yoga environment itself may contribute to practitioners acquiring an attentive presence and reflective awareness of their embodied being.

Running like a thread through our findings is how participants found their practice of yoga contributing moments of felt peace in body and mind. In the context of Gadamer's (1996) description of health as a state of equilibrium, of experienced weightlessness in which different forces balance each other out, the experiences of calmness and peace the students describe can be understood as expressions of felt health. At the same time, this felt calmness — this harmony between body and mind — does not come easy; achieving it requires effort and hard work. For Shusterman (2012, p. 337), such labor can have aesthetic results: working on one's inner spiritual virtues can render the body more beautiful. Perceived health can perhaps be understood to be related to perceived beauty in the form of gratitude towards one's own body.

In disciplines of somatic education, such as yoga, exercises are deployed to treat the possible misuse of our bodies in our spontaneous and habitual way of being. The explicit bodily attention characteristic of such disciplines is geared not simply at improving our bodily knowledge but also at promoting change (Shusterman, 2005, p. 166-167). The way we, as bodies, handle life with its various challenges can lead to bad as well as good habits when it comes to taking care of ourselves and our well-being. The findings presented here suggest that yoga has the potential to support practitioners towards greater insight into their body and its possibilities and limitations: into what the body-subject can, or can almost, or cannot do. Such insight is essential for the achievement of change.

To the extent that yoga practitioners strive for change, yoga seems to have the capacity to promote good health and prevent ill health. Nowadays, exercising our bodies is generally understood as an important pathway to health. However, we may or may not find such exercise enjoyable. Shusterman highlights that health itself is enjoyed not just as a means to achieve other ends but also as an end in itself (Shusterman 2012, p. 46). Being healthy means having the ability to enjoy life. It is the rhythm of life as a permanent process of establishing and re-establishing equilibrium that constitutes health (Gadamer, 1996, p. 114). In other words, health is something we have to create and re-create throughout our lives. We can never gain full control over the rhythmic functions taking place within ourselves. Rather, health is a state of equilibrium, a process in which different forces balance each other out. If that equilibrium becomes disturbed or disrupted, its restoration requires effort and counterforces. Our findings suggest that yoga can serve as an auxiliary tool, or a counterforce, to re-create balance in our mindful bodies.

We consider our study to be a small but useful contribution to understanding yoga's potential, especially in relation to the mental health and well-being of students passing through a particularly stressful and challenging stage of life. Further qualitative research is required to explore the various dimensions of yoga practice and its possible benefits and disadvantages.

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The Implicit Politics of Physical Beauty and of Artistic Taste in the Aesthetics of Winckelmann

Aura Yanping Gao

Abstract: *This essay argues that Winckelmann's analysis of the "Greek profile," a study of what he described as a critical feature in the facial contour of good Greek statues, has its implicit political issue relating to racism, anthropology, and social hierarchy. Focusing on this artistic-political nexus, I begin with the Greek profile, then consider how the superiority of Greek physiognomy and culture introduces factors of environmental privilege and racial superiority, and finally turn to the implicit politics of Winckelmann's theory of artistic taste.*

Keywords: *Winckelmann, Greek profile, physiognomy, racism, climate theory*

Introduction

In the process of empowering German culture to rebuild its national identity during the Enlightenment period, Johann Joachim Winckelmann (1717-1768), author of the influential *Geschichte der Kunst des Altertums* and widely recognized as the father of art history and archaelogy, based his thinking on the study of Greek culture and particularly Greek plastic art. He called his people to imitate the greatness of the Greeks in order to cultivate themselves and achieve, in Germany, a greater culture than currently existed. His admiration for the Greeks as culturally preferable to other civilizations, however, had implications and consequences beyond art history and archeology. It strongly influenced the cultural theories (and resultant attitudes of cultural politics) among German philosophers, especially Hegel's, where the elements of cultural racism and Eurocentrism become far more explicit. Today, we can better appreciate some of the problematic dimensions of Winckelmann's views. For example, his analysis of what he called the "Greek profile," a study of what he described as a key feature in the facial contour of good Greek statues, relates not only to the environmental factors of climate but to physiognomic views that contributed to cultural racism, which was also encouraged by developments in European anthropology. Winckelmann's views suggest politically problematic hierarchies not only relating to the beauty ideal of the human body but also to the sociocultural conditions necessary for the proper appreciation of artistic beauty, in other words to the politics of the judgment of taste, a central concept for eighteenth-century aesthetics that still has relevance for debates today regarding the logic of aesthetic evaluation and the relative value of high versus

popular art. My paper is structured on three issues of this artistic-political nexus. I begin with the Greek profile, then consider how the superiority of Greek physiognomy and culture introduces factors of environmental privilege and racial superiority, and I ultimately turn to the politics of Winckelmann's theory of artistic taste, although implicit.

I. The Greek profile

In his *Geschichte der Kunst des Altertums* (1764) whose English translation is titled *History of the Art of Antiquity*, Winckelmann writes that the "the so-called Greek profile is the chief characteristic of high beauty. This profile consists of a nearly straight or gently concave line, which describes the forehead and nose on youthful heads, especially female ones"(Winckelmann 2006, 210).[1] The key to the Greek profile for Winckelmann mainly lies in this approximately straight line between the forehead and the nose. Although his discussion primarily focused on sculpture, Winckelmann also thinks a portrait would not be beautiful without this profile. In "Erinnerung über die Betrachtung der Werke der Kunst" (*Recalling the observation of Works of Art*), he argues: "This line is so inherent to the beauty that a face that appears beautiful when seen from the front, would lose much charm when seen from the side, when its profile deviating from the gentle line"(Winckelmann 2020,5). Winckelmann mentions in "*Gedanken über die Nachahmung der griechischen Werke in der Malerei und Bildhauerkunst*" ("Thoughts on Imitation of Greek Works and the Art of Sculpture," 1754) that the image of the Greek profile appears very often in Greek statues and coins, "The profile of the brow and nose of gods and goddesses is almost a straight line." Additionally he remarks, "From the same ideas the Romans formed their Empresses on their coins" (Winckelmann 1972,65).

According to Winckelmann, the excellence of the "Greek profile" has at least two common traits. First, the line of the profile is continuous. In "Erinnerung über die Betrachtung der Werke der Kunst," Winckelmann argues: "The form of true beauty has no abrupt or broken parts. The ancients used this as the basis for the profile of a young man; which is neither linear nor whimsical, though seldom to be met with in nature … It consists in the soft coalescence of the brow with the nose" (Winckelmann 2020,5). Winckelmann's criterion implies that one should avoid abrupt breaks in the alignment between the parts in order to maintain a continuity of line on the face. "Broken, pitted jaw and cheek lines cannot be the form of true beauty "(Winckelmann 2020,5). From this, Winckelmann argues that the Medici Venus with its more collapsed jaw could not be regarded as highly beautiful"(Winckelmann 2020, 5). (See Fig.1).

1 I use Harry Francis Mallgrave's translation, *History of Art of Antiqutiy*, in this article, but occasionally I might make some changes according to the German text which I refer to: Winckelmann, *Geschichte der Kunst des Altertums*, Text: Erste Auflage Dresden 1764, herausgegeben von Adolf H. Borbein, Thomas W. Gaethgens, Johannes Irmscher und Max Kunze (Main am Rhein: Verlag Philipp Von Zabern, 2002).

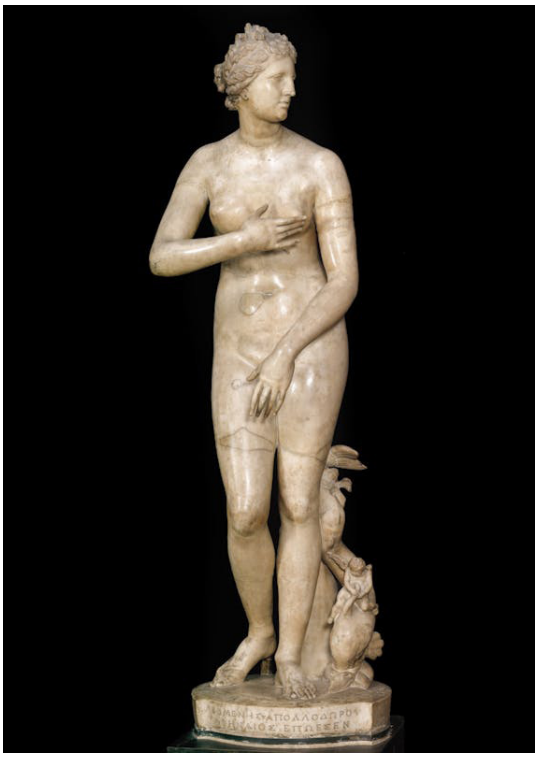

Figure 1 *Medici Venus, Late 2nd century B. C. - Early 1st century B. C., Uffizi.*

Secondly, for Winckelmann this nearly straight or gently concave profile outline never falls into thinness or sharpness, it maintains a certain degree of fullness (it is *völlige*, as the German term denotes). He writes, "On a really beautiful face, the protruding parts are 'blunt' (*stumpf*) and the protruding parts are not 'broken,' for example, the eye bone is raised in a gentle way, and the jaw forms a well-rounded arch" (Winckelmann 2020,5). The "blunt" (rather than sharp), gentle and continuous line create a quality of "fullness" in the looks of the face. In "Gedanken über die Nachahmung der griechischen Werke in der Malerei und Bildhauerkunst," Winckelmann points out that being round is different from being bulging or bloated (*uberflüssigen*). In contrast, to Winckelmann's Greek idea, he sees the images created by more modern painters (i.e. those of the Renaissance) as either failing in beauty by being excessively full (hence bulging) or being too thin, i.e. not full enough. According to Winckelmann, even the great Michelangelo could not create a portrait whose profile was properly full in roundness yet not bulging or bloated.

Among Greek statues, the formation of the Greek profile also depends on the appropriateness of the structure of the various parts of the face. This requires that the forehead should be low; the eye forms an angle that opens toward the nose. With the head pointing in this direction, the angle of the eye plunges toward the nose, and the outline of the eye terminates at the height of its curve or arch, that is, the eyeball itself is in profile (Winckelmann 2006, 210-212). Winckelmann also explains, "The more oblique the eyes, as in cats, the more this line deviates from the basic and fundamental form of the face, which is a cross, by which the face is divided equally, from the crown of the head down, lengthwise and widthwise, such that the vertical line bisects the nose, while the horizontal line passes through the eye sockets. When the eye lies obliquely, then it cuts across a line drawn horizontally through the eye's center "(Winckelmann 2006, 193-194). The nose should never be flat, for the stronger the indentation of the nose, the more it deviates from beautiful form. The lower lip is supposed to be thicker than the upper lip, and the chin is always

full and flat, so that the profile of the head acquires a continuous and full line, implying a noble and cheerful look. Thus, anything that might impair the straightness and fullness of the contours is not welcomed. For example, a flat nose would make the line between the forehead and the nose sag, while a high forehead or a small and flat chin would not contribute to the fullness of the profile.

In point of fact, however, this line does not always exist in Greek art. The profile of satyrs, the drunken woodland gods, does not have this line; the satyr has a sunken nose; and the heroic figure Hercules sometimes has prominent eye bones and thus a deep depression between them. In his *Geschichte*, Winckelmann defines the image of fauns as comic elegance, because the faun's upturned corners of the mouth and flat nose together combine to create a sunken profile. Later artists (such as Bernini and others) failed or refused to express Winckelmann's preferred Greek profile in their art, because they thought the line did not actually exist in reality, whereas Winckelmann (influenced by Platonic ideas) focused on the idealized beauty of the human form rather than the accurate representation of a particular concrete person. As we see, in Bernini's sculpture "The Ecstasy of Teresa" the contours of the faces of both angels and nuns are concave and thus are nothing like the Greek profile. Similarly, Winckelmann also observes that Italian Renaissance painters, especially from the Roman school, do not create the ideal Greek profile. In Federico Barocci's painting, some of the figures have a concave nose, while Pietro da Cortona "is known for heads with small chins, flattened underneath" (Winckelmann 2006,193).

This is not to say that Winckelmann does not recognize that there are practical reasons for shaping the contours differently than his ideal Greek profile. He notes the visual constraints of viewing sculptures presented in the open air and through distanced viewing. He mentions that the eyes of the ideal head are always set deeper than in nature and that the upper part of the eyeball appears very prominent; he justifies this not only through his belief that deep set eyes are a feature of grandeur but also because when viewed from a distance, the deep-set eyes can impress the spectator more, while also bringing light and shadow to the face, adding vigor and strength(Winckelmann 2006,211). The modern German sculptor Adolf von Hildebrand also points out that the clarity of the outline was crucial to Greek sculptures placed in the open air(Hildebrand, 1907,96)[2]

Inspired by Winckelmann's Greek art studies and nearly seventy years after the publication of Winckelmann's *Gedanken über die Nachahmung der griechischen Werke in der Malerei und Bildhauerkunst* (1754), the philosopher Hegel praised Winckelmann for having "opened up for the spirit a new organ and totally new modes of treatment" of art and culture (Hegel 1975 II. 63). Hegel interprets Winckelmann's "Greek profile" in his lectures on aesthetics and fine art and strengthens the idealism of Winckelmann's approach to the extreme. Drawing on the Dutch physiologist Petrus Camper[3], who "characterized this line more precisely as the line of beauty in the face since he finds in it the chief difference between the formation of the human face and the animal profile" (Hegel 1975 II., 728.)[4] Hegel praises the Greek profile as a symbol of human

2 Adolf von Hildebrand writes here, "The clearness required of a representation necessitates a somewhat different treatment of the work according as it is to be placed in the open air or indoors. In the open air, clearness is obtained by means of a characteristic outline, a silhouette. This is necessary whenever sculpture is to be effective at a distance, because the inner visual details gradually disappear as the figure recedes. A clear and expressive silhouette carries farther than any other characterization of an object. The Greeks made great use of silhouette in order that their sculpture might appear clear and effective at a distance."

3 For Hegel's utilization of Campus's theory, see Steven Decaroli, "The Greek Profile: Hegel's Aesthetics and the Implications of a Pseudo-Science," *The Philosophical Forum* Vol. 37. No. 2 (2006): 138-151.

4 Hegel writes here, "In general, this line does in fact provide a very significant distinction between the human and animal appearance. In animals the mouth and the nasal bone do form a more or less straight line, but the specific projection of the animal's snout which presses forward as if to get as near as possible to the consumption of food is essentially determined by its relation to the skull on which the ear is

spirituality: "(i) it is that facial formation in which the expression of the spirit puts the merely natural wholly into the background, and (ii) it is the one which most escapes fortuitousness of form without exhibiting mere regularity and banning every sort of individuality" (Hegel 1975 II.,730-731).

Hegel's description is powerfully based on Winckelmann's observation on Greek statues in his historical study of ancient art with its explanation and highlighting of the ideal of the Greek profile. However, whereas Winckelmann's preference for the Greek profile is meant to affirm the superiority of Greek aesthetics, Hegel transforms it to an ideal of beauty conveying the universal value of spirituality. Hegel argues that the upper part of the face, the forehead, is indicative of the theoretical and spiritual faculties, while the lower part of the face – the mouth and jaw – is indicative of practical activity. In Greek sculpture, the protruding forehead and deeper-set eyes make the intellectual part of the face predominate, thus suggesting "a depth and undistracted inner life, blindness to external things, and a withdrawal into the essence of individuality" (Hegel 1975 II.,734). The nose, as the feature connecting between the theoretical part and practical part, is made more akin to the forehead and therefore, by being drawn up towards the spiritual part, acquires itself a spiritual expression and character" (Hegel 1975 II.,730) . To show a certain absence of desire, the ideal lips should not protrude like an animal, such protrusions suggesting an uncontrolled desire for seizing food. Hegel cites the lips of the artist and thinker Friedrich Schiller as an example of the nobler, more spiritual shape of lips (see Fig.2), alongside the examples from Greek sculpture, and he adds that a full chin gives the impression of certain satiety and repose.[5] We can already see here how this critique of flat noses and protruding lips has politically problematic racial overtones, suggesting that Asian and African features fall short of beauty and spirituality. We will elaborate this issue in the next section of this paper.

Figure 2 *"Friedrich Schiller," by Gemalt von A. Graff, from1786 to 1791. Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons.*

placed further upward or downward, so that the line drawn to the root of the nose or to the upper jaw (where the teeth are inset) forms with the skull an acute angle, not a right angle as is the case in man."

5 Decaroli suggests Hegle's interpretation of Schiller's well-proportioned lips is based on Lavater's highly favorable estimation of facial traits. See Steven Decaroli, "The Greek Profile: Hegel's Aesthetics and the Implications of a Pseudo-Science," *The Philosophical Forum* Vol. 37. No. 2 (2006): 150.

II.

Winckelmann has an explanation for the existence of the Greek profile as an idealized beauty created by talented Greek artists. According to him, their superior, idealizing art was a product of actual Greek life. In *Gedanken*, Winckelmann claims that the idealized Greek statues are "not only nature which the votaries of the Greeks find in their work"(Winckelmann 1972, 62). The Greek profile was made "according to those ideas, exalted above the pitch of material models"(Winckelmann 1972, 65). This profile is indeed an idealized elevation but it is based on the beautiful natural contours of the Greeks. He claims it is grounded in the reality of the environment surrounding Greek artists, while asserting that this profile line is not seen in the art of other peoples in ancient times because those peoples or cultures lacked the appropriate models in reality to form this ideal. For example, the real physical appearance of Egyptians is not able or suitable for inspiring the ideal of beauty that the Greek profile expresses.

In his *Geschichte*, while celebrating the "Greek profile," Winckelmann writes that "the most readily seen proof of the Greeks' superior form…is that among them there are no flattened noses, which is the greatest disfiguration to the face" (Winckelmann 2006,120). He thus seems to denigrate or mock the appearance of Chinese, Japanese, Egyptian, Kalmyk and Moors because of their oblique eyes, flat nose, thick mouths etc. "Such eyes, therefore, when found among us, and in Chinese, Japanese and some Egyptian heads, in profile, are departures from the standard. The flattened nose of the Chinese, Kalmucks, and other distant nations, is also a deviation, for it mars the unity of the forms according to which the other parts of the body have been shaped. There is no reason why the nose should be so concave, instead of following the line of the forehead; however, if the forehead and nose were formed out of a straight bone, as in animals, such a line would contradict the variety of our nature" (Winckelmann 2006,194). He immediately goes on to critique the looks of Africans and other non-Europeans. "The thick, pouting mouth that the Moors have in common with the apes in their land is a superfluous growth and a swelling caused by the heat of their climate, just as our lips swell up from heat or from sharp, salty moisture or, in some men, with violent anger. The small eyes of the inhabitants of remote northern and eastern lands are consistent with their defective stature, which is short and small" (Winckelmann 2006,26). In his *Gedanken* Winckelmann expressed the same idea, "According to those ideas, exalted above the pitch of material models, the Greeks formed their gods and heroes: the profile of the brow and nose of gods and goddesses is almost a straight line… Perhaps this profile was as peculiar to the ancient Greeks, as flat nosed and little eyes to the Kalmyk and Chinese"(Winckelmann 1972,65). For Winckelmann, the fact that the Kalmyk and Chinese have flat noses and small and oblique eyes is something that destroys the unity of the form of the face and constitutes a deviation from the norm of beauty identified with the Greek profile.

Why were the Greeks physically suitable to provide the materials for the idealization of beauty, both in face and in figure? As a staunch supporter of anthropological climate theory, Winckelmann deems climate to be crucially influential in many human domains, inclusive not only physical matters but also language and culture. To back his point, he likes to quote the main ancient proponents of that theory: Polybius, Cicero, Hippocrates, and Lucian. In reality, he draws much of his line of argument from his contemporaries, such as Abbé Dubos's *Réflexions critiques sur la poésie et sur la peinture*, 1719) and Baron de Montesquieu's *De l'esprit des loix* (1748). Winckelmann maintains that climate affects not only the physical form of people but also their inclinations. He believed that in countries with a mild climate in the south of the Alps, such as Italy and Greece, people are graced with a more noble appearance.

In *Gedanken*, Winckelmann praised the Greeks: "The most beautiful human body of ours would perhaps be as much inferior to the most beautiful Greek one" (Winckelmann 1972,62). In Winckelmann's view, the closer one was to the Greek climate, the more beautiful, sublime, and strong were nature's human creations. In other words, the temperate climate of Greece plays a crucial role in the creation of the beauty of Greek bodies, which in turn plays a role in their ability to perceive and create idealized beauty in art. He argues that due to its geographic location "between hot and cold," Greece benefits from luxuriant vegetation, which contributes to healthy food, strong and well-developed bodies, and handsome and harmonious features. People there don't have a flattened nose, which ruins the straight line between the forehead and the nose. To quote Winckelmann directly from his *Geschichte*, "the closer that nature draws to the Greek climate, the more beautiful, lofty, and powerful in appearance are her human creations. Thus, in the most beautiful part of Italy we rarely find people with incomplete, ill-defined, or insignificant facial features, as in often the case on the other side of Alps. Rather some appear sublime, some clever, and their facial form is generally large, full and harmonious in its parts. This superior appearance is so evident that the head of the most negligible man among the common people could be sued for the most sublime historical painting; and among the women of this class, it would not be difficult to find a model for Juno in the most negligible place. In Naples, which more than any other part of Italy enjoys a mild climate, and more constant and more moderate weather because it lies very close to the latitude of mainland Greece, one can frequently find forms and appearances that could serve as models for a beautiful ideal and which in terms of facial form, and particularly the strongly defined and harmonious parts of the same, appear to be created for sculpture, as it were" (Winckelmann 2006, 119).

Whereas Baron de Montesquieu located the geographic border between North and South Europe at the Apennine mountains in Italy,[6] Winckelmann took the Alps as the geographically determining line of division. Just as Montesquieu's contrast between North and South was elaborated in terms of religion and politics, Winckelmann also highlighted the cultural distinction between South and North. However, he reversed the hierarchy of the North's superiority over the South, at least in terms of physical appearance and cultural sensibility. As mentioned above, in Winckelmann's theory, the southern European countries Italy and Greece are on the superior side, while the northern countries, including his own country Germany, are on the inferior side. Two corollaries can be drawn from this. First, Winckelmann's Hellenism could not be automatically transformed into Eurocentrism, since for him, Europe is not a unified concept. Second, Winckelmann is far from a German chauvinist. Indeed he expresses dissatisfaction and harsh criticism regarding the country where he was born, while praising other peoples and cultures. However, his glorification of Hellenism inspired others in developing a rationale for racism and the superiority of the German people.

Winckelmann's notion of the ideal Greek profile is clearly not a mere aesthetic whim or idealist fancy, but is instead grounded in principles of physical anthropology and environmental shaping. That is why some contemporary scholars, like Elisabeth Décultot, have revisited Winckelmann's writings in the project of eighteenth-century anthropological and ethnological research (Décultot 2018,69-80). The anthropological and ethnological implication in Winckelmann's work was developed by Petrus Camper (1722–1789), a Dutch surgeon, skilled anatomical illustrator, and avid numismatist. It is he, whom Hegel cited as his main scientific source for affirming the idealism of the Greek profile. But it was Winckelmann whom Petrus

6 For a very helpful clarification of Montesquieu's politics of south and north in Europe, see Roberto M. Dainotto, *Europe(in theory)*,chapter 2, Durham: Duke University Press, 2007.

Camper praises for having the observational skill to notice and describe the Greek profile, noting how he "enjoyed the opportunity of consulting the excellent observations of Winckelmann" (Camper 1794 ,4).

Drawing on Winckelmann's description of the "Greek profile," but appealing to the principles of the alleged science of phrenology, Camper developed his theory of the "facial line" or "facial angle." This is the angle measured at the intersection between a horizontal line drawn from the earlobe to the tip of the nose and an approximately vertical line from the top of the forehead to the advancing part of the upper jawbone. Adopting this system, Camper measured various species of animals including varieties of apes and humans from different races. His findings noted that the tailed monkey had a facial angle of 42° while the orangutan had an angle of 58°. As for human races, he found that the Angolan and the Kalmuck both had angles of 70° while the European had a facial angle of 80° (See Fig.3). In sculpture, due to the idealization Winckelmann suggested, the facial angle in works of Roman statuary ranged from 85° to 90°, and in Greek statuary an angle that reached 100° (Hodne 2020, 19). Echoing Winckelmann's judgements, Camper claimed that the Apollo Belvedere represented the embodiment of perfect human beauty, while the flat noses of Chinese and Kalmucks were deemed an offence against beauty.[7]

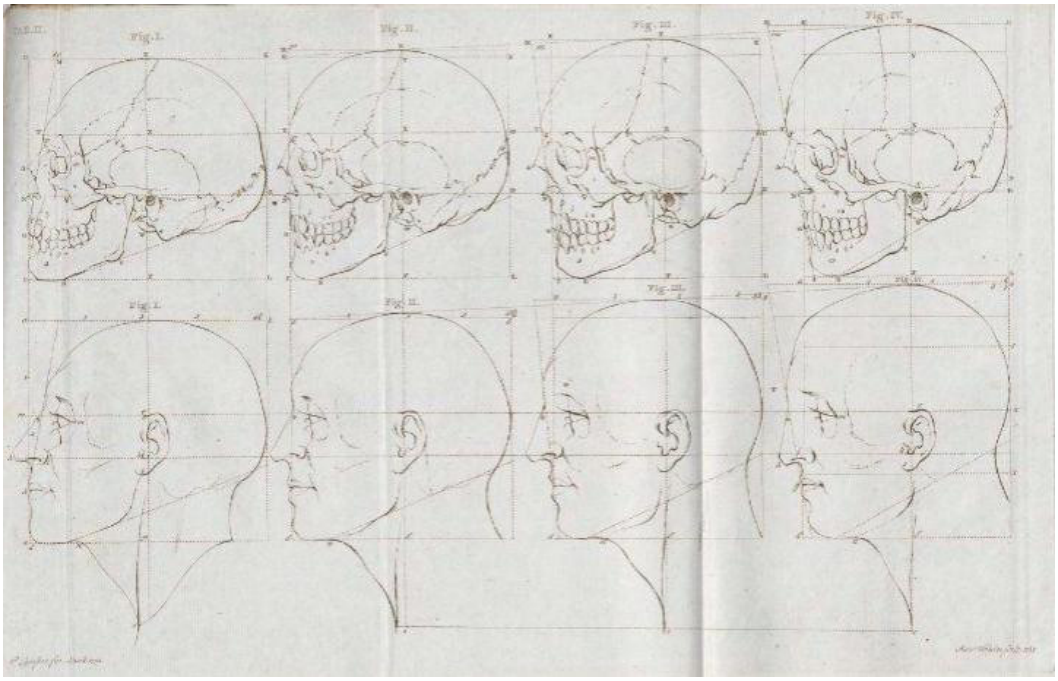

Figure 3 *Petrus Camper facial angles by son Adriaan Gilles ,1791. Koninklijke Bibliotheek, public domain.*

As Hegel claims, Camper "not only finds the chief difference between the formation of the human face and the animal profile, but also he pursues the modification of this line in the different races of mankind"(Hegel 1975 II,728). drawing from the observations of Winckelmann. It is therefore historically clear that Winckelmann's artistic study and privileging of the Greeks over African and Asian bodies and art helped inspire the science of Western racism, later developed by the scientists Josiah Nott and George Gliddon's in their well-known book *Types of Mankind*

7 For Petrus Camper 's research project especially basing on Winckelmann's work, see Lasse Hodne, "Winckelmann's Apollo and the Physiognomy of Race." *The Nordic Journal of Aesthetics* No. 59 (2020), 19-21.

(1854). As George L. Mosse confirms, the body stereotypes that emerged from Winckelmann's analyses of ancient art "have a direct bearing upon the appeal of racism, and upon its relation to nationalism …[because] racism from its origin to modern times adopted a neoclassical male aesthetic, encouraged by anthropologists who liked to contrast natives and Europeans based on their resemblances to or differences from the idealized Greeks"(Mosse 1995, 165–166).

III.

Through his theory of how human nature is shaped by climate, Winckelmann, in his aesthetics and art theory, argues for a correspondence between the presence of beautiful human bodies and superior aesthetic sensibility. The claim is that the climate not only shapes the human body but also influences its inclinations and sensitivities. Moreover, the presence of a multitude of beautiful bodies provides excellent materials for developing a discriminating taste for bodily beauty both in life and in art. Winckelmann cogently argued that through its favorable climate, Greek culture fostered athletic pursuits that developed and displayed the beautiful body and that therefore also inspired the representation of beautiful bodies in art. These factors helped develop in the Greeks an especially refined aesthetic sensibility.

Before Winckelmann, the French thinkers Montesquieu and Jean-Baptiste Dubos asserted that climate partly determines our sensibilities. Montesquieu pointed out in *The Spirit of Laws* (1748) that the temper of the mind and the passions of the heart are extremely different in different climates. "A cold air constringes the extremities of the external fibers of the body; this increases their elasticity, and favors the return of the blood from the extreme parts to the heart. It contracts those very fibers; consequently, it increases also their force. On the contrary, a warm air relaxes and lengthens the extremes of the fibers; of course, it diminishes their force and elasticity (Montesquieu 1989 ,254-255). Dubos argues in *Réflexions critiques sur la poésie et sur la peinture* (1719) that very cold weather freezes our imagination while hot weather stimulates the body as much as the spirit; hence the temperate zone of moderate weather is the best for humans in terms of developing their spirit and sensibilities. Winckelmann holds a similar view, that climates with mild weather poised between warm and cold contribute to the residents of such climates having not only a more beautiful appearance but also greater sensibility to beauty, the culture and climates of Greece and Italy exemplifying such connections. "Their imagination was not exaggerated, …and their senses, which acted through quick and sensitive nerves on a fine-woven brain, discovered instantly the various characteristics of a subject and concerned themselves chiefly with reflecting on that subject's beauty" (Winckelmann 2006, 121). In contrast, people living on the other side of the Alps, such as the Germans, are physically less attractive and have lower aesthetic sensibilities as well.

Winckelmann applies this understanding of levels of sensibility still further in his observations concerning taste in his own contemporary European society. What is particularly interesting is that he adds a sociological or sociopolitical dimension to the climatic anthropological approach (Shusterman 2019,19). He argues that the physically beautiful men of noble social rank are more likely to be sensible to the beauty of art. Winckelmann formulates this theory in his *Abhandlung von der Fähigkeit der Empfindung des Schönen in der Kunst und dem Unterrichte in derselben* ("Treatise on the Capacity for Sensitivity to the Beautiful in Art and the Method of Teaching It",1763), an essay addressed to the young baron Friedrich Reinhold von Berg, with whom Winckelmann fell in love when the nobleman visited Rome. Winckelmann takes von Berg as an example of the linking of somatic beauty and good taste. "Your physique led me to conclude the

existence of that which I desired, and I discovered in a beautiful body a soul made to be virtuous, one that is gifted with the appreciation of beauty" (Winckelmann 2013,149).

We should remember that Winckelmann was openly gay and had a number of young lovers. It is not unreasonable to connect part of his admiration for Greek bodies and Greek culture to the Greek traditions of pederasty that find expression in Platonic dialogues like the *Symposium* and the *Phaedrus*, even if Plato's Athenian finally rejects homosexual love in his later work the *Laws*. However, Winckelmann privileges youth over adults more generally in terms of aesthetic sensibility. He argues that the natural gift for perceiving the beautiful in art is stronger in young people because they have "greater sensitivity," and this superior sensitivity is the somaesthetic result of their having young bodies that are typically in better condition, more impressionable, and more vigorous than older bodies; hence they have greater capacities of perception and of feeling, which makes them "more passionate," and this, in turn, makes them more capable of appreciating beauty, which, for Winckelmann is a matter of "feeling" (*Empfindung*)(Winckelmann 2013,152).

The somaesthetic dimension of Winckelmann's artistic theories have been noted in earlier work by me and others. Despite of that, Winckelmann's theory of artistic perception and judgment relies heavily on previous discussions of taste as a mental faculty distinct from merely bodily, sensual gustatory taste. These discussions of the mental sense of taste developed in seventeenth-century Europe and eventually flourished in eighteenth-century British aesthetics, most notably in Francis Hutcheson (famous also for his theory of the moral sense) and David Hume. German aesthetics drew on this notion of taste. Kant's aesthetic theory's analysis of the beautiful, for example, focuses on "the judgment of taste," while Alexander Baumgarten, the founder of modern aesthetics and an influence on Kant, also employed the notion of taste as not limited to physical taste. Winckelmann follows Baumgarten (who was his teacher when Winckelmann was a student at Halle University) by distinguishing a mental sense of taste, and more generally a distinction between "inner" and "outer sense."

Winckelmann puts more emphasis on the inner sense. For beauty to be properly perceived, the outer and inner senses must both perform successfully. "The former must be accurate and the latter sensitive and fine" (Winckelmann 2013, 153). Describing the qualities characterizing this "finer inner sense" for beauty, Winckelmann writes, "This inner sense… must be ready, delicate, and imaginative [*fertig, zart, und bildlich*]" (Winckelmann 2013,155). As for this imaginative capacity of the inner sense, he argues that this "third characteristic of [beauty's] inner feeling… consists in a lively depiction of the Beautiful…[and] is a result of the first two and cannot exist without them. But its strength grows, as memory does, through practice" (Winckelmann 2013,155).

The idea that one's sense of beauty develops "through practice" is something that calls for attention from a sociopolitical perspective, because it involves issues of social and economic privilege in the pursuit of artistic beauty and understanding. We should note that not only did Winckelmann keenly appreciate the beauty of youth, he also greatly admired the class of nobility and tended to attribute to both a superior capacity for taste, even if this superiority is not innate. Winckelmann acknowledges that "like the poetic spirit, [the capacity for sensing beauty in art] can develop only poorly by itself, and without instruction and teaching it would remain empty and lifeless"(Winckelmann 2013,150). Although Winckelmann believes sensitivity to beauty is an innate gift, he insists that the proper development and cultivation of taste depends on education and other cultural conditions, which themselves were much conditioned by class hierarchy in eighteenth century. For cultivating fine inner feeling, Winckelmann strongly advices young

people interested in art to observe original works of art instead of copies or reproductions, because "a true and complete knowledge of the Beautiful in art cannot be gained in any other way than through contemplation of the original images themselves" (Winckelmann 2013,175). The more original works of excellence one was exposed to, the better one could practice and experience in discriminating the qualities of beauty.

However, Winckelmann also recognizes that at his point in time, such observation of numerous originals can be properly done primarily in Rome and at institutions belonging to the rich aristocracy of the nobles or of the Church (Winckelmann 2013, 157-158). Winckelmann insists that "without being in Rome," "one must be content, as many lovers have to be, with the glimpse of a sigh, that is to say, with valuing highly small things and what is mediocre(Winckelmann 2013, 158). In his letter[1763/1764] to his student Herrn von Baron Riedesel, Winckelmann mentions, whoever has already stayed in Rome for more than one year really doesn't need to ask his advice in art (Winckelmann 2020,63). More generally, he maintains that, even among nobles, it is important to dwell "in a large city" in which quality artworks are located and accessible rather than being a nobleman who is confined to the countryside. Further, Winckelmann affirms that the proper appreciation of art and the true exercise of taste require having a strong degree of economic independence. This means not only being free from worrying about how "to earn [income] sufficient for their daily bread" but "also [to] have the means, opportunity, and leisure" to access and study art in a concentrated way. Leisure, Winckelmann claims, "is especially necessary. For the contemplation of works of art is, as Pliny says, for people of leisure" (Winckelmann 2020,156). Besides all these requirements for successfully pursuing practice in appreciating the beautiful in art, a good teacher is further required to give "oral instruction." Here again the conditions of cultivation of the sense of beauty in art seems to imply class (and gender) privilege, as only boys from the nobler and wealthier strata of society could attract and afford real experts in artistic beauty for such "private teaching" and could enjoy the social power for access to the private homes and institutions where fine original artworks could be observed(Winckelmann 2020,157). We see here an elitist approach to beauty resting on while reinforcing clear sociopolitical hierarchies: aristocratic over common; urban over rural; rich (in leisure and access) over poor. Winckelmann's complacent elitist stance can be contrasted to the British art critic Jonathan Richardson, who, in *Discourses, An Argument in behalf of the Science of a Connoisseur* (1719), argued that art appreciation could be a means of promoting popular enlightenment and thus contribute to social democracy (Disselkamp and Testa 2017, 195).

Conclusion

By focusing on Johan Joachim Winckelmann, the eighteenth-century German thinker generally claimed as the father of art history and archeology, this essay has shown the intimate connections between, on the one hand, his artistic notions of representing the beauty of the human body and aesthetic theories about our differential human capacities for perceiving it, and, on the other hand, anthropological views concerning the physiognomy of bodily beauty and its relation to climate and to racial difference. These connections made by Winckelmann have problematic political dimensions suggesting European supremacy in both human form and cultural distinction. Moreover, the political injustice of this racial hierarchy is compounded by assertions of aristocratic privilege. The aesthetic ideal thus becomes the young, handsome European nobleman, even if Winckelmann began with the idealized ancient Greek profile. This European privilege, rooted in ancient Greek art, was adopted both by influential philosophers like Hegel

and influential theorists of race. The connection between quality of attractive somaesthetic appearance and the quality of sharpness or insight of aesthetic perception is surely debatable; the connection of good artistic taste with leisure and the privilege of access and education for "practice" in judging art is much more difficult to challenge.

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The Clamorous Silence of the Body: on Shusterman's Somaesthetics

Nóra Horváth

Abstract: *It has been more than twenty-five years since Shusterman introduced somaesthetics in his book Practicing Philosophy: Pragmatism and the Philosophical Life. Since then the somaesthetic field has grown with many researchers working in its diverse fields, but Shusterman's own work has also evolved in different (and sometimes surprising) ways. This essay examines some of those ways by exploring an attempt to map them.*

Keywords: *Shusterman, Somaesthetics, Pragmatism, Body, Man in Gold, Philosophy, Literature.*

It has been more than twenty-five years since Shusterman introduced somaesthetics in his book *Practicing Philosophy: Pragmatism and the Philosophical Life*. Since then the somaesthetic field has grown with many researchers working in its diverse fields, but Shusterman's own work has also evolved in different (and sometimes surprising) ways. This essay examines some of those ways by exploring an attempt to map them. A good place to start is with a recent study of his work in the Brill series Studies in Somaesthetics: *Shusterman's Somaesthetics - From Hip Hop Philosophy to Politics and Performance Art*, edited by Jerold J. Abrams. The book contains chapters by eleven internationally well-known Shusterman researchers, and it is divided into two main parts, while a third part includes an essay where Shusterman's responds to the preceding chapters' analyses of his work, followed by an interview with him by Yanping Gao that covers, among other things, the Chinese reception of somaesthetics. The philosopher, who was born in the USA, studied in Jerusalem, received his doctorate in Oxford, and currently teaches at Florida Atlantic University, has traveled the whole world in recent years to introduce the theory that defines both his philosophical thinking and his everyday life. Somaesthetics now has substantive academic support around the world. Universities, research institutes, art academies, and other art groups and organizations are connected with new projects relating to Shusterman's theories, as they have developed since the publication of *Pragmatist Aesthetics* in 1992.

It is worth reading Yanping Gao's interview with Shusterman, which was conducted online in 2020, right in the middle of the Covid epidemic. Shusterman pointed out that the resulting situation gave a completely new aspect of relevance to somaesthetics. The obligation to wear a mask and keep spatial distance forced people to transform social relationships, previously

formed habits, and communication that were routine in everyday life. On top of all that, in order for people to protect their loved ones, they needed increased awareness to recognize the symptoms of the disease. The question and answer that started the conversation highlights how much the epidemic we experienced together turned our lives upside down and what deep traces it left, even if we do not consciously analyze it every day. The interview also discusses in detail some of the philosophical contexts, inspirations, and influences on Shusterman's work that provide important background information in the various chapters. For example, the relationship between his views on affect and embodiment and those of Spinoza, Deleuze, and William James, and the evolution of his thought from literary theory to more embodied arts.

The first major part of the volume is entitled *Pragmatism and Somaesthetics*. Its authors of its six chapters thoroughly explore the inspirations and influences behind the development of somaesthetics, sometimes emphasizing the features that raise the most questions in Shusterman's readers, and other times focusing on the topics that point to the positive, integrative, and interdisciplinary characteristics of somaesthetics. The theoretical part of somaesthetics cannot be understood without examining the tradition of pragmatism, so the philosophy of Dewey and Rorty forms a basis of comparison in some of these chapters. Shusterman is a versatile thinker who, after a serious training in analytical philosophy, turned to the philosophical problems of pragmatism and contemporary art. Richard Rorty's personal example had the greatest influence on Shusterman's turn to pragmatism, while his focus on the aesthetics of contemporary aesthetics was inspired by the writings of Arthur C. Danto. Pierre Bourdieu drew Shusterman's attention to the socio-political aspects of aesthetics and invited Shusterman to Paris (when Shusterman was still identified as an analytical philosopher), thus opening Europe's intellectual doors to the nomadic philosopher. At the end of the volume, Shusterman explains why the European terrain is so important to him: the first somaesthetical workshops were connected there and the Man in Gold (who is central to six of the book's chapters) was also born there. Certain books of Shusterman that are published in Europe do not even exist in English.

After a while, the framework of contemporary analytical aesthetics proved to be too narrow for Shusterman, including Danto's because for Danto the distinction between art and reality is absolute. Shusterman himself perceived that the chapter on hip hop in *Pragmatist Aesthetics* no longer moved within the framework of analytical philosophizing. He saw more and more clearly that art and reality, as well as philosophy and the personality of the individual creating the philosophical theory, cannot be fully separated. Shusterman believes that the personal voice, questions of personal identity, and the biographical dimension should not be excluded from philosophy. His philosophy is thus also a personal wayfinding, involving critical introspection as part of one's way of life; the life task that binds the whole person, body and soul. The roots of this idea clearly go back to antiquity, when philosophy was treated as a way of life. Shusterman's goal is to overcome the institutionalized confinement of philosophy. The essence of Shusterman's theory is that for self-improvement, cultivation, and mental well-being, it is essential to deal with the soma and taking the person's physical dimension into account. He sees that in order to bring together the whole of human existence and keep it in harmony, it is necessary to work in an interdisciplinary field, and he tried to do so by developing somaesthetics. Hence somaesthetics' disciplinary relationships go beyond the humanities and extend to the biological, cognitive and health sciences, which can be valuable allies of the humanities.

This book accurately reflects the diversity that can be seen in the researches of philosophers inspired by Shusterman. By crossing the boundaries of philosophy rooted in traditional European thinking, Shusterman attracts criticisms of abandoning real philosophy though his aim is to

enrich it. The adoption of a multi-dimensional approach that includes thinking through the body contrasts with the dominant European tradition that insists exclusively on the spirit. This embodied direction, which is natural for Asian philosophy, seems to find support also in the United States because of the pragmatist tradition. John Dewey is one of Shusterman's main intellectual "supports."

In the introduction of Jerold J. Abrams and in Stefán Snævarr's chapter "Shusterman's Pragmatist Philosophy," we see the intellectual heritage that greatly influenced the development of Shusterman's theory. Snævarr presents Shusterman's well-known definitions of the soma in detail, and although he notes that "Shusterman does not situate his thinking concerning the soma within any grand metaphysical or ontological theory" he finally concludes that "Shusterman's theory about the soma is an attempt at inventing a new way of speaking about the body and the mind [...] far removed from metaphysical speculation." (Abrams, 2022, p. 25) Shusterman often receives sharp criticism from phenomenologists at conferences, because he does not follow the traditional *Körper* and *Leib* distinction. By way of comparison, Snævarr brings up the phenomenological soma concepts of Edmund Husserl and Maurice Merleau-Ponty. However, the traditions of pragmatist aesthetics (Rorty, Dewey, etc.) approach the aesthetic self from a different direction. I think Shusterman's understanding is much closer to Foucault's aesthetics of existence than to Merleau-Ponty's somatic philosophy, whose conceptual system and aims differ from a pragmatist approach.

According to Alexander Kremer's "From Pragmatism to Somaesthetics," Shusterman's works not only changed the approach to aesthetics, but also gave philosophy a wider interpretation. Like Snævarr, Kremer frames Shusterman's theory by clarifying what characterizes pragmatist philosophy and who are the representatives of neopragmatism. According to one possible grouping, we can distinguish three main groups within contemporary pragmatism, writes Kremer, the "neoclassical pragmatists (e.g., Larry Hickman, Susan Haack, John McDermott, John Ryder, Jacquelin Kegley, Kenneth Stickers, and James Campbell)," who are characterized by combining naturalism and scientific methods and consider themselves the truest followers of classical American pragmatism, the analytic pragmatists (e.g. Robert Brandom, Huw Price, Donald Davidson, Hilary Putnam, and the early Rorty) who see the future of philosophy in a combination of pragmatist and analytic philosophy, and the postanalytic pragmatists (e.g. the later Rorty, Daniel Dennett and Richard Shusterman) who are seriously monitoring the development of 20th century continental philosophy. Although most people think of Dewey, Rorty and Shusterman when they mention pragmatist aesthetics, Kremer points out that Dewey never used the notion of pragmatist aesthetics. Regardless, Dewey's critique of the museum conception of art can also be interpreted as an antecedent of somatic aesthetics. In 1934, in his theory explained in *Art as Experience*, Dewey already stated that real life and art do not necessarily have to be separated, we just do it out of an academic, institutional habit, because for centuries, people have placed different works of art in museums from their own cultural context.

According to Kremer's conclusion, Shusterman's "general theoretical standpoint" is also "philosophical aestheticism," the necessary prerequisite of which is continuous self- and world understanding, and thus experience is its central concept. Kremer asks the question in the third part of his study: "Why can we say that Shusterman's somaesthetics is a philosophy?" Although some of us have already come to this conclusion based on the first part of his paper (taking into account the importance of the body and understanding - which of course is primarily realized through experience and thinking through the body), Kremer summarizes his argument in five points. However, the arguments do not primarily prove why somaesthetics is a philosophy,

but rather what are the most defining points of Shusterman's theory, which, in addition to explaining the close connection to pragmatism, highlight innovations, new approaches, and at the same time anticipate Shusterman's openness to Asian philosophies, which fit perfectly with his philosophy that emphasizes the soma. I think that the fact first mentioned by Kremer, according to which "Shusterman's approach is not a substance-oriented but a process- and practice-oriented approach," is important from this point of view. This could also be an answer to Snævarr's questions, who misses the ontological foundation in Shusterman's theory. Kremer accepts as a principle that "Shusterman is not interested in the substance of the world, but instead he views the world as a conglomerate of ever-changing processes and relations." (Abrams, 2022, p. 53) This allows Shusterman a natural connection to life practices based on Buddhism. But the concept of philosophy as a way of life dominates the entirety of Western ancient philosophy. This is precisely what Michel Foucault pointed out in *The History of Sexuality*, so it can be considered Shusterman's merit that he brought back and strengthened those elements of the philosophical tradition that represent the importance and naturalness of aesthetic existence. Shusterman himself states this in the article "What Pragmatism Means to Me" quoted by Kremer, according to which "Pragmatism provides support for the idea that philosophy should engage not only with concepts, but also in practice. This has encouraged my efforts to revive the ancient idea of philosophy as an embodied way of life." (Abrams, 2022, p. 53-54).

The book's third chapter is by Polish professor Leszek Koczanowicz, author of several books on politics and pragmatism. Pragmatists are mainly committed to philosophical investigations on politics because people have to create a democratic milieu first and after that we can speak about the possibilities of freedom and responsibility. Without the foundations of a well-functioning democracy the questions of private and public affairs would be useless. Koczanowicz in his paper focus on the relations of power and the body, on how certain movements can embody the idea of emancipation and resistance against the oppression of the state, the establishment or any other oppressive system. One of the main questions is why the autocratic systems are afraid of spiritual messages in relation to well-being and ameliorative practices. According to Koczanowicz it is really important to examine these questions from the point of view of contemporary social sciences and humanities, because it is a huge problem that "an adequate concept of the body is lacking, which would combine its social character with the appreciation of its emancipatory potential" (Abrams, 2022, p. 63-64). To address the question of how politics deals with everyday life, Koczanowich analyzes Henri Lefebvre's *Critique of Everyday Life* in the light of Bourdieu and Boltanski's works. In Koczanowicz's argument, the concept of everyday life is important because it is the only way to understand the concept of emancipation, which in this context is not only "a certain general movement toward a greater freedom and/or equality, but also a set of everyday life activities that enable people to obtain more autonomy in their actual social relations" (Abrams, 2022, p. 66). Introducing somaesthetics into the political field can reveal "how the body could be both a vehicle of emancipation and a site of resistance against the oppressive regime." Building on the theory of somaesthetics, Koczanowicz proposes the concept of somapower as a political alternative to Foucault's biopower. Somapower "vitally affirms that while the body is shaped by social relations of power, it can also shape these relations" (Abrams, 2022, p. 71).

Max Ryynänen's "Living Beauty, Rethinking Rap: Revisiting Shusterman's Philosophy of Hip Hop" returns to Shusterman's most famous book, *Pragmatist Aesthetics*, which marked the greatest breakthrough in 20th-century aesthetics for the concept of popular art. Ryynänen knows the history of rap well, and while presenting it, he immediately theorizes the possible

place of rap in art theory. Analyzing Shusterman's early writings on rap, Ryynänen argues that "if rap music expressed postmodernism, then postmodernism (as a philosophy) would also help to illuminate various dimensions of rap music, as aesthetically challenging, intellectually penetrating, and socially critical." (Abrams, 2022, p. 81) Since rap is the defining musical trend of the 20th and 21st century, it is necessary for art theory to be able to theorize and examine the social conditions that shape the development of different artistic trends. It is important to work in an interdisciplinary field, because the broad background context of a work of art is essential for understanding the work. Shusterman, reflecting on Ryynänen's chapter at the end of the volume, notes the relationship between somaesthetics and rap: "As pragmatist aesthetics and the philosophical art of living were the two prime themes that led me to somaesthetics and that were central to my study of rap, it is not surprising that some early interpreters of my somaesthetic project (including the always insightful Martin Jay) took rap as its paradigm. Even if my study of Western somatic therapies and Asian somatic disciplines were equally inspirational and perhaps ultimately more formative for my studies of body consciousness, rap was surely decisive for my appreciation of the political import and transgressive joy of somaesthetic experience" (Abrams, 2022, p. 249).

In his article "Somaesthetics and Pathic Aesthetics," Tonino Griffero sends his own philosophical perspective, "pathic-atmospherological aesthetics" into battle for the critical examination of somaesthetics. While somaesthetics finds its roots in pragmatism, pathic aesthetics finds its roots in phenomenology. According to Griffero "Pathic aesthetic experience is an in-between space experienced by the felt – or lived body (*Leib*), and one not reducible to any physiological or anatomical dimension of experience." For me, the in-between space symbolizes transversality, which has its antecedents in European philosophy (e.g. Deleuze) as well as in Asian thought, e.g. in the aesthetic interpretations related to Japanese *butoh*, which I have discusses at several somaesthetic conferences. The experience of transversality is possible for both the artist and the receiver, and the experience of a special state of mind experienced as a result of the work clearly has physiological consequences. Of course, aesthetic experience cannot be reduced to purely physiological effects, but it has some of them. The ameliorative care of the self-practice of somaesthetics is sharply opposed by Griffero's theory of "wise passiveness," which does not consider it necessary to develop somatic skills. Separation of passivity and activity at this level does not stand the test of philosophical debate, since we have known since Aristotle that thinking is also activity, but to quote Shusterman's apt conclusion: "Living is an activity that essentially involves breathing and other somatic actions, even what we call passive perceiving involve action. Simply to see our surroundings, we must open and focus our eyes. In order to taste, even as passively as possible and even if someone is kind enough to feed us like a baby, we need to open our mouths" (Abrams, 2022, p. 251).

It was a smart decision on the part of the editors to place Dorota Koczanowicz's "Eating as an Activity: Somaesthetics and Food Studies" after Griffero's study. The author, who has been publishing in the field of "food studies" for a long time, has truly advanced somaesthetic theory in its connection with food. Koczanowicz points out that in Shusterman's article "Somaesthetics and the Fine Art of Eating" (published in 2016) extended somaesthetics to the art of food and eating. It has been known since ancient times that well-chosen food can have a healing effect, the "disciplinary history of food studies" is quite short (Abrams, 2022, p. 106). According to Koczanowicz, "the first book to ask explicitly whether food is art was Elisabeth Telfer's 1996 *Food for Thought: Philosophy and Food*" that applied familiar philosophical notions to new fields of inquiry (Abrams, 2022, p. 113). If the main question of somaesthetics is "How to make life

better?," then it is really essential to examine nutrition as an activity that most influences our health and well-being. The "act of eating" is of course not the same as the art of eating, this is also evident for Shusterman, who writes in his reflection that "gastronomical meliorism is also an issue of cultural politics: to raise the status of our eating experience to the legitimacy and quality of aesthetic experience, so that the mere *act* of eating becomes an *art* of eating imbued with cultural meaning, and affording shared social pleasures" (Abrams, 2022, p. 25).

The second part of *Shusterman's Somaesthetics* is a tribute to the Man in Gold and at the same time a critical examination of its diverse meanings. The six chapters examining *The Adventures of the Man in Gold* and Shusterman's reflections on this second part at the end of the book provide a fantastically detailed and comprehensive picture of Shusterman's Man in Gold project that he conducts with the Parisian artist Yann Toma. The description of the technical details of the work is dwarfed by the exploration of the deep human feelings that characterize the birth and adventures of the Man in Gold, "the philosopher without words." Shusterman formulates the key question of the identity of the Man in Gold. "On one interpretation, the Man in Gold is the transubstantiation of the philosopher Richard Shusterman, enjoying a different ontological identity than the philosopher. But what is that ontological status? Is the Man in Gold an artwork and would this constitute an ontological elevation that makes him superior to the philosopher? Or, instead, is the Man in Gold, as the imaginative creation of two people (Shusterman and Yann Toma), only a fictional entity with no real substantive identity, only a borrowed existence in the performances of Shusterman and the photographs, films, and texts relating to those performances. I cannot resolve these questions here; perhaps they are ultimately unresolvable and or not worth resolving." The six chapters on the Man in Gold focus less on ontology and identity but more usefully on issues of transformation, otherness, the transfigurational media of photography and film, prejudice, and projection, the power of love and the pain and trauma of its loss.

Part of book's strength is that the authors of the studies have known Shusterman personally for many years, they can see his entire *œuvre* and, accordingly, are able to interpret certain details in depth. Abrams (after Shusterman) analyzes the Man in Gold as a strange hybrid of philosophy and photography, and then parallels it with Chris Johnson, "from Philip K. Dick's science fiction novella, *The Golden Man*" (Abrams, 2022, p. 138). The second part of Abrams' study is an examination of the possible relationship systems of the two figures, who can be connected to each other through photography. Yvonne Bezrucka ("Shusterman as Philosopher and the Man in Gold") examines the provocative stimulus that the appearance of the Man in Gold evokes in people, and thus immediately analyzes the confusing difficulties of accepting otherness somaesthetically. Yang Lu's study ("On Shusterman's Somaesthetic Practice: The Case of the Man in Gold") merges beautifully with Yanping Gao's interview, providing a valuable interpretation of the Chinese reception of *The Man in Gold*.

Diane Richard-Allerdyce's Lacanian investigation ("An Exquisitely Beautiful Longing: A Lacanian Reading of *The Adventures of the Man in Gold*") gives a new perspective to the atypical beauty of Shusterman's creature. Richard-Allerdyce's analyzes the contradictions of Shusterman's creature along the lines of the most important Lacanian concepts (the Real, The Symbolic, the Imaginary, and the Mirror Stage). The use of Lacan's concepts is particularly relevant in this context. Based on Lacan's famous mirror stage theory, it is a misunderstanding of identification if we think that with the "I" the subject discovers its own reality. Actually, it is identification with an image. The mirror stage, during which an imaginary self-image is born, determines all our lives. Infants discover their own reflection in a mirror between the age of six and eighteen

months. This image is of crucial significance in the developing of self-awareness. The birth of an ideal-I is transmitted by the imago (mirror image); however, in this way the basis of our self-consciousness will always be an image with which we will never completely identical. Therefore, Lacan thinks that the misjudging of ourselves is decisive instead of getting to know ourselves. It is only an identification with a desired thing.

Shusterman rightly describes Else Marie Bukdahl's chapter ("The Golden Turn in Shusterman's Somaesthetics: The Magical Figure of the Man in Gold," written with testimony of the artist Benthe Norheim) as "special because its authors actually witnessed the Man in Gold and sheltered him with sympathy and love" (Abrams, 2022, p. 256). Bukdahl's study, enriched with color photos, really guides the reader through the phases of the birth of the Man in Gold. It presents the exhibitions, artistic programs and meetings that owe their birth exclusively to the Man in Gold. We can get to know the artists who were most emotionally connected to this project. Bukdahl chose the perfect motto for the chapter from Paul Klee: "Art does not reproduce the visible; it makes visible" (Abrams, 2022, p. 177). The sentence that Deleuze analyzed a lot is also strong in this context, because the Man in Gold project brought to the surface countless things (emotions, memories, positive and negative relationships) that would have remained hidden forever without it, not only to his readers but primarily to the philosopher Shusterman.

Abrams's edited collection on Shusterman's somaesthetics is like a journey in which rational planning progresses while evoking emotional memories. It brings the reader much closer to somaesthetics and its multiple possibilities of interpretation and application. The entire book, not least through the golden image of the philosopher without words, demonstrates that soundless screams cannot go unnoticed and the clamorous silence of the body can be a reality. This essay did not examine Shusterman's oeuvre in chronological order but explored it through critical analysis of its themes as interpreted by experts on various aspects of his work. Particular attention was directed to his work with the Man in Gold. Although many people even within the philosophy profession thought Shusterman was crazy for implementing his Man in Gold project, in the light of criticism and recent years, we can say that it has become a decisive, convincing examplification of Shusterman's theory as an embodied philosophy that finds expression also through clamorous silence.

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Self-Transformation as *Trans*-formation: Rilke on Gender in the Art of Living

Richard Shusterman

Abstract: *Central to the projects of somaesthetics and philosophy as an art of living is the idea of self-transformation by transcending the limits of one's given identity or current self. Among the very different ways of pursuing self-transformation, this essay explores the idea of gender transformation that seeks to transcend the conventional male/female gender binary, a transformational transcendence to something trans. We explore this idea through a close reading of Rilke's famous poem "Archaic Torso of Apollo" and his* Letters to a Young Poet *in which Rilke seems to gesture toward such transformation.*

Keywords: *: Rilke, art of living, gender, sculpture, self-transformation, sex, somaesthetics, transgender.*

I.

The famous Rilke sonnet "Archaic Torso of Apollo," which opens his 1908 book of *New Poems: The Other Part*, concludes dramatically with the imperative "You must change your life."[1] This strikingly blunt demand for self-transformation powerfully implies the task of self-cultivation and related notions of self-examination and *askesis* that are central to the idea of philosophy as an art of living. It is therefore not surprising that philosophers cite the poem in exploring the idea of philosophy as a way of life. Peter Sloterdijk takes the poem's final line as the title of his 2009 book, published in English in 2013 as *You Must Change Your Life: On Anthropotechnics*.[2] The book describes how contemporary Western culture has embraced the ancient Greek idea of self-cultivation and developed it into a model of rigorous, disciplined practice, which he calls "the practicing life" (Sloterdijk, 2013, pp. 4, 11, 13, 14), and its first chapter appropriately begins with Rilke's sonnet.

There are significant affinities between Sloterdijk's idea of anthropotechnics and the project of somaesthetics that I have been elaborating since the late 1990s in connection with my views

1 The poem's German title is "Archaïscher Torso Apollos" (Rilke 1976, p.83). I should note that Rilke also has a less famous Apollo poem, "Früher Apollo," based on a different statue that depicts the head of a youth.

2 The Viennese-born philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein, without mentioning Rilke (probably because the connection was obvious), echoes the famous command in his notebooks, writing "Du mußt dann dein Leben verändern" (Wittgenstein 1980, p. 27).

on pragmatism and philosophy as an art of living, which have been published in a variety of texts, including my German books, *Vor der Interpretation* (1996), *Philosophie als Lebenspraxis* (2001), and *Leibliche Erfahrung in Kunst und Lebenstil* (2009). Although the affinities and differences between my somaesthetics and Sloterdijk's anthropotechnics are worth exploring, I shall not pursue them here. Instead, I focus on Rilke's famous Apollo poem along with some of his letters in order to elaborate a distinctive, somewhat unconventional way of understanding transformative self-cultivation in the philosophical art of living: an option that highlights the relevance of gender transformation. I should begin, however, by presenting both the sonnet (in its original German) and an image of the sculpture it describes, because its original language and inspiring artwork are key in interpreting it, especially since the poem's English translations vary widely and are deficient in different ways.

"Archaïscher Torso Apollos"

Wir kannten nicht sein unerhörtes Haupt,
darin die Augenäpfel reiften. Aber
sein Torso glüht noch wie ein Kandelaber,
in dem sein Schauen, nur zurückgeschraubt,

sich hält und glänzt. Sonst könnte nicht der Bug
der Brust dich blenden, und im leisen Drehen
der Lenden könnte nicht ein Lächeln gehen
zu jener Mitte, die die Zeugung trug.

Sonst stünde dieser Stein entstellt und kurz
unter der Schultern durchsichtigem Sturz
und flimmerte nicht so wie Raubtierfelle

und bräche nicht aus allen seinen Rändern
aus wie ein Stern: denn da ist keine Stelle,
die dich nicht sieht. Du mußt dein Leben ändern.

Figure 1 *Marble torso from Miletus, Musée du Louvre, Paris*

"Archaic Torso of Apollo"

We never knew his head and all the light
that ripened in his fabled eyes. But
his torso still glows like a gas lamp dimmed
in which his gaze, lit long ago,

holds fast and shines. Otherwise the surge
of the breast could not blind you, nor a smile
run through the slight twist of the loins
toward that centre where procreation thrived.

Otherwise this stone would stand deformed and curt
under the shoulders' transparent plunge
and not glisten just like wild beasts' fur

and not burst forth from all its contours
like a star: for there is no place
that does not see you. You must change your life.[3]

3 Translation by Edward Snow (see Rilke, 2010).

II.

The basic meaning of this sonnet (one of Rilke's famous *Dingedichte* or "object poems") is unquestionably clear and direct. The poet finds that this sculptural form, despite being an eyeless, headless, limbless, lifeless stone, exudes a strange artistic perfection that makes the poet feel he is being scrutinized by that object and judged somehow deficient in regard to it, so that he must change his life. The demand for self-transformation is the strict, peremptory, and urgent "*mussen*" rather than the weaker obligation of "*sollen*." The poem presents art as having the power to *demand* that one change one's life, while also implying that art might provide a model for such change by providing a model of beauty in which even broken fragments (like the headless, limbless torso) can express perfection. Rilke's sonnet therefore fits nicely into what I've advocated as the aesthetic model of philosophical life. This aesthetic version is in contrast (though not in conflict) with the therapeutic vision of philosophical life by offering a positive model of attractive, virtuous flourishing rather than mere healing of ills or diminishing negativities.[4] We know that Rilke indeed viewed his life in artistic terms; he was "a poet who contrived an existence exclusively dedicated to his art, who made indeed a work of his life," trying by extensive efforts of "self-stylization" to create a unity of artistic work and life (Prater, 1986, p. ix, 16). Rejecting the notion "that art is just something for leisure hours after coming home from the office or whatever," Rilke insisted in a letter "that he who does not devote himself to art with all his desires and everything in him… is simply not an artist" (Prater, 1986, p. 34).

Beyond the sonnet's basic message of self-transformation, however, the question arises as to what direction such self-transformation should take. What kind of attractive metamorphosis does the poem suggest? Sloterdijk reads its paean to the sculpted torso of the god Apollo as recommending a transformative self-cultivation toward the muscular beauty of divine, athletic masculinity. "The somatic, or, more precisely, the auto-erotic and masculine-athletic, impressions of the sculpture … must have provoked in the poet (who, in the language of his time, was a neurasthenic and a weak-bodied introvert) an empathetic experience of the antipodal mode of being that is native to strong 'body people'" (Sloterdijk, 2013, p. 26). Rilke, according to Sloterdijk, simply draws on "the immeasurably rich statue culture of the ancient Greeks… [with its] dominant system of physical and mental kinship between gods and athletes in which resemblance could reach the level of identity" (Sloterdijk, 2013, p. 26). Because "the sportsman… was always also a god of sorts," Sloterdijk construes Rilke's poem as the recognition of a divine injunction expressed by the exemplary aura of the sculpted stone toward masculine athleticism. "The authoritative body of the god-athlete has an immediate effect on the viewer through its exemplarity. It too says concisely: 'You must change your life!', and in so doing simultaneously shows what model this change should follow" (Sloterdijk, 2013, p. 26).

I believe that Sloterdijk is wrong to read Rilke (in this poem and elsewhere) as affirming a model of hypermasculinity, characteristic of "the sport cult phenomenon that appeared after 1900" (Sloterdijk, 2013, p. 29). Such a narrow, conventional reading limits the distinctive scope, polysemy, and power of the poem. Of course, this conventional reading can draw on the fact that Rilke's early years were troubled by feelings of athletic inadequacy and issues regarding manliness. We learn from Rilke himself that "until [he] went to school," his mother "dressed [him] as a girl" and treated him "as a big doll" (Prater, 1986, p. 5). At the military school he attended, he was very unhappy and was remembered as being "like a girl in uniform" and "below par" in athletics (Prater, 1986, p. 8–9). However, by the time he wrote the Apollo poem,

4 See Shusterman 1997, 2023, 2024.

those childhood issues were long over, as he gained assurance through his literary success while affirming his masculinity through women lovers, marriage, and fathering a child.

In reading the poem as urging transformation toward more athletic manliness, Sloterdijk connects its message to "the athletic and somatic renaissance" that Nietzsche introduced through his critique of Christianity's anti-somatic bias (Sloterdijk, 2013, p. 38). Connecting Nietzsche and Rilke is certainly apt, as both advocated the importance of self-stylization in the art of living. Moreover, both had been deeply in love with Lou Andreas-Salome, the captivatingly attractive and daringly progressive Russian-born intellectual. Sixteen years older than the 21-year-old Rilke when they met, she remained a cherished confidant and powerful influence throughout his life. If she first caused him to change his first name from "René" to the more masculine-sounding "Rainer," she also convinced him of the exceptional, creative power embodied in the female.[5] Recognition of this power suggests the creative ideal of a new gender identity that transcends the limits of the traditional binary male and female identities perhaps by mixing the best of both in a trans synthesis. We can see hints of such a synthesis in the Apollo poem if we look carefully at its language and the sculptural form that inspired it.

We should not be put off by the use of "his" throughout the poem's English translation, not only because that pronoun is often used by trans individuals but also because the German "*sein*" which it translates is also used as the neuter possessive pronoun. Moreover "*sein*" also serves as the possessive pronoun for *der Stein* (the stone) whose sculptural form is the focus of the poem and whose grammatical gender is masculine. We thus should not read "his" here as simply referring to Apollo but rather more directly to the sculpted stone torso that is assumed to represent that of the god. We should next note the description of the torso in the second quatrain: the blinding surge or curve of the protruding breast "*der Bug der Brust*" (*Bug* is a term for the protruding, curving bow of a boat or nose of an airplane). The hint of surging feminine curves of the breast is followed by its gentle or soft turn of the loins (*leisen Drehen der Lenden*) that leads "toward that centre where procreation thrived" (*zu jener Mitte, die die Zeugung trug*). This bodily middle that carries procreation (*trug* is the past tense of *tragen*, which means to carry or bear) is more suggestive of the female body than the male, of her inner reproductive organs rather than the external male phallus and scrotum. And when we look at the torso, we find no phallus or scrotum, only a slightly protruding pubic triangle suggestive of the *mons pubis*, which is typically more prominent in females than males. In short, the description of the torso has distinct suggestions of androgyny or transgender character. Hence, the exemplarity of the torso and its authoritative injunction to change one's life suggests not the conventional model of macho, muscular masculinity but rather provides an exemplar that combines, blends, or blurs masculine and feminine qualities to suggest an androgynous or transgender ideal.[6]

The suggestion that such an ideal can be perceived through and inspired by the sculptured form of Apollo is not a radically new invention of Rilke. It has an influential precedent in Johan Winckelmann's famous account of the Belvedere Apollo, which Winckelmann celebrates as "the highest ideal of art among all the works of antiquity that have escaped…destruction" and that is "formed …completely according to the ideal,… [taking] from the material world only as much

5 See Andreas-Salome, 2017, first published in German in 1910, thus several years after Rilke wrote his *Letters*, though she may have long held these views and shared them with Rilke. If she claims that through motherhood and its power of passive creativity, "the woman [is] high above … [the man regarding a] value that is essential for life," she also insists that ultimately the two genders present a "unity in the form of duality" that serves creativity. She concludes that this "is why we so readily observe the relative frequency of bisexuality in artists, as, more generally, in any manifestation of genius" (pp. 40, 42).

6 I should note that I do not identify the concepts of androgynous and transgender, which often differ widely in usage. I connect these notions here because both share a core resistance to the traditional gender binaries.

as was necessary" for the artist to "make [this ideal] visible" (Winckelmann, 2006, p. 333).[7] Befitting Winckelmann's notion of ideal beauty as an idealized synthesis of beautiful features found in natural human bodies, Apollo is a blend not only of youthful and mature good looks but also of both male and female splendor. "An eternal springtime, like that of the blissful Elysian Fields, clothes the alluring virility of mature years with a pleasing youth and plays with soft tenderness upon the lofty structure of his limbs" (Winckelmann, 2006, p. 333). Comparing the sculptured Apollo to the paradigm first woman, Winckelmann notes how the many "individual beauties of the other gods are here mingled together, as they were in Pandora. A brow of Jupiter, gravid with the goddess of wisdom, and eyebrows whose motions declare his will; eyes of the queen of the gods, arched with grandeur, and a mouth whose shape infused desire in the beloved Branchos," while "soft hair plays about this divine head like the tender, waving tendrils of the noble grapevine stirred, as it were, by a gentle breeze" (Winckelmann, 2006, p. 334).[8]

Winckelmann's Apollo experience also anticipates Rilke's in noting how the vision of this statue exerts an authoritative power demanding self-transformation. Winckelmann expresses this in strongly somatic terms of inspiring uplift. "In gazing upon this masterpiece of art, I forget all else, and I myself adopt an elevated stance, in order to be worthy of gazing at it. My chest seems to expand with veneration and to heave like those I have seen swollen as if by the spirit of prophecy" (Winckelmann, 2006, p. 334). Here again we find a divine model inspiring meliorative metamorphosis toward an ideal beyond the divisive gender binary of male and female. This is not surprising, not only because the Greek gods were masters of transformative metamorphosis, performing it on themselves and on others, but also because Greek culture displayed a plurality of gender identities and sexual relations.[9]

Although heroism is a common topos for the philosophical life (whether one's heroic model is Socrates, Diogenes the Cynic, Augustine the saint, or Nietzsche the rebel), Rilke's famous Apollo sonnet is richer in meaning and originality when we read it not as recommending meliorative self-transformation to heroic masculinity but instead as suggesting a very different ideal of personhood that is nonetheless heroic in challenging deeply held prejudices and norms. The injunction to change one's life here means pursuing a new identity that transcends the rigid, restrictive polarities of male and female; it urges a self-transformation that might be described as a *trans*-formation. This reading finds confirmation in Rilke's prose writings, particularly in his *Letters to a Young Poet*, where he expounds key ideas that are central to the traditional project of the philosophical life as meliorative self-knowledge and self-cultivation.[10] Before addressing the trans issue (a distinctively radical aspect of Rilke's vision of self-cultivation), I should briefly note how the *Letters* affirm conventional themes of the philosophical life.

7 For my analysis of Winckelmann's art theory with particular focus on its somaesthetic, social, and educative dimensions, see Shusterman, 2018, 2019.

8 Walter Pater's (1912) famous essay on "Winckelmann" problematically construes the androgynous nature of Winckelmann's Greek ideal of sculpted divine beauty as instead "a sexless beauty," exuding "a moral sexlessness, a kind of impotence, an ineffectual wholeness of nature, yet with a divine beauty and significance of its own" (p. 233).

9 I explore this polymorphic sexuality and diversity of gender roles in the chapter on Greco-Roman erotic culture in Shusterman, 2021a, pp. 30-97.

10 I sometimes modify the translation of the letters based on the original German, see Rilke, 1954 and 1958.

III.

The first theme is the classical demand to know oneself by carefully examining oneself through introspection and analysis. The letters repeatedly insist on the importance of "inner searching" to find one's creative sources and life direction. "Go into yourself" and "search… in the deepest places of your heart" to find your direction. "Delve into yourself for a deep answer…, then build your life according to this" (Rilke, 1954, pp. 18–19). Recognizing that the individual is always also a product of nature, Rilke echoes a theme central to Stoic and Epicurean versions of the philosophical life -- the need to respect nature and be guided by it. One should "draw near to Nature" and "find everything in himself and in Nature to which he has attached himself" (Rilke, 1954, pp. 19, 21). We must accept the cosmos which is grander than us and be patient in enduring what it brings us. We must trust Nature and accept the verdict of life: "Let life happen to you. Life is right, in all cases [*auf alle Fälle*]" (Rilke, 1954, p. 74; 1958, p. 52). To trust in nature you must also "trust the natural growth of your inner life…and await with deep humility and patience the birth hour of a new clarity.…Patience is everything!" (Rilke, 1954, pp. 29–30).

But patience means not simply to wait lazily for enlightenment and achievement to occur, one must cultivate one self based on what nature has given you and that you have learned from rigorous self-examination, including probing one's feelings and one's doubts. In this perfectionist path, the "feelings that concentrate you [*Sie zusammenfassen*] and lift you up are pure… Everything that makes *more* of you than you have heretofore been in your best hours is right." Even "your doubt may become a good quality if you train it. It must become *knowing*, it must become critical…and watchful" (Rilke, 1954, pp. 74–75; 1958, p. 52).

The art of living philosophically is to study and learn the answers through living and facing the questions of life, not by taking readymade answers from texts offering wisdom. "*Live* the questions now. Perhaps you will then gradually, without noticing it, live along some distant day into the answer" (Rilke, 1954, p. 35, emphasis original). In going deeply into oneself, in attending carefully and critically to one's feelings, and in living the questions of how to live, one must face the challenges of solitude and the risks of loneliness that come from questioning the conventional ways of life, of experiencing deeply one's distinctive being and difference. "The necessary thing is after all but this: solitude, great inner solitude. Going-into-oneself and for hours meeting no one" (Rilke, 1954, pp. 45–46). One should not fear such trials but embrace them as part of the necessary *askesis* or training in the art of living, so "it is good to be solitary for solitude is difficult; that something is difficult must be a reason the more for us to do it" (Rilke, 1954, p. 53). Dealing with challenging new experiences that place us "in the middle of a transition [*Übergang*] where we cannot remain standing" is also difficult and good (Rilke, 1954, p. 64). As solitude helps us experience things with greater care, depth, and attention, so encountering the difficulties of new experiences helps us to grow. Hence, "to have courage for the most strange, most singular, the most inexplicable that we may encounter" is needed to realize one's life to the fullest and develop a "greater" self, which, because it will not cease to live the difficult, "will not cease to grow" (Rilke, 1954, p. 64, 72).

In advocating this life of careful, patient, self-examination, self-cultivation to bring one's inner nature in harmony with nature and transform the self through difficult transitions that make for ripening growth, Rilke does not describe it as a philosophical life. Although Rilke studied philosophy as one of his core university subjects (which also included art history), the word philosophy does not appear in these letters. Yet any perceptive student of philosophy as a way of life will read these letters as recommending a version of such life, a version constituted in terms of a life of self-examining, meliorative self-transformation through artistic creation.

Foucault, in his study of modern heirs or versions of the classical philosophical life, cites artists as key exemplars (Foucault, 2011, pp. 187-189). Because the letters are addressed to an aspiring young poet rather to an aspiring young philosopher, there is no need to mention philosophy. But when Rilke writes "Art, too, is only a way of living" (Rilke, 1954, p. 78), one can read the "too" as implying that if philosophy is most truly a way of life, so is art; and Rilke speaks explicitly of "living the artist's life" (Rilke, 1954, p. 30). Similarly, we should read the "only" not in the dismissive sense of "merely," but instead as suggesting that what is essential in art is the ripening growth of the person through attentively, richly lived experience rather than the external institutions of the artworld and the material objects identified as artworks, which are merely external expressions of the artist's art of living and inner growth. This, of course, is an echo of the idea of philosophy as more essentially a way of life than a collection of philosophical texts or institutions of professional philosophers.

Having noted the affinities between Rilke's exhortations and the typical ancient counsels of philosophy as a way of life, we should now consider some important differences. The first, perhaps only nuanced difference, is his insistence on the centrality of love. Of course, philosophy by its very name puts love at its core. But the love Rilke speaks of is not love of wisdom but the love of other another person, which we typically identify as romantic, sexual love. Like solitude, "love is good, too: love being difficult. For one human being to love another: that is perhaps the most difficult of all our tasks, the ultimate, the test and proof, the work for which all other work is but preparation" (Rilke, 1954, p. 53-4). Important Stoic and Epicurean versions of philosophical life warn against erotic love, including its connection with marriage and children, as dangers for the tranquility and focus believed necessary for the philosophical life (Shusterman, 2021a, pp. 30-97). For Rilke what is particularly valuable in such love is not the conventional ideal of merging with the other but the way that love inspires the lover toward meliorative self-knowledge, self-critique, and self-cultivation in order to make oneself worthy of the beloved. Rather than relinquishing one's separate individuality by "uniting with another," love "is a high inducement to the individual to ripen, to become something in himself, to become world, to become world for himself for another's sake" (Rilke, 1954, p. 54). This Rilkean view of love as inspiring meliorative, elevating self-cultivation may recall Plato's *Symposium*'s account of philosophical life as beginning with the desiring love for the beauty of a particular boy's body that then stimulates the lover to seek higher beauties in the spiritual realm through self-cultivation. However, the two views are ultimately very different, as Rilke makes no transcendental appeal to an ideal Form of beauty and does not jettison the love of an individual person for the love of abstract ideals.

What strikes me as the most distinctive and radical feature of Rilke's vision of life, love, and self-cultivation is its focus on gender complexity and transition. He makes the concept of gender key to his account of the ideals of love and self-transformation, while connecting both these ideals to his ideal of art as a way of life. Although the established English translations of the *Letters* never employ the term "gender" but instead use "sex" to translate the German "*Geschlecht*" (which can mean both gender and sex), it is the concept of gender that is most crucial for Rilke's ideal of self-transformation. In his third letter he criticizes the poetry of Richard Dehmel for being too masculine in their expression of love's desires. Its erotic expression, though often beautiful, is not "thoroughly mature" because it is one-sidedly masculine in gender, representing the male gender rather than the human person, *der Mann* rather than *der Mensch*. The problem in Dehmel's work is that its erotic world "is not sufficiently *human* (*menschlich*), that it is only male (*männlich*) …and laden with the old prejudices and arrogances with which men have disfigured

and burdened love" (Rilke, 1954, p. 31; 1958, p. 20). Dehmel's problem is that his gender does not encompass the female along with the male to achieve the full human expression that crosses narrow gender lines. "Because he loves as *Mann* (man) *only*, not as *Mensch*" (the human person in general that comprises both male and female sex and gender), his erotic perception or "sexual feeling" is one-sided and "something narrow…that diminishes his art" (Rilke, 1954, p. 31; 1958, p. 20).

Rilke strikingly connects sex and art as forms of creation. In discussing Dehmel, he claims: "artistic expression lies so incredibly close to that of sex, to its pain and ecstasy, that the two manifestations are indeed but different forms of one and the same yearning and delight" (Rilke, 1954, p. 30). He later affirms that our creative "fruitfulness…is but one, whether it seems mental or physical; for intellectual creation too springs from the physical, is of one nature with it and only like a gentler, more ecstatic and more everlasting repetition of physical delight" (Rilke, 1954, p. 37). Rilke affirms the feminine gender or principle as dominant in creation. Most obviously through motherhood, the feminine plays the leading role in patiently carrying and nursing the physical offspring, but the virginal and elder female also embody the creative principle through the promise and memory of motherhood. Moreover, because the gendered principle of motherhood connotes the crucial role of receptivity, nourishment, and patient carrying in intellectual creation, Rilke claims "even in the man there is motherhood," which is both "physical and spiritual; his procreating is also a kind of giving birth…when he creates out of inmost fullness," deeper than his superficial genital marking where he differs from the female (Rilke, 1954, p. 38).

Love and creation will be better, Rilke then argues, when men and women transcend the gender identities traditionally assigned to them at birth according to their sexual parts and instead transition to a higher transgender identity that expresses the caring human person rather than the traditional narrower male and female identities. Such a transition, in which "a new human being rises up [*ein neuer Mensch erhebt sich*]" could positively transform the world and end the painful misunderstandings, struggles, and casualties of the familiar war between the oppositional sexes (Rilke, 1954, p. 38; 1958, p. 25). For Rilke, "the great renewal of the world will perhaps consist in this, that man and maid, freed of all false feelings and reluctances [formed by traditional binary gender identities] will seek each other not as opposites … and will come together as *human beings* [*Menschen*], in order to simply, seriously, and patiently bear in common the difficult sex that has been laid upon them" (Rilke, 1954, pp. 37–38; 1958, pp. 25–26).[11] Rilke sees this change of gender identity as not requiring a change of sexual organs but as overcoming the gender roles, feelings, and behaviors that those sexual organs, blindly given, at birth falsely imply. We should understand the trans in Rilke's transformation of gender identity not as a male transitioning into a female or vice versa, but instead as a transformation that breaks with the false binarism and recognizes transgender as truly a new gender identity, and indeed a superior one holding promise for a new social world that is more tolerant, more just, and more creative. It is interesting that the German word Rilke uses for "transition" is *Übergang*, which suggests an over-coming or meliorative elevation, as in Nietzsche's *Übermensch*.[12]

11 The emphasizing italics are in the original.

12 The word *Übergang* also means a bridge or passageway that goes over something difficult or dangerous (a river, road, or gorge). This notion of transition as a perilous passage over something problematically uncertain could also recall Nietzsche's notion of the human being as a transitional phase from something less to something better, a bridge [Brücke] between the animal and the *Übermensch* who is superior to the current, conventional human being. "*Der Mensch ist ein Seil, geknüpft zwischen Thier und Übermensch, — ein Seil über einem Abgrunde. Ein gefährliches Hinüber, ein gefährliches Auf-dem-Wege*" (Nietzsche, 1999, p.16). "The human is a rope, tied between beast and *Übermensch* – a rope over an abyss. A dangerous crossing over, a dangerous on-the-way" (my translation). If Nietzsche's remarks might suggest humanity's transition to some new, unforeseen, posthuman condition (which some might associate with our increasing cyborg existence), Rilke's

Affirming that before this meliorative gender metamorphosis becomes shared by many, "the solitary individual can now prepare and build" for it, Rilke finds in womankind the most promising signs of such gender transition, just as he sees in the female more openness, fertility, and patience for creative birth (Rilke, 1954, p. 39). "Women, in whom life lingers and dwells more immediately, more fruitfully, and more confidently must surely have become fundamentally riper people [*reifere Menschen*], more human people [*menschlichere Menschen*] than the light-weight man, who is not pulled down below the surface of life by the weight of any fruit of his body, and who, presumptuous and hasty, undervalues what he thinks he loves" (Rilke, 1954, p. 58; 1958, p. 41). Aware of how the female gender identity was already beginning to change in his time, he perceives how this transformation begins by women adopting aspects of masculine gender but will not stop there. "The girl and the woman, in their new, their own unfolding, will but in passing be imitators of masculine ways, good and bad, and repeaters of masculine professions" (Rilke, 1954, p. 58; 1958, p. 41). However, they will go beyond those ultimately false directions of traditional male identity which they adopt merely to free themselves of their bondage to traditional feminine gender norms. "After the uncertainty of such transitions, it will become apparent that women were only going through… those (often ridiculous) disguises in order to cleanse their own most characteristic nature of the distorting influence of the other sex" (Rilke, 1954, p. 58; 1958, p. 41). Rilke sees confident signs of this evolution (particularly in "the northern countries" of Europe), believing that "Some day there will be girls and women whose name will no longer signify merely an opposite of the masculine, but something in itself, something that makes one think, not of any complement and limit, but only of life and existence: the feminine human being [*der weibliche Mensch*]" (Rilke, 1954, p. 59; 1958, p. 41).

IV.

That Rilke describes this new gender identity through troubled old binary terms like "feminine," is likely because the language of his time did not provide him with an acceptable human gender designation outside the binary grid. We still struggle linguistically, socially, psychologically, medically, and legally with properly recognizing trans as something that cannot be reduced in some way to the familiar binaries (for example, in direction of transition from male to female or vice versa or in combination of binary gender or sexual traits). Binarism runs extremely deep in our thought, dualism being the easiest form of classificatory distinction. It belongs to our most fundamental logical principles, the famous law of the excluded middle that underlies the view that propositions are either true or false but not something in between. Its Latin expression, *tertium non datur*, means "no third [option] is given." As traditional logic countenanced no third value between true and false, so traditional thought countenanced no third option besides male and female. It is clear why sexual and gender binaries were traditionally regarded as essential for societies because their duality promoted heteronormativity that in turn promoted genital heterosexual lovemaking, which was physically necessary for generating children and thus sustaining social life. Contemporary biotechnology has successfully challenged this necessity, thus opening a path to greater social appreciation of experimentations in nonbinary gender expressions and identities.[13] But that broad social recognition has been too slow in coming, partly because the binarism of our language and our logic is so deeply entrenched.

transformation seems more concretely aimed at transitioning from the traditional binary gendered human being to a superior humanity liberated from the limits of that binary.

13 I explore how the pragmatics of progeny supports traditional heteronormativity in a variety of Western and non-Western cultures in Shusterman 2021a, 2021b.

Perhaps this difficulty of expressing new transgender ideas through conventional language so severely marked by traditional gender binarism was what compelled Rilke to express them through artistic suggestion in sculpture and in poetry: hence his sonnet on the alleged torso of Apollo (who is not a manly man but rather a god). The fact that after celebrating *der weibliche Mensch* Rilke refuses to posit a parallel ideal for men—namely, the masculine human being or *der männliche Mensch*—shows how far Rilke's ideal is from Sloterdijk's vision of athletic manliness. It also indicates Rilke's drive to transcend the traditional logic of gender binaries in imagining a new, more fully human, transgender identity and its expression in love.

Rilke knows that the struggle to realize such love and gain its social recognition will be difficult, and he sees women's liberational advance as its vanguard.[14] "This advance will (at first much against the will of the outstripped men) change the love-experience, which is now full of error, will alter it from the ground up, reshape it into a relation that is meant to be of one human being to another, no longer of man to woman" (Rilke, 1954, p. 59). Freed from the restrictive gender binaries that serve oppressive patriarchy, "this more human love…will fulfill itself, infinitely considerate and gentle, and kind and clear in binding and releasing" because it will be based on more mature, more confident and tolerant human identities that are self-assured in their individual independence (Rilke, 1954, p. 59). Such love, Rilke concludes, "consists in this, that two solitudes protect and border and salute each other" (Rilke, 1954, p. 59).

Convinced that the society of his time was saturated with antiquated rigid rules and repressive norms that stifled individual independence and creative expression, Rilke insisted on solitude as necessary for the self-examination and self-transformation needed to bring us beyond gender binarism so that we can better desire and love each other as humans rather than as males and females. Whether today's more open and permissive society makes solitude less necessary and whether we also need significantly intimate others to find our way beyond our birth-assigned genders are questions worth asking. Asking such questions is not to challenge the importance of spaces of solitude for critical introspection that has always been a key element of the philosophical life. But dialogical encounter with a significant other has also been central to philosophical living, and Rilke powerfully exemplifies the value of such encounters not only in the letters to his young follower but in his dialogical poetic encounter with the sculptural stone, a nonhuman significant other that expands somaesthetic dialogue in ways that blur the boundaries between persons and things.

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14 In identifying woman as the uplifting vanguard of progress toward a promising but still unformulable future of gender and love, Rilke reminds me of the famous final lines Goethe's *Faust* about the feminine pulling us onward and up: "*Das Unbeschreibliche, hier ist's getan/Das Ewig-Weibliche zieht uns hinan.*"

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Book Review

Bodily Engagements with Film, Images, and Technology: Somavision, Max Ryynänen

Steen Ledet Christiansen

We have two dogs in our home, the golden retriever follows the movies we watch in attention, the kangal mix could not care less, unless a dog barks in the movie. The golden watches so intently that we have to cover her eyes when the gore of our horror movies is too much for her, for us. Of course, we have no idea what her experience of human movies is, nor do we worry about our own exposure to gore. These reactions are all part of a larger somaesthetic relation to screens, images, our pets, and so forth. Do we cover our dog's eyes because we think she cannot somehow filter out the violence the way we believe that we can? Why is violent imagery not harmful to us? If somatic reactions are somehow biologically determined, why does only one of our dogs react to any screen images?

These questions are similar to the questions that Max Ryynänen open his book with, also reflecting on his dog's relation to screens. Here, different screens elicit different canine reactions. Of course, Ryynänen's book is not a book on animals, or rather, nonhuman animals. It is a book on the human animal and our bodies watching and engaging with films, images, and technologies. In emphasizing bodily and somatic relations to images and technologies, Ryynänen's book is part of larger shift towards rectifying the imbalance between cognitive and corporeal emphasis in aesthetics and philosophy over the past decades, if not centuries.

Bodily Engagements with Film, Images, and Technology is thus part of a larger aesthetic-philosophical shift towards somaesthetics, as its subtitle *Somavision* also signals. Read and understood in that light, Ryynänen makes several important forays into contemporary audiovisual media culture. First, some films — Ryynänen calls them "somatic films" — engage a physicality of experience, an experience that educate viewers (somehow a poor phrase for Ryynänen's aim) about somatic boundaries and somatic entertainment. Second, these somatic boundaries are amorphous and a two-way street: films, specifically documentary films for Ryynänen, may make us feel more like machine bodies, understood in a positive way that affords insight into these machines' role and position in a larger, hybrid lifeworld. Third, this two-way street between human and machine bodies may be informative to understand the larger implications of our attitudes towards cars, robots, and robot cars. Their uncanny liveliness may bring insight into our own human liveliness, such as the programmatic media philosophy of Mario Perniola, through who Ryynänen argues for an immersion into mediated and technologized sensibilities as a saturation of human experience. An experience best understood through a version of Indian philosophy known as *rasa*, a philosophy, Ryynänen argues, that offers a more fruitful

conception of human-technological relations through the concept of atmosphere as something that permeates and suffuses experience.

If this overview makes it sound as if Ryynänen slowly opens up human capacities and experiences towards a more technological lifeworld that presents exciting possibilities and different problematics, then that is quite accurate. On the one hand, Ryynänen has a deep respect for human bodily experience as something that must not be underestimated the way it has been, historically. On the other hand, Ryynänen also, quite rightly I believe, rejects the idea of a static human sensorium — bodily engagements are *changeable* and *historical*, so that new technological and aesthetic forms bring about different experiences. Attending to these historical changes of somatic experiences offers a way to trace and understand contemporary technological advances and their impact. Or, really, any period but Ryynänen's focus is contemporary.

What Ryynänen's book is not, is an aesthetic study understood in the more traditional formalist approach, where certain aesthetic devices are investigated and analyzed for their contribution to, for instance, the cinematic tradition. Anyone looking for close analyses of films and documentaries will not find that here and should look elsewhere. What readers will find are forays into framing and understanding older questions in new and different ways.

There is a clear, vibrant desire to understand the larger implications of technologies — broadly conceived — and to understand them differently. If there is a weakness in Ryynänen's study, it is that vibrant desire, often fueled by autobiographic anecdotes. The difficulty runs deep. The study depends on these autobiographical framings, not just for the engaging style that Ryynänen has, but also the embedded nature of the arguments that are essentially deliberate enactments of somaesthetics. Change the embedded nature and you change the situation. As always, such a form of argument runs up against a phrase from what is certainly a somatic film, the Dude in *The Big Lebowski* saying "That's just like, your opinion, man."

And yet, it is not. It is a testament to Ryynänen's philosophical range that it is exactly the enacted nature of the case at stake that *requires* an autobiographical embedded framework. To do otherwise would be to miss the entire point of bodily *being there* confronting *this* problem in *this* way. Such analyses are meant to be followed and engaged with, not summarily dismissed. Certainly this is also part of Ryynänen's point when critiquing Adorno's critique of mass culture — framed differently, we are able to see the issues at stake in a new light. Maybe then things aren't as bad. Or, maybe we should attend to more and other markers than Adorno's highbrow leanings. Maybe the body has a say, too.

In these ways, Ryynänen's book offers a meaningful contribution to bodily being in the world and also a meaningful decontribution to critical theories that leave bodily experience out of the relation between humans and technologies. Whether or not the examples or cases are what readers would want, the book suggests methods that should be emulated — attend to these problems, here, now, in these ways. Attend to the body, its somatic markers, its somatic boundaries, blurred as they may be, because these embedded situations bring fresh perspectives that could not emerge in other ways.

Methodologies for Exploring Embodiment and Aesthetics

Section 2

Somaesthetics and Methodology: A Dialogue

Falk Heinrich, Max Ryynänen, Stefano Marino, Aurosa Alison, Elena Romagnoli

Abstract: *The article's form is a dialogue among five scholars of somaesthetics. The dialogue's topic is somaesthetics and methodology, addressing questions such as: What are the relevant methods for somaesthetic inquiries and practices? What are the methodological difficulties? Which important dimensions do methods and methodologies exclude? The article consists of five pieces, each addressing questions and propositions presented by other authors. The contributing authors are Falk Heinrich, Max Ryynänen, Stefano Marino, Aurosa Alison, and Elena Romagnoli.*

Introduction

Falk Heinrich

Methodologies form the cornerstone of Western academic and scientific achievements. Academia and science rely on methods and methodologies as their fundamental building blocks, as they provide a stable foundation for knowledge. When assessing student reports and investigations, examiners often place significant emphasis on the application and discussion of methods. Likewise, in my experience, peer reviewers of academic papers frequently devote substantial attention to methodological questions. Without methods, there would be only a chaotic investigation without objective and purpose (so the story goes). Methods of observation and instigation logically structure our perception of an otherwise disorderly and incomprehensible world. Furthermore, methods enable the structured analysis of distinct observations.

What are the methodologies of somaesthetics, a philosophy of aesthetics that integrates somatic practice as a key component? How can one's personal aesthetic experiences serve as empirical material for philosophical inquiry? Perhaps the last question is framed incorrectly, as it introduces a division that distinguishes between aesthetic experiences as the subject of academic investigation and academic reflection proper––a distinction that somaesthetics want to disassemble. Furthermore, should we understand somaesthetics as an academic, reflective discipline or as a creative form of action such as art? Philosophy, and especially aesthetics, has often found itself straddling these two distinct cultural domains, each with its own objectives and epistemologies, and consequently, differing perspectives on method and methodology. There are many questions concerning somaesthetics' methodology or better methodologies worthwhile asking.

These questions and similar ones have occupied my thoughts on somatic practice and realization for a considerable period. I dedicated an entire chapter in my recent book (Heinrich, 2023) to such (academic) questions. They also prompted me to dedicate an entire special issue of the Journal of Somaesthetics to these topics. As part of this special issue, I decided to invite some esteemed colleagues to engage in a dialogue on somaesthetics and methodology.

The initiating part of this dialogue consists of my inquiries regarding the status and function of methods in somaesthetics. It centers around the question of how we can make one's own somatic experiences available for academic reflection. Subsequent parts are contributed by my colleagues, presenting their thoughts on somaesthetic methodologies. Each text received comments from the others, leading to revisions and clarifications. The resulting contributions are presented here. I present these contributions in chronological order, just as they were written and shared with the other contributors.

Max Ryynänen's contribution is critical of the emphasis placed on methodologies in philosophy, as it tends to lead to generalizations at the expense of the unique specificity of aesthetic experiences, which should not be generalized. Instead, he sees the role of philosophy in transcending and destabilizing established practical, social, and cognitive structures by offering alternative perspectives. This cannot be achieved by following methods that are inherent to established structures.

Stefano Marino also reflects on the limits of methodologies, initially asserting that philosophizing is an "art of living" that encompasses what methodologies exclude. His extensive discussions revolve around a philosophy that proceeds "methodically unmethodically" (Adorno, 1991:13). Marino, like Ryynänen, finds this transgressive and experimental dimension in somaesthetics, precisely because somatic practices, including art practices, are part of its methodological toolkit. In my personal view, this emphasizes the inseparability of thinking and experience as an act of embodied and embedded awareness.

Aurosa Alison's starting point is that somaesthetics should be regarded as a discipline with its own methodology, in which practice plays a vital role. Alison shares some of her academic experiences that have opened the field of somaesthetics for her personal investigations and teachings on the concept and practice of architectural dwelling.

Lastly, Elena Romagnoli's contribution attempts to overcome the distinctions between object and subject, and active and passive, as in her view these distinctions are the primary issues produced by academic methodologies. Drawing from Gadamerian hermeneutics, she argues that philosophical reflection should be viewed as an inherent part of living, of action, and of doing. Likewise, enacting and staging are intrinsic to philosophizing. Here, the philosopher (and the aesthetic experiencer, I would like to add) is both subject and object simultaneously. Aesthetic experience must be understood and practiced as movement, activity, or performance, where the purely analytical distinction between subject and object is fused together.

In hindsight, all the contributions revolve around the importance of practice, whether it's the practical implications of philosophy itself or somatic practices as an integral component and subject of philosophy. Each contribution, in its own way, addresses the methodological distinction between the analyzing subject and the object of analysis, highlighting that this distinction is not an inherent aspect of (aesthetic) practice and experience. All the contributions view (artistic) practice as an experiential means to break through methodological barriers that isolate cultural and epistemological structures. Somatic practices and experiences, on one hand, are part of somaesthetics' methodology, and on the other hand, they defy or transcend (academic) methods by serving as a unique act and expression of life that inherently involves observation as awareness.

Somaesthetics: Methodological Solipsism or Truthfulness?

Falk Heinrich

Keywords: *Hermeneutics, Somaesthetics, Method, Situation, Performativity.*

Somaesthetics explores the function and significance of the human body in aesthetic experiences. It extends beyond the realm of art and considers the relevance of the human body in aesthetic encounters across various fields and domains. The experiencing body can be described from both a first-person and a third-person perspective. The third-person perspective typically provides insights into the bodies and bodily experiences of individuals other than the observer. In contrast, the first-person perspective describes and analyzes one's own experiences, which are inherently embodied. This brief article contemplates the methodological challenges associated with observing oneself from a first-person perspective.

The foundational methodological paradigm of Western science is observation. Scientific observation is understood as and operationalized by inserting a distinction between the observer (the subject or agent) and the observed (the passive object). Furthermore, the scientific object is also created by inserting distinctions between what is captured and what lies outside the applied method of observation. This paradigmatic axiom of observation does not allow for simultaneous awareness of the observer and the observed. The observer and their observation are blind spots that can only be illuminated by another observation. In this case, the observer tries to observe their own observation. However, as Merleau-Ponty (2002) asserted, this is difficult because every observation is always of something, and an observation of an observation will immediately attempt to return to the primary observation of that something. Normally, the third-person approach is methodologically uncontested, as long as the investigation specifies precisely what is observed and how. Third-person investigations can be accomplished using qualitative and quantitative methods or blended approaches.

Allow me to be more specific: My research interest lies within the field of movements in general and specifically in dance. I am interested in the performative dimensions and aesthetic experiences of movement. A third-person perspective investigation of the aesthetics of movement requires, or rather forms, an external object; this might be observed or measured movements of other individuals, such as dancers or athletes, or experiences of individuals in motion. I could select a distinct group of informants and formulate a well-defined topic for my investigation. Based on this, I can apply qualitative or quantitative methods. For instance, I can choose to conduct interviews, posing specific questions to my informants. Alternatively, it might be more appropriate to create a survey targeting a larger number of informants. As an investigator, I can also apply ethnographic research methods and observe the informants through notes, video, photos, and so on. I can also use quantitative methods to measure particular properties of the informants' movements. These measurements can include the movements' extension in space, their velocity and acceleration, and the amount of muscle power used, among other factors. This type of data might provide insights into the aesthetics of movement when observed. Dance choreographies take these features into consideration when designing movements with distinct aesthetic appeals.

Another way of studying aesthetic experiences is by measuring physical responses during such experiences, such as changes in heart rate, sweat production, and other indicators of

arousal. More advanced technologies can measure brain activity using BCI (brain-computer interface) technologies, such as EEG or other neuroimaging techniques, which track fluctuations in activities in different brain areas. Analyses of this data can provide information about which cognitive functions are involved in aesthetic experiences, such as the sensation of beauty. However, the drawback of these technologies is that the experiencing subject is confined to clinical test settings that only allow for measuring the perception of certain forms of aesthetic expression that require a motionless body, mostly visual perception of images or auditory perception of sound and music.

The soundness of these approaches depends, in part, on the visible reflectivity of the observer and the observation itself; black spots are created when data production is not described and critically assessed. At least since the advent of quantum physics, there is no doubt that the investigator and the setup of the measurement have a determining influence on the outcome of the investigation. For instance, the seemingly simple method of conducting an interview (though it is by no means a simple task) depends not only on the quality and precision of the interviewees' recollection and their ability to express aesthetic experiences with words but also on the interviewer's capacity to create a conducive setting and atmosphere. Especially in the case of interviews and phenomenology-based surveys, these are third-person approaches to first-person experiences. Academic validity seems to arise from the evaluative and reflective stance of the researcher rather than from the firsthand experience of the informant. This often results in first-person experiences being conveyed in the second person (Petitmengin, 2006).

However, the aim of this short paper is not to discuss these types of academic investigations as examples of scientific methodology based on observation. I mention these types solely as background information for a discussion of first-person approaches and their challenging status as academic methodology. In aesthetics, first-person observation involves investigating one's own aesthetic experiences. Academically, this is generally not accepted or, at least, is frowned upon because this method appears to blur the clear distinction between the observer and the observed. The observing subject becomes the object of observation. I claim, however, that philosophical aesthetics is historically based on precisely this methodology. Its academic trick is to render the observer invisible. This is achieved by focusing on the object of observation, such as an artwork, design artifact, or performative expressions like dance and theatre. This type of observation is presented as an analysis of the aesthetic features of an external object. It should not come as a surprise that especially analytical aesthetics is preoccupied with identifying and discussing the aesthetic properties of objects. At the very least, aesthetic properties of external objects provide a basis for aesthetic experiences and sentiments that appears to be consistent for everyone.

Yet, aesthetics as an academic discipline was launched as the study of sensory cognition. Most continental Western philosophy acknowledges the perceiving subject as the producer of aesthetic sentiments, such as the sentiment of beauty. This led to the introduction of subjective taste and aesthetic judgment during the 18th century. According to this theoretical position, an object is aesthetically perceived, contemplated, and judged (e.g., Hume, 2000; Hutcheson, 1726; Kant, 2007). Academic investigations of aesthetic perceptions, therefore, involve studying subjects as they experience objects aesthetically, be it art, nature, or design. Philosophical aesthetics typically does not employ empirical methods to measure the perceiving subject. This means that the philosopher is, in fact, investigating their own sensations and perceptions by adopting a reflective stance towards themselves, a form of introspection guided by existing aesthetic theories.

Baumgarten's notion of aesthetics, however, includes a pragmatic and practical ambition: to exercise the faculty of sense-perception and the capacity to create aesthetic artifacts (Baumgarten, 1750), primarily through texts in his case. Somaesthetics shares similar ambitions but with an extended focus on the sentient body, the soma (Shusterman, 1999). Somaesthetics regards the soma as the integration of the body and mind or, more accurately, it does not accept the observational distinction between the body (as the material means of observation) and the mind (as the agent of observation) but proposes the soma as an operational entity capable of perception and action. One thing is clear: Baumgarten's and somaesthetics' practical ambitions challenge and complicate the scientific paradigms of observation, which involve the insertion of distinctions and a focus on the object.

As mentioned earlier, I can observe and analyze other people's aesthetic experiences and practices by applying various academic methodologies presented earlier. Most papers and books that advance aesthetics empirically are based on observations of others. The academic observer appears to be in the clear because they do not compromise the data and findings with their (messy and irrational) subjectivity; instead, they scrutinize the rationalities and irrationalities of the observed experiencer. Clearly, this is a valid approach that can lead to new insights into the nature and different functions of aesthetic perception.

However, investigating one's own aesthetic perception and practice opens a completely different field where unmediated sensory experiences play the most important role. The downside is that the focus on one's practice, which I consider an essential dimension of aesthetics, complicates and blurs the lines of academic observation. In this case, the observer is also the observed, and the subject-object distinction as a theoretical and methodological anchor is lost because the object (in my case, my own movement) seems to merge with the experiencing subject. According to this paradigm, the agential subject cannot simultaneously be an experiencing subject and an experienced object. On the other hand, to fully experience and appreciate my own movements, there must be some form of objectivization[1] of my movements because any form of awareness is based on the insertion of observational distinctions that generate objectivizations.[2] What would such objectivization of one's own movements in the moment of action look like?

Shusterman (1999) describes the foundation of somaesthetics as consisting of three pillars: analysis, pragmatics, and practice, indicating that practice is an important part of (philosophical) aesthetics. However, in his writings, there is a missing epistemological link between analysis (theory) and practice (action). Both appear to contribute to each other, but how? One could be satisfied with the assertion that the fields of abstraction (theory) and concrete particularity (practice) are distinct fields that inform each other by being each other's experiential and conceptual background. This seems to be an acceptable explanation when the objects of analysis and perceptual practice are different, and when I am not investigating my own practice. But when we want to analyze the aesthetic experience of myself as an agent (a dancer, an actor, a

1 I use the term objectivisation to mark a difference to objectification as a psychological projection onto external objects. In my context, objectivisation is the creation of the possibility of an inner awareness of ongoing actions and perceptions.

2 For instance, Luhmann's system theory claims that any system operates by overserving its surroundings, which means drawing a distinction between inside and outside. Furthermore, every system observes by means of an inherent code. This generalized code enables system operations by detecting what is important for precisely the type of system in question. Before Luhmann, Kant and later Plessner pointed to the importance of the distinction between the inner and the outer. For Kant, internal (transcendental) rules of perception (understanding) that create external objects (objectivity) are the precondition for self-consciousness. Plessner, on the other hand, conceptualizes the different ways living beings handle the border between themselves and their environment as the self-positioning of the being, which is seen as the determinate characteristic for living beings and their developmental status. Modern neuroscience claims the existence of high-level neural centers that monitor (and modify, if necessary) the body's metabolism, which is dependent on both inner and outer conditions.

participant in interactive art, or just in everyday actions), then the object of perception and analysis is one's own actions. In this case, the linkage between analysis and practice must be direct: theory must emerge from practice, and, I would like to add, practice must incorporate theory. The danger of this methodological approach is epistemic solipsism. The promise is a break with the Cartesian observational split that has haunted Western discourse for a long time.

In my opinion, it is necessary to methodologically support this aesthetic reintegration, even if it appears to sacrifice academic clarity, which, conversely, often requires simplifications. One's own experiences are inherently complex, blurring the line between the observed object and the observing, reflective subject, as well as the distinction between materiality and imagination. Dewey has previously discussed this idea, wherein aesthetic experience combines the "meanings imaginatively summoned" (Dewey, 1980: 274) with the material essence of the artwork (in my case, the physicality of movement) and the tangible presence of the observer. This aspect constitutes the exceptional nature of aesthetic experience and poses a thought-provoking challenge, particularly to systematic philosophical thinking (Dewey, 1980). Dewey's critique of the intertwined unity of the materiality of artwork and the imagination of the perceiver as a criticism of philosophical discourse remains relevant. In philosophical aesthetics, artifacts are often merely employed as sporadic examples to support a philosophical argument; artifacts are not the experiential foundation for theoretical arguments.

However, the background of Dewey's criticism still revolves around an ontological differentiation between the experiencer and the artwork. According to him, the external artwork enables us to have aesthetic experiences and facilitates communal understanding. In an aesthetics of one's own actions, on the other hand, the subject's actions become the objects of inquiry. This realm of practice presents an additional challenge to academic conceptualizations and underlying methodological axioms.

Clearly, every academic exploration of aesthetic experiences necessitates the consideration and discussion of existing concepts, propositions, and fragments of already established aesthetic theories. However, when it comes to investigating the aesthetics of one's own actions, the selection of these abstract concepts can only be grounded in one's own personal experiences (which, again, are influenced by one's knowledge of aesthetics theories). In other words, one methodological challenge lies in incorporating the experiential dimension as an integral part of theory development, not solely when writing at one's desk as an act of recalling, but also within the context of practical engagement. An (aesthetic) theory must be seen as a framework for perceiving and understanding the world, not merely as a collection of more or less normative propositions and values. In the case of man-made artifacts and situations, aesthetic theories also frame potential actions toward the perceived object or situation. For instance, knowledge about the aesthetics of dance frames not only our experience of dance performances but also provides us with a means to create dance sequences ourselves. Needless to say, dancing or instructing dancers also requires many other competences. My assertion necessarily implies that any aesthetic experience inherently contains and triggers theoretical elements. My theoretical undertaking must be linked to concrete and specific concepts derived from my direct aesthetic experiences, both in the realms of action and writing. In this regard, it is essential to provide more concrete and practical explanations.

As already mentioned, my field of investigation is dance, for instance, embraced couple dance such as waltz, tango, rumba, and many more. Every dancer, whether professional or not, must be able to differentiate the diverse features and facets that together make up a particular dance. The dancer needs to somatically feel and understand this dance's distinct musical features

(rhythmic and melodic forms) and its distinct style of moving together. A style is made up of discrete qualities, such as the characteristic embrace of many social dances, which is made up of different positions of the right and left arms, how the bodies relate to each other, and the varying distances between the dancers, the somatic interaction between the dancers made up of tension and release phases. The distinct elements of a body technique elicit a dance's specific feeling. These traits must be understood as both body postures and concepts. The concept of an embrace derives from the somatic feeling of physically enclosing an object or another being and, conversely, of being enclosed by another and perhaps being one agential entity. We understand the characteristic features of these dances through concepts. They also help us learn to dance. Yet we dance and sense postures and movement sequences, not concepts. Thus, our experiences must be understood as integrations of bodily actions and cognitive concepts. Dewey refers to James, who suggested that the term "experience" is a "double-barreled" one:

> *"It is "double-barreled" in that it recognizes, in its primary integrity, no division between act and material, subject and object, but contains them both in an unanalyzed totality. "Thing" and "thought," as James says in the same connection, are single-barreled; they refer to products discriminated by reflection out of primary experience."* (Dewey, 1998: 8)

Concepts primarily structure the empirical world of dance as fields of action and reaction, not as detached descriptions. In other words, we sense basic concepts. Noë asserts:

> *"But just as there is no sharp line between the personal and the subpersonal, so there is no sharp line between the conceptual and the nonconceptual. Indeed, it may be that sensorimotor skills deserve to be thought of as primitive conceptual skills, even if, as is frequently the case, they are subpersonal."* (Noë, 2004: 31)

Sensorimotor skills are not solely motor skills but also awareness skills, whether at a personal or subpersonal level. Concretely, I not only need to comprehend the structure and style of a specific dance, but while dancing, I must also analyze what is going on with my partner's, my own, and all the other dancers' movements to be able to initiate and complete the next move. Here, analyzing in action means making potential selections that create action possibilities. Selections are not yet actions but ongoing assessments of the situation in the light of known and incorporated dance moves in terms of their possible initiation as the next step. Analysis as potential action selections is very concrete, yet it already entails a categorial ordering in types of moves. This applies primarily to improvised dance, but also choreographed dancing is not only automatized operations because the dancers must be aware of their partner and adjust the quality of their movement to each other. The same applies, for instance, also to classical music. Here, awareness does not mean the selection of possible melodic actions, but rather the alignment of the pregiven action (playing a distinct tone) to the present situation in terms of timbre, rhythm, expression, etc. For the audience, the perception of music and dance entails ongoing expectation of the next move, tone, or harmony to come. Enjoying performative arts is not solely a passive perception; perception is always active because the seen and heard is a neurological re-enactment that includes triggered expectation (e.g., Freedberg & Gallese, 2007; Gallese, 2018).

Analyzing at this level is not an intellectual exercise, but rather an awareness deeply rooted in the perception of movement characteristics. These features include a movement's energy,

direction, pace, and rhythm. I claim that perceived movement characteristics are already proto-theoretical concepts, enabling the dancer to comprehend the situation and respond accordingly. The act of observing and selecting movements represents the conceptual realm of the dance, facilitating the identification of potential actions in a given scenario. In other words, the dancer's conceptual understanding is influenced by their sensorimotor skills. "If sensorimotor skills are a kind of simple concept, then perceptual experience depends on conceptual understanding, albeit of a special and primitive sort" (Noë, 2004: 184). Awareness, including potential next actions, is the source for both action and theorization.

Here, I do not want to elaborate further on Noë's interesting contention[3] (which is surely influenced by Gallese & Lakoff, 2005, and Lakoff & Johnson, 1999). Instead, I want to focus on the notion of awareness. I assume that not many within the academic community would negate the assertion that awareness is necessary for both theorization and action. Indeed, scientific observation is one means of creating awareness (in the form of knowledge). This also entails the awareness of things and processes that cannot be sensed directly with our sense organs. Scientists invent apparatuses that can make us aware of unsensible objects, particles, and mechanisms. But when it comes to aesthetics, which is intrinsically bound to our sensing body and sensory perception, the perfection of this apparatus of awareness (the soma) is disapproved of but simply taken as a naturally given (as long as we are healthy). Even the fact that one of art's (or rather art museum's) pedagogical functions is to create a framework for individual sensibilization, understood as the exercise of our sensory capacities, must be taken as an argument for the necessity of practice for philosophical aesthetics. Sensory practice seems to be implied in the act of doing philosophy.

This is precisely my concern: one of the methodological consequences of my elaborations is that practice must be an inherent and recognized part of aesthetics. This must be evident when the object of the investigation is the experience of one's own actions. However, each type of aesthetic experience has its own type of practice that somatically involves the perceiving agent as a sensing and acting being. Philosophical aesthetics must acknowledge this. Obviously, one can write about activities or objects without being a practitioner of that activity. One must not necessarily be an actor to investigate theater, a painter to write about painting, or a gardener to ponder the aesthetics of nature. Nonetheless, experienced practice should not be a menace to academic quality; on the contrary, it should enhance it. There will always be a practical and somatic relationship and entanglement with the investigated activity or object, and this should always be a reflected part of the investigation. Writing about the aesthetics of nature, one must be out there, in the wild nature or in the designed nature of gardens. Being in the wild nature means hiking, skiing, or biking; otherwise, one is just a tourist looking at it from a distance but not grasping its sensory bearing. An aesthetic investigation of designed gardens must somehow include the practice of gardening as a source of pleasure, experience, and knowledge. Doing philosophical aesthetics should always mean being aware of oneself as an integrated part of the subject under investigation.

This short paper is a praise for practice-based academic investigations. I can, of course, analyze the dance of others, but my analysis is much more comprehensive when it incorporates my somatic awareness and experiences of dancing. Doing aesthetics means being somatically engaged in the world as a source of sentient experiences. Dance should not be a commodity in

3 Enactivism, a specific approach in cognitive science, tries to precisely prove this because their theories are based on the naturalism of dynamic system theory that at its core has the interdependence of living entities and their surroundings (e.g., Maturana, Varela, Gibson). Every cognition is an act of securing the living system.

the experience economy to be perceived at a distance like spectacular landscapes viewed only to be documented as the background for selfies. For me, dancing is a practice in somatic awareness that intersects concepts with actions.

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Methods? What are they?

Max Ryynänen

I warmly welcome Falk Heinrich's initiative to invite Aurosa Alison, Stefano Marino, Elena Romagnoli, and myself to a dialogue on the methods of somaesthetics for *The Journal of Somaesthetics*. As an ex-editor-in-chief of the journal (with Falk and Richard Shusterman), I know that the topical and methodological variety of papers which arrive to the journal is broad, and on several occasions I thought that was I totally lost or that the text that I/we had received had nothing to do with our aims or *methods*. This frequently happened when someone's work was based on explicit *methods* or stressed that a certain *method* was used. Therefore, my first reaction to Falk's invitation was to raise my eyebrows. Perhaps his wish is not that we turn methodologically into an approach resembling scholars who do statistics, quantitative studies or laboratory experiments (which I typically associate with 'methods'), and I know that there are certain clear methods for definitions in analytic philosophy and thoughts on the methodological nature of the hermeneutical circle which some of us in philosophy like to think of as *methods*, but at least in my own philosophical habitat, I question the usefulness of thinking of methods in philosophy. However, I definitely share an understanding of the problematics posed by Falk. And I will bring about my own answer, which, in the end, as one can already guess, is not a thorough one to Falk's questions, but a sort of response, from my own part, from my own perspective, and from my own philosophical position/angle, to what is at stake here. I hope it will enhance dialogue.

As hinted at above, I have always had a hard time accepting the idea of methodology in philosophy. One of the key experiences that led me to this was from my studies (and later teaching) in semiotics, which I consider to be an extremely methodological discipline. Returning to the two already mentioned examples, there is no way that I can say that some ways of making conceptual definitions or the use of the hermeneutic circle (which is closer to my own work than the already mentioned definitions in analytic philosophy) would not work as guidelines for thinking, but working with philosophy is still distant from the way methodology is thought of in virtually every other scholarly discipline, such as semiotics, which is governed by many rules. If, in certain forms of sociology, one asks how many people should be interviewed in order to obtain reliable statistics, in semiotics, which my Saussurian colleague Christian Aspalter used to call the "Swiss pocket knife," models are everywhere – often as diagrams, with 4 or 6 boxes to fill in.

Of course, we can still think of methodology in a broader fashion, but I find it more fruitful to think that philosophy, as opposed to semiotics and/or chemistry, works rather like football or playing jazz guitar.

How is philosophy like jazz guitar or football? We learn how to build and then apply argumentation, argumentative patterns, solutions, questioning, and reflective ways to describe issues by imitation; and becoming big in this field often means, that you play your *game/music* (to follow the simile) in your own, sometimes very surprising way. We often appreciate highly original strains of thought, which are untypical for the academy. And most of the time we don't base our work on model thinking or clear rules.

By rehearsing and practicing – reading, listening, talking – we learn to improvise in a variety of situations. There are no hard and fast rules for how to play with a football (although it is useful to practice different kicks and situations and to know the rules of the game), or how to play a

guitar (but learning chords, modalities and licks/riffs played by masters can help). You have to have *tekhne* (technique, skill, practice), and *poiesis* (creativity), but no one can say that there is a clear methodology for successful playing. And for success in philosophy, it is sometimes enough to have a colleague say "that's interesting."

In practice, philosophy is a bit like art (or certain sports). On this free ride, where techniques, perspectives, and ways of discussing change according to the need to move forward in increasing understanding, we get results which others can build upon. This makes our practice different from jazz guitar and football. Jazz guitarists and football players do not develop threads like we do regarding the definition of art (continuing on the work of others), although they can of course build on what people have been doing before, and use this in their own game. Our *business* lies somewhere between the scientific and main forms of scholarly work and art/football.

When commenting on this practice, Ludwig Wittgenstein said that you study philosophy to a certain extent so that you can eventually throw away the ladder (1921; *Tractatus* 6.54). And in his own school of analytic philosophy he developed a model for doing so – not a model to rigidly follow formulas, but an example of how thinking can meaningfully go beyond patterns and the shallow rules we have. Others who have been especially efficient in throwing away the ladder (in other schools) include Martin Heidegger, Emil Cioran, and Julia Kristeva. It is also important to mention the tradition of Zen (and other perennial philosophical traditions) as the utmost philosophical game for this, as it strives to relieve us even from the ego and existential problems – although one must bear in mind, that Zen is not an academic discipline at all, though, it is still philosophy (for probably most of us in the context where I am publishing this).

This tendency of drifting out of the scholarly ordinary, which we appreciate in philosophy, happens through unexceptional writing practice. In Guardare Ascoltando (2003), Pier Aldo Rovatti states that, technically speaking, the writing of Heidegger and Jacques Derrida is allegorical but in terms of content and philosophy it is not allegorical, which makes the texts tricky to crack, and which, in the end, makes them potent for reaching beyond the ordinary. No methods are failed, though. Like Pat Metheny, the guitarist, or Zico, the football player, who surprised me countless times when I watched Brazil play as kid, they *know things*, they *know how*, and they play against all expectations. Not unlike Michael Taussig's characterization of Jacques Derrida, they are trickster gods.[4]

We know, of course, that we philosophers don't all the time nor even often surprise our colleagues, and this also applies to artists; but the basic way of doing this work still, makes *free play* possible (I hereby give this concept a new life in philosophy), and at least once or twice most scholars in the business have hit the unknown and/or the *new* by turning a question around, or by coming up with a new conceptual perspective. What seems to make sense to the community is what we buy, but there is no clear code/formula for that, just the acceptance of a textual gesture which shows the way to new knowledge/understanding. Not that someone follows rules or strict methodologies.'

Somaesthetics has attracted more methodological reflection than most branches of philosophy or aesthetics (by naming both, I want to stress that aesthetics does not always pertain to philosophy, as it can also be sociological). Ultimately, those reflections with which Richard Shusterman started the whole enterprise have not really led to the formation of a methodology in the true sense of the word, nor even to much testing on what could be done in somaesthetics.

4 Taussig delivered this analogy in a lecture which I hosted a couple of years ago in Finland, but I have no idea if he has published the thought somewhere.

Maybe John Dewey's philosophy and pragmatism in Richard Shusterman's hands has more broadly developed into an important base for a *style* of doing philosophy, or a way of practicing it. But I know that Shusterman has also tested somaesthetics in action in conferences and events, doing practice and theory hand-in-hand. However, not many have experienced this, and we might want to welcome more ways of testing it. Of course, such approaches could be more related to what contemporary dancers call methods, i.e. ways of testing out movement and being in the body (nearly every bigger name teaching dance talks about their own method, and dancers study these methods all the time). And, if we would use the concept of the method the way dancers do, we'd call e.g. Derrida's philosophy Derrida's method and Heidegger's philosophy Heidegger's method. Talking about somaesthetics, there is reflective work done on practices, which are methodological, of course, e.g. related to yoga (I am referring to the work of Vinod Balakrishnan and Swathi Elizabeth Kurian). Yoga has a clear methodology on how to do things. Comparing it to e.g. contemporary dance, you don't have people who resemble Kristeva or Heidegger showing up and devising their own practices, surprising us with improvisations – just to remind us of the difference of the main meaning of methodological and non-methodological practice. Although yoga is about reflection and consciousness – this it shares with philosophy – you aim at the repetition of patterns which you execute as best you can, without aiming to renew the *language* of the practice. A Derrida of yoga might break your neck!

Philosophy to some extent is really about skill, a game-like activity, and free rides in various topics, which we copy from the masters. Just think of Luce Irigaray's occasionally obscure tripping on the body, seeking various perspectives, asking questions, etc., following the great tradition of experimental writing which challenges metaphysics, or Abhinavagupta's way of *getting* lost with the rasa to ultimately shed light on its very nature (see Gnoli 1956), and in a way which can at least be considered non-methodological.

If we do not strive for a stricter methodology, what then? Artists, in their relatively free play, have sometimes used dogmas to come up with new directions. Could we do that too? It could be more effective in advancing with our enterprise, and better than working out a methodology which easily leads to the stiffening of the discourse. The latter happened with phenomenology (not that I would have a problem with that, though). An early reading of phenomenology reveals that it was an experimental branch of philosophy, featuring vibrant outbursts, where new concepts were invented when needed and ways of writing tested. Think of Aurel Kolnai's "On Disgust" (*Der Ekel*, 1929) or radical-conservativist, hard-to-crack essays like Martin Heidegger's "The Origin of the Work of Art" (1935-1936/1950, *Der Ursprung des Kunstwerkes*). When the methodological considerations and the exegetic attitude took over, German phenomenology became scholastic (the French gave it a new experimental boost in the 1960s, though). However, I have started to welcome its late blending with natural sciences and therapy, which has provided some interesting paths of thinking for all of us. Somaesthetics is still open for anything. Phenomenology absolutely not. As this makes me happy, talking about somaesthetics, I fear a slightly rigid methodology.

The 1995 established dogma school of film, Dogma 95 (von Trier, Vinterberg, etc.) went against the grain to produce low tech works with a handful of rules. The camera must be held by hand, the film format must be Academy 35 mm, the sound must never be produced apart from the images. This provided a way of using dogma in art, and resulted in a new kind of film.

Falk's main interest is in the field of methodological problems in somaesthetics, which deals with the "function and significance of the human body in aesthetic experiences" and has issues with "difficulties regarding the first-person observation of oneself." It is true that to some extent

the subjective and objective points of view can make things messy if the main way of discussing phenomena is always one's own sensation, whether witnessing art or e.g. dancing, which is Falk's own take on this. Still, if one thinks about it, being both the observer and the observed is not always problematic. If anything, here it could be thought of as methodological and in the interest in precision which has haunted philosophy since its origins. Philosophy has nearly always suffered from striving to achieve universality.

Let's say one writes film philosophy, and there is an interest in discussing the tickling of the soles of the feet which occurs when one watches action films where people climb walls. In the fashion of early phenomenology, one can focus on the sensation, and not say too much about it, although maybe playing around with it intellectually. One might be the observer and the observed in some way, but to be precise... we are not the sensation. Like a house that is seen, a pain in the back is felt – and it is not I/we ourself/ves. And, we don't need to immediately aim for total universalism in our claims. I think the problem of simultaneously being the observer and the observed partly actually arises when one aims for too much universalism, and does not only note that this happens to me and to many others testing the boundaries of the phenomenon with the readers – and, just a note, this is something where brain research, which Falk mentions, with its hardcore methodology, gives a helping hand – while, of course, it is notable thing in itself that we sometimes reflect on e.g. being and having a body. Thinking of universalism, brain researchers don't say that all of us experience things the same way. It depends on having/lacking mirror neurons (people with Asberger's don't have the empathy which mirror neurons make us engage with, and/or conditioning.) Why should philosophers? Can't we just talk about phenomena without extending them too much?

This is more broadly a problem for aesthetics. It is not only a problem for the Eurocentrically minded scholar, who thinks that we all look at images alike (Europe's contemplative tradition, among many local ones (the popular traditions of gazing at images are different from the one typical for art), is of course often very different from Japanese or Indian ways of watching images, even if it might find similar traditions in these cultures too). If one looks, for example, at the discussion on environmental aesthetics, it seems that people debate if we can consider ethically complicated issues, such as polluted landscapes, beautiful. Not even touching on the way our experience changes with time (from one moment to another); one second it accentuates the ethical, the next, the aesthetic. We know that some people seem to get more disturbed by ethical issues in their sense of beauty than others (just look at woke discussions (with no negative intent with the word use here)), and there can even be cultural differences regarding our ways of being trained to understand landscapes and images. Japanese erotic shunga images excessively provoke the Western viewer, but not the traditional Japanese viewer, as much as we can still think they exist. Why write so extensively; in other words, why claim for universality, and not just contemplate the issue itself, that I, or some people, get messed up with ethics all the time (or this is how we interpret it) when we look at polluted landscapes? I am not advocating a relativism, but just accentuating that it is not realism to think that there is always a rule which fits everyone (or for every language. I am referring to the way analytic philosophy is totally based on English language). Only in philosophy can someone really believe, or at least practically think that something applies everywhere and for all of us, and this hubris, which we have inherited from Plato all the way through enlightenment philosophers to our day is a real problem, which we should amend. At the end of the day, these issues are partly problems of philosophical hubris, and maybe even writing, which our academic tradition has made too cocky. Even if it led to said results politically, I have always appreciated Heidegger's way of working on specifically, consciously German language, and even local issues, such as life in a village in the Black Forest

(like in *Gelassenheit*, see Heidegger 1966). We should aim for smaller things sometimes.

I'd also like to find ways to be precise, and here I'd like to address the aesthetic experience, one of Falk's foci. The whole concept of aesthetic experience does not look very useful to me. As we use it to describe engaging with kayaking, being at a Pearl Jam concert, and contemplating a Gerhard Richter painting, it does not make much sense using it the way we do. I welcome takes such as Richard Shusterman's "Entertainment: A Question for Aesthetics" (2003), where he discusses titillation and other reactions to popular culture – and the already mentioned Kolnai (in his footsteps, Carolyn Korsmeyer), Irigaray (with her notes on the morphology of the body, sometimes very precise "soma-maps"), more and many others, who have discussed more detailed issues in experience. But I still think we need to, at least for a while, get rid of the concept of aesthetic experience. A good way to make the situation better would be to simply condemn the fuzzy concept of aesthetic experience for some years. Why accept a concept which often means nearly nothing? Could this dogma, to not have a concept around at all, or to crave that it is used more precisely, ensure that people would have to come up with something different, to work for e.g. The Journal of Somaesthetics? As the poets say, don't say flower if you can say rose... Why say aesthetic experience if you can say that a book tickled your imagination or that a film made you feel warm?

I agree with Falk that "practice must be an inherent and recognized part of aesthetics," but this seems to be a thing that happens more when practices have aesthetic thinking on their margins, which is the case with, again, yoga – or why not dancing, where there is also a lot of discussion, but where the main thing remains the bodily dialogue/movement. Instead of working to get this all to the field where aesthetic research dominates, could we try to export aesthetics across the disciplines, institutions, and practices? Why is somaesthetics still rooted in the academy? Can't we become useful somewhere where written discourse and knowledge production is not the number one game? I think we can. Just as aesthetics has become a marginal, but still important part of art education, literature studies, and even some natural sciences (for more, see Ryynänen & Somhegyi 2023), somaesthetics could become integral to dance studies, or yoga, to mention two examples. Should we start *jamming* with people from dance and/or yoga (we are, of course, many of us, often, people who do both (I do yoga))? At least we can 'go out', and this could be a good topic for an issue of *The Journal of Somaesthetics*. How to export the good knowledge we have and achieve more dialogue? Maybe the outcome would make our initial problems of methodology more complicated if we desired to stay there; but on the other hand, as allegorical players of jazz guitar and football, the experience might force and/or entice us to make new moves, though less discursive, to make the *jamming* fruitful. I believe this could have been one of the things that Shusterman was originally aiming at, to not just mix approaches and come up with something new, but to also inform non-philosophers about the potentials and resources that are available in philosophy, and to look for new outcomes.

We also need better descriptions when we attempt to write about different bodily practices. Arnold Berleant has discussed what he calls "descriptive aesthetics" (1992) in pragmatism, but not on the platform we call somaesthetics. He believes that we should start making richer descriptions. We lean too much on descriptions of other, less aesthetically trained people, such as writers. This could again be a new strategy for increasing our skills, and maybe I could think of a shallow use of the word methodology, gaining a more methodological basis. For example, yoga is sometimes well described in classics like Patanjali, but has anyone really attempted the description with philosophical interest and rigidity the way Berleant does, going all the way to small bodily details in the yogic experience? Maybe a theme issue on descriptive aesthetics and somaesthetics could work for the journal too?

Mario Perniola proposed that we should become less interested in results, which stem from modern metaphysics, but rather think of ourselves as mediums (see e.g. Ryynänen 2021), philosophers as mediums of reality. It's worth a try (and Husserl, of course, in phenomenology, might have drifted in the same direction with some of his thoughts on the Epoché, where, after reduction, reality could shine on us philosophically in text). Indian philosophy has always built more on taxonomy, and we might want to follow it (see e.g. Bharata 1999). What kind of somatic reactions and experiences do we have in the body? Should they be listed, just to better understand what we have to play with? There are many ways to choose, but although none will answer, at least discursively, Falk's thoughts, they might offer new ways of wrestling with them - alternatives, if not partners in crime, for the one who thinks of methodology. They might offer methods, ways to walk.

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"A Careful Disorderliness": Some Remarks on Somaesthetics and the Role of Methods in Philosophy [5]

Stefano Marino

Abstract: *In the context of the present issue of* The Journal of Somaesthetics, *specifically dedicated to the topic of methodologies, my article aims to contribute to an open dialogue with some other esteemed colleagues on the question concerning the significance but also the limitations of methods in philosophy. In my article I take somaesthetics as my point of departure and mainly focus on this philosophical discipline in the first two sections, with particular attention to Richard Shusterman's work, from his groundbreaking book* Pragmatist Aesthetics *to his more recent* Adventures of the Man in Gold. *At the same time, coherently with my philosophical background, mostly based on hermeneutics and critical theory, in the following sections of my article I try to broaden the picture and provide some remarks on the role of methodologies in philosophy in general (and not only in somaesthetics), supporting the conception of a philosophy that, following Adorno, proceeds "methodically unmethodically."*

Keywords: *Somaesthetics. Methods. Critical theory. Hermeneutics. Philosophy of music.*

The fanatics of logic are unbearable like wasps
(*Die Fanatiker der Logik sind unerträglich wie Wespen*).
Friedrich W. Nietzsche, *Sokrates und die Tragoedie* (§1).

I am pleased and grateful to have been invited to contribute, with some other esteemed colleagues and dear friends, to this dialogue on the question of philosophical methods. With no ambitions of completeness or systematicity, the aim of my paper is simply, so to speak, to open myself to this dialogue and offer some provisional remarks on the significance but, at the same time, also the limitations of methods in philosophy. Given the context of this issue of *The Journal of Somaesthetics* specifically dedicated to the topic of methodologies, I will take somaesthetics as my point of departure and will mainly focus on this philosophical discipline, with particular attention to Richard Shusterman's work. Coherently with my philosophical background (mostly based on hermeneutics and critical theory, the philosophical traditions and currents that I had mostly researched before and which, in the last years, led to my encounter with pragmatism and somaesthetics, approaches that have enriched my path with new impulses and influences), I will also try to broaden the picture and provide some observations that may hopefully be meaningful for a reflection on philosophy in general, and not only for one of its current forms, i.e. somaesthetics.

5 I would like to sincerely thank Lea Duffell for having carefully read and scrupulously revised my article, polishing my rough English and suggesting valuable revisions that definitely helped me to improve my work.

1.

Somaesthetics is one of the most fertile fields of research in recent philosophical scholarship and debate. By virtue of its openness, its interdisciplinary character, its strong focus on the central role played by the body in human experience, and its capacity to profitably intersect different concepts and fields (thus overcoming the sad narrowness of certain academic limitations), somaesthetics has proved to be able to offer a complex and stimulating framework for the investigation of various topics, ranging from strictly aesthetic questions to existential, ethical, social and also political problems. The important task to broaden the field of aesthetics beyond the traditional limits that have been assigned to this academic discipline in the modern age can be associated, in Richard Shusterman's thinking, with a more general aim: to reconcile philosophical reflection with life and hence to rediscover an idea of philosophy as a "way of life" and an "art of living" that had been partly forgotten or neglected in the last centuries. All this finds a clear reflection in what we may call the standard definition of somaesthetics, understood as "the critical study and meliorative cultivation of the body as the site not only of experienced subjectivity and sensory appreciation (aesthesis) that guides our action and performance but also of our creative self-fashioning through the ways we use, groom, and adorn our physical bodies to express our values and stylize ourselves" (Shusterman, 2019, p. 15).

For me, one of the reasons (although clearly not the only one) which makes somaesthetics a fertile, fruitful and stimulating field of philosophical research lies in, what we may call, an impulse to re-open certain questions, like those concerning the exact nature or status of philosophy and its methods. Of course, depending on one's philosophical approach and perspective, the idea itself of re-opening a certain question (be it epistemological, ontological, ethical, metaphysical, logical, or methodological) may appear in different ways. For example, while some may consider it as a symptom of philosophy's idleness and inconclusiveness, others may arguably view it as a sign of the vast, complex, delicate, difficult and also subtle character of philosophical questions *as such*. Personally, I definitely tend to opt for the latter solution, on the basis of the general idea of philosophy as being an *open* and *pluralist* enterprise. Without necessarily arriving to certain extremely historicist conclusions, according to which "real philosophical questions have a history but have no answer" (Volpi, 2005, p. 7), it is nonetheless reasonable to recognize that philosophy and, more generally, the humanities "cannot dispense with a 'guarantee of answerability' of their questions in the sense that their questions have to be formulated so as to be 'reasonable' and to 'allow for decisions.' … Compared with the natural-scientific guarantee of answer, the questions of the humanities are '*open questions*'." (Krüger, 2021, p. 111; my italics) In my view, with its emphasis—among other things—on the important role played by interpretation in both philosophy and life (especially visible in some contributions in which Shusterman fruitfully intersects the paths of pragmatism and hermeneutics, although not ceding to any form of "hermeneutic holism" or "hermeneutic universalism"), also Shusterman's approach is coherent with what has been said above in regard of the open nature of philosophical questions.

As I said, a philosophy such as somaesthetics stimulates us, among other things, to re-open the questions concerning the status and methods of philosophy. In fact, ever since the introduction and presentation of somaesthetics in the final chapter of *Pragmatist Aesthetics*'s second edition, the question concerning the exact disciplinary status of this new branch of philosophy has always appeared as a very relevant one. It is, therefore, not by chance that in the very first lines of that chapter Shusterman honestly and importantly observes:

> *If somaesthetics is introduced as "a disciplinary proposal," what sort of discipline could it be? How would it, or should it, relate to the traditional disciplines of aesthetics*

> *and philosophy? … If aesthetics is a subdiscipline of philosophy and somaesthetics purports to be a subdiscipline of aesthetics, then by the transitivity of subsumption, somaesthetics should also be a subdiscipline (or a sub-subdiscipline) of philosophy. But, though it clearly involves philosophy, somaesthetics seems to include too much other stuff to be contained as a philosophical subdiscipline. … Moreover, through its practical dimension, somaesthetics even engages in bodily practices that seem foreign, if not inimical, to the tradition of philosophy. … If philosophy is defined as theory, then does not somaesthetics' crucial practical dimension bar its entry as a philosophical subdiscipline?* (Shusterman, 2000, pp. 276, 278–279)

Trying to answer these fundamental questions—and articulating in a clear way the main reasons supporting different views that one may have about the exact disciplinary status of somaesthetics—, Shusterman coherently claims in that context that one can "argue for a wider conception of philosophy …, recalling the ancient idea of philosophy as an embodied practice, a way of life." Although "[t]he ideal of philosophy as … directed toward the improved conduct of life may seem alien to our academic training and professional self-image as specialists of conceptual analysis," it is nonetheless true that "ancient philosophical schools … have often been very different in this regard, applying the institutional discipline of instructing disciples in a far more holistic sense," and thus defining an ideal that, "[f]or all the difficulties it presents for conventional academia, … remains a venerable and appealing model of philosophy" (ibid., p. 279). So, at the end of the last chapter of *Pragmatist Aesthetics*, Shusterman eventually observes: "As a philosopher keen to promote broader and more practical conceptions of his discipline, I prefer to absorb the swell of somaesthetics within the philosophical fold, thus enhancing the discipline of philosophy. … But, I am happy to leave these precise questions of affiliation *provisionally open*" (ibid., p. 280; my italics).

2.

A disciplinary proposal like somaesthetics thus requires to question its exact status and position within the broader discipline of philosophy. By doing so, somaesthetics also stimulates us to reflect on the very status or nature of philosophy itself—for example, by suggesting that philosophy should not be reduced to its theoretical part, but it should also include a practical dimension. With its wide and pluralistic character that includes three main branches (analytic, pragmatic, and practical) and three main dimensions (representational, experiential, and performative), somaesthetics especially invites us to meditate on the methods of philosophical research.

As is well known, the history of modern and contemporary philosophy has been, in part, a history of discourses on method. Especially in certain phases and moments of the history of philosophy in the last centuries, the epistemological question concerning the methods of philosophical and scientific research has been fundamental and really totalizing, as if it was *the* philosophical question *par excellence*. Now, because of its complex, composite and multilayered nature, somaesthetics logically seems to imply the existence of a plurality of methodologies against any reductive conception that may limit the methods of philosophical inquiry to only one legitimate and adequate approach. This already emerges in a very clear way in the aforementioned final chapter of *Pragmatist Aesthetics*, in which, not by accident, the term "method" itself is constantly used by Shusterman in the plural form. Not only that: beside the descriptive and theoretical methods of analytic somaesthetics, Shusterman also includes among the legitimate methodologies for his new disciplinary proposal "specific methods of somatic improvement"

of a pragmatic and practical kind, thus speaking of "various methods to improve certain facts by remaking the body and society," of "diverse methodologies of practice" and "experiential methods," of "different methodologies of pragmatic somaesthetics" and "pragmatic methods of somatic care" (Shusterman, 2000, pp. 272, 276).

In *Pragmatist Aesthetics* and elsewhere, Shusterman's concept of philosophical method (inasmuch as somaesthetics coherently understands itself as a philosophical discipline, as we have seen) seems to be so broad, open and plural, that it allows to subsume under the concept of methodology "a vast variety of pragmatic disciplines" that, on the one hand, are usually considered to lie "outside the legitimized realm of academic philosophy," but, on the other hand, are often recommended "to improve our experience and use of the body: diverse diets, body piercing and scarification, forms of dance and martial arts, yoga, massage, aerobics, bodybuilding, various erotic arts (including consensual sadomasochism), and such modern psychosomatic therapies as the Alexander Technique, the Feldenkrais Method, Bioenergetics, Rolfing, etc." (ibid., p. 272). In speaking of the erotic arts and, in particular, of consensual sadomasochism in terms of experiential methods, Shusterman typically tends to refer to Michel Foucault, a figure that is "exemplary for working in all three dimensions of somaesthetics" (Shusterman, 2008a, p. 29) and that, for him, can be precisely defined as a methodologist: more precisely, "[a] pragmatic methodologist proposing alternative body practices to overcome the repressive ideologies entrenched in our docile bodies. … Bravely practicing the somaesthetics he preached, Foucault tested his favored methodologies by experimenting on his own flesh and with other live bodies" (Shusterman, 2000, p. 281). In this context, it is notable to observe that, on the basis of a general idea of sexual experience as a form of aesthetic experience—inasmuch as the former "seems to capture all the key elements emphasized by the major conceptions of aesthetic experience" (Shusterman, 2008b, p. 93)—, Shusterman's methodological interest in the theories and techniques of lovemaking has finally led him to develop this field of somaesthetic research in a wide and systematic fashion in his book *Ars Erotica* (2021), in accordance with the long-lasting influence of Foucault's "aesthetics of existence" outlined in his *History of Sexuality* and lecture courses, but also with the aim of overcoming certain limitations of Foucault's approach (on this topic, see Antoniol and Marino 2024).

Now, it is certainly possible and, to some extent, also understandable that scholars of philosophy oriented to its more traditional conception as a purely theoretical, analytical and descriptive intellectual enterprise may raise some objections against such an enlarged list of philosophical methodologies that includes, among other things, dance, yoga, psychosomatic techniques and even erotic arts. At the same time, however, it is also understandable that a form of philosophical thought like somaesthetics—oriented to a wider conception of philosophy as "an interdisciplinary field of research, rooted in philosophical theory, but offering an integrative conceptual framework and a menu of methodologies not only for better understanding our somatic experience, but also for improving the quality of our bodily perception, performance, and presentation" (Shusterman, 2017, pp. 101-102)—can be coherently tempted to include those experiences and practices in the list of the legitimate methods for broadly understood philosophical research.

In this context, reflecting on the philosophical challenges posed by somaesthetics and on the potential objections of methodological purists (so to speak), who may express a certain skepticism towards this plea for a plurality of different methods (both theoretical and practical), I personally lean, in general, towards a positive view of methodological pluralism, and I also tend to compare and associate it with other forms of pluralism in philosophy, such as, for

example, with what we may call stylistic pluralism. The stylistic pluralism that has characterized the history of philosophy has been brilliantly described by Arthur C. Danto, who observed that it is hard to think of "a field of writing as fertile as philosophy has been in generating forms of literary expression," so that Western philosophy has famously been

> *a history of dialogues, lecture notes, fragments, poems, examinations, essays, aphorisms, meditations, discourses, hymns, critiques, letters, summae, encyclopedias, testaments, commentaries, investigations, tractatuses,* Vorlesungen, Aufbauen, *prolegomena, parerga,* pensées, *sermons, supplements, confessions, sententiae, inquiries, diaries, outlines, sketches, commonplace books, … and innumerable forms which have no generic identity or which themselves constitute distinct genres:* Holzwege, *Grammatologies, Unscientific Postscripts, Genealogies, Natural Histories, Phenomenologies, and whatever the* World as Will and Idea *may be or the posthumous corpus of Husserl, or the later writings of Derrida, and forgetting the standard sorts of literary forms—e.g., novels, plays, and the like, which philosophers have turned to when gifted those ways* (Danto, 1986, pp. 136, 141).

Mutatis mutandis, is not the question concerning the existence of different philosophical methodologies, in principle, quite similar and hence comparable to the question concerning the existence of different styles and kinds of writing in philosophy? (The latter is currently a widely accepted matter that, for me, must not be confused with a mere reduction of philosophy to a free rhetorical exercise of fascinating forms of *écriture* or something of the kind).[6]

3.

The basic question at the center of this open dialogue—to which I endeavor to contribute with this paper—is the question of how we record our experiences and make them available for critical investigations. With its methodological pluralism, somaesthetics suggests and actually legitimates the existence of various (and sometimes very different) approaches, processes and sets of norms that can be fruitful to accomplish this task. These procedures can include both quantitative and qualitative methodologies, and—given the particular nature of somaesthetics as both a theoretical and practical philosophical discipline—it is also important to add that our focus must not be limited to intellectual methods, but it also needs to be open to practical approaches. If we accept to define philosophical thinking, in a very general way, as a sort of gradual exercise in awareness, aimed to progressively reach objectives such as conceptual realization and the improvement of life, then we can probably say that these objectives are different but at the same time related to each other, inasmuch as it is reasonable to suggest that, at a certain level, a conceptual realization also means an improvement of life (for example, in terms of what Hannah Arendt called the "enlargement of the mind" and the achievement of an "enlarged mentality": see Arendt, 1968, p. 241; 1982, pp. 40–43). What I simply mean is that we can probably understand an achievement of this kind as an improvement of our life at a theoretical and intellectual level, that is, at the level of our broader and better understanding of many things and situations (which, in turn, can obviously have also positive effects on improving our practices, our interactions with the environment and with other people, etc.). However,

6 In this context, it can interesting to note that Shusterman's last authored book is precisely dedicated to the philosophical investigation of the "art of writing" (see Shusterman 2022).

from the perspective of a philosophical discipline like somaesthetics, the idea itself of the improvement of life seems to entail something else and something more than "just" a theoretical and intellectual advancement in our understanding. With its clear invitation to philosophize in practice and also (if not especially) in the dimension of our everyday life, somaesthetics does not only point out what I have previously called conceptual realization but also emphasizes what we may emphatically define as the richness and complexity of life in the very moment of living. [7]

The methodological pluralism that somaesthetics as a philosophical discipline (although new and *sui generis*, in a sense) powerfully invites us to embrace may also lead to asking a more general and more radical question: namely, the question concerning the value and significance of methods in philosophy but, at the same time, also their limitations. In other words, once we accept the existence of a plurality of legitimate and acceptable methods in philosophy, we can further wonder: are methodologies as such, in their differences and varieties, *the* central feature of philosophy, or is it equally important and necessary also to recognize the existence of what we may label extra- or non-methodical dimensions of philosophical work?

In the Introduction to his *Negative Dialectics*, a mature theoretical masterpiece, Theodor W. Adorno—who represents for me one of the most rigorous philosophers of the twentieth century—surprisingly observed:

> *As a corrective to the total rule of method, philosophy contains a playful element which the traditional view of it as a science would like to exorcise. … The un-naïve thinker knows how far he [or she] remains from the object of his [or her] thinking, and yet he [or she] must always talk as if he [or she] had it entirely. This brings him [or her] to the point of clowning. He [or she] must not deny his [or her] clownish traits, least of all since they alone can give him [or her] hope for what is denied him [or her]. Philosophy is the most serious of things, but then again it is not all that serious* (Adorno, 1990, p. 14).

In the context of these cursory observations on methods in somaesthetics (and in philosophy generally), one might be tempted to paraphrase Adorno and claim that methodology is the most serious of things in the realm of philosophy, but then again it is not all that serious. By saying this, it is *not* my intention to support an "anything goes" general attitude (so to speak) that would lead to deny the importance and value of methods in philosophy, both in the traditional conception of this discipline, as a purely theoretical form of investigation, as well as in somaesthetics's enlarged conception of it, as a practical art of living. Rather, my free paraphrase of Adorno's dialectical statement on what we may designate as the serious but at the same time unserious character of philosophy is simply functional to briefly introduce matters concerning the presence of experiential, experimental and, in a sense, genuinely non-methodical components in philosophical work.

At a very general level, we can say that methodological issues fundamentally concern the identification of certain guaranteed rules that are proposed to govern a specific approach. When we speak of methods, in a strict and rigorous sense, we essentially mean sets of rules, principles and procedures. However, even if it is true that there is no game without rules (metaphorically speaking), it is equally true that a game does not only consist of its rules and that sometimes—as happens in musical improvisations and in many other circumstances—we actually "make up the

7 I am grateful to Falk Heinrich for having emphasized and brought to my attention these aspects of philosophy, in general, and somaesthetics, in particular, thus stimulating me to try to reflect on and include them in my paper.

rules as we go along" (Wittgenstein, 2009, §83; see Bertinetto and Bertram, 2020). Metaphors aside, the point is that advancement in research (including philosophical research, or perhaps especially in this field) is not only a question of knowing the right procedures and rules. As one learns from different but comparable sources such as Kant's reflections on the function of the *Urteilskraft*, Gadamer's hermeneutical account of *phronesis*, or Wittgenstein's rule-following paradox, the correct application of rules cannot rest on other methodical rules. Rather, depending on the various contingent situations, the correct application of rules requires what we may describe as extra-methodical human capacities such as reasonableness, free imagination, sensitivity, good taste, tactfulness, intuitiveness, and sometimes even a certain playfulness (as recognized by Adorno in the aforementioned passage from his *Negative Dialectics*). Especially in the current age of Artificial Intelligence, in which numerous processes are apparently governed by mere algorithms and which seems to carry a risk that one day we may arrive at a stage when even philosophical thinking becomes something that "robots can learn and copy"—as Adorno polemically and, for me, a bit unjustly already claimed about analytic philosophy in the 1960s (see Adorno, 1990, p. 30)—, it is all the more important and valuable to take carefully into consideration certain aspects and components of human experience that are apparently irreducible to the pure dimension of procedures and rules. I am aware that these observations will arguably make me appear like an old-fashioned and outmoded humanist, but this is probably what I really am, and hence I accept this objection (or better: I do not consider it as an objection but rather as a compliment).[8] After all, it is not strange that my general philosophical orientation also influences the provisional remarks on methods in philosophy presented here.

My idea of the presence of non-methodical components in philosophical work, and actually the very use of terms such as "extra-methodical" or "unmethodical," clearly bears a trace of my studies on Hans-Georg Gadamer's hermeneutics. In fact, as a sort of counter-reaction to what we may ironically call the methodological frenzy of the modern age, a thinker like Gadamer *critically* identified the primacy of method over truth and over the subject matter itself as one of the defining features of modern thinking. For Gadamer, this predominance of the methodical stance in philosophy and science is tantamount to a restriction and limitation of the vastness, complexity and plurality of our experience and knowledge of the world in its manifold forms—up to the point that Gadamer, without making any plea for the absence of methodology, nonetheless criticizes the "new, narrower sense of knowledge which first became valid in the modern period" (Gadamer, 1996, p. 148). This finds a clear expression in the modern concepts of method and objectivity, in the sense that in modern thinking "only what is approached by methodological means, namely 'what is objectified,' can become the object of scientific knowledge" (Gadamer, 1999, vol. 7, p. 433).

According to Gadamer, in the "new epoch of knowledge of the world" inaugurated by modern philosophy and science, the objects of true knowledge "are defined by the conditions of methodical knowability" (Gadamer, 1998, p. 51) and, most importantly, by the primacy of only

8 With regard to this topic, in this somaesthetic context I am in very good company (so to speak), inasmuch as Shusterman himself, in his recent book *Philosophy and the Art of Writing*, has observed: "Technologies for composing texts (oral utterance, pen, pencil, brush, typewriter, or computer) are not merely external instrumentalities for recording thoughts but tend to shape the thoughts they present. If Plato contrasted orality with writing, later thinkers contrasted writing by hand with typing. … Today computers reshape thought and writing far more aggressively, as programs like Google's Smart Compose instruct you how to complete your thought by predicting what you intend to say, while the program Grammarly tells you that your sentence is too long or needs rephrasing. As writing is a key technology for self-knowledge and self-cultivation, so new technologies of writing (by shaping our thinking and feeling) may reshape philosophy's art of living. … [C]ertain qualities of subtle feeling and nuanced meaning [could] vanish from literary and philosophical culture. Will visual culture fill this gap? If so, it will need more than the digital emoji. We may need a reinvestment in the expressive somaesthetic power of the human voice and somatic gesture and performance to enrich the practice of literature and philosophy. Philosophy's art of living may always require the art of writing, but it also needs more than words to realize its full and most rewarding potential for human flourishing" (Shusterman, 2022, pp. 116–117).

a few legitimate methodologies that are supposed to be valid in all fields of research. From a Gadamerian hermeneutical perspective, "[m]ethodically derived experiences … are abstracted from the totality of human existence" (Bleicher, 1980, p. 118), which means that methodologies typically tend to restrict the entire space of our experience within certain pre-established limits, according to certain pre-defined rules, etc. At the same time, as I have endeavored to show in some of my past writings on this topic (see Marino, 2011), the title *Truth and Method*, Gadamer's masterpiece, has been often misinterpreted as *Truth or Method or Truth against Method*, and it is plainly a misunderstanding to consider a serious philosopher like Gadamer as an enemy of method. As Gadamer himself observed, "I am not at all against method. … I merely maintain that it is not only method the route of access" (Gadamer, 1995, p. 121). So, without failing to recognize the importance and even the indispensability of "methodical rigor" as the sign of "the strictest ethos" of all genuine scientific research, the point is that it is nonetheless possible to argue that "what constitutes the essence of research is much less merely applying the usual methods than discovering new ones," for example by means of the researchers' "creative imagination" (Gadamer, 2004, p. 555).

Given my equivalent interest in philosophical hermeneutics and critical theory of society, in reflecting on the methodological questions in our dialogue it was very easy and spontaneous for me to extend my thoughts to a dialectical thinker such as Adorno, for whom controlled and guaranteed stringency, on the one hand, and spontaneous and unguarded expressiveness, on the other hand, "are not two dichotomous possibilities" in philosophy: rather, these components "need each other; neither one can be without the other. … Whenever philosophy was substantial, both elements" (that is, argument and experience) "would coincide. … Otherwise the argument deteriorates into [a] technique of conceptless specialists amid the concept" (Adorno, 1990, pp. 18, 30) and, conversely, the philosophical import of our free experience, if not counterbalanced by argumentative rigorousness and stringency, runs the risk to degenerate into an arbitrary play with concepts devoid of any specific content. By the way, it is interesting to note the strict correspondence between the concept of "[c]ogency and play [as] the two poles of philosophy" (ibid., p. 15) and the concept of "the unity of discipline and freedom" (Adorno, 2016, p. 136) as one of the guiding ideas of Adorno's philosophical account of art, in general, and of music, in particular. This is fully coherent, I think, with a general conception of philosophy itself as "neither a science nor [a] 'cogitative poetry'," but rather a mixed and hardly definable (but extremely important) form of knowledge, peculiarly characterized by a sort of "suspended state" as an "expression of its inexpressibility" that makes of philosophy "a true sister of music" (Adorno, 1990, p. 109) and, more generally, of all arts.[9]

It is actually well known that Adorno favored one method, namely the dialectical one, over all other philosophical methods, and surely he was *not* a lax or naive opponent of the use of methodologies in philosophy. For example, an important section of the Draft Introduction to his unfinished and posthumous *Aesthetic Theory* is specifically dedicated to the methods in

9 I recognize that in the previous passages there have been mentioned some overlapping notions, such as rigorousness, discipline, stringency, argument, cogency and method, and used in a partially interchangeable way. Of course, I do *not* think that these terms have all exactly the same meaning, and I do rather believe that it is important to be terminologically accurate and thus understand methods in a more precise way—for instance, as fixed patterns and predefined sets of rules that humans being create in order to structure and cognize their life experience by selecting certain aspects and choosing distinct norms and frameworks of observation. At the same time, I would like to explain that putting those notions near each other is terminologically coherent with Adorno's philosophy, and that, besides this, it is also possible to see a conceptual link that connects those notions, inasmuch as one of the basic "drives" or "urges" that guide human beings in the definition and precise codification of methods is precisely that of organizing and even systematizing their "need" or "impulse" to rigorousness, discipline, stringency, cogency, and so on. On this topic, see Adorno's stimulating observations on the relation between *esprit de système* and *esprit systématique*, and, in general, on negative dialectics' attitude towards the presence of both systematic and anti-systematic components in philosophy (Adorno, 1990, pp. 24–26). I am grateful to Falk Heinrich and Max Ryynänen for having read the first version of my paper and having solicited me to reflect more carefully on these specific questions.

aesthetics (where we read that "[t]hat today a general methodology cannot, as is customary, preface the effort of reconceiving aesthetics, is itself of a part with methodology" [Adorno, 2002, p. 357]). More generally, expert scholars in Adorno's aesthetics and philosophy of art have identified several processes that, compounded, contributed to the formation of his unique dialectical method.[10] Furthermore, it is also important to remember that Adorno, besides being a philosopher, was also a musicologist and sociologist: for example, he followed very clear patterns for his musical analyses of both classical music and twentieth-century avant-garde music, as well as of popular music, and he also based his sociological work on certain methodologies. Nevertheless, I think that Adorno, as a philosopher, was also fully aware of the intrinsic limits of all fixed methodologies and so, not by chance, even dialectics was understood by him as more than a method in the usual sense of this term, i.e. as more than an extrinsic "set of axioms or formulas," and rather as something that is "both a method and not a method," as "an indissoluble unity of thinking and experiencing" (Weber Nicholsen and Shapiro, 1993, pp. XIII, XV–XVI). So, on the basis of what has been just said, it will not seem strange or surprising that Adorno, on some occasions, defined his ideal of philosophy as one that "proceeds, so to speak, methodically unmethodically" (Adorno, 1991, p. 13).

4.

At the end of the second section, after having hinted at somaesthetics' methodological pluralism, I somewhat compared it with what I suggested to call stylistic pluralism. Now, on the basis of what has emerged in the third section apropos of Adorno's conception of a philosophy that may proceed "methodically unmethodically," I think that it can be useful to briefly return to the question of stylistic pluralism in philosophy and, with regard to this, I would like to allow myself to open a short digression on the problem of the presentation form (or, in short, the problem of style) in Adorno's thinking. In fact, it is precisely in the context of a rigorous problematization of the role of language and style in philosophy, and more particularly in the context of a reflection on the essay form, that the statement on proceeding "methodically unmethodically" was formulated by Adorno—although, in my interpretation, this statement can be understood not only as a summary of certain qualities that Adorno ascribed to the essay form but also as a fitting short description of his general approach to negative-dialectical thinking.

It is a well-known fact that, in a comparable (but at the same time different) way to Heidegger, Derrida, Rorty and other thinkers who have strongly prioritized the linguistic and, in a sense, stylistic dimension of philosophy, the question concerning the most adequate presentation form in philosophy always played an important role in Adorno's thinking. In his first writings of the early 1930s, for example, he expressed the demand for a new kind of dialectics based on "exact fantasy," as the "*organon* … of philosophical interpretation" (Adorno, 2000, p. 37), and also on the rescue of the "*aesthetic* dignity of words" (Adorno, 2007, p. 38). These same issues were later developed in his major works, in which dialectics, among other things, was conceived for example, as a philosophy characterized by "a critical rescue of the rhetorical element" (Adorno, 1990, p. 56). Adorno's particular dialectical approach led him to reject any sharp disjunction between content and form, i.e. between what is expressed and how it is expressed, which resulted in him claiming that the form of presentation is *not* something external to the subject matter

10 For example, according to Judith Frederike Popp (2021, pp. 191, 193), "Adorno's method provides an extensive research field," in which "[i]nterdisciplinarity plays a main role." For Popp, "Adorno combines systematic conceptions and performative philosophical (self-)critique in his work, which is rooted in his interdisciplinary capacities and professions. He installs five strategies … to theoretically develop conceptual networks and, at the same time, to practically and performatively reflect this theory formation on the level of its linguistic mediation."

itself but rather something that essentially belongs to it and is dialectically interwoven with it. As Adorno explained in the 1930s:

> *The distinction between form and content in philosophical language is not a disjunction in an eternity without history. … It is based on the view that concepts and, with them, words are abbreviations of a multiplicity of characteristics whose unity is constituted solely by consciousness. … Words [however] are never merely signs of what is thought under them, but rather history erupts into words, establishing their truth-character. The share of history in the word unfailingly determines the choice of every word because history and truth meet in the word* (Adorno, 2007, pp. 35–36).

As Adorno also explained in his essay appropriately entitled *The Essay as Form*, the philosophers' indifference to the formal, stylistic and, in a sense, aesthetic component in the composition of a philosophical text have often led to use stereotyped forms that, in turn, were partially responsible for the presentation of dogmatized contents. This particular critique is based on Adorno's dialectical conception of the mutual relation and influence between the content of a text (and also of a work of art, of course) and its form. This also allowed him to state, for example, that according to positivist methodological procedures

> *the content, once fixed on the model of the protocol sentence, is supposed to be neutral with respect to its presentation, which is supposed to be conventional and not determined by the subject. … In its allergy to forms as mere accidental attributes, the spirit of science and scholarship comes to resemble that of rigid dogmatism* (Adorno, 1991, p. 5).

It is thus not surprising that most Adorno's works were written in alternative presentation forms. The most important, in this context, are aphorisms (especially exemplified by one of his major works, *Minima Moralia*), the so-called "paratactical composition" (particularly testified by *Aesthetic Theory*, Adorno's late and unfinished masterpiece), and the essay form itself. The latter played an extraordinarily significant role in Adorno's intellectual production, so that at least eleven out of the twenty volumes of his *Gesammelte Schriften* are collections of essays. For Adorno, the essay provokes resistance because it transgresses "the orthodoxy of thought," inasmuch as its "innermost formal law" is "heresy" (ibid., p. 23). Establishing a clear connection between the dimension of thinking and that of writing, in his observations on the essay Adorno arrives to attributing some basic features of his own ideal of negative dialectics to this presentation form. For example, he explains that in the essay "concepts are not derived from a first principle, nor do they fill out to become ultimate principles" (ibid., p. 4), and also that "the essay, in accordance with its idea, draws the fullest conclusions from the critique of system" and "incorporates the antisystematic impulse into its own way of proceeding" (ibid., pp. 9–10). As we can see, the co-presence of a systematic orientation and an antisystematic impulse that animates Adorno's negative dialectics as a unique form of thinking finds a precise correspondence, at the level of writing, in the co-existence of those same aspects that he seems to detect in the very principle of the essay form. At the same time, for Adorno the essay form (like negative dialectics, again) "does not stand in simple opposition to discursive procedure" and "is not unlogical," because "it obeys logical criteria insofar as the totality of its propositions must fit together coherently"; rather, it simply "does not develop its ideas in accordance with discursive logic. … It coordinates

elements instead of subordinating them" (ibid., pp. 22–23). The idea of a form of thinking—and a form of writing, in the specific case of these reflections on the essay form—that is not merely unlogical or irrational but rather logical or rational in a different and enlarged way (so to speak), i.e. capable of being dialectically inclusive towards the unlogical within its logic and making room for the irrational within its rationality: this idea becomes not only fruitful in the specific and delimited context of current Adorno scholarship (for example, in terms of an investigation of the dialectical relation between truth and untruth: see Marino 2019 and 2021), but it can be also stimulating in the more general context of a reflection on the very idea of a philosophy that, as I said, is able to proceed "methodically unmethodically." So, it is precisely the question concerning the relation between what we may call the methodical and non-methodical aspects of philosophizing to which I will return in the following, final section of my paper.

5.

After the first two sections strictly focused on somaesthetics, I dedicated the third and fourth to a brief digression on two philosophical traditions (hermeneutics and critical theory), and particularly on two thinkers (Gadamer and Adorno) that have had a strong influence in shaping my idea of philosophy and philosophical methods. On the one hand, my Gadamerian and Adornian background leads me to have the greatest respect for the role played by discipline, rigorousness, stringency and methodological accuracy in philosophical work (on the basis of a general acceptance of the legitimacy of diverse methodologies in our field, i.e. what I have previously termed methodological pluralism). On the other hand, precisely this hermeneutical and dialectical background has also led me to reflect on the limits of the methodical component and the presence of other aspects in philosophy, which, as I said, should not (and perhaps simply cannot) be regimented, disciplined and subsumed under the exact rules of a given methodology. What is essential, from this point of view, is the co-presence of what we may define the controlled, rigorous and stringent component of philosophizing and, at the same time, its unrestrained, imaginative, experiential and even experimental component: in order to summarize this discourse in a quick and understandable way, I have used before the simple notions of "methodical" vs. "unmethodical." In a sense, if I may venture a free comparison between philosophy and pop-rock music, drawing inspiration from King Crimson's album *Discipline*—one of the greatest masterpieces in the career of this band and, for me, in the entire history of twentieth-century music—we could say that the aim is always that of finding the best possible equilibrium between the equally essential components of discipline and indiscipline.

What I am trying to point out here is that a "non-method"—or, more strictly, a non-methodical component—is an important part of any method and, in a sense, represents the partiality and fallibility of any method. To put it simply, my idea is that we surely need methods, which I have previously defined as fixed patterns and predefined sets of rules that humans being create in order to structure and cognize their life experience by selecting certain aspects and choosing distinct norms and frameworks of observation.[11] However, we know that the correct application of the latter cannot rest, in turn, on other rules (unless one accepts to fall in some sort of *regressus in infinitum*), but it rather relies on some capacities or virtues that are acquired by experience, or that sometimes derive from a special talent, and that cannot be subsumed in any way under the

11 At a more general level, we probably need rules to simply structure our lives, because—following various insights that one can derive from different authors, such as Nietzsche, Gehlen, Gadamer, Bourdieu, MacIntyre and others—it is the "second nature" of the human being as such that it requires the developments of norms, habits and procedures. However, they must *never* be understood as merely "given" and purely "natural" (in a reductive sense of this terms), and hence determined once and for all, but rather as flexible, changeable, historical and revisable, and thus, in a spirit of pragmatic meliorism, also improvable.

notion of method in the strict sense of this term. Furthermore, my aforementioned discourse on "non-method" as part of any method also aims to emphasize the presence of dimensions of our experience that transcend the limits of a field's methodological framing and that open us to what we may call the unknown, the unexpected and the undisciplined. The realm of inspiration, creativity, impulse and affect constitutes a way of tapping into what we may emphatically describe as the enigmaticalness of life and represents a field that cannot be approached through a strict methodology—or, in a more metaphorical fashion, can be uncovered through "non-methods." These exceeding dimensions can always foster new developments, stimulate our impulse to overcome or transgress the limits of a certain predetermined set of norms, or uncover aspects which can be consequently observed and analyzed. However, in doing so, they also increase our awareness of the partial, relative, contingent and incomplete character of every fixed methodology.

In my writings in the field of aesthetics—especially in the aesthetics of popular music (Marino, 2018, 2022a, and 2022b)—I have sometimes tried to compare and intersect the different influences exercised on me by critical theory and hermeneutics with the more recent influence exercised on me by somaesthetics. Can this kind of comparative approach be fertile and fruitful also in the context of the present observations on the role of methods in philosophy? As I have tried to show in the second section, dedicated to a very brief survey on certain fundamental methods of somaesthetic research thematized by Shusterman, what emerges at a methodological level is a clear pluralist attitude. With regard to Adorno's methods but, at the same time, his emphasis on the importance to preserve the freedom to also proceed unmethodically, it has been observed that "he disturbs conceptual analysis by combining it with a narrative-essayistic style that tests its language in order to *leave space for the undetermined*. He transcends fixed models by demonstrating the ability of language to *voice the undisciplined* of being by letting it show. … The instruments are exact phantasy and imagination, as well as rehabilitation of the rhetoric and practicing metaphors of suddenness" (Popp, 2021, p. 194; my italics). Can we try to connect the Adornian ideal of a philosophy that aims to proceed "methodically unmethodically" to the questions and challenges raised by a new philosophical discipline like somaesthetics, with its ambitious aim to be "[a]n ameliorative discipline of both theory and practice" (Shusterman, 2000, p. 101)? Is it also possible to derive from somaesthetics some fruitful elements and suggestions for a philosophy that aims to be methodologically rigorous and disciplined but, at the same time, open to what I have previously called the undisciplined? In my opinion, yes.

In the third and fourth sections, I have summarized, through the "Kingcrimsonian" discipline/indiscipline distinction, what had been explained about method in a more traditional fashion (relying on insights derived from hermeneutics and critical theory). One of the reasons for my fascination with somaesthetics from my first encounter with it is the fact that, at a methodological level, it somehow invites us to be very disciplined but at the same time also a bit undisciplined, i.e. spontaneous, free and, above all, conscious of the contingent, conventional and revisable nature of human norms and rules (including those which concern philosophical and scientific methodologies, let alone the rules at the basis of the various arts). By saying this I mean that somaesthetics, although not denying at all the importance of methodical procedures and, indeed, recognizing the existence and value of a wide plurality of different methodologies (both theoretical and practical), also stimulates us to relativize them, as an antidote to the frequent risk in philosophy (but also in science and art) to absolutize and dogmatize them. As a consequence, a philosophy like somaesthetics also invites us to be unafraid to indulge what we may provisionally call our free "inspiration," provided that this does *not* monopolize

the philosopher's attention and become hegemonic at the expense of the strictly methodical component, but rather interacts with it in a well-balanced and fruitful way.

Perhaps one of the reasons why I was fascinated by this approach, and even one of the reasons why I personally tend to interpret somaesthetics in this way (in comparison with its other possible interpretations that may well exist), is based on individual and even idiosyncratic factors, such as, for example, my background as a pop-rock musician, more specifically, a drummer. In my view, indeed, finding the best possible balance between discipline and indiscipline—or, freely adapting Adorno's terminology to what can be defined as the aesthetics of drumming (see Bruford 2018), the best possible balance between cogency and discipline, on the one hand, and play and freedom, on the other hand—has always been the secret of all the great drummers in the history of pop-rock music (and not only, of course). As different as their musical styles and their approaches to the use of drums and cymbals can be, *mutatis mutandis* the magic of the drumming of different players, such as Ginger Baker, Keith Moon, "Mitch" Mitchell, John Bonham, Ian Paice, Jon Hiseman, Aynsley Dunbar, Bill Bruford, Phil Collins, Carl Palmer, Stewart Copeland, Lars Ulrich, Igor Cavalera, Dave Grohl, Matt Chamberlain, Chad Smith, Brad Wilk, Matt Cameron and many others, lies exactly in their capacity to find diverse forms of balance between granitic solidity and dynamical fluency, combining these two qualities together, and expressing them on record and especially on stage (quite often with significant volumes of improvisation).

What has been previously said about the invitation, which I seem to find in somaesthetics, to indulge all the potential sources of "inspiration" that may help us improve our philosophical work and may fruitfully interact with our methodological framework, can be already identified in Shusterman's personal explanation of his gradual shift to a philosophy centered on the body. Let me illustrate this with a very clear and direct example. In the interview entitled "Philosophy and the Body," Shusterman cites a Seminar in Aesthetics that he had held many years ago at Temple University as a seminal source of inspiration for his decision to philosophize on the body, which would eventually lead to the coinage of the concept itself of soma—"the sentient purposive body," conceived as both *Körperhaben* and *Leibsein*, "both subject and object in the world," breeding the insight that "[o]ur experience and behavior are far less genetically hardwired than in other animals," and revealing that "human nature is always more than merely natural but instead deeply shaped by culture" (Shusterman, 2019, pp. 14–15). The Seminar included PhD students of philosophy, English, visual arts, and especially dance (some of whom were also "very talented performers," according to Shusterman) and, as he recalls, was held late in the afternoon. After the end of this regular teaching activity, however, Shusterman and his students would go out drinking and dancing, eventually having breakfast all together at 3:00 in the morning. The point, obviously, is *not* that drinking and dancing all night long should be considered, strictly speaking, as a philosophical activity, let alone as a proper philosophical methodology, because, as such, it is clearly not. However, what is stimulating is hearing from the own voice of somaesthetics's founder that precisely such extra-philosophical and undoubtedly non-methodical experiences functioned as a (or perhaps the) source of inspiration to discover the "incredible sensitivity," the "special knowledge and skills," and the particular "bodily intelligence" that sometimes non-philosophers (like dancers, in this case, or musicians, performers, sport players and so on, in other somaesthetic situations) may possess and may disclose to academically-trained and methodologically-framed philosophical minds that, in fact, can benefit from this kind of dialogue and openness in order to recognize that those other forms of sensitivity, knowledge

and intelligence have not been given "enough recognition … in the intellectual world."[12]

The lesson that we can learn from this testimony is, again, one of great pluralism and, above all, of great openness to the valuable fact that free, spontaneous and unrestricted experiences can potentially have a fuel for philosophical work: a work that, in my view, *cannot* be uncontrolled and methodically unguaranteed but, at the same time, must strive to preserve the boost of those experiences and not disempower them through an excess of conceptualizing or abstract theorizing. Is it possible to see a connection and a sort of *fil rouge* between what I have defined above as the very origin of the project of a philosophy centered on the body, on the one hand, and some recent developments of Shusterman's somaesthetic research, on the other hand? In my opinion, yes. For example, it can be observed that the spontaneous and even transgressive experiential dimension of letting oneself go and freely opening up to unexpected events, or even being "possessed" by the power of certain experiences (although *not* arbitrarily and without any limits, but, again, with the attempt to establish a sort of dialectics between the component of limits and controls, on the one hand, and the impulse to overcome those same limits and controls, on the other hand), is well represented by Shusterman's experimental work as *l'homme en or* (Shusterman, 2016). Given that this work is now well known by scholars of somaesthetics (and not only), I will not open here a long digression in order to describe and explain it to the readers of *The Journal of Somaesthetics*. Rather, I will limit myself to remind that what I am referring to is a work that has originally mixed philosophical theory, performance art and real life, and has gradually arrived to be considered as an integral part of Shusterman's somaesthetic work, up to the point that the entire second part of a recent book wholly dedicated to his philosophy is centered on various interpretations of the "adventures of the Man in Gold" and entitled, significantly, "Performative Philosophy and the Man in Gold" (see Abrams, 2022, pp. 125–240).

At the end of the third section of the contribution, in briefly discussing Adorno's ideal of a sort of unmethodical method, I have cited Nicholsen's and Shapiro's formula of "an indissoluble unity of thinking and experiencing," coined to describe Adorno's negative dialectics. From a certain point of view, this expression can be functional and fitting also in different philosophical contexts, including somaesthetics. Of course, in thinking of the "indissoluble unity of thinking and experiencing" and in reflecting on the unrestrained, experiential, experimental and playful component of philosophizing that Adorno spoke of, it is difficult to imagine Adorno walking, running and dancing in a golden suit, as Shusterman does when he performs as "the Man in Gold." Indeed, in arguing for the importance to transgress certain fixed methodological boundaries to favor imagination, innovation and experimentation, a more traditional thinker like Adorno veritably had something different in mind from Shusterman's eccentric, fanciful, extravagant and unpredictable performances in various parts of the world, captured by the photos and films of his "partner in crime" Yann Toma, and then carefully scrutinized and narrated in a philosophical way by Shusterman himself in his essays on this particular topic. Nonetheless, in principle it is not impossible to see some convergences between these (and potentially also other) different ways of protesting against every attempt to reduce philosophical work only to a careful application of certain predefined methodical rules, in order to defend, vice-versa, the importance of (non-methodically definable) free, spontaneous, imaginative and expressive components of philosophizing.

The methodological pluralism of somaesthetics, combined with its capacity to include in

12 The entire interview is available on this website: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LXBf2l_tUVI.

its theory (but also put into practice) certain transgressive, experimental and non-methodical practices, is particularly significant in this context. In fact, it can help us to recognize the value of methods in philosophy but at the same time their limits, and thus it can lead us to acknowledge in a more careful way the delicate dialectics between the methodical and unmethodical aspects that, for me, is characteristic of philosophy and, more in general, of human life. At the end of the day, it probably also remains true for philosophers what Herman Melville stated at the beginning of Chapter 82 of his *Moby Dick*: "There are some enterprises in which a careful disorderliness is the true method."

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Somaesthetics and future practices of "Doing" aesthetics

Aurosa Alison

Abstract: *In this contribution, I aim to illustrate how the discipline of Somaesthetics is developed not only theoretically but also from an application and practical standpoint. Indeed, in the examples I provide, we can observe the application of Somaesthetics within three areas: 1. Dwelling, 2. Architectural design and processing within design courses, 3. The concept of urban involvement through the contribution of Man in Gold. My intention is to explore the latest developments in Somaesthetics within the fundamental context of creative action in design and architecture.*

Keywords: *Creation, Practice, Discipline, Architecture, Dwelling.*

1. Some good methodological premises

I am very pleased to participate in such an engaging and stimulating debate about the methodological approach of Somaesthetics. First, I would like to point out that the moment we delve into the realm of Somaesthetics, we do so as a full-fledged *discipline, rather than merely exploring a theoretical concept* (Shusterman, 2000, 1999).

Already in itself, therefore, Somaesthetics demands the development of its own methodology. In fact, Shusterman takes the systemic programming of aesthetics directly from its theoretical founder, Baumgarten (1750). In this regard, the systemic question of the philosophical discipline of aesthetics, avails itself of a reconstructive quality, which Shusterman wants to add regarding the practical implication:

> *"Intriguing as these inquiries are, my prime goals here are reconstructive rather than historical: (1) to revive Baumgarten's idea of aesthetics as a life-improving cognitive discipline that extends far beyond questions of beauty and fine arts and that involves both theory and practical exercise; (2) to end the neglect of the body that Baumgarten disastrously introduced into aesthetics (a neglect intensified by the great idealist tradition in nineteenth-century aesthetics); (3) to propose an enlarged, somatically centered field,* Somaesthetics*, that can contribute significantly to many crucial philosophical concerns, thus enabling philosophy to more successfully redeem its original role as an art of living"* (Shusterman, 2000, pp. 266 – 267).

Practical experience is an integral part of Shusterman's disciplinary proposition and is almost always (not always) related to improved quality of life. The fundamental concept is, in my view, the aspect of the three dimensions of Somaesthetics also recalled by Heinrich: 1) Analytical Somaesthetics; 2) Pragmatic Somaesthetics; and 3) Practical Somaesthetics. While the first two types are contextualized in the domains of knowledge and prescription, the last type, the practical one, is inscribed in "… All about actually practicing such care through intelligently disciplined body work aimed at somatic self-improvement" (Shusterman, 2000, p.276). I emphasize "not always," because the realm of "practice" and "experience" is often described or used by Shusterman

in various spheres, such as those of performing arts, music, popular contexts, underground cultures, and notably, what is now called *everyday aesthetics* (Saito, 2007).

I found particularly interesting the proposition of Falk Heinrich about the practice of Somaesthetics: *Philosophical aesthetics normally does not apply empirical methods somehow measuring the perceiving subject. This means that the philosopher actually is investigating their own sensations and perceptions by establishing a reflective stance towards themselves, a kind of introspection with the help of already existing aesthetic theories*.

In fact, there is always a kind of fear in the philosophical world, especially the academic world, in wanting to step out of the box and put into practice the aesthetic theories on which one researches. I must confess, that when I first encountered Somaesthetics, I finally found a dimension that I had been trying to enter as a young researcher for some time. A dimension scientifically proven but with the possibility of "experiencing" what one is working on.

> *I first had a similar approach to the world of the contemporary Imaginary and with an author considered not very classical: Gaston Bachelard. Bachelard, in fact, introduces in his philosophical system, two totally opposite lines of thought: the epistemological one and the phenomenological-aesthetic one related to the world of natural elements and reverie* (Alison, 2020).

This almost bipolar view in Bachelard's philosophical method prompted me to recognize the unique possibility in philosophy - that methodology could be enriched based on the preceding theoretical framework. Regarding the practical implication, Bachelard introduces a fundamental concept in his philosophy, that of material imagination. Bachelard, in his extensive theorization of the philosophical dimension of images, first and foremost establishes a clear demarcation between material imagination and formal imagination (Bachelard, 1942). The images he defines as "material" respond to dynamics of combination through which material elements accord. Water, earth, air, and fire represent not only natural elements, but they also find resonance within the realm of the creative imagination. This introduction to material imagination can point out how, in the *production craft*, one can distinguish the dynamic value of matter. The very image of the craftsman inspired by matter refers us to another Bachelardian, that of the pétrisseur, or the one who works the material of dough or the combination of the two elements of earth and water. The so-called *pétrissage* includes the working by hand of the material through a real discernment of reality. Bachelard is a prime example that came to mind, regarding the production of an artifact, which represents a form of knowledge.

Continuing with Heinrich's methodological proposal, another passage for which I totally agree is: "In other words, one methodological challenge lies in incorporating the experiential dimension as an integral part of theory development, not solely when writing at my desk as an act of recalling, but also within the context of practical engagement."

Practical involvement must belong to the apparatus of knowledge, first, to find the objectivity of knowledge but also its concreteness. Somaesthetics, in this regard, is a comprehensive discipline since it insists on multiple aspects without leaving out the application context as fundamental. And in this sense, I echo the sentiments expressed by Max Ryynänen: "By 'rehearsing' and practicing – reading, listening, talking – we learn to improvise in a variety of situations. There are no rules for how to play football or how to play jazz guitar when we go to the top, although it is useful to train different kicks and situations, and, in guitar playing, learn chords, modalities and licks/riffs played by masters. You have to, though, have tekhne for it (technique, skill,

practice), and poiesis, creativity to go with, but no one can say that there is a clear methodology for successful playing. And for success in philosophy, it is sometimes enough that a colleague says 'that is interesting'".

We live in an Era that, unfortunately, prioritizes skill enhancement over life improvement. The aspect of *poiesis*, which Ryynänen emphasizes, holds a significant place in Somaesthetics. That is free and sensitive creativity, decoupled from the concept of power but connected to the improvement of the quality of the self. And again, about the practical and solipsistic aspect:

> *Like said, Falk's main interest is in the field of methodological problems in somaesthetics, which deals with "function and significance of the human body in aesthetic experiences" and has issues with "difficulties regarding the first-person observation of oneself." It is true that to some extent it is messy with subjective and objective points of view, if the main way of discussing phenomena is always one's own sensation, whether witnessing art or e.g., dancing, which is Falk's own take on this. Still, if one thinks of it, it is maybe not always problematic to be the observer and the observed at the same time. If anything, here could be thought of as methodological, it could be the interest in preciseness which has haunted philosophy since its origins. One problem is that philosophy has nearly always aimed too much for universality.* (Ryynänen, 2023)

In fact, the starting point is our body which represents the connection we have with the rest of the world, it is our perceptual "prius" (Merleau-Ponty, 1945), but at the same time, as Shusterman points out, it has considerable facets in the theoretical-philosophical treatment of the first part of the twentieth century (Shusterman, 2008).

In the second chapter of *Body Consciousness. A Philosophy of Mindfulness and Somaesthetics* titled *The Silent, Limping Body of Philosophy: Somatic Attention Deficit in Merleau-Ponty*, Shusterman points out how the father of perception theories uses the body from a uniquely material and non-experiential point of view. This underscores that the somatic aspect of the body implies experience, which is a fundamental aspect of putting somaesthetics into practice. Consequently, it is not enough to use the body as an object of connection to knowledge; instead, the "living body" is integral to the systematic nature of the Somaesthetics discipline. This is precisely why my exploration of the material experience of manual work, concerning material imagination, led me to examine the co-presence of the sentient body of the artisan, as well as that of the designer or architect.

Probably, the practical field is the one that has not only always fascinated me the most, but more importantly, it has always been how I communicate with students in Architecture schools. This is because, in architecture or design students, there is always a desire to search for a theoretical structure on which their creations are based. They are fascinated by the discourse of Somaesthetics because this discipline relates their work to academic stability based on *experience*. In this regard, I can cite an example that I think is important to understand how students need to get into the merits of their design and artistic experiences—that of *storytelling*. The exercises they are often asked to do are always practical, but in the background, they have the input of narrative to focus on the fundamental points of what they are creating. With final-year architecture students, within the Architectural Design workshops, I first propose creating "Phenomenological Maps" or "Drift Maps." They map the spaces of their inspections, which often occur in European suburbs, through their feelings and emotions. This form of storytelling,

which takes its cues from Debord's Situationism, helps them understand how to imagine and design future spaces in already existing spaces. These representational maps record Their emotional experience precisely (Alison, 2020). The experience aspect is not always the easiest to record because finding a similar way for all disciplines is complicated.

On the other hand, Drift Maps represent a small piece of how practical experience can enter the merits of a design dynamic in which the critical aspect is fundamental. In the next three paragraphs, I want to illustrate, instead, the theoretical aspects underlying the predominance of experience and practice within the discipline of Somaesthetics. Here, I have found the contexts of dwelling, architecture, and performativity in cities as helpful cues for creating further examples of recording.

2. Aesthetics and Somaesthetics of Dwelling

In May 2022, I had the pleasure of being invited by Max Ryynänen to deliver a lecture at the Aalto "*Space, Body, Objects, Atmosphere, Gender. Dwelling Manifesto,*" where I presented the advancement of my research regarding the aesthetics of dwelling. Indeed, this field of research is very broad, and in the discipline of Somaesthetics, I found several essential methodological insights.

Let's start with a more detailed presentation of the points of my research on living, which starts from a similar conception of the *Art of Living*. I would like to delve into the main points in my lecture. The starting point for the research is precisely the methodology I intend to undertake in this research. The first point is aptly titled: *Philosophical Methodology: Something of Popular - Something like Phenomena*. The references I have begun to use are extremely different as theoretical foundations, but very close as an approach to contextualizing practice or *praxis* in the phenomenological reading of dwelling, that is, of a dasein of dwelling. The first reference is Antonio Gramsci, who wrote in the *Prison Notebooks* (Gramsci, 1975), "...For the philosophy of *praxis*, being cannot be separated from thought, man from nature, activity from matter, subject from object. If one makes this *detachment*, one falls into one of the many forms of religion or into meaningless abstraction".

I have intentionally italicized the two words, praxis and detachment, because they represent the heart of the problem. The choice to use Gramsci's idea into my research is influenced by Shusterman's use of him in the introduction to the Italian edition of *Pragmatist Aesthetics*: "I would like to recall the extraordinary contribution of Antonio Gramsci. He made to understanding *popular art*, also emphasizing in a penetrating way how such art cannot be confined to a simple demographic niche since the people themselves are not a homogeneous social or cultural group" (Shusterman, 2010, p. 27).

Another reference that plays a pivotal role in the introduction to my research on the aesthetics of living is John Dewey's concept of aesthetic experience as introduced in *Art as experience*: "… Recovering the continuity of esthetic experience with normal processes of living…" (Dewey, 2005, p. 16). The normal process of living would correspond to the "basic vital functions" [as dwelling] (Dewey, Ibidem). A second point in my presentation relates two other methodological concepts: Aesthetics, understood as *aisthesis*, and Neo-Phenomenology. Regarding the Greek term *aisthesis*, Shusterman, as well as Ryynänen, highlights a significant aspect, namely the meeting of poiesis and techne:

> *The so-called Greek arts were not really because they were described as techne and poiesis, the modern conception and practice of art (nor event its Latin root) not yet*

> *having been shaped… Experience of beauty and sublimity undoubtedly predate the eighteenth-century birth of aesthetic, but they cannot therefore be reasonably excluded from the domain of aesthetic experience. Indeed, the term "aesthetic" was introduced to account for and structure these prior experiences which were too various in quality to be subsumed under the term's "beauty" and "sublimity", too rich in meaning to be described as mere taste, and obviously too extensive to be circumscribed by the practice of art.* (Shusterman, 2000, p. 48).

Sensitive knowledge lends itself to a further fundamental concept, that of practice. Experience is fundamental when dealing with beauty. It is not enough to approach the sublime solely from a theoretical point of view; it must also be explored from a practical perspective.

When it comes to Neo-Phenomenology, it is imperative to delve deeper into the philosophical theorization of the concept of *Atmosphere*. In fact, Shusterman's reading of Atmospheres theory is often critical because it leaves no room for the soma to express itself practically but only as a proprioceptive subject. But shifting the topic to the methodological use of practice in the cognitive form of Somaesthetics, Neo-Phenomenology can help us have an additional suggestion:

> *New Phenomenology, as I have conceived and developed it, aims to male their actual lives comprehensible to humans, that is, to make accessible again spontaneous life experience in continuous contemplation after having cleared artificial ideas prefigured in history. Spontaneous life experience in anything that happens to humans in a felt manner without their having intentionally constructed it.* (Schmitz, 2019, p.44)

> *In its empirical humbleness of following up on spontaneous life experience instead of wanting to apodictically deliver ultimate justifications by means transcendental speculation or contemplating essences, New Phenomenology is marked by an openness which other branches of philosophy lack: its utility in the context of applied sciences… New Phenomenology has inspired other disciplines. We should, however, keep in mind that it has not yet had as much influence as it could and should have. Group one: Architecture [theory of dwelling, interior space, urban environments] …* (Schmitz, 2019, p.49).

The experience of spontaneous living, as Hermann Schmitz points out, can be a useful subject for this methodological reading of ours. And about the methodology of an aesthetics of living, I have concluded: 1) Pragmatist Aesthetics: theorizes the active experience, 2) New Phenomenology: theorizes the passive experience, and 3) Dwelling is in the exact middle being both.

In Neo-Phenomenological passive experience, however, we must remember that there is the experience of spontaneous life, so there is the possibility of using the theory of Atmospheres in the methodological considerations of Somaesthetics as well.

3. Somaesthetics and Architecture

Another area in which I have had the opportunity to practice and theorize somaesthetic methodology based on putting it into *practice* is architecture. Currently, I am working on the Italian translation and edition of an essay by Richard Shusterman entitled: *Somaesthetics and*

Architecture. A critical option. This essay was first presented as a lecture at the 11th International Conference of the Bauhaus - *Universität in Weimar* in 2009. A year later, in 2010, it was the subject of an expanded presentation at the *Haute Ecole d'Art et de Design* in Geneva. Later in 2012, it was published as the tenth chapter of the book: *Thinking through the body. Essays in Somaesthetics.*

This paper presents fundamental points for articulating somaesthetic methodology within the context of architecture. Indeed, Shusterman's contribution, in the French version, explicit underscores how critique, is fundamental in the context of improving the quality of life - a position closely aligned to the famous father of Modernism, Le Corbusier. Shusterman, also highlights other instances of critical approaches in the use of methodology, such within the Modern movement or the Bauhaus School, where a critical utopia is constituted (Shusterman, 2010, p. 9).

In discussing the role of criticism, Shusterman introduces the relationship between architecture and Somaesthetics and elucidates how the latter can provide critical input. The presentation of Somaesthetics in this architectural context is as follows:

> *"Rooted in a classical pragmatist tradition that considers experience as a crucial philosophical concept for which the body is central, Somaesthetics is to critically study and cultivate, from a meliorative perspective the way we experience and use the living body (or the and use the living body (or soma) as a site of sensory appreciation [aisthesis] and creative self-shaping. Somaesthetics is therefore linked to knowledge, discourses, practices and bodily disciplines that structure or seek to refine such somatic attention. It is in fact a discipline that encompasses both theory and practice"* (Shusterman, 2010, p.16).

I would like to revise the definition of Somaesthetics because, even in the case of critical input, Shusterman reminds us that it is a discipline based on theory and *practice*. Somaesthetics, as Shusterman points out, carries a dual meaning: it emphasizes the perceptual role of the soma and its aesthetic applications in shaping the self and its environment while also serving as a means of evaluating the aesthetic qualities of other people and things (Shusterman, 2010, p.16). Furthermore, he adds that in his pursuit of pragmatist aesthetics, he arrived at the discipline of Somaesthetics to integrate the importance of bodily performance and especially aesthetic practice, not only confined to the field of Fine Arts but extending into different aspects of daily life (Shusterman, 2010, p.17). The experiential characteristic of Somaesthetics, is translated with architecture through the soma, which is the tool par excellence with all spatial articulations, through which to perceive and articulate space.

The soma is the crucial medium through which, architecture is generated and experienced (Shusterman, 2010, p.27). In relation to this dual function of the soma, Shusterman introduces a concept very dear to me, that of shintai taken up by architect Tadao Ando:

> *A 'place' is not the absolute space of Newtonian physics, that is. a universal space, but a space with meaningful directionality and a heterogeneous density that is born of a relationship to what I choose to call shintai. (Shintai is ordinarily translated as body', but in my use of the word I do not intend to make a clear distinction between mind and body: by shintai I mean a union of spirit and flesh. It acknowledges the world and at the same time acknowledges the self.)* (Tadao Ando, 1995, p.453).

Shintai, deeply rooted in an already experiential theory, focuses its theoretical lens on the body's movement in space, understood as a somatic practice. In this regard, I had the opportunity to edit the Issue of the Journal of Somaesthetics *Body, Space, Architecture* - Vol. 8, No. 22 (2022). This volume featured a diverse array of contributions that resonated with each other, full of many keywords such as city, experience, soma, gesture, relationship, urbanism, built environment, and virtual (Alison, 2022). The common thread that ran through these contributions was the central theme of *practice*, also understood as experience.

4. The Art of Living the City as a Man in Gold

A final example I would like to provide that illustrates the Somaesthetics methodology, is based on the importance of practice, featuring Shusterman's avatar of the Man in Gold. The Man in Gold is a practical representation of what Shusterman understands as the performance of the Somaesthetic discipline. Indeed, in presenting this alter-ego's birth, he introduces its creation's cause. The man in Gold approach comes from numerous requests from artists and attendees of Somaesthetics Workshops for practical examples of how to apply this theory to contemporary art creation (Shusterman,2016, p.9). A second reason was that always featuring Shusterman as the protagonist within a photography session, in which he takes the photographs, brings him closer to thinking that he would feel more comfortable as the subject of the same pictures. (Shusterman, 2016, p.12). The third decisive cause was an encounter with the artist Yann Toma as part of a project that featured some philosophers chosen by the artist. Each philosopher was filmed presenting one of the key concepts of their work. Shusterman chose that of experience (Shusterman, 2016, p.13). A second opportunity to work with Toma was as part of the "Flux Radiants" project, in which Toma wanted to capture a person's energy through photography. For the occasion, Shusterman wore an outfit offered by Toma: a ballet suit that belonged to his parents, who were dancers at the Opera de Paris. The case was gilded and shiny. After the project shots, Shusterman describes his feelings this way: "I could no longer stay motionless. Some inner force compelled me to quiver and shake with irrepressible energy" (Shusterman, 2016, p.30). The Man in Gold was born spontaneously, like the Avatar that put Shusterman's body into representation. Same thing on the contrary, we cannot say about the Soma, who is invaded by his alter-ego.

Richard Shusterman meets the Man in Gold for the first time on June 12, 2010, in the medieval Abbey of Royaumont. The Man in Gold is expressed through the body's movements and the depth of space. What drives the Man in Gold to exist? Shusterman occasionally wonders about his host: fear and love (Shusterman, 2016, p.52) are the emotions that drive him to trust in someone other than himself. What truly fascinates me is the somatic analysis of his spatial predisposition.

In his experience, The Man in Gold has various experiences in very different cities. Cartagena, Paris, and New York are three of the many settings in which his performances have taken place. And the thing that intrigues me most about The Man in Gold is his ability to establish a "relationship" with each city, somatically experiencing its objects in an unconventional way (Alison, 2023). We can admire The Man in Gold on the top of a wall in a historic city in Colombia, running through the meadows in the South of France or weaving on the dock from which ferries set sail to New Jersey. The positions his body takes and his bodily experience of urban spaces hold profound significance for those researching the practical methodology of Somaesthetics. The Man in Gold embodies the example of Somaesthetics extending into everyday life and among the streets of a city. The Art of Living, an expression Shusterman often

uses, encompasses, above all, the everyday life that intensifies in the city. As a postscript to Man in Gold, I am pleased to mention another essay by Shusterman that underscores the practical implications of knowing how to use Somaesthetics.

In *Bodies in the Streets: The Soma, The City, and the Art of Living* (Shusterman, 2019), several insights are worth considering: 1) First, the analogies between the Soma and the City, which Shusterman also re-proposes in the world of architectural design (Soma and Architecture), 2) The relationship between "the crowd" and the individual in the streets, 3) The alienation and intoxication from the streets, a point where Shusterman further emphasizes the issue of bodies and their urban experiences, 4) The Self-Fashioning that the city suggests to the soma. Therefore, the intensification of the Soma's enactment also occurs through its surrounding space, which also constitutes it.

Man in Gold may represent today, a new methodological approach in its constitutive being. Or even better, it belongs to a putting into practice of Somaesthetics that fits into its methodology. In this regard, I subscribe to the conclusion of Stefano Marino's contribution:

> *The methodological pluralism of somaesthetics, combined with its capacity to include in its theory (but also put into practice) certain transgressive, experimental and unmethodical practices, is particularly significant in this context, allowing us to recognize the value of methods in philosophy but at the same time their limits, and thus leading us to acknowledge the delicate dialectics between methodical and unmethodical aspects that is characteristic of philosophy and, in a sense, defines it.* (Marino, 2023)

A methodology that makes use of an experiential-sensitive practicality (dwelling), an embodied practicality in the design domain (architecture), a practicality of somaesthetic performance (Man in Gold/ City). A methodology, therefore open to new application scenarios that make their difference their richness.

5. Conclusions

This contribution of mine is to demonstrate and give examples of how "praxis" serves as the basis of the discipline of Somaesthetics. Currently, it is the role of researchers like us to thoroughly develop, as much as possible, a methodology capable of being based on cognitive experience.

In this regard, I would like to propose my latest research, which mainly concerns i) the aesthetics of living understood as an experiential form, ii) somatic involvement in the field of architecture, not only from a perceptual point of view but also from a design point of view, iii) considerations regarding a new way of experiencing the city.

These three strands often intersect, especially when we consider dwelling as a somatic activity and not only a theoretical one. Such an approach perfectly embodies the design modes of architecture and urbanism. Not surprisingly, Shusterman's interest lately has often focused on the relationship between public and private space regarding the new practical dimensions of Somaesthetics.

I am sure that this further glimpse into the future methodologies of Somaesthetics has the potential to further enrich the discipline's experiential foundation. I am confident that there is no reserve on the part of the more assiduous theorists but rather an openness to dialogue.

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Performing Somaesthetics. Future Methodological Developments

Elena Romagnoli

Abstract: *In this paper I make use of hermeneutical concepts to propose some reflections on the method in somaesthetics. First, I show how hermeneutics helps us to put in question the presumed "objectivity" or "neutrality" of any observation or interpretation, reminding us that the specific "situation" in which we are located can never be disregarded. Being situated implies being embodied in a given body, conceived as essentially motion. On this basis I focus on the reassessment of aesthetic experience as opposed to the subject-object dualism (the author and the work of art) and the active-passive dualism (the author and the public) in order to extend it to the body and to somaesthetics itself, conceived of in a performative way, as a practical "doing" of philosophy.*

Keywords: *Hermeneutics, Somaesthetics, Method, Situation, Performativity.*

1. Space, Time and Body

I am very glad to accept Falk Heinrich's invitation to contribute to this *dialogical* issue. Dialogue has characterised philosophy since the very beginning, from Plato to Giordano Bruno, to Schleiermacher, and finally to hermeneutics, with Heidegger and Gadamer. It is precisely hermeneutics which will be the starting point for my reflections about method in somaesthetics – my investigation will have, at times, a sort of scattered order, as it originates as an answer to a dialogue. I will make use of hermeneutical concepts to propose some reflections – which do not want to be systematic, but only point to some potential future developments – which, starting from the reassessment of aesthetic experience as opposed to the subject-object dualism (the author and the work of art) and the active-passive dualism (the author and the public), will extend to the body and to somaesthetics itself, conceived of in a performative way.

Heinrich affirmed that "the grounding methodological paradigm of Western science is observation", emphasising how somaesthetics should go far beyond the flat application of methods borrowed from science. Without going into an overly schematic view of science, it is worth noting that hermeneutics, too often portrayed as only concerned with texts, is not intended to oppose the *Geisteswissenschaften* to the *Naturwissenschaften*. This is an aspect that Gadamer emphasised several times in the introductions to his works (see Gadamer 2013, xxv-xxvi and 576-577). As Stefano Marino recalled, Gadamer's hermeneutics is not intended as a kind of "anti-methodological" conception. It is high time we retrieve the real Gadamerian conception, whose *dialogue* with somaesthetics can offer promising insights.

The attempt to overcome the subject-object dualism is a crucial point, brought forward by hermeneutics and also present in pragmatist aesthetics (Dewey) and in somaesthetics. The subject-object dualism is often associated with the idea of method, understood as the application of a general theory to a particular and concrete case. I am aware that the so-called "hard sciences" themselves questioned and criticized such naïve conception. However, we could affirm that this simplistic view still operates in some way, sometimes implicitly, in some philosophical contexts.

Disregarding the point of view of the philosopher, or more generally of the one who is

formulating a theory or carrying out an operation, is still considered philosophically valuable. This is the idea of a presumed "objectivity" or "neutrality" of the observer who relates to what he observes as an object. Such an idea is shared by several philosophical approaches that can appear very distant from each other, such as cognitivism and historicism. What they have in common is that they consider being situated in a specific space and time as a limitation on knowledge. Conversely, hermeneutics reminds us that the specific *situation* in which we (the observers, the philosophers) are *located* can never be disregarded. There is therefore no neutral observer who can provide a purely objective description in this respect, like a *tabula rasa* totally capable of mirroring the surrounding reality.

Instead of a subject-object dualism, hermeneutics is characterised by a *relational* and *continuistic* conception, in which the observer is in turn influenced by the observed object, and vice versa. In this regard, as it is well known, Gadamer criticised historicism for its attempt to disregard the observer's historical point of view, believing one could place oneself on the same level as the author of a past text, the *mens auctoris*. According to Gadamer, "historical knowledge opens the possibility of replacing what is lost and reconstructing tradition, inasmuch as it restores the original occasion and circumstances" (Gadamer 2013, 166). Moreover, he continues, "ultimately, this view of hermeneutics is as nonsensical as all restitution and restoration of past life. Reconstructing the original circumstances, like all restoration, is a futile undertaking in view of the historicity of our being. What is reconstructed, a life brought back from the lost past, is not the original. In its continuance in an estranged state it acquires only a derivative, cultural existence" (Gadamer 2013, 166).

In contrast to such a view of the observer situated outside of time and space (and, I would add, outside of the body), Gadamer developed the famous concept of *Wirkungsgeschichte*: "If we are trying to understand a historical phenomenon from the historical distance that is characteristic of our hermeneutical situation, we are always already affected by history" (Gadamer 2013, 311). Juxtaposing these reflections with somaesthetics can appear almost contradictory, given the persistent interpretations of Gadamer's thought as a mere historicism or textualism, far distant from a philosophy of the body (i.e., a reduction of hermeneutics to a mere methodology for reading or interpreting texts). On the contrary, there are crucial points of contact between hermeneutics and somaesthetics. Indeed, Gadamer's philosophy is one of Shusterman's early influences, as it appears from the book *T.S. Eliot and the Philosophy of Criticism*. This has been confirmed to me by Shusterman himself, who acknowledged his debt to Gadamer's philosophy on the occasion of the conference "The Promise of Pragmatist Aesthetics. Looking forward after 30 Years" in Budapest on 25-28 May 2022 (on this point, see Kremer 2018 and Romagnoli 2023).

We should note that a reflection on the body is certainly absent from Gadamer's thought. However, the conception of the hermeneutical situation can be developed by stating precisely that, as opposed to an abstract and dichotomous vision, every observation always takes place in a *specific body* (something that distinguishes human individuals from artificial intelligence). For this reason, I believe that anti-dualism and situatedness are closely linked to an embodied conception of philosophy (somaesthetics).

Moreover, a reflection on the body requires the latter to be understood not as static (the body of Greek statues, for instance) but rather as *in movement*, that is, in its interactive and performative expression. This is an aspect that partly stems from thinking of philosophy as of a practical activity, namely as a form of praxis. The philosopher (the observer) is him/herself performing an activity that is not only theoretical, but practical as well: his/her body and movement are involved in the process, even in the process of writing a book or a paper.

Indeed, that philosophy should be understood as a practical activity has been a central theme since Aristotle's *Etica Nichomachea*, something that Gadamer took up in *Truth and Method*: "If we relate Aristotle's description of the ethical phenomenon and especially the virtue of moral knowledge to our own investigation, we find that his analysis in fact offers a kind of *model of the problems of hermeneutics*. We too determined that application is neither a subsequent nor merely an occasional part of the phenomenon of understanding, but codetermines it as a whole from the beginning." (Gadamer 2013, 333). This is fundamental in the role of the hermeneutical concept of "application [*Anwendung*]" (see Gadamer 2013, 318 ff.), which is not merely understood as the application of a general case to a particular one, but rather as the intrinsic relationality between the observer and the observed.

If hermeneutics rehabilitates practical philosophy, this is truer in the case of Dewey's pragmatism and its development in Shusterman. As I already mentioned, the latter was influenced by Gadamer's rehabilitation of practical philosophy, and it is no coincidence that the last part of his book on Eliot is entitled "Pragmatism and Practical Philosophy" and refers to Aristotle's *phronesis*: "The doctrine of mean is no fixed or recursively applicable 'arithmetical proportion' given in the nature of thing, but needs to be determined anew in relation to us and the changing particulars of our *situation*" (Shusterman 1988, 199).

This aspect relates to the elaboration of Shusterman's proposal on somaesthetics in its three main constitutive parts, namely the "analytical", the "pragmatic" and the "practical" (Shusterman 1999, 304-308), the latter being concerned "not with saying but with *doing*" as the one most neglected by academic body philosophers, whose commitment to the discursive *logos* typically ends in textualizing the body" (Shusterman, 1999, 307). This is surely one of the most ambitious and challenging assertions of somaesthetics and represents a promising field of investigation in relation to more "classical" philosophical currents, such as hermeneutics.

To sum up what has been said thus far, 1) investigating a way of "philosophising" that, as opposed to the separation of the observer from the observed (subject-object view), implies a retrieval of the situation in which both are located sounds promising. 2) Being situated implies being embodied in a given body. 3) The body is conceived of as in movement, namely as interacting with and relating to others by becoming active.

2. The Active and the Passive in Aesthetics

Aesthetic experience is undoubtedly a crucial starting point for a practical approach to philosophy. Following Baumgarten, Shusterman stressed that aesthetics is not only a theory of art, but also a theory of sensibility, which paves the way to a reflection on the body (Shusterman 1999, 300-302). Indeed, Shusterman stated that somaesthetics can be provisionally defined as "the critical, meliorative study of the experience and use of one's body as a locus of sensory aesthetic appreciation (*aisthesis*) and creative self-fashioning. It is therefore also devoted to the knowledge, discourses, practices, and bodily disciplines that structure such somatic care or can improve it" (Shusterman 1999, 302).

Along these lines, Heinrich can rightly affirm that "to investigate one's own aesthetic perception and practice opens a completely different field where the unmediated sensory experiences play the most important part". A peculiar expression of an aesthetic experience involving the body occurs when we are the subject of an aesthetic act and at the same time we are the "observer" of such aesthetic activity, as in the case of dancing. In other words, the "observer" and the "observed" are one and the same.

We can start exploring such point by analysing the reassessment of a participatory relationship between the artist and the beholders (for a participatory conception of art and beauty, see Heinrich 2014). This aspect can also help define a method in the field of somaesthetics, by questioning the subject-object dualism (the artist and the work) and, consequently, the active-passive dualism (the artist and the audience). While it is certainly true that the body is not as central to Gadamer's hermeneutics as it is to French philosophies (think of Foucault or Merleau-Ponty), we can still benefit from hermeneutics' critique of the separation between the author and the audience, a conception based on the aesthetics of the artistic genius as the one who "reveals the truth" to the audience (on this topic, see Shusterman 2000, 207 ff.). In contrast, we can resort to a paradigm of aesthetic experience that takes into account the intrinsic relationality between the author and the audience.

Such reassessment of the role of the artist and the public is fundamental to hermeneutics, as I argued in Romagnoli 2022 and Romagnoli 2023. Gadamer indeed claims that it is necessary to "pull the rug from underneath the false alternatives of production and reception, of the aesthetics of production and the aesthetics of reception" (Gadamer 2022, 72). Moreover, "on the side of the artist we have the anticipation of the effect which the work will have, whether as fulfilling an expectation, trumping an expectation or producing a contrast to an expectation. On the other side, the work of art is always encountered in such a way that the spectator always ascribes something like an intention or an idea to it or to the artist, who is its creator" (*Ibid*.).

The need to rethink of the aesthetic experience by overcoming the active-passive dichotomy had already been made explicit by Dewey, who lamented the lack of a single word in English that "unambiguously includes what is signified by the two words 'artistic' and 'esthetic.' Since 'artistic' refers primarily to the act of production and 'esthetic' to that of perception and enjoyment, the absence of a term designating the two processes taken together is unfortunate" (Dewey 1934, 53). For Dewey, when the artists create a work of art, that creation must involve a continuous act of perception, which enables them to modify their work in progress. Symmetrically, the perceiver of the work of art is not placed in a purely passive position: in order to perceive, the beholders must *create* their own experience, in a way that is comparable to that of the artist. This means that an act of perception is present in the creation itself. (Dewey 1934, 56.). Similarly, the act of perception is not merely passive, but involves an act of creation (Dewey 1934, 60ff.).

Shusterman also takes up this aspect as he suggests revising the separation between the artist and the audience, "between the active maker or author and the contemplative receiver or reader" (Shusterman 2012, 55). The conception of art as experience thus provides a way out of such dualism, since it "links artist and audience in the same twofold process" (*Ibid*.). Shusterman explicitly affirms that "art, in its creation and appreciation, is both directed making and open receiving, controlled construction and captivated absorption" (*Ibid*.).

We can overcome dualism by rethinking the essence of the aesthetic experience as movement, as activity or as performance. It is precisely relationality that explains the aesthetic experience, not as a pre-determined whole that is formed by the artist, but as a process that may be liable to failure or success, as theorists of the aesthetics of improvisation have emphasized (see Bertinetto 2022). Conceived of in this way, namely as a "work in progress", the aesthetic experience reveals the mutual relationship between the artist and the audience.

As Heinrich affirms, "for the audience, the perception of music and dance entails ongoing expectation of the next move, tone or harmony to come. Enjoying performative arts is not solely a passive perception, perception is always active because the seen and heard is a neurological re-enactment that includes triggered expectation". This is what also happens with the most classical

aesthetic experience ever, the performance of classical music, though I believe it can be extended to any aesthetic experience.

Along these lines, I would like to recall a personal experience that I consider paradigmatic: at the New Year's concert at the Staatsoper Unter den Linden in Berlin, the famous conductor Daniel Barenboim was certainly influenced by the feeling of the audience and the fact that his performance was charged with special significance, not only because it was the New Year, but because he had made a comeback after a long time. In particular, he conducted Beethoven's *Ninth Symphony* in a very slow tempo, as critics also noted, which was due to his personal interpretation that reflected not just his mood but also his body and the exhaustion he felt as a result of his illness. The audience certainly played an important part in this too, as they welcomed the freshness of such interpretation and responded at the end with warm or loud whispers when the conductor was late coming on stage.

Therefore, as Heinrich points out, "doing" cannot be regarded as a limitation of aesthetic theory. It should also be noted that doing relates to the supposedly passive dimension of the audience: the close posture or crossed arms, the clapping of hands, the standing up. The dimension of the body in the first person and thus the "reception in the audience" influences the development of the work of art itself, though this does not entail an art aimed at merely pleasing the audience and degrading into aesthetically inferior products.

An aesthetic experience is therefore not only performed by those who produce it, but also by the "public" that actively participates in it. This aspect leads to important consequences of a social and political nature. In contrast to the idea of the genius, aesthetics embraces a broader perspective, both in terms of a wider range of aesthetic phenomena (not just the "fine arts") – e.g., drinking a glass of wine or walking in nature as Everyday Aesthetics teaches us (see Saito 2007) –, and in terms of including different strata of the population (not just the elites), thus paving the way to a greater democratisation of it, as proposed by somaesthetics.

Rethinking the role of the audience as involved in the creation of a work of art, that is, those who make it, including its bodily shape, is a way to rethink a method in somaesthetics as well. By considering the body as "soma", somaesthetics should avoid proposing an internal dualism between myself as the observer and myself as the observed object. In this liminal case, too, it is a question of rethinking a relationship of continuity, i.e. of movement, in a performative sense, of the "subject" and his/her body.

3. Following Bodies' Performances

Given the role of situatedness and rethinking the artist-audience relationship, we can draw a connection with the body. It can be said that a performative paradigm is present *in nuce* not only in the so-called "performative arts", but also in the other arts that result from the very enactment of the work, as noted by Gadamer's hermeneutics. As I argued in Romagnoli 2023, this paradigm characterizes for example the literary arts, since the reading of a text (even silently) implies enacting the literary work, performing it. In itself, an un-played score would remain a mere text. Only at the moment of its enactment (i.e. play) can one speak of a work of art.

Gadamer speaks of the performance as an inseparable aspect of the work itself: "It is in the performance and only in it – as we see most clearly in the case of music – that we encounter the work itself" (Gadamer 1998, 120). In *Truth and Method*, Gadamer already claimed that "the same is true for drama generally, even considered as literature" (Gadamer 2013, 120). As "a drama really exists only when it is played, and ultimately music must resound" (Gadamer

2013, 120), the same applies to poetry. Such a paradigm can also be extended to the method of somaesthetics in a broader sense, as enactment, as a practice that involves the body. As I mentioned before, the body itself is not conceived of as an object, but precisely as "soma", it is understood as enactment, as a body in movement.

The conception of art as performance has an equivalent in Shusterman's formulation of "art as dramatization" (see Shusterman 2001) and in the subsequent collection *Performing Live* (see also Heinrich 2023) as well as in the essay *Photography as Performative Process*. In the latter, the aim was precisely to show that photography cannot be reduced to the photographic image, since in doing so "we diminish its aesthetic scope and power by limiting the elements that can manifest artistic value and provide aesthetic experience". This undervalues the centrality of the body and diminishes "the essential meaning of the photograph (at least in philosophical discussions) […] to the object photographed". According to Shusterman, "the reduction of the aesthetics of photography to the photograph risks reducing it to the aesthetics of an object (that is, the real-world referent) actually outside the photograph" (Shusterman 2012a, 119).

This reference to photography is paradigmatic in elucidating a way of understanding the aesthetic experience as a "*mise en scene*", which is always the *mise en scene* of an action involving bodily movement: "Taking a photographic shot, like any action we perform, always involves some bodily action" (Shusterman 2012a, 69). However, Shusterman also stated that he wants to distance himself from a reading such as that of Davies 2004, which claimed that works of art are not physical objects but the artists' actual performances. What I want to argue here, however, is that the essence of the aesthetic experience is to be found not in the artists' activity (which would fall back to a reading of the artist-genius-creator) but in the praxis involving the audience in which they actively participate. That is to say, not only the movement of the artist's body but also those of the audience somatically create the work.

The emphasis on the bodies' movements allows us to rethink both the aesthetic and the philosophical experiences as lived at first hand. Such an experience can therefore be conceived of as an endless adjustment and check of our own perceptions and the possibility of communicating them to others, whose experiences/perceptions may be similar or different. To avoid falling back into mere solipsism, dualism needs to be overcome and replaced with a relational and performative conception, in which not only do I relate to my own body both as a subject and as an object, but I relate to other bodies as well (as, for example, on the dance floor or at a concert).

Shusterman affirmed that "the body is always somehow constructed" (Shusterman 2000, 150). Similarly, the perception and awareness of our body needs to be constructed. This is similar to the process of "doing" or "performing" philosophy: i.e. when we are aware of our body ourselves, it is not just a mere instant feeling, which would have little to do with philosophical reflection, it is rather a process of constructing corporeality itself as the basis of somaesthetics.

Philosophy itself, if conceived of as a constant practice that is always improvable, goes in a similar direction as that of bodily experience. We started by showing that the aesthetic experience is the result of a process of interaction between the author and the audience, and that a work of art becomes itself only when it is enacted. This also extends to the experience of the body, understood as a relationship between myself as a subject and myself as an object, in a continuous process of adjustment, which involves thinking of the body in its incessant movement, situated in space and time, and constantly interacting with other bodies.

Taking our cue from the continuity of each body with the other, the problem of solipsism can be overcome, and a method in somaesthetics can be worked out. In this sense, somaesthetics can

also be understood as a constant practice, somehow comparable to a certain kind of embodied Socratic dialogue, as a continuous adaptation to the other in its corporeality. Somaesthetics itself is only such when it is enacted as a practical activity, that is, when it is performed.

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How to Apply Somaesthetics? Practices, Methods, and Research Design in Somaesthetic Approach

Anne Tarvainen

Abstract: *In this article, I address the field of somaesthetics from the perspective of a researcher and pedagogue. I propose ways to apply the analytic, pragmatic, and practical dimensions of somaesthetics in the academic context. I also consider what defines a somaesthetic inquiry, how we could construct our research designs and evaluate our methods, and why it is essential to articulate somaesthetic knowledge in an accessible and credible way. I reflect on these questions with reference to the texts by philosopher Richard Shusterman and soma design researcher Kristina Höök. The article aims to illuminate the main characteristics of somaesthetics and outline some possible methodological directions, especially for researchers, pedagogues, developers, artists, and students who wish to conduct their somaesthetic inquiries in academia.*

The use of various embodied practices, such as yoga, taiji, and pilates, has increased considerably in Western daily life over the past few decades. In 2021, over 34 million people in the U.S. participated in yoga, while the market size of yoga and pilates studios within the wellness industry was estimated at 9.9 billion U.S. dollars (Statista Research Department, 2023). Such practices, originating both from the Eastern hemisphere and developed in Western countries, have become integral to our leisure time, self-awareness, and overall well-being. In numerous professions like education, the arts, and therapy, embodiment is employed as a tool, and the awareness of embodied well-being has become common knowledge, extending even to seemingly "incorporeal" tasks, such as typical office work.

Given the growing importance of embodied practices, it is not surprising that researchers from various disciplines are increasingly exploring the multifaceted aspects of embodiment. Embodiment has been a subject of discussion in philosophy, humanities, and social sciences for quite some time, while the physical well-being of the body has been a longstanding focus in medical sciences. While the former disciplines have explored embodiment from various experiential and socio-cultural perspectives, the latter still predominantly rely on a narrower view of the body as an anatomical and physiological object. However, some changes are

underway. In clinical research, for example, qualitative approaches are gaining an appreciation for offering a non-reductionistic view of illnesses and understanding people's experiences more deeply and humanely (Bhangu et al., 2023, pp. 1–2). The humanities and social sciences, where embodiment has previously tended to remain at the discursive level (Chadwick, 2017, p. 7), have also excelled in developing specific embodied approaches and methodologies (e.g., Chadwick, 2017; Ellington, 2017; Perry & Medina, 2015; Pink, 2015; Sandelowski, 2002).

To understand human embodiment and related well-being, we need to grasp our corporeal situationality in a specific time, place, and socio-cultural setting — and identify the myriad dynamic factors that relationally influence us. For such work, the field of somaesthetics proposed by philosopher Richard Shusterman offers an appropriate approach (Shusterman, 1999; 2008; 2012). But what exactly is somaesthetics, and more importantly, how is it practically applied? What methods could be employed, and should this approach serve as a philosophical, empirical-scientific, artistic, or well-being-oriented entry point to embodiment?

Shusterman has developed somaesthetics from the perspectives of a philosopher and a Feldenkrais practitioner. In this article, I will approach this field as an academic scholar and well-being educator. I have applied the somaesthetic framework in my empirical ethnomusicological research on human vocality and in my role as a pedagogue, developing the Voicefulness® method (see, e.g., Tarvainen 2018a; 2018b; 2024 forthcoming; n.d.). Here, I will highlight some research-related issues, focusing particularly on questions about research design and methodology that have surfaced while applying the somaesthetic approach. When referring to *research design*, I am addressing the overall structure of the inquiry—theoretical framework, concepts, methods, and more—enabling the collected or produced embodied evidence to respond to the research questions, problems, or aims (cf. Punch & Oancea 2014, p. 144). I aim for this reflection to offer an addition to Shusterman's perspectives to facilitate other academic researchers in using somaesthetics. My intention here is not to set out rules for structuring and conducting the somaesthetic process but rather to open up diverse perspectives for consideration in this regard.

Shusterman urges philosophers and researchers to harness their embodiment more deliberately and systematically in their reasoning. Understanding humanity tangibly, beyond quantitative facts or rational-logical pondering, necessitates finding a locus of reasoning within one's own body. (Shusterman, 1997, p. 175) Just as philosophers and scientists can benefit from conducting their work with the awareness of their own embodiment, so can the developers, educators, and hands-on practitioners of embodied methods gain from somaesthetics' analytical and culturally sensitive perspectives. While we increasingly use embodied practices and methods in our daily lives, we still may overlook their underlying premises—the ontological truths and cultural, embodied, and aesthetic norms they represent. This might not pose a problem for occasional practitioners, but teaching, developing, and researching these practices demand, in my view, a deeper understanding of their cultural, social, religious, political, and historical principles.

Somaesthetics has proven successful in arts research, encompassing music and dance, as well as in artistic research and design. This is not surprising since this approach provides an excellent framework for critically examining, developing, and implementing practical embodied methods, skills, and pedagogies related to aesthetics. As the title "somaesthetics" implies, this field includes comprehending and nurturing the aesthetic dimensions of human embodied experiences (Shusterman, 1999; 2008; 2012). It encourages drawing from one's own embodied knowledge, predominantly employing a first-person perspective. However, could it be that somaesthetics' emphasis on firsthand embodied practice and experience is seen as alien to disciplines based on

more traditional empirical data? While applications relying on larger numbers of participants have been limited so far, I suggest that somaesthetics could effectively explore this kind of data as well. Moreover, I would see Shusterman's somaesthetics as a good fit for the toolbox of academics, like anthropologists, sociologists, and other social scientists, as this approach is theoretically rooted in the philosophies of Michel Foucault, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Simone de Beauvoir, Ludwig Wittgenstein, William James, and John Dewey, to name a few (Shusterman, 2008). As a philosophical approach rather than a fixed theoretical or methodological model, somaesthetics also allows flexibility in conducting interdisciplinary research and applying various methodological solutions (Shusterman, 1999, p. 299). Nevertheless, it provides a clear theoretical framework and structure for research—be it theoretical, philosophical, empirical, or practical.

Somaesthetics is embraced by a diverse community comprising philosophers, researchers, artists, pedagogues, and practitioners of embodied methods. While this article primarily addresses individuals in academia, I aim not to confine the discussion solely to academics. Instead, I refer to these practitioners under a broader term: *somaesthetician*. I envision a somaesthetician as someone actively engaging in embodied methods to cultivate body consciousness and skills, utilizing their lifetime-acquired embodied sensibility to practically engage with their somaesthetic investigations. This engagement leads to the production of embodied insights, reflections, knowledge, and understanding. In the same vein, acknowledging that somaesthetic investigations extend beyond academic research, I prefer using the term *inquiry*, aligning with the approach advocated by Shusterman (2012, p. 26).

In this article, I draw on Shusterman's and Kristina Höök's writings as a starting point for my thoughts on the somaesthetic methodology. Shusterman has established the foundational concepts of somaesthetics, while Höök, a pioneer in soma design, has applied this approach rigorously, articulating somaesthetic knowledge in detail. Both thinkers have guided my earlier explorations of somaesthetic experiences and inspired me to draw on my embodied and pedagogical work to inform academic research — and vice versa. This article aims to further expand the discourse on somaesthetics from a theoretical standpoint to its empirical applications. It reflects how somaesthetic practices and methods could be framed and articulated, especially within academic research. It seeks transparency regarding the aims, roles, uses, and evaluation of a somaesthetic inquiry. The questions addressed are: A. What are the potential aims, objects, perspectives, methods, data, and theoretical frameworks for a somaesthetic inquiry? B. What methods could be applied in the analytic, pragmatic, and practical scopes of somaesthetic inquiry? C. How and by what criteria could the application of methods be evaluated in somaesthetic inquiry? D. How do we articulate somaesthetic knowledge? It should be obvious that the scope of one article cannot thoroughly cover this vast subject; rather, it sketches some outlines aiming to offer insights for those considering the somaesthetic path in their inquiries.

I address the questions raised above in subsections 2.—4. of this article. However, in the first subsection, titled "Embodied, Somatic, and Somaesthetic Practices and Methods," I discuss the need for a clearer exposition of the concepts related to embodied, somatic, and somaesthetic practices and methods. Moving on to the second part, "What Makes a Somaesthetic Inquiry?" I contemplate the essence of inquiries falling under the category of "somaesthetic," outlining prospective elements for research designs, including potential aims, objectives, perspectives, methods, data collection, as well as theoretical and philosophical frameworks. In the subsequent subsection, "Methods in Analytic, Pragmatic, and Practical Somaesthetics," I present Shusterman's concepts of analytic, pragmatic, and practical somaesthetics. These serve as a

sturdy foundation for any somaesthetic inquiry, with the first providing a methodological basis for analytic reflection, the second for developing embodied practices and methods, and the last for nurturing somaesthetic sensitivity through one's embodied work. I illustrate this with examples from previous academic studies where somaesthetics have been effectively applied in constructing research designs from aims to outcomes.

Moving forward to the fourth part, "Evaluating Methodological Positions," I present perspectives on critically evaluating one's research process and methodological choices. This evaluation is crucial for a somaesthetician who navigates various ways of knowing, from one's embodied intuition to analytical argumentation. In the subsequent subsection, "Articulating Somaesthetic Knowledge," I address a recurring question in prior studies of embodied experience: how to express embodied knowledge in words without losing its richness yet keeping it understandable even to those unaccustomed to argumentation derived from corporeal thinking. Here, I draw particularly on the ideas of Shusterman and Höök and their emphasis on the necessity for a knowledge canon and a more cohesive conceptual framework in the field of somaesthetics. Finally, in the concluding section titled "Conclusions," I briefly summarize the main points raised in the article regarding the application of somaesthetics in an academic environment.

1. Embodied, Somatic, and Somaesthetic Practices and Methods

Somaesthetics is a critical and ameliorative approach that focuses on the experience and use of the soma (body-mind as an inseparable whole), particularly from the perspective of aesthetic perception and creative self-improvement (Shusterman, 1999, p. 302). The emphasis lies on embodied practices and methods. However, for individuals entering the field, it may initially be unclear whether these methods serve as means or objects of development in somaesthetic investigations such as research, artistic projects, or pedagogical work. Somaesthetics has indeed faced criticism for its lack of clarity in methodological implementations, especially in areas where empirical methods are crucial (Bardzell, 2014, p. 10). Likewise, potential confusion may arise from overlapping concepts referring to various practices as "embodied," "somatic," or "somaesthetic" alongside broader concepts like "practice," "method," and "technique." This might also lead to a question about where the "research method" fits into this context. It is crucial to emphasize that while consistent usage of concepts might benefit the field of somaesthetics and embodiment studies, it might be advisable to allow individual inquiries enough time to manifest before closely associating them with thorough conceptual definitions or predefined methodological routines. Many concepts linked to the study of embodiment are fluid and interconnected, and excessive categorization could potentially detract from the holistic essence of somaesthetics.

To enhance one's own somaesthetic inquiry, and especially the later reflection and reporting of the methods used, it can be beneficial to pose questions at various stages of the inquiry. For instance: When I refer to "method" at this stage of my inquiry, do I mean (a) an embodied method through which I exercise my own somaesthetic sensibility, which I may also teach to others; (b) an embodied method I am about to explore and/or develop; (c) an approach through which I will assess, evaluate, and enhance the aforementioned embodied methods; (d) the tools by which I will conduct analytical observations of my data or articulate my insights in relation to a broader field of research, arts, or somatics? For clarity, identifying the different roles that the methods play in one's somaesthetic inquiry—though not necessarily as described above—

can be helpful. In somaesthetic inquiry, the same embodied methods may fulfill varying roles at different stages of the process, and their roles might differ even within specific situations. For instance, employing a specific embodied method as a practical tool to enhance one's body consciousness could also become the focus of development during the pragmatic stage of the inquiry.

Clarity can also be attained by creating classifications for diverse practices and methods within the broader field of embodiment, as recommended by Ben Spatz—not merely for the purpose of categorization but to provide context for one's inquiry (Spatz, 2017, p. 12). Spatz conceptually distinguishes *practice* from *technique*. The former refers to embodied activities as they manifest in the unique situations and settings of everyday life for specific individuals or groups. Spatz regards practice as a "fundamental concept of embodied research," yet he emphasizes the necessity of the concept of technique to consider the repetitions and regularities within these activities (Spatz, 2017, p. 7). Similarly, I interpret ***embodied practices*** as activities observed in everyday life — but also as functional domains like running or stretching. These encompass "actual performance or application, repeated customary action, the usual way of doing something," as elucidated by The Merriam-Webster Dictionary's definition of "practice." Along the same lines, I understand methods as more structured "systematic plans" or "procedures," constituting "bodies of skills or techniques" aimed at achieving specific goals. (Merriam-Webster, n.d.). ***Somatic methods*** are loosely connected embodied approaches that emerged during and after the "somatic turn." They share common features such as an emphasis on embodied experience, integration of body and mind, the intent to develop body consciousness and self-awareness, proprioception, the alteration of embodied habits by exploring movement patterns, an interest in processes, and the exploration of body authority and ownership (Green, 2002a; 2002b; Rouhiainen, 2006, pp. 10, 25; see also Shusterman 2000). As expected, these frameworks of practices, methods, and techniques exhibit considerable overlap. In certain inquiries, it might be suitable to maintain more flexibility with these concepts or employ them in diverse manners.

In reference to the above, I perceive ***somaesthetic practices*** as more general and ***somaesthetic methods*** as more specific embodied or somatic approaches that incorporate an aesthetic element in some way. Shusterman has distinguished between ***representational, performative, and experiential somaesthetic practices***. The first focuses on altering the body's appearance (e.g., makeup or bodybuilding), the second on nurturing somaesthetic experiences (e.g., meditation), and the third on enhancing body performance and health (e.g., sports) (Shusterman, 1999, pp. 305–307; 2012, p. 44). Additionally, it might be beneficial to specify ***somaesthetic research methods*** further, encompassing the previously mentioned somaesthetic methods and potentially integrating more conventional research methods when necessary to complement somaesthetic investigations.

Somaesthetics and somatics share some practices and methods, yet they should be distinguished as somaesthetics provides a broader theoretical and philosophical perspective on the somatic as well as other embodied practices and methods. For instance, somaesthetics can facilitate critical examinations of somatic methods, considering their cultural and social contexts, thereby expanding the scope of inquiry beyond the methods themselves. This is crucial because these methods often lack explicit clarification of their underlying values, let alone critical evaluations. For example, even if an embodied method claims to be inclusive, it might not be suitable or accessible for diverse bodies. Dancer and researcher Leena Rouhiainen highlights criticisms of somatics, citing its lack of a unified theory, ambiguity regarding the values and norms embedded in methods, and its emphasis on holistic approaches that still consist of

disconnected methods. Moreover, subjective perspectives and an uncritical methodological approach diminish the credibility of the somatics field. Shusterman's analytic dimension within somaesthetics, with its ontological considerations, offers a solution to this issue, as discussed further ahead (Rouhiainen, 2006, pp. 24–25).

2. What Makes a Somaesthetic Inquiry?

How do we define investigations within the realm of somaesthetics? Is the somaesthetic essence of a study determined by its objects, methods, or theoretical framework? These questions are best left open-ended, although I will venture to propose an outline to help identify and articulate the somaesthetic of one's inquiry. Presently, there is a considerable amount of research in embodiment that, while not explicitly somaesthetic, could arguably fit within this field. I suggest that the somaesthetic nature of an inquiry may manifest in various ways: (1) through the pursued aims, (2) inherent characteristics of the examined phenomenon (the study's object), (3) as a perspective guiding the inquiry, (4) within the overall design of the process, encompassing methods and materials, or (5) as part of a theoretical and philosophical framework. Often, the aims and subjects of somaesthetic exploration emerge from a somaesthetician's personal interests—driven by a desire to acquire or deepen specific bodily skills or address social, cultural, or practical injustices. It might also stem from a desire to introduce a missing perspective in academic or somatic discussions. The inquiry might revolve around issues concerning embodiment and agency or aim to unveil hidden potentials within a particular method.

(1) The aims of somaesthetic studies can be broad and diverse. They might encompass cultivating somaesthetic experiences, actions, or skills, innovating and advancing somatic methods, pedagogies, processes, or technologies, fostering well-being through heightened body consciousness, influencing social norms, practices, and policies concerning the body, and expanding knowledge about embodied experiences. When initiating a somaesthetic process, the objective might intentionally remain open-ended, allowing it to evolve through practical experimentation in various real-life scenarios. In terms of the analytic, pragmatic, and practical dimensions of somaesthetics (Shusterman, 2012, p. 142), which I will discuss further in the next subchapter, the inquiry's aim can encompass a wide range, from critical socio-cultural analyses of embodied practices to developing methods and using one's experiential insights to create embodied knowledge. These dimensions can also intersect, such as when using practical bodily actions to generate insights for socio-cultural understanding. The overall investigative approach can be philosophical, critical, comparative, descriptive, reflective, evaluative, prescriptive, or empirical, depending on how the inquiry relates to the aforementioned dimensions of somaesthetics.

(2) The object of study could be any somaesthetic activity or experience, as well as the environmental, material, social, cultural, linguistic, political, or historical context or scenario surrounding such activities or experiences. The focus can also remain undefined at the onset of the somaesthetic process, allowing examination to occur organically in actual situations, observing how various somaesthetic phenomena intersect within these contexts.[1] The focus could span broader bodily practices or habits (like walking or office work), more refined and intentionally crafted methods (such as yoga or mindfulness), or the exploration of arts or other

1 This kind of *transactional* approach was devised by John Dewey and Arthur F. Bentley (1949). Unfortunately, I cannot discuss it here further, even though it could be one possible departure for developing somaesthetic methods. In music sociology, researcher Mark Rimmer (2020) has proposed the use of a transactional approach for a comprehensive, situational, and environmental examination of musical agency, and I have, in turn, developed a parallel method while analyzing sound environments (Tarvainen, 2023).

disciplines demanding particular skills (like music, dance, or long jump). Spatz suggests that inquiry can categorize physical practices based on the study's needs, such as into larger generic categories (movement or rhythm, dance or martial arts), regional and cultural traditions, more specific named traditions, narrower technical terms, and references to instructors and colleagues in the same field (Spatz, 2017, p. 12). In selecting the object of the study, one can draw from Shusterman's division of somaesthetic practices and methods into representational, performative, and experiential categories, as previously discussed. These classifications can assist in defining the study's focus, such as concentrating on the experiential aspects within a specific embodied practice. Shusterman stresses the importance of exploring and advancing experiential somaesthetics as a balance to the more dominant attention given to performative and representational aspects within Western culture (Shusterman, 2012, p. 111). I believe that research can center on somaesthetic experiences even if the observed embodied practice is performative or representational—and vice versa. This "counter-view" approach could yield valuable insights that offer perspectives not inherently intrinsic to the somaesthetic phenomenon.

In somaesthetic inquiry, the human being is perceived as an integrated body-mind entity, referred to as the soma, rather than being viewed as distinct physiological and psychological facets. The aesthetic dimension can emerge in a study either through culturally defined aesthetic activities, such as arts, or through other activities where aesthetic experience is inherent. Dewey's pragmatism offers guidance, urging us to view our everyday lives as potential arenas for aesthetic experience. Shusterman further underscores the diversity within somaesthetics, advocating for exploration across a wide spectrum of embodied practices. He has personally focused on selected forms of somaesthetic practice himself to explicitly articulate the relevant topics related to the approach under development. (Shusterman, 2012, p. 12.)

When choosing ***(3) the perspective*** for a somaesthetic inquiry, it is worth considering whether the embodied knowledge is formed based on the investigator's own embodied experiences or whether other people's experiences should also be considered. Embodied or somaesthetic knowledge can include knowledge "about the body" or, even more preferably, knowledge "from/through the body" (cf. Scialom, 2021, p. 20). There are various approaches through which a somaesthetician can engage with their subject of inquiry. The perspective—or, rather, in this context, "the point of experience" or "the point of agency"—can range from being distanced, participatory, immersed, affected, or studious, and this standpoint can evolve throughout the process. The process can also be initiated from different directions, namely analytic insight, demand in practice, or awareness arising from practical embodied practice.

How do somaesthetics appear in terms of ***(4) the methods and data***? I will discuss these later in more detail, but let me briefly note here that it could be beneficial to reflect on how the somatic and aesthetic aspects are present in one's methods, data, and implementation. The focus lies on methods that approach the body "from the inside out," as experienced firsthand, rather than examining it from an external perspective as an object of observation (Hanna, 1988, p. 19). One can also ask themselves what kind of evidence they would like to offer the readers (or other audience) to support one's arguments. One can, for example, use philosophical argumentation and theoretical engagement with previous research, the collection and analysis of data, or critically apply the existing methods of development and testing. Examples of suitable means for producing or collecting data for somaesthetic purposes include various combinations of embodied methods and reflections, phenomenological approaches, ethnography, autoethnography, participatory and interventional methods, practice as research, artistic methods, and maybe even narrative methods. Interviews, surveys, media or archive

materials, and materials produced during evaluation, testing, or development, to name some, could be used and analyzed by applying virtually any method while keeping the somaesthetic perspective on top.

In constructing ***(5) the theoretical and philosophical framework*** for somaesthetic inquiry, one can start, for example, from previous somaesthetic research, which includes, in addition to Shusterman's numerous philosophical texts (e.g., 2008; 2012), many somaesthetic analyses already conducted in various fields (e.g., Bratkowski, 2012; Dhillon, 2015; Granger, 2015; Heinrich, 2023; Höök, 2018; Macpherson, 2021; McKerrell, 2012; Mullis, 2016; Ryynänen, 2015; Smith, 2017; Tarvainen, 2018a, 2018b). One can also lean on the classics on embodiment that have influenced the humanistic and social sciences at large (e.g., Merleau-Ponty, Foucault, Mauss) and, of course, on the related works on embodiment and aesthetics in one's own discipline. When writing theses or academic journal articles, it is understandably required to link one's findings and insights to previous research in the field in question. This should be no problem, as the field of somaesthetics welcomes the interdisciplinary connections between somaesthetic inquiries and various fields of research, from philosophy to biology (Shusterman, 2017, p. 11). On a theoretical level, it is advisable to reflect on the suitability of the theories used and if they can work side by side in the research without creating major ontological contradictions.

In the introduction of this article, I posed the question, "What are the potential aims, objects, perspectives, methods, data, and theoretical frameworks of a somaesthetic inquiry?" essentially inquiring about its research design. In summary, ***the aims*** of somaesthetic inquiry may be analytic, pragmatic, and/or practical, and the focus is often on cultivating body consciousness, harnessing somaesthetic experiences, and generating embodied knowledge. ***The object of study*** might be representational, performative, and/or experiential somaesthetic activities and experiences. Reflection on the chosen ***perspective(s)*** for the inquiry and the roles of investigators and participants is often integral to somaesthetic inquiries. Somatic, aesthetic, and experiential aspects play pivotal roles in ***the methods and data*** of such inquiries, while ***the theoretical and philosophical framework*** is typically situated within prior somaesthetic research or other relevant fields such as philosophy, research, arts, or other embodied disciplines.

3. Methods in Analytic, Pragmatic, and Practical Somaesthetics

Shusterman defines the three scopes of this approach as ***analytic***, ***pragmatic***, and ***practical somaesthetics***, and this division also helps structure the methodological side of the approach. To put it briefly, (1) analytic somaesthetics is descriptive and theoretical, looking at the embodiment in a broader social, political, historical, or cultural context; (2) pragmatic somaesthetics is comparative evaluation and development of specific embodied activities, practices, methods, pedagogies, processes, or interactions, and (3) practical somaesthetics, for its part, is actual engagement in embodied practices, as the focus of observation is more situational. (Shusterman, 2012, p. 142.) Within these three scopes, which can be understood as the different dimensions, phases, or emphases of the somaesthetic examination, the applied methods may also be different. (1) Analytic somaesthetics, as the name implies, could utilize the analytically oriented methods; (2) pragmatic somaesthetics, in turn, can include various methods of evaluation and development; (3) practical somaesthetics consists of hands-on embodied methods. In what follows, I will further explore these different dimensions of somaesthetics and the potential methodological solutions they provide.

(1) Methods for analytic reflections

Analytic somaesthetics can be descriptive, explanatory, critical, philosophical, or empirical. Soma and its aesthetic dimensions are reflected in relation to consciousness, knowledge, world, agency, culture, norms, practices, values, ideologies, and institutions, among other things. In the academic context, the discoveries of analytic somaesthetics can be linked to, for example, philosophical, aesthetic, ontological, historical, socio-political, anthropological, psychological, or biological knowledge of the human body and mind. (Shusterman, 1999, pp. 304, 307; 2007, p. 11; 2012, pp. 42, 188.) Within the domain of analytic somaesthetics, reflection, articulation, and connections to previous knowledge are paramount. The tools used in this stage can be, for example, methods for structuring and studying different kinds of data or philosophical argumentation techniques that aim to relate the knowledge to previous relevant debates in one's field and somaesthetics. They also allow one to examine the somaesthetic phenomenon in a broader cultural context and articulate its hidden norms and values. Articulation in written form may be necessary, although other forms of presentation could also be used and developed.

In an academic setting, the toolbox of analytic methods may include traditional research methods applied in a deliberate manner or even brand-new methods. Outside of the academic context, using actual research methods may be irrelevant. However, even then, it would be valuable to adopt a certain level of analytic grip to open up one's somaesthetic process and illuminate the underlying cultural and social values related to it. The data of analytic somaesthetics can be anything that reveals the above-mentioned cultural, political, or normative aspects of embodied practices. These can be previous philosophical or scholarly texts, newspaper articles, archive material, images, audio recordings, videos, interviews, works of art, and so on. Basically, any data and materials can be analyzed from a somaesthetic perspective — given that the content is relevant to the topics of somaesthetics.

Good examples of analytic somaesthetics — in addition to Shusterman's texts — are, for example, John Toner's and Barbara Gail Montero's (2022) review of the research on the peak performance in sport in relation to Shusterman's ideas on body consciousness and habits, and Höök's (2018, pp. 3820–4157) discussion of the ethics in soma design related to dualism, feminism, privilege and the politics of algorithms. From the latter, I would like to highlight a passage that illustrates how somaesthetics can operate from the practical to the analytic level — from the embodied experience to the thought processes and values of the researcher.

> *"My viewpoint was that cultivating the body seemed like a selfish activity, directing attention to the self and thereby avoiding caring for society. But gradually, I came to see how it enabled me to take a holistic stance on some of the horrible plagues we battle right now — misogyny, racism, privilege, and denial of climate change. Although somaesthetic design will not remedy those issues — they are far too complex for that — it offers me, as a design researcher, a path toward a form of activism."* (Höök, 2018, p. 3835.)

Another example is my own analytic and critical look at Western singing culture's aesthetic ideals and norms by analyzing the somaesthetic experiences of the d/Deaf, vocally disordered, and "tone-deaf" singers. In that study, I examined the experiences of a wide range of participants, not so much to find generalizations but to bring out a rich spectrum of varying experiences. As research data, I used free-form responses to internet surveys, interviews, and social media content such as YouTube comment threads and analyzed them with thematic analysis and close reading. In both the collection and analysis of the data, the focus was on themes relevant to

somaesthetics, namely on how the singers and those commenting on their voices relate to the vocal body and embodied experience, in other words, how they used "the somatic modes of attention," to borrow a term from the anthropologist Thomas J. Csordas (1993). (Tarvainen 2018a; 2018b; 2021.)

(2) Methods of evaluating and developing

Pragmatic somaesthetics is critical, comparative, transformative, normative, and prescriptive in nature. In particular, it aims to evaluate and develop embodied practices and methods, not just to describe them — and that is how somaesthetics differs, for example, from most phenomenological approaches. It is also worth mentioning that the pragmatic approach builds on the analytic one, as it relies on a certain knowledge about the human body — what the body is ontologically, physiologically, or socially. (Shusterman, 1999, p. 304–305; 2010, 219; 2012, 42, 188.)

The pragmatic process of evaluating and developing generates not only critical knowledge of embodied practices but also proposals or even new methods, practices, or products. Alternatively, existing practices may be improved to meet people's somaesthetic needs better. These tools used here may overlap with the ones used in the practical somaesthetics, which I will discuss later. However, whereas practical somaesthetics focuses on elaborating one's own embodied experience, pragmatic somaesthetics usually focuses on other people's experiences in one way or another. This could happen by considering how others experience a given set of exercises or how the exercise could be guided to facilitate embodied insights.

In pragmatic somaesthetics, ideation, reflection, structuring, and evaluation are conducted, whether in the form of written texts, spoken words, pictures, sounds, or others. These outputs can be used as data, along with other collected materials, like survey answers, interviews, and various types of evaluation or testing data. Within this pragmatic framework, the inquiry can be linked conceptually to the pedagogical theories or the development practices in one's field.

Höök refers to the methods she applies in the pragmatic phase of her work as "soma design methods," whereby designers conceptualize and experiment somatically with a technology or product under development. She divides "soma design methods" into ideation, engagement with materials, and evaluation. The first of these includes slowstorming, aesthetic laborations, and embodied sketching. Höök reflects on how the somaesthetic approach differs from other methods commonly used in design. For example, compared to usually relatively fast-paced brainstorming, somaesthetic slowstorming is, as its name suggests, deliberately slow. Here, the ideas are not necessarily written down but given a form that can be adequately perceived with the senses. Mapping of user experiences is also an essential part of the pragmatic phase. The interest is not so much in the general experience of a large number of users as it is in more refined perceptions. Therefore, the users may be involved in the process as "soma cocreators," providing more detailed experience and ideas for product development. (Höök, 2018, pp. 3176, 3430–3437, 3670, 3745.)

Another example of pragmatic somaesthetics is the musicologist Simon McKerrell's (2012) study, where he applied fieldwork methods such as participation, auto-ethnography, and ethnographic interviews to study the somaesthetics of listening in the field of traditional music. He has critically examined musicology and aesthetics and developed "an ethnography of hearing" that could better reveal the essential embodied dimensions of musical understanding. In this sense, he has conducted pragmatic somaesthetics, that is, developing methods to remedy the shortcomings of the earlier methodology in his research field.

One of the methods for reflecting on and sharing embodied experiences with others is *the body map*. I employ this approach in my Voicefulness® workshops, typically following an extensive free-form vocal exercise. Participants express their experiences by drawing, writing, or otherwise marking—each in their unique style—specific details on a piece of paper featuring the outline of the human body. Subsequently, these experiences are discussed collectively as a group. Recalling, visualizing, and verbalizing one's own experience can contribute to developing body awareness. These maps could also be used to analyze some aspects of somaesthetic experiences. (Tarvainen, n.d.) Similarly, body maps have been utilized before by Höök (2018, p. 3703) in the form of the *body sheet method* as well as Claudia Núñez-Pacheco and Lian Loke (2016) in the form of the *body map method*.

(3) Practices and methods for enhancing somaesthetic sensibility

Practical somaesthetics is basically the practice of embodied methods in real life. Practical somaesthetics is systematic and reflective embodied training of one's own soma in its representational, experiential, or performative aspects. (Shusterman, 2012, pp. 45, 188.) It is, therefore, practical in nature, and the object — or rather the focus — of examination is one's own embodied experience. Whereas the knowledge reflected in the field of analytic somaesthetics is linked to previous research and the work carried out in the pragmatic field to pedagogical and developmental approaches, in the field of practical somaesthetics, the embodied experience is naturally linked to one's life history, and the social and cultural situations, but may also be reflected in relation to the experiences of other people.

A somaesthetician uses their own soma's sensibility, acquired over a lifetime, to connect practically with the phenomenon under study, producing embodied insights, reflections, and understanding. As should be evident by now, practical somaesthetic methods are embodied practices and methods one uses to cultivate one's senses and body awareness. The person performing practical somaesthetics is usually in the role of a student or learner. The focus is on the embodied perceptions and the insights that stem from them. These insights do not necessarily need to be reflected through language but can profoundly affect how one understands oneself as a corporeal and social being. They impact how one encounters the world and other people through the embodied agency.

The practical methods applied in somaesthetics often have the following characteristics: They evolve embodied perceptions, sensibility, and body consciousness; They utilize the simplifying and slowing down of bodily action, allowing time for the discovery of tacit knowledge that tends to remain hidden in everyday experiences; They also engage body consciousness by excluding excess stimuli, directing attention in a controlled manner to different parts of the body, making changes that keep the focus alert, and concentrating on the present moment; In addition, the methods like *making strange* may be used by orchestrating experiences that are attention-catching, rich, and memorable; Also the reflection on the experience is often used with practical methods, either through discussion with others, writing, drawing or other means of structuring. (Höök, 2018, pp. 869–872; Shusterman, 2012, pp. 15, 117, 297–298, 304.) The practical work may result in materials such as research diaries, autoethnographic texts, videos, audio recordings, or images. The perspective here may be based solely on one's own experience or the experiences of several people through artistic collaboration, participatory research, or other equivalent activities.

Shusterman teaches his students somaesthetic introspection in the form of a body scan in order to cultivate their somaesthetic understanding. (Shusterman 2012, pp. 112–122.)

I have applied improvised voice and movement to practice and teach body awareness and somaesthetic sensibility, utilizing the method of *Voicefulness*® developed by me and *Movingness*® developed by Peter Appel (Appel, n.d.; Tarvainen, n.d.). Höök details five techniques designers can use to develop their somaesthetic sensibility. Those are "focusing on change and interest," "disrupting the habitual," Laban movement analysis, autoethnographies, and "engaging with other somaesthetic connoisseurs." She notes that designers can easily get stuck in a repetition of familiar mannerisms, whereas challenging oneself through new bodily practices can open up new directions in the design process. (Höök, 2018, pp. 3229, 3787.)

Since there are numerous successful implementations of practical somaesthetics, I would like to give two more examples: David A. Granger (2015) has applied practical somaesthetics in anti-racist education, which starts from identifying racist embodied habits and related feelings in one's body. Eric Mullis (2016), for their part, brings together contemporary feminist philosophy and the practice of contact improvisation to explore the social values and ethical attitudes related to gender and ability through movement. The interaction with other bodies through touch and the cultivation of trust in contact improvisation serve to promote embodied ethics. Mullis' work, I think, nicely combines the starting point of analytic somaesthetics — the examination of social values and ethical attitudes — with practical somaesthetics using contact improvisation.

How to answer the question posed in the introduction, "What methods could be utilized in analytic, pragmatic, and practical scopes of a somaesthetic inquiry?" In analytical somaesthetics, one could use, for example, philosophical argumentation or academic research methods from the respective fields to explore cultural, political, or normative aspects of embodied practices. Pragmatic somaesthetics can make use of various methods of ideation, reflection, structuring, and evaluation from relevant fields. Practical somaesthetics primarily involves methods that enhance body consciousness, which could include an array of techniques from somatics or adapted methods tailored for somaesthetics. Materials and data used in somaesthetic inquiries encompass a wide spectrum, ranging from archival materials, articles, scholarly literature, questionnaire responses, interviews, evaluation or testing data, written texts, images, audio recordings (e.g., sounds, spoken words), videos, sensory materials, to diverse forms of art.

4. Evaluating Methodological Positions

As embodied beings, our experiences are inherently tied to our situated perspectives (Merleau-Ponty, 2005, p. 499; see also Hannula et al., 2014, p. 9). I posit that the somaesthetic inquiry process fundamentally involves awareness, reflection, and articulation of diverse experiential positions and knowledge production. First, the somaesthetician should be able to distinguish — either in real time or retrospectively — their actions within the analytic, pragmatic, or practical dimensions of their inquiries. This awareness translates practically into a conscious understanding of one's actions at any given moment: whether engaging in analytical reflection, pragmatic development, or unveiling embodied findings. Consistently documenting these actions aids in transparently presenting the inquiry process later, ensuring clarity and credibility. Specific somaesthetic inquiries might incline toward analytical, pragmatic, or practical orientations yet often incorporate elements from all these dimensions.

Somaesthetics itself underscores the practice of disciplined consciousness and focus shifting. These skills are central to somaestheticians, not only in their personal embodied experience but also in relating their experiences and actions to the entirety of the inquiry. Ensuring the inquiry's full transparency happens by describing and critically evaluating the different steps

of the process and the methods used, as well as justifying the choices made. The ability to shift between a broader analytical perspective and an increasingly immersive embodied experience can be seen as a vital skill for a somaesthetician. At best, the insights, understanding, and knowledge produced in the analytic, pragmatic, and practical dimensions can nourish each other. Consequently, attempting to segregate these dimensions during the inquiry rigidly might be unnecessary, if not unfeasible. After all, analytical insights may emanate from practical embodied activities, and conversely, analytical considerations may activate body consciousness, eliciting novel embodied insights.

When using the same methods at different stages of the somaesthetic process, it may be helpful to identify different perspectives, styles of reflection, roles, or positions one adopts within or in relation to these methods. For example, the methods of pragmatic and practical somaesthetics may be the same. However, they require a different attitude, as practical somaesthetics focuses on learning through the methods rather than developing them. In pragmatic work, the somaesthetician takes on the role of an "evaluator," "developer," "designer," or other equivalent, whereas in practical work, it is more of a "student." The roles of a student and developer can intertwine seamlessly in one's experience because the process is often integrated and holistic. However, during this process, for example, while doing a bodywork exercise, one may distinguish shifts in their "modes" or "attitudes" during the practice. At one moment, they may be immersed in their own experience, after which the reflective mode may be activated as some thoughts and outlines of the experience arise in a form that can be remembered and maybe later discussed or written down. At times, one may focus on evaluative thinking and structuring and, from there, occasionally delve into embodied awareness to recollect a past felt experience. A good example of the distinction between these pragmatic and practical somaesthetic roles, modes, or attitudes are the activities described by Höök as "training somaesthetic skills" and "soma design methods" (Höök, 2018). Since somaesthetics is also, to a great extent, a practice of consciousness and focus, such shifts, when made in a coordinated and deliberate way, can be seen as an integral skill of a somaesthetician. However, this may not always be easy, and transitions between roles, for example, from a reflective to an evaluative state, may generate internal or external conflicts and tensions.

Explicating the different methodological grips, such as illustrated above, is vital if the same activity is used in different scopes of the somaesthetic inquiry for different purposes. In addition, one of the significant strengths of somaesthetics is its critical angle on embodied practices and methods, and this is worth utilizing to ensure that the inquiry becomes more than just a celebration of a practice that is dear to oneself. In general, I do not see a problem in examining (with) the practices and methods one is already engaged in, as it is not unusual in other research fields for a researcher to investigate a phenomenon in which they are themselves involved. The study of a familiar embodied method could be compared to the work of an ethnomusicologist who examines their own musical culture in a participatory and analytic way. They consciously position themselves in the settings of musical-cultural activities differently than they are used to, observing these activities from a fresh perspective and participating in them in new ways. Likewise, Shusterman describes a corresponding crossover between comparative critique and practice in other disciplines. For example, a philosopher may well criticize the philosophical praxis they use. Similarly, a researcher of religion does not have to endorse the religions they are studying, and a musicologist can appreciate music-making while criticizing specific techniques or styles of musical production. (Shusterman, 2007, p. 15.)

Höök points out that no method, even somaesthetic, would always produce good results. It is a matter of using methods competently — expertise and sound judgment are essential

for successful implementation. (Höök, 2018, 3779.) When studying embodied experience, it is easy to be misled into thinking that experiences are universal — aren't we all embodied beings? However, Green cautions against seeking "universality in the rules that govern somatic principles," emphasizing how our experiences are shaped by socio-cultural circumstances (Green, 2002, p. 117). Even distinctions between song and speech, or music and dance, are cultural, not universal, perceptions of these bodily activities, as Spatz reminds us (Spatz, 2017, p. 9). Therefore, it is important to critically assess the embodied methods used, regardless of their effectiveness in the investigator's own practice. It is worth asking: Does this method work for other people, for example, for those with physical restrictions, or is the embodied "development" brought about by this method a desirable development for someone living in a different cultural context? Ask: Does this method accommodate others, such as those with physical limitations? Is the embodied "development" desirable in different cultural contexts? Shusterman emphasizes that "development" in any context relies on underlying norms (Shusterman, 2007, p. 148; 2012, p. 22). Ultimately, practitioners of somaesthetics should reflect on the cultural and ontological basis of the methods they use, maintaining an appropriate distance to balance practical engagement.

As mentioned earlier, embodied knowledge can stem from the investigator's own bodily experiences or those of others. Carla Rice cautions that a strong focus on embodied reflexivity might inadvertently prioritize the investigator's experiences, marginalizing the experiences of others, including study participants (Rice, 2009; Chadwick, 2017, p. 6). A proficient somaesthetician recognizes the need to involve diverse bodies in certain inquiries. Asking questions like "Whose soma is exploring or being explored?" or "Whose bodily experiences shape embodied knowledge?" is crucial. These questions affect the quality of evidence collected or generated in the inquiry. Successful implementation might also be measured by the degree to which the inquiry encourages participant action. Reflecting on the researcher's relationship with participants, co-investigators, or collaborators is essential, shedding light on power dynamics and the influence of different embodied experiences involved. Whether the somaesthetician is a novice or an expert in the studied embodied practice, they should acknowledge that their own experiences and skills impact the accessed embodied knowledge. However, this does not imply that information from a beginner would necessarily be inferior to that from an experienced practitioner. It should also be noted that as sentient beings within our environments, inquiries should consider the soma within its surroundings, encompassing interpersonal, social, and cultural contexts.

During the inquiry process, a somaesthetician becomes conscious of their own embodied practice and analytical investigations in relation to preceding traditions. They familiarize themselves with the relevant texts, works, and methods from these traditions for their inquiries and articulate how their work aligns with them. This involves establishing connections and perceiving one's inquiry as part of a larger collective effort to accumulate knowledge and comprehension. It involves situating oneself cognitively, culturally, socially, and even geographically. Even though somaesthetic inquiry is deeply rooted in the somaesthetician's individual embodied experiences, it does not exist in isolation (Hannula et al., 2014, p. 8.). Embodied human experiences don't form in isolation but within a shared process influenced by the physical, social, and cultural environment. From my perspective, one of the remarkable strengths of somaesthetics in generating new knowledge is its focus both on thorough and accurate observation of bodily experiences and reflecting on these experiences within broader contexts. Personally, I think that my own role as a somaesthetician is to better comprehend the diversity of both my own and others' embodied experiences, viewing them as integral parts of broader social and cultural phenomena, potentially aiding in a deeper understanding of humanity.

In this subsection, I have addressed the third question raised in the introduction, presenting perspectives on evaluating the use of somaesthetic methods. These reflections are not meant as strict criteria but rather as guiding markers for somaesthetic practitioners to assess and refine their inquiry process more effectively. Within a somaesthetic inquiry, it is essential to be aware of one's own position. This includes understanding how one relates to different dimensions of somaesthetics, evaluating the efficacy of embodied methods within their socio-cultural contexts, comprehending the evolution of these methods and their interpretation in various contexts, acknowledging the participants in the inquiry, and considering the environmental or socio-cultural backdrop. Additionally, it involves reviewing the contributions of previous authors in one's own field.

5. Articulating Somaesthetic Knowledge

Somaesthetic activities and methods can be practiced as such without the need to explain or communicate them to anyone else. However, engaging in a somaesthetic inquiry—whether academic, artistic, wellness-focused, or otherwise—typically involves reflection and the pursuit of transparency. In many aspects, particularly concerning methodology, somaesthetic inquiry diverges from conventional empirical research and, therefore, should not be evaluated solely by traditional academic standards. Nevertheless, somaesthetic research carried out in an academic context, emphasizing empirical aspects, might seek to meet certain criteria characteristic of good qualitative research, aligning with somaesthetics' objectives. For example, by combining and synthesizing sources on the evaluation of qualitative and artistic research[2] and applying them to somaesthetics, a somaesthetician could assess their inquiry's aims and quality based on criteria such as ***novelty, creativity, and impact***, alongside its ***coherence, consistency, and transparency***. The last three aspects are pivotal in the formulation and communication of somaesthetic knowledge within academic settings.

Coherence means that the inquiry forms a meaningful whole: The methods and practices enable access to pertinent embodied evidence aligned with the set research questions or aims. The inquiry's objectives, focus, methods, evidence/materials, results, and impacts should be clearly articulated. This involves detailing the roles of both the researcher and participants (who?), the inquiry process (what?), the locations and times involved (where and when?), the methods utilized (how?), and the underlying purpose (why?). Consistent and transparent documentation and presentation of all inquiry steps are important. The inquiry should provide sufficient high-quality evidence organized, interpreted, and presented suitably based on the inquiry's objectives. Additionally, it should be thoughtfully linked to previous research or other works within its field.

The first-person perspective is commonly used in somaesthetic writings. As Höök has noticed, this may initially alienate an academic reader looking for objective proof without necessarily finding it. She writes about her own struggles when entering the field of somaesthetics and admits that hypothesis- and rationalization-driven thinking was difficult to break free from, as were the objectivist-reductionist ideals. I see that for a somaesthetician, good argumentative skills are essential, as they enable opening up one's experience in an accessible way without compromising the richness of the description while also linking one's insights to the previous academic tradition in a credible way. Moreover, as Höök points out, it would also be good to share one's somaesthetic journey, as it makes the work more relatable and understandable and

2 Burke, 2016, p. 335; Critical Appraisal Skills Programme, 2018, p. 2–6; Hannula ym., 2014, p. 14-15; OECD 2015, 28, 46-49; Yadav, 2022, p. 686

reveals the unique circumstances from which the work originates. Our life experiences — illness, pain, ecstatic feelings, and how we physically live our daily lives — influence how we implement somaesthetics. (Höök, 2018, pp. 323, 410–413, 4208.) Reflections on embodiment have often highlighted the friction between embodied experience and language (e.g., Sheets-Johnstone, 1999, pp. 147-149). Höök explains that conceptualization narrows embodied knowledge since some experiential aspects are more easily described in language than others and, therefore, may dominate the examination. The experiences located in a particular part of the body and which are "ontologically explicit," such as pain, seem to be easier to express. However, beyond these experiences, a wide range of perceptions are difficult to capture in words, and metaphors play an important role in describing them. Language allows us to sketch ideas quickly, but the description can only serve as a rough indication, not a direct or all-inclusive representation of the experience. Language is a quick tool for reflection and communication, but shifting the focus from linguistic to embodied processes brings slowness with it, as our sensory skills, which are tied to muscle function and neural responses, among other things, change and develop slowly. (Höök, 2018, pp. 883, 906, 2813, 2831.)

While I have emphasized argumentation and clarity here, it is often best to enter the somaesthetic process with an open soma, tolerating, or better yet embracing, the possible ambiguities of the process along the way. Towards the latter stages of the investigation, a more reflective, analytic, and structuring orientation will usually emerge. Furthermore, it would be beneficial if new non-verbal forms of reflecting and structuring somaesthetic knowledge arose in somaesthetics. Similarly, Höök stresses that the articulations of embodied knowledge should be more diverse than they currently are, even in an academic context. Finding appropriate means of articulation is paramount, especially regarding somaesthetic experiences. Articulating embodied experiences and ideas and making them comprehensible to others can take the form of practical embodied interaction, videos, or images, to name some. (Höök, 2018, p. 4247.) While academic fields traditionally contextualize research through a "literature review," somaesthetics might benefit from a "practice review," incorporating non-textual sources, as proposed by Spatz in the realm of embodied research (Spatz, 2017, p. 12). He states: "In framing embodied research, critical and philosophical references are optional, while technical references are essential. This is because embodied practice derives its structure and meaning primarily from lineages of technique." (Spatz, 2017, p. 13.)

Language is a challenge but also a potential tool in a somaesthetic process, as it can be used to enhance somaesthetic introspection. Even in the methods and practices that emphasize the non-linguistic dimension of experience, it is usually necessary to use language to instruct the practice, direct the participants' focus during the exercise, and describe experiences and their features. (Shusterman, 2012, p. 121.) Shusterman sums up how a somaesthetician could fruitfully relate to language:

> *"Body and language, so often posed as oppositional forces competing for primacy or all-subsuming privilege, are both essential for somaesthetics. The key is not to side with one against the other, nor to rank them in importance, but rather (just as we argued with respect to the duo of spontaneous versus self-conscious action) to coordinate them more effectively so that they can work best together."* (Shusterman, 2012, p. 121.)

According to Shusterman, in somaesthetics, the discursive and non-discursive, reflective and immediate, as well as thought and feeling, can be integrated to create a sense of dimension,

harmony, and clarity in the body. He also reminds us that the primary aim of somaesthetics is not to develop discursive theory but to develop embodied practices — although discourse is needed, for example, in the field of cultural politics, to bring about these aimed changes. (Shusterman, 2012 , pp. 16–17, 195.)

During paradigm shifts, new knowledge tends to face strong resistance and criticism in the academic world. Höök points out the importance of explicit verbalization and conceptualization of somaesthetic processes for the sake of their credibility. This should be done so that even the audiences that do not have first-hand experience of in-depth embodied sensibility could understand the arguments — as they eventually might be the readers who review the validity of these processes. Höök also proposes a "protective belt of knowledge" for soma design research, in other words, a well-articulated canon of knowledge that would be meaningful in terms of aesthetic experience. Such a canon could include knowledge articulated in many different forms, such as descriptions of successful and failed processes, first-person experiences, terminology, methods, and explanatory theory. (Höök, 2018, pp. 4195, 4257–4272; see also Gaver & Höök, 2017.) The emergence of such a canon in the general field of somaesthetics would be highly welcome. As Shusterman has argued, the field of research on embodiment is still quite fragmented, and those working on it would benefit from a more collective and interconnected body of knowledge (Shusterman, 1999, p. 304). This collective approach would facilitate the development of the field itself through concepts and methods related to previous inquiries. As Höök has stated, a well-defined conceptual framework and a more coherent field of study would make the somaesthetic approach more appreciated and applicable to other fields as well. This does not imply a univocal but rather a polyphonic and mutually discursive field of somaesthetics. Höök points out that conceptually unifying the field of research does not mean removing the essential dimensions of creativity and experience from the somaesthetic approach. Nor should it be the role of the canon of knowledge to rigidify the field of research, thus preventing the continual evolution of the paradigm. (Höök, 2018, pp. 4270–4276; see also Gaver & Höök, 2017.)

In the introduction, the question posed was, "How do we articulate somaesthetic knowledge?" Various aspects were discussed, including coherence, consistency, transparency, the first-person perspective, validity, collective knowledge formation, and established canons of texts and embodied methods. The acknowledgment of language limitations in expressing embodied knowledge and the necessity for innovative, non-verbal means to structure and communicate such experiences were highlighted. A somaesthetician endeavors to present findings and insights gained from inquiry in a clear, comprehensible, and credible manner. Similar to creating a theoretical framework, the reporting phase aims to situate one's work in a specific context and connect with others, fostering a common understanding by dedicating time and effort to communicate findings effectively.

6. Conclusions

Somaesthetics provides an open field where professionals across diverse disciplines can align their work somatically and aesthetically, integrating their embodied experiences into the thinking process. Within this realm, they generate knowledge, methods, practices, technologies, and products by exploring the aesthetic potentials of the soma. Somaesthetics offers invaluable guidance for interpreting aesthetic embodied phenomena in various cultural, social, or normative contexts. At its core, a somaesthetic inquiry aims to expand philosophical understanding, generate empirical knowledge, develop practices, or execute practical embodied processes. This approach does not prescribe dogmatic rules or predefined methods; rather, it

urges practitioners to forge unique approaches drawing from diverse traditions and methods across disciplines. Particularly, methods that not only analyze but also strive to transform social and cultural phenomena at the level of body and experience resonate well with somaesthetics. However, this creative freedom, even within an academic setting, may introduce challenges in presenting a coherent and comprehensible synthesis accessible to readers less versed in somaesthetic expertise.

A somaesthetician, encompassing roles such as philosopher, researcher, pedagogue, artist, or wellness professional, is inherently inclined towards enhancing their body consciousness or commencing such exploration. This journey can unfold through specific embodied methods or via the practice of any bodily skill or everyday mindfulness. In addition to a general somaesthetically attuned lifestyle, somaestheticians' immersion in specific somaesthetic processes can enhance their somatic skills and derive insights from personal and others' experiences. These structured or temporal processes, akin to research projects, developmental interventions, or artistic endeavors, gradually render a somaesthetician acutely aware of how embodied beings act, think, and perceive the world—acknowledging the fundamental impact of soma on worldviews and values.

In academic contexts, discussing methods necessitates a connection to the research design. Methods are chosen to collect or produce evidence that illuminates new embodied insights, answers research questions, justifies arguments, or fulfills project objectives. The critical juncture in an inquiry lies where embodied insights transform into evidence—materializing through writing, drawing, singing, or molding of variable matters to communicate somaesthetic experiences. While not diving deeply into these specific junctures or their methods in this article, the focus has been on outlining the research design that enables the extraction and sharing of experiences stemming from them. The questions posed in this article regarding the somaesthetic inquiry's research design, methods, evaluation, and articulation of somaesthetic knowledge could serve as a tool for readers initiating their own inquiries.

At the start of this article, I presented four questions regarding A. the research design (aims, objects, methods, etc.) of the somaesthetic inquiry, B. the methods, C. their evaluation, and D. the articulation of somaesthetic knowledge. Throughout this article, I have provided answers to these questions, offering a framework that readers may find helpful as a tool for their own inquiries.

A. Variety of aims and approaches: The aims of a somaesthetic inquiry vary from fostering, practicing, and developing somaesthetic-related experiences, skills, actions, and practices to influencing social norms and policies and enhancing well-being. While generally centered on unearthing embodied experiences and knowledge, these inquiries may adopt analytic, pragmatic, and/or practical aims or even launch without specific initial objectives. The object of study spans various somaesthetic activities, experiences, and their representational, performative, or experiential aspects, as well as their surrounding environmental, social, cultural, linguistic, political, or historical contexts. Acknowledging the human being as a unified body-mind, somaesthetic inquiries involve introspection regarding the methods and practices used, shedding light on the formation of embodied knowledge. Theoretical and philosophical frameworks are ideally rooted within prior somaesthetic research, extending to related works on embodiment and aesthetics while connecting the inquiry to academic, artistic, or somatic disciplines.

B. Materials for communicating embodied knowledge: In analytic somaesthetics, written expressions and philosophical argumentation play significant roles, encompassing a wide spectrum of materials exploring cultural, political, or normative facets of embodied practices.

Pragmatic somaesthetics' diverse methods involve reflection, evaluation, ideation, and data collection, yielding a rich array of written texts, spoken words, images, sounds, and other evaluative data. Practical somaesthetic methods focus on cultivating body awareness and enhancing embodied perceptions, often involving touch, movement, body scanning, contact, and voice improvisation, among others. These methods are utilized to practically engage with the phenomenon under study and generate embodied insights and reflections that may not be articulated verbally. Participants may co-create or collaborate and create research diaries, autoethnographic texts, videos, or audio recordings documenting the embodied knowledge produced during this phase.

C. Positioning in Somaesthetic Inquiry: The execution of a somaesthetic inquiry can be evaluated, for instance, based on how effectively it employs the inherent skill of directing awareness in somaesthetics. A somaesthetician is conscious of their bodily situation in the world and their position concerning the analytic, pragmatic, and practical scopes of somaesthetics. Transitioning between somaesthetic perspectives during examination facilitates clear descriptions and justifications of the choices made in the inquiry process. Moreover, the position in relation to the employed embodied methods is crucial, allowing for a critical assessment of these methods and their applicability in various contexts beyond the researcher's personal practice. This encompasses considerations of diverse bodies, cultural diversity, and social backgrounds. Examining the various roles in the production of embodied knowledge, comprehending diverse experiences, recognizing individual differences, and contemplating the influence of one's own cultural and social background on the quality of embodied knowledge is essential when contemplating the researcher's relationship with participants.

D. Coherence, consistency, and transparency: In the introduction, I raised the question: "How can somaesthetic knowledge be articulated?" This inquiry touches upon aspects like coherence, consistency, transparency, the first-person perspective, validity, collective knowledge formation, established texts, methods, and the understanding of language's limitations and potential in describing embodied knowledge. It emphasizes the necessity for innovative, non-verbal means to structure and communicate embodied experiences. A somaesthetician aims to argue and articulate findings and insights gained through inquiry clearly, comprehensibly, and credibly. Similar to constructing a theoretical framework to contextualize one's inquiry, striving for a shared understanding by dedicating time and effort to communicate findings in the reporting stage helps establish connections.

My goal in this article was to expand the realm of somaesthetics to empirical researchers in academia. When viewed through an academic mindset, even somaesthetics might begin to appear overly structured. Excessively rigid protocols in somaesthetic inquiry could potentially stifle the entire process. Somaesthetics values flow over categorization, focusing on inner guidance from the body rather than adhering strictly to methodological doctrines and external instructions. Therefore, allowing flexibility for the inquiry to evolve in unforeseen directions is more beneficial. However, this does not negate the value of "research design awareness" for those conducting such inquiries. It aids them in understanding their venture beyond conventional boundaries while aligning with academic expectations, contexts, and prior practices.

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Art as "The Third Skin": A Methodology for Exploring "Spatial Repetition" in Trauma[1]

Shira Berger

Abstract: *This article explores the potential of using art-based research to analyze repetitive paintings made after trauma, to understand psychological mechanisms that stem from the body. To this end, I propose a multi-disciplinary approach combining psychoanalysis and art, to describe the concept of the "third skin," as a psychological-spatial repetitive mechanism originating in the body and stiving towards healing, which is activated following trauma and manifested materially in art. The foundation for this lies in a spatial etiology that I have identified in trauma, which I have named "spatial repetition," and which provides the basis for a methodology that enables to see repetitive artwork as a visual embodiment of repetition in trauma, as well as a lens through which to understand it.*

Keywords: *trauma, skin, wound, repetition, art, psychoanalysis, methodology, interdisciplinary.*

1. Introduction

> *"Every technique is a 'technique of the body,' which demonstrates and emphasizes the metaphysical structure of our flesh*" (Maurice Merleau-Pony)

When Madge Gill was 38, just a few weeks after she nearly died giving birth to a stillborn baby, she began to paint for the first time. This creative period continued uninterrupted for the next forty years until her death, during which she produced thousands of artworks using painting, weaving, and embroidery, which were characterized by significant morphological repetition (Jeanneret, 2017). This visual repetitiveness manifested itself in the diligent persistence of geometric shapes and imagery, which cover most of the surface area of the artwork and create textures that have a powerful yet enigmatic, unsettling, and even destabilizing effect. Gill lacked formal artistic training and lived on the margins of society, and thus is considered an outsider in the art world (Russel, 2001). As is typical in such cases, most of her vast body of work was found in her home only after her death; in many ways, it remains mysterious to this day.

1 This article is based on a doctoral thesis written under the supervision of Prof. Rachel Dekel from the Louis and Gabi Weisfeld School of Social Work at Bar-Ilan University and Prof. Efrat Biberman from the Hamidrasha Faculty of Arts at Beit Berl College. The research was conducted under the auspices of the Program of Hermenutics and Cultural Studies at Bar-Ilan University, with its support.

As an art therapist, I often come across cases where people who have experienced trauma spontaneously begin to create artwork characterized by repetition. This artistic repetition often occurs alongside the characteristic repetition seen in trauma situations, namely, the intrusive and repetitive reliving of the traumatic experience, which can occur through nightmares, flashbacks, or an unconscious return to the same traumatic experience, perceived by the subject as an inescapable fate (APA, 2000).

Trauma is defined as "an event in the subject's life defined by its intensity, by the subject's incapacity to respond adequately to it, and by the upheaval and long-lasting effects that it brings about in the psychical organization" (Laplanche & Pontalis, 2011, p. 351). The Greek meaning of the word "trauma" (τραῦμα) is "wound," derived from the Greek verb (τιτρώσκω), which means "to pierce," usually in the context of breaking the skin, and it is the origin of the term "trauma" in the physical context (Ibid.). This point will be important in the context of discussing skin later in the article.

Freud (1895) was the first to link trauma to repetition, attributing to it a temporal etiology. Initially, he saw repetition as an attempt to represent the trauma (Breuer & Freud, 1893) and later as an attempt to return to a pre-life state (Freud, 1920). However, due to descriptions about the inability to represent trauma (Caruth, 1996) I claim that this repetition cannot be related solely to representation and temporality, as representation is only possible through temporal etiology (based on an orderly temporal sequence which enables movement on a linear axis between past and present, or from the surface to the depths, and visa-versa), which is disrupted in trauma. Consequently, this temporal etiology Freud described for repetition is insufficient on its own to explain this artistic phenomenon and therefore constitutes a lacuna; such repetition as found in artworks reveals another stratum of repetition following trauma, which cannot be explained by temporal etiology.

My attempt to offer an additional explanation for the relationship between artistic morphological repetition and trauma repetition, beyond the temporal etiology of repetition, is what drove me to propose another etiology – a spatial one – that I have identified in trauma, and which I refer to as **"spatial repetition."** This concept forms the basis for a methodology that allows us to see repetitive artwork as a visual embodiment of repetition in trauma and as a lens through which to understand it.

The use of the terms 'space' and 'spatiality' in this context stems from the spatial essence in relation to temporality (the question of space/time). In this case, this question is a key point because, in contrast to Freud's temporal etiology, the spatial repetition I identify in trauma occurs in heterogeneous manners and directions, parallelly, creating a unpredictable non-linear-spatial plain in which the etiology is spatial. The distinction between linear and non-linear is therefore crucial for understanding the distinction I suggest between the two repetitions and for identifying the seemingly arbitrary embodiments of the spatial-repetition as such.

While the phenomena of repression, free associations and representation are Freudian paradigmatic examples of the temporal-linear repetition axis, I see dreams, dissociation and schizophrenia – in addition to trauma, as Freudian examples of spatial repetition. Accordingly, I propose that both repetitions play a role in normal development, operating in parallel, and view trauma as a cause of disruption in temporal repetition and increasing the spatial repetition – possibly to a pathological extent.

Recognition of the spatiality of trauma has led in recent years to a "spatial turn" in trauma research (Coddington & Micieli-Voutsinas, 2017; Perera, 2010; Trigg, 2009). Yet, these studies concentrate on the geographical aspects of trauma, and without connecting it to repetition –

namely, the persistence of visual objects – and regarding a-priori spaces. In opposition, the spatial etiology I suggest allows us to understand repetition embodied in art made after trauma, as a pre-representational creative spatial practice that serves as a psychological-spatial mechanism activated in traumatic states. Accordingly, this does not entail existing geographical sites, but rather **creates a-priori mental and artistic spatial plains**, which form the basis for explaining the body-trauma-art relationship and the proposed methodology.

Understanding the relationship between repetitive artistic representation and trauma repetition raises the inherent complexity of its investigation, and phenomena belonging to various disciplines, including the effects of trauma and repetition on the subject, the psychological mechanisms involved, and the artistic function. For this reason, the methodology I propose is a multidisciplinary one, combining psychoanalysis, trauma research, and art – an intersection which has already been related to as 'the extended field of mental health' (Bennett, 2022). I argue that this artistic activity is primarily anchored in the body – or more precisely, the skin – as a result of the trauma, and creates the unique connection of trauma-body-repetition-creation. This premise provides the theoretical justification for examining artworks as a method for understanding the psychological mechanism of repetition in trauma. This approach is consistent with the field of somaesthetics, which assumes that there is a unique relationship between human aesthetic creation and our body (Andrzejewski & Heinrich, 2012). This connection provides the theoretical basis for the methodology I propose, which is **spatial**.

In this article, I will elaborate on these ideas as a basis for the methodology, and then describe my proposed methodology. Finally, I will demonstrate its use by examining Gill's work as a paradigmatic case of spontaneous extreme repetitive artwork produced after trauma, therefore suitable for examining the relationship between repetition in psychological trauma and the spontaneous repetitive artistic expression created in its wake.

2. Repetition in Trauma: The Lacuna in Freud's Temporal Explanation as a Standalone Theory

As mentioned, the methodology I propose relies on the direct connection Freud made between the phenomenon of repetition and trauma (Freud & Breuer, 1893; Freud, 1920). In the early stages of this theory, Freud saw the symptom as an expression of the repetitive return of the traumatic memory in an alternate form, caused by the psyche's need to create a representation of the trauma (Breuer & Freud, 1893). Later, he gave clinical attention to the repetition itself, identifying it as a critical characteristic in such situations. Referring to this phenomenon as "repetition compulsion," he described it as the subject's unconscious attempt to assume an active role and control the outcomes of the trauma. Either way, the etiology Freud identified is temporal, as the repetition moves along a linear axis from past to present. Freud recognized that in trauma cases, processing does not entirely eliminate repetition and may even intensify it (Freud, 1914, 1920). This discovery created a persistent clinical and theoretical lacuna in the understanding of repetition in trauma, one which Freud was not able to reconcile throughout most of his writing.

Freud's essay *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920) marks a significant theoretical turning point: there, for the first time, he addresses repetition as a clinical phenomenon in its own right. To explain it, Freud introduces his concept of the "death drive" and describes how repetition works to promote it. The dynamic of "repetition compulsion," seeks to return the organism to the inert state that preceded life by repetitive dissolution. However, despite this groundbreaking

description, the etiology of repetition remains distinctly temporal, describing repetition along a temporal-linear axis (Freud, 1920).

The issue I have identified with the exclusively temporal explanation for repetition stems from the inherent connection between temporality and representation. Since representation is a recreation of a prior perception that once existed but is now absent (Lalande, 2010, p. 241), it is supposed to move along the linear time axis – between the "source" in the past and its "recurring expression" in the present (Freud SE XII, p. 150). The question therefore arises: if the temporal continuum is disrupted in trauma, how can one move "along it" in order to mend it?

The idea that repetition is a psychological attempt to represent the trauma formed the basis for the development of various psychoanalytic theories dealing with the representation of absence due to trauma (Bion, 2013; Bollas, 1987; Freud, 1925; Klein, 1983; Winnicott, 1991). British psychoanalyst Donald Winnicott (1974) eloquently explained this paradox as inherent to trauma. In a short essay published posthumously, he discusses the implications of an early trauma so terrifying that the event was never experienced by the psyche, therefore leaving no psychological imprint. As the event has no psychic imprint from the past, it cannot be represented in the present. This situation results in the psyche being trapped between a constant threat experience and the shadow cast by a nonexistent past, which many times can cause the preverbal somatic experiences characteristic of trauma (Levine, 2012). Basing her trauma research on this insight, Caruth (1996) characterizes this dialectic as typical of later traumas as well. Thus, another lacuna emerges: how can something that has no psychic imprint be represented? Moreover, could there be another type of repetition that is not temporal?

3. Repetition in the Spatial Dimension of Trauma

Within the "spatial turn' in trauma mentioned earlier, studies draw attention not only to the ability of trauma to move across spaces and places but also between heterogeneous objects of different "orders," for example: people, sites, objects, body parts, and more. As a result, spatial connections are formed between people, places, and objects that cannot necessarily be located or mapped (Caruth, 1996), to the extent that trauma leads to a complex amalgamation of psychological, cognitive, and material spaces. Accordingly, attention has been drawn to the need for an interdisciplinary approach examining the relationship between trauma, geography, and the human experience. However, the relationship between *repetition* and space, or the spatial connection between trauma and the skin – both as a physical and psychological-spatial site – and art, have not yet been addressed.

Repetition and Space in Trauma Symptomatology

Repetition in trauma leads to the persistence of the traumatic experience even after the original event has passed. In this context, reactions often intensify with each repetition, to the point where they become disconnected from their source and take on a life of their own (Herman, 2015). As a result, not only does the trauma become greatly removed – both temporally and spatially – from the original event, but it is often impossible to discover its origin or anticipate its continued dispersion. The reason for this is that, although the original event occurred in a specific time and place, the repetition (in flashbacks or other forms) can occur anywhere and at any time, sometimes creating bizarre and inexplicable concurrences between the experience and the place (for example, a recurrence of the experience emerging at an unexpected site).

Nonlinearity is in my opinion also embodied in the dissociative defense mechanism

characteristic of trauma (Balint, 1992; Bromberg, 2014; Davies & Frawley, 1994; Eshel, 2016; Fairbain, 1952; Herman, 2015; Modell, 1990; 2012; Stern, 2004; Winnicott, 1974). Dissociation is a psychological defense mechanism involving the splitting of the self, while the fragmented parts continue to exist – and repeat – in many directions simultaneously and paradoxically (as opposed to a single linear axis). In my view, this illustrates the way that trauma moves *through* repetition spatially, in a manner that is neither linear, predictable, nor fixed, due to the heterogeneous places and appearances in which it reoccurs.

Furthermore, evidence of the spatiality of trauma can be found in the unique phenomena and symptoms it induces. For instance, the sense of danger that accompanies every repetition creates distortions of perception and causes the experience of danger to escalate, so that even environments and places that are typically safe can be perceived as dangerous (Herman, 2015). Added to this is the potent "contagious" quality of trauma, expressed as "secondary traumatization," "intergenerational transference," and "traumatic countertransference," where family members or therapists also begin to suffer from post-traumatic symptoms, despite not having been present at the original event (Dekel, Hantman, Ginzburg & Solomon, 2006).

A form of spatial liminality is inherent in these phenomena due to the strange (though seemingly obvious) fact that human connection can be formed on a spatial non-linear basis (as opposed to a temporal-linear one via hereditary/biologically). Though I do not intend to suggest that this is the only way to explain interpersonal relationships, this *spatial* dimension in them has not yet been emphasized). Moreover, this spatial 'stickiness' of trauma, which also occurs between heterogenic elements, portrays a non-linear, illogical and even seemingly arbitrary spread of trauma that spatiality can help to explain. Therefore, the methodology I propose focuses on an investigation of spatial repetition, and adds art as a spatial site wherein trauma spreads spatially as part of a process originating in the body.

The Spatial Dimension in Freudian Trauma Theory

In revisiting Freud's theories, I found evidence that the spatial dimension's importance in the psychic experience in general, and in trauma in particular, can be found even in his early theories. There, Freud emphasizes that psychic experiences are primarily located in the body and on the skin's surface (Freud, 1923). Thus, he creates a direct link between the physical skin and trauma, and describes the spatial expansion of the traumatic event as extending into the actual space of the body. This connection constitutes a basis also for the connection of trauma theory to somaesthetics via proprioception, interception and or kinesthetics (Silow, 2002; Cassidy, 2012).

Moreover, the very ability of trauma to move through repetition across places, into the clinic and the therapeutic relationship in the context of transference (Freud, 1912), constitutes the condition for psychoanalytic healing. However, I found the main evidence of the spatiality of trauma and repetition in Freud's essay *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920), where he describes the psychic surface as an organism with a membrane facing outward that absorbs external stimuli while protecting the psychic contents. In this interaction, the surface is ever-changing (Freud, 1920). Furthermore, the surface is equipped with a stimulus-shield, which can operate independently to protect itself and in so doing, protect the entire mental system. This shield also operates horizontally and spatially, allowing it to alter its form to survive and ensure the system's survival.

According to this paradigm, trauma is an event that breaches the protective membrane and floods the system with stimuli. As a result, a repetitive spatial-horizontal activity is triggered in which all the surface's defense systems are mobilized to take control of the excess stimulation to

reestablish intrapsychic equilibrium. Freud refers to this concept as "the pleasure principle" and argues that it is the organism's ultimate goal (Freud & Breuer, 1893, Freud, 1920). Thus, Freud not only draws attention to the critical importance of the surface in trauma and thereby to its spatial dimension and the repetition within it, but also describes the spatial organization and the drama of the interface triggered in response. Interestingly, the way Freud describes this activity is very similar to the way the physical skin responds to injury, striving to repair the skin at the wounded site.

4. The Skin's Spatial Dimension: Skin as a Heterogeneous, Nonlinear, Dynamic, Creative Space

My findings that space is involved in various trauma phenomena brought me to question whether there might be other similarities between physical and psychological wounds beyond the Greek word's origin and metaphorical usage. As the term trauma means "wound," its usage makes the skin an integral part of it – the "site-space" where the wound occurs. Therefore, there is no wound without skin. The skin, the human body's largest organ, covers almost the entire body and is responsible for essential functions like temperature regulation, movement, metabolism, and respiration. The aspect of self-regulation is crucial in the context of trauma recovery and emphasizes the need of awareness of the spatial dimensions of the self in trauma cases (Toner and Moran, 2015).

French philosopher Michel Serres (2008) articulated the unique, dynamic, and even paradoxical quality of the skin as a "formless form." Indeed, although perceived as a uniform organ, skin is composed of various tissues, capillaries, glands, cells, and interactions that are determined by the skin's location, conditions it's exposed to, and functions. The skin's properties aren't absolute and undergo many changes and even upheavals throughout life. Therefore, although it may appear static, homogeneous, and stable, skin is in fact an active, dynamic, heterogeneous, nonlinear space characterized by paradoxical complexity. This dynamism is especially evident during injury and rupture (Freud, 1920; Guarnera, G., et al, 2019).

The Physical Wound as a Repetitive Spatial Event

When the physical skin is wounded, a complex spontaneous process is initiated, aimed at healing the tear. The biological reason for this is survival, as an exposed wound is vulnerable to infections and can lead to the development of inflammation, fluid loss, loss of body heat, hypothermia, and even death (Broughton, Janis & Attinger, 2006). Under optimal conditions, this process includes specific stages occurring in the following order: bleeding and clotting (*hemostasis*), inflammation, creation of new tissue (*proliferation*), and scarring (Ibid.). However, given the skin's dynamism, in practice these stages can overlap, change, become extended, fail, or may not even occur. Therefore, for various reasons, the body sometimes fails to generate the activity necessary for healing, leading to the formation of a chronic wound that "refuses to heal."

It should be noted that Freud himself used the concepts of "wounding" and "scarring" as metaphors for psychological states (1917). However, beyond this metaphorical usage, he did not link the physicality of the wound with psychological trauma, and he certainly did not link these to artistic work. I see traumatic repetition as the psychological equivalent of the wound's "stubborn refusal" to heal. Furthermore, I propose that both are expressed in the dominance of spatial repetition and the inability to move beyond it, a phenomenon that originates in the body and can also be embodied in the surface expression of artwork.

5. The Relationship between Biological and Psychological Surfaces

The skin is in relationship with the body's internal systems, often aiding in diagnosing diseases and symptoms not originating in the skin, including psychological conditions (Mcdougall, 1989). In this context, the skin has been found to serve as a sort of pictorial surface upon which psychological symptoms are drawn, sometimes having a symbolic or concrete relationship with the psychological origins. In other words, the skin's surface is like a canvas on which both psychological and physical experiences are depicted and embodied. Thus, there is a visual connection between the content and the *actual* physical body.

Freudian theory led psychoanalysts to understand the skin's importance in the psyche (Anzieu 1985; Ogden, 1992; Tustin, 2018). Among them, Esther Bick (1968) connected physical and psychological skin, introducing the concept of the "psychic skin" and the defense mechanism that develops following early trauma, which she termed the "second skin" (Ibid.).

The psychic skin is a developmental achievement expressed in the experience of containment of the self. This is made possible following an adequate relationship with caregivers early in life. The source of this psychological process is physical. In the beginning of life, aspects of the personality are experienced as lacking any connecting force; if the infant is fortunate enough to have a containing object satisfying its needs closely, while engaging all its physical senses – these begin to be experienced as a containing envelope and the infant begins to feel contained within its skin. According to Bick, the containing object can be any sensory object that grabs the infant's attention and is tangibly experienced as skin, giving the physical skin its psychological function as a continuous containing boundary. This process allows the infant to eventually relinquish the concrete object and develop the ability to cope with separation from the mother.

Bick also described the implications of a disruption in the development of the "psychic skin" as a result of trauma, leading to development of a "second skin"; due to anxiety caused by the prospect of "spilling out" and annihilation, which is characteristic of this state, the psyche creates pseudo-autonomy by repeatedly and inappropriately using mental functions or innate skills. Such repetition creates motoric or mental continuity in place of the skin experience, which has been interrupted, and the individual develops a dependence on this instead of the disappointing object. Compared to other post-Freudian psychoanalytic approaches that see trauma as related to early human relations (Ferenczi, 1988; Winnicott, 1965), Bick's description is unique in that it is entwined with the actual bodily experience that precedes any psychological representation processes.

Although Bick refers to trauma early in life without focusing on repetition, I believe her theory is also highly relevant to trauma later in life. First, her description is reminiscent of Freud's depiction of the surplus of unbridled energy rushing in as a result of a tear in the protective surface in states of trauma. Moreover, the defense mechanisms characteristic of this anxiety involve increased containment efforts, similar to Bick's skin-based defense mechanisms, using them as "prosthetic skin" to replace the wounded skin. All of this is achieved through a repetitive, **spatial** practice, which intensifies and serves to create horizontal "prosthetic skin" to cover the wounded areas, through activity that resembles physical skin responding to a rupture. This, I suggest, can also be manifested in a tangible, visual way, such as in artwork.

My claim, therefore, is that the use of the term "trauma," meaning wound, is not just metaphorical; rather, there is a spatial similarity between the psychic and physical dimensions. This spatiality is embodied in the etiology, in the repetitive activity triggered, and in the practice of this activity (via the making of the artwork). Furthermore, I argue that this activity can be

manifested in art that expresses the spatial relationship created between the wound, the skin, and the artwork.

6. Trauma and Art: From Art as Representation to Art as "Third Skin"

The connection between trauma and art is profound and highly relevant to the current article due to the inherent inability to represent trauma (Caruth, 1996). Over time, a deeper understanding has developed of the impact of trauma on the capacity for representation, including in the field of art. Particularly after the Holocaust, a realization evolved that not only can trauma not be represented, its (attempted) representation can potentially empty the trauma of its full essence and true significance (Felman, 1992). With this understanding, various theorists have successfully articulated the power of art in traumatic contexts, in light of its ability to contain the paradoxical state of representation alongside the incapacity for representation, without resolving the tension between the two. Furthermore, art, paradoxically, is the most faithful representation of trauma due to its lack of logic (Felman, 1992; Gaitini, 2020). In other words, the artwork itself can be as nonlinear as the trauma.

Over the years, it has been recognized that repetition and the inability to represent the traumatic experience can lead to further regression in the capacity for symbolization (Markman, 2013), as well as to intensification of sensory, affective, and behavioral symptoms (Young, 1992). Consequently, there has been a transition toward focusing on the creative process and art as a combined medium through which the self thinks itself, parallel to verbal thinking (Abram, 2012; Ehrenzweig, 1967). I would add that it may even *replace* verbal thinking in certain situations. In other words, I am suggesting that **the artworks' form and structure can embody a bodily experience that precedes representation.** In doing so, art also uses the same heightened sensuality that is characteristic of traumatic situations (Van der Kolk & Fisler, 1995) and links to the preverbal component of trauma. Evidence for this can be found, for example, in descriptions of how focusing on geometric shapes can serve as a defense against the anxiety of spilling out, which is typical of pre-symbolic experiences (Tustin, 2018).

The power of art, therefore, lies in its ability to create something devoid of logic and linearity, thus enabling processing not only at the representational level but on the sensory level as well (Rose, 1987). Biberman and Sharon-Zisser (2014) note that the power of the artistic act stems precisely from its ability to go beyond the boundaries of representation and reach an end beyond which there is (seemingly) nothing. According to the authors, it is precisely this ability that allows repetition to be stimulating and revitalizing. Thus, they too create a direct link between repetition and the incapability of representation.

My proposal then is, that this repetition it is not an attempt to represent but rather to create a spatial **"third skin"** via the wounded mental ones. My concept of **"the third skin"** is the material artistic-aesthetic **embodiment formed through repetitive spatial activity, triggered in the wake of trauma**. Accordingly, I see this embodiment is in essence as a creative activity, striving toward healing and originating in the body. This concept reflects the perception of artistic practice as part of the same spatial process of repetition in trauma, which constitutes the boundary enabling the intangible to become tangible. However, in extreme situations this activity can also embody a pathologically more static and stereotypical development. Yet, reading through this paradigm emphasizes my claim that the soul's desire for healing also lies at the basis of these incarnations..

Accordingly, I seek to add a focus on spatiality, arguing that the repetitive artistic activity following trauma is a horizontal practice that operates in relation to the surface – i.e., the skin –

of the body, the psyche, and the artwork. This repetition expands horizontally and nonlinearly, similar to the way physical skin responds to physical trauma. As this activity leaves sensory traces in artwork, it can be investigated as a methodology for understanding spatial repetition in trauma.

7. The Methodology

The above multidisciplinary discussion on the relationship between trauma, repetition, the body, and art allowed me to describe the concept of "the third skin," which forms the theoretical basis for this methodology. The theoretical component is based on the intertextual approach (Kristeva, 1984), in which relationships are created between texts in various fields of knowledge (including "visual texts," i.e. artwork). The theoretical integration that follows offers a new integrative methodological approach, wherein artwork that is created after trauma and has morphological repetition is viewed as a practical embodiment of the spatial repetition that arises in response to trauma.

Artwork constitutes a sensory horizontal space that concretely embodies spatial repetition and is therefore directly accessible for empirical artistic investigation. Thus, this methodology constitutes otherart-based research (Eisner, 1981). It combines a formalist perspective (De Duve, 2010) focusing on the morphological formality of the repetition and the theoretical perspective embodied in the "third skin" concept.

On a practical level, the art-based aspect of the research includes three stages: (1) conducting a formal examination of artwork, including a review of the purely morphological features of the artwork; (2) analyzing the types of repetition present in the artwork, based on the patterns and rhythms they create and characterizing them in relation to descriptions of the "spatial repetition" and linear repetition in stage 1. This stage is based on the "rhythmanalysis" methodology, which perceives people, places, and things as having rhythms in relation to our minds and bodies, and deals specifically with repetition and the way heterogenic entities are linked in rhythm (Bachelard, 1969; Lefebvre, 1991); and (3) integrating the formal findings with the theoretical background, rooted in the intertextual approach, in order to understand these artistic embodiments in relation to the concept of "the third skin."

The novelty of this methodology is that it focuses on the **structural and physical tangibility** in which spatial repetition in trauma is anchored, instead of moving away from it to focus on psychological representations, as often occurs when examining such artworks. Therefore, the findings will not be analyzed at the metaphorical or representational level (at least not exclusively or primarily), but as an embodiment of "the third skin," i.e., an embodiment of a literal repetitive skin-related process, both physical and psychological, which occurs following a traumatic rupture. Consequently, I will consider the repetition's visual embodiment in the artwork as actual pre-symbolic skin patterns that form the foundation for the survivor's ruptured experience of skin continuity and containment, and as a prerequisite for the capacity for representation.

The assumption is that such an investigation can allow us to understand the artist's physical-psychological motivation based on the artwork's morphological quality and the function of repetition in art in response to trauma. The approach seeks to illuminate how this repetition embodied in the artwork and in the process of creation can be integrated as part of the creative process and perhaps even contribute to healing.

Moreover, and in light of the importance of having someone bear witness in cases of trauma (Amir, 2018; Caruth, 1995; Stern, 2012), viewing the artwork through this prism may constitute

an *additional* level of spatial repetition as performed by the viewer: With the trauma embodied in a pre-symbolic way in the artwork, this type of observation affords the viewer an opportunity to participate in the trauma's spatial movement – into, within, and from the artwork – thereby actively bearing witness to the trauma and particularly to the spatial repetition activity. This activity does not occur at a representational level but at the actual sensory level of the skin. This point also sheds light on the power of the experience and the aesthetic practices also from a second and third person perspective, and the continuous of the creative process through them.

8. Case Study: Applying the Methodology to an Untitled Work by Madge Gill

Figure 1 *Untitled, 1954, ink on cardboard, 63.6 x 50.8cm*
photo: Claude Bornand, Collection of Art Brut, Lausanne, inv. cab-9335

Formalistic Observation

The piece is a long, colorful, untitled, and undated drawing in black, blue, and dark burgundy-purple ink on Bristol board. The composition is centered; the figure of a luxuriously dressed woman is featured in the center and along almost the entire length of the paper, surrounded by a formally geometric background. Although the drawing as a whole is characterized by a textured overlay and blurring between the figure and the background, they can still be distinguished from one another, as the background is drawn in blue tones while the woman is drawn primarily in black and burgundy. Additionally, the background is characterized by straight geometric textures creating a sense of architectural space, while the woman's clothes are characterized by round, wavy, "spilling" textures composed of amorphous shapes, some of which seem to draw from the natural world.

Beyond her adorned clothing, the central vertical axis of the woman's figure – from her head, down to the center of her base - is left relatively blank. The drawing is more spaced out in this area, with less dense coverage than most other areas in the work. The woman's hair and facial features are very prominent, due to the dense, dark black color in which they are drawn. The blank surface of her face, created by the absence of drawing and the cleanness of the paper there, accentuates this further. Consequently, her head appears to be almost "disconnected" from the rest of the detail in the piece.

In the lower righthand section of the artwork, a checkered surface can be seen, exceptional in its simplicity. Against it, an image stands out that looks like a "fountain" at the end of a staircase. This image is delimited on its upper side by a relatively thick arc separating it from the background; it seems like a relatively orderly and guarded "enclave," engulfed by the tangled background and other images – almost as if it describes an occurrence that is separate from the rest of the piece. This type of image recurs several times, both above the windows and in the upper lefthand corner within the sketched background. This form is also echoed in the woman's figure; the arc at the top of the staircase parallels her adorned head, and the dress concealing her body is wide at the base, growing narrower toward her waist much like the staircase, which narrows as it ascends. Gill's signature, written upside-down, appears in the top right corner of the artwork, which is relatively uncharacteristic of her work.

Analyzing the Repetitions in the Artwork

Various morphological repetitions can be identified in the artwork. About half of its surface is covered by a checkered texture that appears to cross the page diagonally behind the woman's figure, repeating itself relatively consistently. This texture appears like tiling in shades of blue, in a uniform direction and angle. However, as the "tiles" are colored so densely, in different areas the texture becomes difficult to identify, creating the sense of a "stream" moving across the artwork. Within this "stream" three similar windows appear, and it almost seems as if they are being "swept" along. Each window has a crossed lattice with a white triangular area above, where a tiered shape appears with a plant or flame at its top. The "steps" of the "sculptures" recur in the "staircase" in the lower right part of the work. In contrast, in the upper part of the work, there is a relatively large amount of white space due to the orderly and precise drawing of straight, parallel, and intersecting lines that almost look like a preliminary outline of the tiling – before being colored in. Although this area of the drawing is much less dense and dramatic, the repetition within it is still clear.

The woman's clothes also feature repetition, yet it differs from the geometric textures in the background, primarily because its consistency is hard to characterize. Rather, the repetition in

her clothes creates a sense of threading, swirling, scattering, and even spilling in unexpected and inconsistent ways. The distance between most of the repetitions in the central area of her body is spaced out such that white spaces are left between the recurring shapes, making it seem that the background is denser and more "put together" than the woman's body. Moreover, the repetition of the "fountain" shape, both overtly and in the overall form of the woman's figure, creates a repetition that appears in different formal contexts. Consequently, heterogeneous and even bizarre encounters occur between the shape and its surroundings.

As a result, it becomes apparent that despite the relatively orderly composition, the work lacks morphological uniformity regarding the types of images, the levels of figuration and abstraction, and perspectives. (The background offers a mostly bird's-eye-view perspective of the moving floor tiles, but there are also more figurative enclaves, which are not entirely coherent). These create a complex, deceptive perception of space that does not lead to a coherent morphological unity, and at times creates the feeling that the work is actually disintegrating.

This lack of uniformity is also manifested in the textures' different directions and rhythms of movement. Some move in a uniform direction but in an infinite stream, some "spill out" in drops or sliding waves, as if seeking to go beyond the page's boundaries, and elsewhere there is a sense of an occurrence being diluted (e.g., in the hat). As a result, despite the orderly composition, there is a kind of kinetic and "dispersive" cacophony. Thus, although the work contains some areas of three-dimensional depth, the overall sensation is one of horizontal movement covering the surface in an unexpected, dynamic, and heterogeneous flow.

Examining the Morphological Findings in Relation to the "Third Skin"

Considering this work's composition, figurativeness, and relatively atypical signature, it seems likely that it is a portrait. However, unlike classic portraits where the subject stands in the center and is highlighted against the background, in Gill's work the distinction between the figure and the background is blurred. Furthermore, there is a certain inversion: while the woman's face is white and prominent, the center of her body remains blurred and fragmented in relation to the rest of the work. It creates a sense that what is holding her body parts together is the background, which seems more solid and secure than the body itself.

This echoes Esther Bick's concept of the "second skin," which posits that in order to compensate for the lack of "psychological-skin" experiences due to trauma, an attempt is made to create a continuous, artificial, compensatory skin experience to counter the sense of fragmentation. This psychological mechanism begins in the body – in the actual skin. In my view, this mechanism is also relevant to late trauma and artwork created in its wake: The repetitive artistic creation process generates a "third skin" that is distinct from the second skin infants develops within their body/psyche after early trauma. Accordingly, I consider the morphological repetition embodied in the artwork to be the result of second-skin-related mental activity: spatial repetition that becomes dominant following trauma and is manifested in a concrete, tangible way in the artwork.

The dominance of spatial repetition over the linear repetition (via temporal repetition) is also what makes it possible to identify manifestations of a "third skin" in this artwork. These can be recognized through the lack of formal linearity, heterogeneity, and horizontal spreading that characterize spatial repetition and most of the repetitions in the work. As mentioned, there are also linear repetitions, but the overall effect created is dynamic and dispersive to the point of disintegration. Moreover, the repetition creates horizontal spaces with the morphological appearance of actual physiological skin. For example:

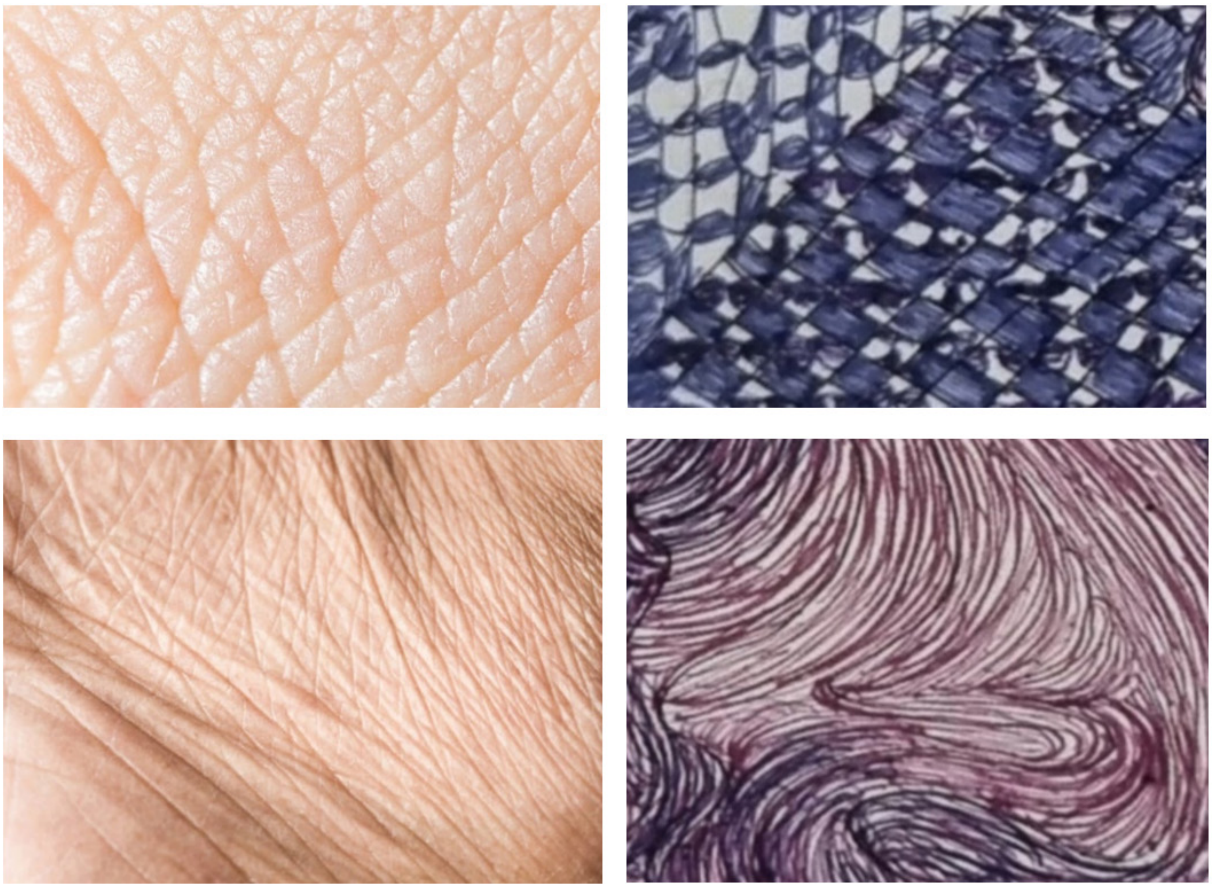

Figure 2 *Untitled, 1954, ink on cardboard, 63.6 x 50.8cm*
photo: Claude Bornand, Collection of Art Brut, Lausanne, inv. cab-9335

Interestingly, these manifestations are found specifically in the background and in the woman's clothing rather than her body. I thus propose that, despite the inability to represent trauma, the repetition in Gill's works embodies the spatial function of creating psychological-skin areas to cover open wounds, precisely as with biological skin. All this is further emphasized when considering the possibility that the work is a self-portrait.

Although this artistic exploration is concentrated in the morphological repetition found within one artwork, I suggest that repetition which takes place *between* works is also an embodiment of the same spatial etiology and evidence of the repetition's true spatially, moving not only *within* the work but also across different works. This can be demonstrated as follows:


Figures 3 and 4 *Left: Untitled, 1954, ink on paper, 64 x 51 cm,*
photo: Morgane Détraz, Atelier de numérisation – Ville de Lausanne, Collection of Art Brut, Lausanne, inv. cab-4240;
Right: Untitled, 1952, ink on paper, 64 x 51 cm,
photo: Arnaud Conne, Atelier de numérisation – Ville de Lausanne, Collection of Art Brut, Lausanne, inv. cab-4241

Moreover, this showcases the morphological repetition of shapes and elements *between* artworks, which can be identified only in perspective of a body of work, and the way in which this spatial repetition of the non-linear spread can continuate in different resolutions.

Pursuantly, I suggest that the artwork embodies an attempt to create a continuous repetitive spatial experience at the **actual physical level**, to compensate for the experience of internal fragmentation. Therefore, in contrast to most interpretations of outsider art, which have dealt extensively with the pathology involved in the artists' condition (Prinzhorn, 1922), I suggest that this repetitive activity also has a generative and creative quality that constitutes a spontaneous striving toward healing. Furthermore, this striving now involves *us* – the viewers – who, by experiencing the repetition embodied in the artwork, not only become witnesses to the trauma, but true participants of the repetition; repeating the spatial spread of the trauma that originated in the creator's body.

9. Conclusion

In this article, I suggested that, like skin, trauma too, is formless and has no stable meaning due to its dynamism, nonlinearity, heterogeneity, unpredictability, and continual expansion, which occurs through "spatial repetition." This description of trauma and "spatial repetition" provides, among other things, an additional explanation for the inability to represent trauma, since, through spatial repetition, trauma moves and expands in a nonlinear, heterogeneous, and unpredictable way, thereby negating any possibility of representing it.

Freud explicitly noted that it is almost impossible to identify such repetition (which he directly linked to trauma or its effects) without the assistance of other factors (Freud, 1920). Accordingly, I have described artwork created after trauma, which is characterized by morphological repetition, as a tangible embodiment of the repetition originating in the physical body and operating similarly to it. I proposed a methodology for examining art created after trauma, based on an understanding of repetition as a complex, multifaceted, multidimensional phenomenon. This methodology responds to what I see as the inherent need to investigate trauma precisely through its heterogeneous lack of uniformity. Identifying trauma's ability to move spatially between sites, people, and objects, calls for an examination that is itself spatial, rather than a linear approach that maintains a dichotomous separation between disciplines.

Therefore, these theoretical concepts were not intended to expand the classic psychoanalytic discussion of body representations as the basis for psychological representations, nor do they claim to be the only way to understand the connection between trauma, repetition, and art. Instead, they offer an additional possibility for understanding morphological repetition in trauma-based art, by shifting the role of art as representation to art as a third skin. On this basis, I offered a methodology to help us understand how the body's **physicality** following trauma is expressed in repetition embodied in art. Expanding art's examination accordingly is another contribution of this article.

The methodology, based on approaching artwork as fulfilling a function beyond (or preceding) aesthetic form, psychological representation, or semiotic representation, leads to the realization that both trauma and art resemble our body more than we previously thought. In light of this, identifying different types of repetition and the dominance of one over the other can also help us understand the motivation driving the creative act and its creative potential. This enables the possibility of identifying the creative motivation the art embodies in relation to trauma and even to harness it in support of the therapeutic effort. By this, I seek to join the many ways trauma theory informs creative practices, while creative practices themselves continue to shape the social and cultural aspects of trauma literature.

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Weeping out Loud: Embodiment in the Contemporary Lament Learning Process

Elina Hytönen-Ng, Emilia Kallonen

Introduction

Lamenting is a bodily experience, a means of expressing grief or sorrow, involving the shedding of tears and crying while singing. It stands as a deeply communal expression of grief and other profound emotions. This tradition is global and has been found in different parts of the world, from rural China (McLaren 2008) to Bangladesh (Wilce 2009) and from Ireland (McLaughlin 2019) to Greece (Caraveli-Chaves 1980). While some variation exists across traditions, a common thread worldwide is that laments have predominantly been oral traditions among women (McLaren 2008, 2). In this article, we look at the learning process of lamenting in contemporary Finland from a bodily and experiential perspective using somatics and somaesthetics as our framework.

Geographically and culturally, the Karelian and Ingrian lamenting traditions are closest to Finland. These regions bordering Finland and Russia, also share a historical connection with Finland. Moreover, the laments among the Skolt Sámi people in northern Finland and Russia closely align with the Karelian tradition (Jouste 2020). Folklorist Eila Stepanova defines Karelian laments as sung poetry that "follows conventionalized rules of traditional verbal and non-verbal expression, most often performed by women in ritual contexts and potentially also on non-ritual grievous occasions" (Stepanova 2017, 487).

A new lament phenomenon emerged in Finland at the turn of the 21st century, described with various terms such as neo-laments (Silvonen 2022b; Wilce 2011). These contemporary laments in Finland are composed of various public and private lamenting practices, based on the Karelian and Ingrian traditions. In present-day Finland, lamenting is used, for example, as performing art and music, and it is taught in workshops and lament circles (Hytönen-Ng, Patrikainen & Silvonen 2021). While the contemporary Finnish lament culture awaits comprehensive study, ongoing discussions in various cultural studies, such as the *Kyynelkanavat* project, funded by the Kone Foundation during 2021–2024, are actively addressing this topic. Our research, presented in this article, is part of this project. As ethnomusicologist Elina Hytönen-Ng and folk music educator Emilia Kallonen, we form one of the three researcher-artist pairs working in the project. Our study aims to delve deeper into the process of learning contemporary laments. (See, for instance, the work by Hytönen-Ng & Kallonen 2023; Silvonen & Kuittinen 2022, 2023; and the forthcoming themed issue on *Musiikin Suunta* journal 1/2024).

In this article, we focus on the laments practiced within a lamenting circle, part of the broader context of workshop activities on contemporary lamenting in Finland. Generally, these activities

are not intended for public audiences but rather aim at learning and understanding the tradition through personal experience within a guided group. In our research, we have conducted and studied this kind of circle to explore the potential of embodied approaches like somatics and somaesthetics in the learning process of contemporary lament. Our emphasis is on the *practical somaesthetics* approach, which, according to Shusterman (2012, 45), involves "not just reading or writing about somatic disciplines, but systematically performing them." However, our work also aligns with *pragmatic somaesthetics*, as we view lamenting as an embodied practice that can be taught and cultivated.

The article commences with a subchapter detailing our research process and methodological choices, setting the grounds for our work within the lamenting circle. This is followed by a brief overview of the Karelian lament tradition and related research, which has framed our engagement with the lamenting circle. Subsequently, we briefly examine the contemporary wave of lamentation and workshop activities in Finland, providing context for our work. We then move on to our backgrounds, elucidating our interest in somatics and somaesthetics concerning lamenting, followed by our definitions of these terms. Finally, we scrutinize the lamenting circle and the activities conducted within it in more detail.

The Research Process and Methodological Choices

Our research focused on a lamenting circle following a short yet intense workshop, allowing participants an extended opportunity to engage with the laments. In this circle, Kallonen implemented her teaching method, wherein participants learned and did laments based on the Karelian lamenting tradition while embodying the essence of the new lament tradition. The circle's work was driven by a keen interest in teaching and learning more about the laments, exploring somatics, and understanding associated communal aspects. The group's aim was to cultivate lamenting skills within a confidential community of the circle, not for public performances or audiences.

Kallonen convened and led the circle, comprising voluntary participants. The lamenting circle spanned over two years, involving a closed group of eleven individuals. Across both years, there were nine active participants, with slight membership changes; two individuals exited after the first year and were replaced by two new members. The group consisted of individuals of diverse genders, while men were in the minority, ranging in age from their late twenties to their sixties. Participants were aware of their involvement in a research project while participating in the circle. The group encompassed individuals speaking different native languages, each crafting laments in their respective languages. Meetings occurred both in-person and online using the Zoom platform, convening approximately once a month from July 2021 to July 2023.

Our research data included the field notes generated from observations by Kallonen and Hytönen-Ng, along with Hytönen-Ng's autoethnographic notes detailing the learning process in the circle. While Kallonen planned and guided the lamenting circle's process and maintained a reflective diary, Hytönen-Ng immersed herself in learning the lamenting process and traditions as well as observing the circle as a participant. Engaged in autoethnographic research, Hytönen-Ng documented her circle attendance and was also interviewed by Kallonen about her experiences in the circle. These discussions, where the roles of researcher and artist-musician interchanged, facilitated deeper self-reflection on the learning process and encountered the difficulties she was having during the process. Interviews with the participants, not included in this paper, will be discussed in another forthcoming paper.

As a researcher-artist working pair, our backgrounds initially seem quite disparate. Our paths to engaging with somatic and somaesthetic theory distinctly differ. Yet, despite these differences, our mutual interest in soma and somaesthetic, particularly in lamenting practice, unites us.

Elina Hytönen-Ng, an ethnomusicologist, specialized previously in musically induced experiences (Hytönen-Ng 2013) and imagined community in popular music (Hytönen-Ng 2017). Initially drawn to embodiment through anthropology, particularly sensory anthropology (see Pink 2015)[1], and already experimenting with autoethnography (see Adams, Ellis & Holman Jones 2017), she noticed that these approaches felt insufficient in capturing the depth of the lamenting experience. Although autoethnography employs "personal experience to describe and interpret cultural texts, experiences, beliefs, and practices" (Adams et al. 2017, 1), it did not seem comprehensive enough when focusing on bodily experiences. Seeking deeper insight, Hytönen-Ng turned to Shusterman's somaesthetics.

The linguistic association of body-related words with death and funerary traditions somewhat tarnished the beauty of the lament tradition in Hytönen-Ng's mind. However, reading about somaesthetics, particularly Shusterman's (2012, 3) view on the body's central role in artistic creation, resonated with her thoughts. Shusterman's emphasis on *soma* when talking about the body (see Shusterman 2008, xii) resonated with Hytönen-Ng's thoughts. Understanding somaesthetics' emphasis on bodily experience in shaping aesthetic encounters, she recognized its potential in comprehending the lamenting process and its associated somatic dimensions. This realization underscored the significance of the body in learning processes.

Emilia Kallonen, a professional folk singer, lamenter, and folk music educator, specializes in archaic Baltic-Finnic music cultures such as laments and rune singing. Central to her work as a performer and educator are improvisation and auditory music-making. Relating to the perspective of the folk music emeritus professor Heikki Laitinen (2003), Kallonen perceives her role as a contemporary folk musician as a blend of artist and researcher. Her work entails respecting tradition while creatively engaging with historical material, drawing from analytical thinking, imagination, and empathic understanding. Her background in dance also informs her work as a lamenter, emphasizing the need to honor tradition while innovating.

As a contemporary dancer, Kallonen's specialization in somatic movement practices like Body-Mind Centering (Bainbridge Cohen 2012), emphasizes a multi-sensory and embodied approach. Echoing artist-researcher Leena Rouhiainen, Kallonen describes somatic practices as holistic engagements with humans as sensing, feeling, and acting beings. According to Rouhiainen (2006), *somatics* intersects artistic, well-being, and therapeutic realms. Drawing from Thomas Hanna (1928–1990) and Shusterman, she writes:

> *[…] various experiential and bodily methods that enhance an individual's well-being through movement and physical manipulation are commonly referred to as somatic practices, particularly in the Anglo-American context. […] However, the broader aim of somatics is to function as a multidisciplinary field encompassing both research and practice, aiming to elucidate the nature of human life and foster well-being among individuals. […] the research orientation he [Shusterman] calls somaesthetics should consider the significance of sensorial and corporeal aspects in the construction of knowledge. (Rouhiainen 2006, 13–16, translation by EK)*

1 More about the difference between sensory anthropology and anthropology of senses see Bajic (2023).

Based on her own artistic experience and education, Kallonen emphasizes the embodied and experiential approach to the lamenting process. She explains her view of somatics in teaching laments, in which mental images and physical exercises are central to the creative process when adapting oneself to the archaic lament aesthetics and forms of expression.

The theory of somaesthetics offers our joint research a unique perspective, bringing us closer to each other as artists and researchers, while it provides a common ground where we can share equality despite our backgrounds. Our research commenced with the corporeality of the laments and the embodied practices within the lamenting circle. In examining the body's role and embodied approach in the lamenting process, we recognize that a lamenter expresses not only through verbal and vocal channels but also through physical gestures. As an age-old practice expressing intense and deep feelings, the lament inherently involves the entire body. In the context of lamenting, personal creative experience offers us knowledge about individual and communal aspects of the lamenting process and their significance for the lamenter.

Scrutinizing and unraveling the embodied experience of the lamenting process, encompassing the lamenter's emotions and inner imagery of the lamenter, grants deeper insights into the essence and dynamics of lamenting. This broadens our comprehension of this traditional means of expressing profound emotions. It is crucial to recognize that the traditional laments serve not only as a verbal expression relieving emotional burdens but predominantly as communal avenues for processing and releasing diverse emotions.

"Weeping out Loud" as the Karelian Lamenting Tradition

The historically closest lamenting cultures to Finland have thrived in Orthodox Christian regions in Ingria and Karelia, both representing Baltic-Finnic cultures. Ingria, a historical area surrounding St. Petersburg in northwestern Russia, and Karelia, a more expansive and diverse region spanning both sides of the Finnish-Russian border, share many commonalities in their lamenting traditions. Their cultural ties and parallels offer a framework and starting point significantly adopted in contemporary laments in Finland. Our research and creative endeavors specifically reference the Karelian lamenting culture. Here, we will provide a brief overview of this tradition.

Defining Karelia and Karelian culture is intricate, with definitions varying based on perspectives. Karelia, situated in Finnish and Russian territories, comprises several sub-regions where the lamenting traditions vary from one another to a certain degree. The lamenting tradition has held stronger roots in Orthodox areas than in Lutheran ones, where its presence might have been nearly absent (Silvonen 2022c; 28–29, see also Karjalan Sivistysseura 2023a, 2023b).

In Finland, newer definitions, and manifestations of Karelia and Karelians emerged during the 20th century, largely due to the relocation of over 400,000 Karelian individuals to different parts of the country post-Second World War. For these relocated Karelians, laments lost their customary place in the daily life of their now separate communities. The surrounding Finnish populace often didn't comprehend the laments, the Karelian language, or customs. Additionally, Orthodox Christianity was perceived as culturally Russian and somewhat unconventional. With the modernization of society and the disintegration of Karelian communities through migration, the old lamenting tradition seemed to gradually fade. Yet, despite remaining largely concealed and nearly forgotten to the wider public, the skill of lamenting endured among a few elderly women, eventually resurfacing in new forms within subsequent generations toward the century's end. (Tenhunen 2006)

Traditional Karelian laments have been extensively documented through recordings, writings, and studies dating back to the 19th century in both Russia and Finland (Silvonen 2022c; 30–31). Recent recordings in Russian Karelia are also available (see Karjalan Sivistysseura 2023c.) Researchers, such as Konkka (1985), Tenhunen (2006), Stepanova (2014), and Silvonen (2022c), among others, have contributed to work on this tradition. The Karelian lamenting tradition, as an ancient pre-Christian folk culture, that comprises of sung poetry where special lamenting words, plaintive voice, and crying interweave into a singular expression. The Karelians called this practice "weeping out loud," or "*äänellä itku*" in Finnish, distinguishing ritualistic weeping from singing and natural wordless crying (Konkka 1985). Described by Honko (1963) as the "poetry of eternal longing," "*ikuisen ikävän runous,*" laments historically marked significant transitions within the community and individual lives. They functioned to release emotions tied to these changes and shielded the community from potential threats (Wilce 2011). However, the most remarkable aspect of laments lies in their highly sophisticated, poetic, and metaphorical language. The traditional lyrics exude reverence, tenderness, and an abundance of natural symbolism while profoundly reflecting ancient worldviews, attitudes toward death, and traditional life order (Stepanova 2014).

Traditionally, within Karelian community life, laments played a crucial role in maintaining communal harmony, encapsulating intergenerational memory and the community's ancient worldview. Typically performed by older women, the skill was transmitted orally within communal contexts. Laments conveyed deep emotions of sorrow and grief, particularly during separations, absences from loved ones, and departures from the community. Most significantly, the laments played a central role in transitional rituals like deaths and funerals, weddings, and young men leaving for war. These pivotal community moments demanded acknowledgment and were marked appropriately through lamenting, believed to reach and resonate with the departed. (Konkka 1985; Nenola-Kallio 1982; Söderholm 1989; Stepanova A. 2012).

In addition to ritual contexts, occasional or everyday laments (see Nenola-Kallio 1982) dealt with emotional situations in the individuals' daily lives. These everyday laments often centered on the lamenter's life story, reminiscences of the deceased, or served as greetings or companions in personal contexts. Unlike ritual laments, these expressions were less community-oriented and more individualistic, offering a platform for personal expression within the framework of the traditional lamenting style. The contemporary laments practiced, for instance, in Finnish workshops today, align with this Karelian everyday lamenting tradition (Tenhunen 2006).

Contemporary Laments

Towards the end of the 20th Century, there arose an increasing interest in relearning the lament tradition. Workshop activities emerged as a part of a "new wave of lament," described by Tenhunen (2006) as the development of contemporary laments in Finland.[2] She describes the emergence of "new lamenters" in her dissertation, briefly summarized here. Professional education for folk musicians began in the 1980s at Sibelius Academy, emphasizing laments as part of Karelian music heritage. Simultaneously, renewed study of laments occurred in Finnish (such as Nenola-Kallio 1982) and Russia (see Konkka 1985). Enthusiastic women, primarily of Karelian descent, eager to learn laments from elderly Karelians in Finland, collaborated with professional folk musicians and researchers knowledgeable about Karelian and Ingrian

2 There are other practices related to the same phenomenon, which we will not focus on in this article (see more on the forthcoming themed issue of *Musiikin Suunta* journal 1/2024).

lamenting traditions. Together, they began developing workshops, and established the Äänellä Itkijät association in 2001, aiming to revive and "maintain the legacy of the Karelian lament tradition in today's Finland" (Äänellä itkijät ry. 2023). This association has been a prominent contributor in this field.

Since then, workshop activities have evolved further. Presently, workshops typically span intensive 2–3-day courses open to anyone interested. Teachers are usually professional musicians or individuals who have long engaged with laments (see Äänellä Itkijät ry. 2023). Workshops primarily cover lamenting principles and the tradition's history, utilizing written research material and archive resources such as photographs, and written and recorded laments. Alongside, there is a common practice of crafting new laments inspired by personal experiences, following the verbal and musical expressions of traditional laments. However, new laments, within the workshop context, are detached from traditional ritual and communal contexts. They are interpreted and created more freely and in various languages, reflecting the absence of a shared culture and oral transmission within villages. Consequently, contemporary contexts yield more individual interpretations. To bridge this gap, new communities, practices, and contexts are being forged to sustain the tradition.

This "new wave of lament" has birthed what we refer to as *contemporary lamenting practices in Finland*, which are mostly based on Karelian and Ingrian lament traditions, primarily highlighting personal topics and emotions of the lamenter. Through these practices, laments have become accessible to a wider audience, including individuals unrelated to Karelian culture, or disconnected from it. Finnish individuals — both men and women — engaging in workshops can now learn about the tradition and its expressions, and create laments as a form of creative self-expression. (Tenhunen 2006; Wilce 2011; Silvonen 2022b).

Kallonen, with over ten years of lament study and practice experience and seven years of workshop leadership, has played an active role in the Äänellä Itkijät association from 2018 to 2022. She observes significant diversity among workshop instructors and content, highlighting a field that lacks homogeneity. She notices varying interpretations, methods, and connections to Karelian and Ingrian lament traditions within lamenting practices. The teaching methodologies across different workshops lack cohesive organization and a shared perspective. Consequently, our research delved deeper into a specific lamenting circle as an illustrative example of contemporary lamenting practices.

Since 2018, Kallonen has developed a lamenting circle, extending the intensive weekend workshops. Here, participants can deepen their ties with the tradition in a guided setting over an extended period. The circle aims to evolve a communal approach to practicing laments, paying homage to the Karelian tradition while adapting to the contemporary world. Maintaining this connection to the tradition becomes critical, given the loss of oral transmission and the hindered intergenerational passage of the tradition. The circle allows participants to learn the lamenting tradition through a personal, creative process, beyond archival materials and written research.

Kallonen defines the cultural framework for lament practice in the circle through a guided and embodied learning process, providing the so-called *lamenter student* somatic experiences and understanding of the physiological, mental, and emotional aspects of lamenting. Combined with written research, this holistic approach enhances the understanding of the tradition. Within this group of passionate learners, the circle becomes a community where shared understanding of the practice of the tradition are nurtured.

In contemporary Finnish society, laments offer a channel for individuals and communities to address various losses in their lives. Without traditional communal structure or close family

connections, new communities formed around lamenting, such as those found within the lamenting circle (Hytönen-Ng & Kallonen, 2023). However, contemporary Finnish society's unfamiliarity with lament content and forms underscores the necessity of constructing new communal and contextual frameworks where the tradition and its practice are comprehended and shared.

Nonverbal and Bodily Aspects of Lament

Figure 1 *Lamenter woman Tatjana Teronen. Village of Korpiselkä, Ladoga Karelia. (Photograph by A.O. Väisänen, 1917. Finnish Heritage Agency.)*

Figure 2 *A lamenter woman by a grave at the annual village celebration. Ilomantsi, Finnish North Karelia. (Photograph by Kyytinen, Pekka, kuvaaja,1970, Finnish Heritage Agency.)*

Figure 3 *A young wife laments after the husband leaves for invitations to the army. Village of Ruva, White Karelia. (Photograph by A.O. Väisänen, 1915. Finnish Heritage Agency.)*

There has not been extensive research on the corporeal or embodied experience of lamenting within the traditional Karelian laments. Historically, the focus has leaned towards the poetic lyrics of the lament. Musicians and new lamenters, however, have started employing an experiential approach since the late 20th century (Silvonen & Kuittinen 2022; Hytönen-Ng & Kallonen 2023). Recently, researchers have begun paying more attention to bodily and emotional expressions. For instance, Silvonen (2022a) has studied the affectivity and emotions in laments preserved in Olonets Karelia's archival tapes. In our research, we explore somatic approaches to deepen the process of learning lamenting, utilizing the somaesthetic framework, which offers a novel and innovative perspective on approaching lamenting.

When examining the bodily aspects of traditional laments, it is crucial to note that collectors in the 19th and 20th centuries, typically from the upper class, were predominantly men who visited villages to gather traditions alien to them by default. We rely on archived photos and recordings to creatively emulate and empathize with traditional lamenting expressions, attempting to perceive them from the lamenter's viewpoint. However, it's imperative to acknowledge our position and perspective, considering the entire research history and available material.

According to Laitinen (2003), musician-researchers must immerse themselves in archival material, treating it as an actual field study. They use personal imagination and multi-dimensional, and multi-sensory methods to adapt archaic traditions' aesthetics, creating new music within the terms of old aesthetics (Laitinen, 2003; 335–338). Stepanova (2014) points out that using archive materials in studying non-verbal communication of traditional lamenting necessitates using multiple senses and methods to grasp a realistic understanding of the laments' comprehensive expression. Konkka (1985; 17) also stresses that "understanding the emotional charge of crying requires emotional reliving and empathizing" (Konkka 1985, 17, translation EK).

Archive photographs from the early 20th Century offer glimpses of lamenters in static positions, often sitting or leaning on the ground or another individual, holding a cotton handkerchief or cloth pressed against their cheek (see pictures 1.–3.). These photographs capture moments of lamentation, though they might have been staged, and detailed field notes about non-verbal communication are scarce. However, notes by tradition collectors describe lamenters' performances as obscure and dramatic (Tenhunen 2006; 66–73.) Fortunately, a 1920s film by Kalevalaseura (2023) showcases a reconstructed wedding ritual involving lamentation, although without sound due to technological limitations. Archived recordings from the early 20th century, however, allow us to hear the voices of old lamenters (see Tenhunen 2006, Silvonen 2022c).

Referring to the archives, we offer a brief description of the bodily aspects of lamenting. Lamenting encompasses musical expressions, the lamenter's voice, special poetic words, and the entire performance situation with its participants and sounds. The lamenter's typical physical posture involves inward-facing protection, often characterized by bowing or rocking from side to side while shielding their face with a cloth or handkerchief. Lamenters might lean on the ground, a grave cross, a tree, their knees, and arms, or another person.

Lamenters articulate words with a weeping, song-like voice, using a special descending melody distinctive to the lament. The words are created and improvised in line with tradition at the time of performance, differing from everyday speech or singing. The bursts of crying, sobbing, sighing, changes in breathing, and tears form part of the lament. Strong emotions connected to the topic and situation impact the lamenter's voice and breathing, introducing variability. (See Silvonen 2022c).

Expressing and venting strong emotions is fundamental in both traditional and contemporary laments. The Karelian tradition provides specific lamenting language and melody guidelines, allowing room for improvisation. These guidelines help lamenters release emotional tension within themselves and their community, whether in ritual or daily life. Lamenting engages the lamenter's physical body, voice, personal emotions, and imagination. The lamenter's inner world of experience and their ability to empathize are crucial in the lament's expression. Traditionally, lamenter women have been interpreters of emotions within communities. In contemporary lamenting circles, a confidential environment fosters empathy toward each other's laments.

Embodiment and Somatics in the Lamenting Circle

For us, the connection between somatic practices and lamenting seems natural, given that sorrow or sobbing is an inherently bodily and somatic experience. In this section, we'll delve deeper into Emilia Kallonen's somatic approach to teaching laments within the lamenting circle. We'll elaborate on why we find somatic approaches crucial in both understanding the tradition and expressing new laments. As our work progressed, we discovered that somatic engagement aids in transmitting oral traditions while making expressions more personal. We believe it's vital to grasp the essence of lamenting through personal practice, allowing the traditional expressions to serve as our teachers. Engaging in practice enables us to comprehend the emotional and bodily processes involved in lamenting, which we believe are fundamentally human and have existed in various forms throughout time. (Hytönen-Ng & Kallonen, 2023).

Throughout our research and creative work within the lamenting circle, we observed participants finding somatic methods intriguing and meaningful. The embodied approach hasn't often been a central focus in this field. Drawing from Hytönen-Ng's autoethnographic work, participatory observations of workshops,[3] and interviews with ten lamenters in a previous project, it becomes apparent, alongside Kallonen's feedback on her teaching, that some Finnish workshop teachers emphasize aspects other than the bodily, such as the poetic and metaphorical qualities of traditional lamenting language. On the other hand, some teachers focus more on the emotions and psychological or even therapeutic interpretations of the lamenting process. Nonetheless, for Kallonen, somatic exercises remained integral, and developing an embodied teaching method was an area of interest.

As a lament educator, Kallonen takes a comprehensive approach, blending experiential and somatic methods with research-based teaching. Her aim is to guide students in understanding the tradition from within, as creative, sensitive, feeling lamenters. This approach has been vital for her as a contemporary lament artist. In our research project, she has developed exercises and methods that utilize personal imagery, breathing, movement, voice, words, and writing. Her bodily practices are akin to mindfulness exercises (Kabat-Zinn, 2023), incorporating variable improvisations with voice, movement, and creative writing. Through these methods, she incorporates somatics as diverse embodied practices within a holistic view of individuals as creative, sensing, feeling, and social actors, as previously discussed in this article.

Kallonen's multisensory and imagery exercises guide the group to sense both their bodily and emotional internal impulses. This strengthens the sense of presence and shifts the group from analytical to deeper creative and intuitive thinking. According to her, this environment allows for the creation of personal lyrics and expressions of lament. She acknowledges, through

3 Hytönen-Ng has participated in four different workshops taught by Kallonen and one another intensive workshop led by folk musician Liisa Matveinen and also Matveinen's one longer course. Planned courses led by two other teachers were canceled during the research period due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

practice, the therapeutic or empowering interpretation of this holistic approach for the participants. However, she emphasizes that the lamenting circle is not a therapy group, and she does not guide therapeutic lamenting in her workshops or circles. For her, contemporary lament is a process of creative self-expression that strengthens the lamenter´s relationship with the tradition while allowing the communal expression of deep emotional experiences. Each participant defines their own needs and goals in practicing laments.

In one of Kallonen's teaching sessions, the structure followed the exercise outlined below. This warming-up exercise aimed to attune the group to the auditory image of the lament and practice producing individual lamenting voices, grounding the preparation and presentation of personal laments in the group.

> *[Instructions to the group by Kallonen:] Let's tune in first by listening to a traditional lament from an archive recording. When listening, let the sound be around you and accept it without analyzing it. Let the lament move your mind and emotions. If emotions rise, don't strive for anything. Just notice your own sensations and reactions in your body while listening, but do not try to modify them.*

After listening, the group participants started to produce the voice together.

> *Breathe out with an s-sound, then with lips closed m-sound, and finally with an open vowel. The sounds last throughout the whole exhalation. You can think that to produce a voice is to breathe aloud. You can take a break from breathing between the vowel sounds. Then, move your voice with open vowels from a higher pitch to a lower so that they start to form descending phrases. Let your own voice and the simultaneous voice of the group happen, and treat it the same way as when listening to the lament earlier. Let the sound be around you and inside you and let it awaken feelings and images in you and let them color the voice. The goal here is not to produce a clean or "beautiful" voice but to dare to let our inner impulses be heard in our own voice.*

Kallonen views creative alertness as the state in which laments are created, fostering and genuine compassion and a deeper connection to our own experiences and others. Bodily and multisensory practices help achieve the archaic and introspective expression of traditional laments, counterbalancing our highly rational modern society that often limits emotional expression and lacks compassion.

Feedback from Kallonen's workshops and the circle highlights that embodied practices aid in the personal learning process of lamenting, revealing the depth and comprehensiveness of the practice. These observations underscore the importance of incorporating somatic exercises and methods in the lamenting circle. These practices align with Shusterman's (2008, 4) notion that being aware of our somatic self-knowledge enriches our lives and artistic pursuits. In the context of lamenting, this suggests that being fully aware of our somatic aspects while engaging in lamenting deepens our experiences, offering layers to adapt to the lamenting experiences of previous generations.

As a Participant in the Lamenting Circle

Elina Hytönen-Ng was an active participant in the lamenting circle conducted as part of our research from 2021 to 2023, led by Emilia Kallonen. Hytönen-Ng engaged in five intensive lamenting courses since early 2018, mostly under Kallonen's guidance, with some led by another instructor, Liisa Matveinen. As part of her involvement in the circle, Hytönen-Ng employed autoethnography, focusing on her own experiences as the object of study. Reflective discussions between Kallonen and Hytönen-Ng provided a platform to share sensory and somatic knowledge related to laments. These discussions also allowed Hytönen-Ng to address challenges and seek guidance. For instance, initially, she struggled to control the lamenting process, often breaking into uncontrollable sobbing midway through the lament. Through the discussions with Kallonen, she learned that while sobbing was acceptable and expected in lamenting, the goal was to attempt to complete the lament. Having the freedom to repeat lyrics, revisit storyline elements, and navigate challenging emotional segments helped her find closure in the lament.

Somatic knowledge offers a different perspective on the learning process compared to textual knowledge. For Hytönen-Ng, accustomed to organizing knowledge textually as a researcher, the somatic approach allowed her to comprehend the practical aspects of lamenting more effectively. The somatic exercises have allowed her to learn the lamenting tradition by processing it bodily. Throughout this learning journey, she became more attuned to various feelings and their corresponding bodily sensations. For example, impending grief during the lament manifested as a heavy sensation in her chest. She observed that the recency of emotional issues reflected in stronger bodily reactions, occasionally causing singing to devolve into sobs and tears, especially with intensely personal topics. The breaking could have stemmed from a single word or expression within the text that amplified or appeared to emphasize the emotion conveyed in the lament. The further removed the subject became in terms of time and emotional processing, the more the intensity of emotional reactions appeared to wane. Revisiting the same topic for lamenting also seemed to provide a comparable sense of distance.

Sometimes, focusing on the lyrics or recalling previous somatic experiences during laments could intensify emotions. Emmi Kuittinen, reflecting on achieving the right emotional state before performing a lament, emphasized using certain facial expressions associated with crying, akin to muscle memory (Silvonen & Kuittinen 2022). Rather than terming this as "muscle memory," (Shusterman 2012, 98–99), we prefer to use the term "somatic memory," encompassing broader associations beyond muscles. These somatic changes, like squinting or facial expressions, trigger appropriate reactions and emotions, integral to the learning process in the lamenting circle. Hytönen-Ng's learning journey revealed that with time, emotional reactions to a certain event diminish to some extent, making singing laments easier. Repeated lamenting about a specific topic gradually eases the emotional impact in daily life. Engaging in laments seems to strengthen the learning process and somatic memory. It also offers a new perspective on the topic, often reducing its emotional intensity and painfulness.

As an autoethnographic note, Hytönen-Ng realized during her reflective work within the circle that her relationship with her deceased father continued to develop through laments, contrary to her earlier belief that it had ended upon his death. The realization stemmed from the idea prevalent in laments that the deceased can still hear and be addressed through laments. This realization evolved further during discussions about war when the war in Ukraine began in 2022. Considering her father's past as a retired army officer and his involvement in U.N. peacekeeping, she contemplated creating a lament about the war and addressing it to her father. This process helped her deepen her understanding of her father's experiences, establishing a renewed connection with him.

Conclusions

This article has looked at the somatic approaches as integral to the learning process of contemporary lament. Our focus has centered on the embodied experiences of practicing laments in the context of one lamenting circle in contemporary Finland. It is evident that somatic experiences play a crucial role in laments and lamenting, an aspect often overlooked in prior research. Past research primarily emphasizes archival images and fleeting references to the singer's posture, while the focus remains predominantly on the lament's text and lyrics. While these textual elements are essential to the overall performance, the somatic and experiential facets have remained concealed.

Examining the somatic dimensions of lamenting offers a deeper comprehension of lament as a holistic practice. Hence, we regard the body and corporeality as pivotal in the learning process of lamenting. However, the emphasis placed by instructors in lamenting circles significantly influences individual participants. Some instructors may prioritize linguistic aspects, eclipsing somatic experiences and leaving participants to navigate the multifaceted somatic learning on their own. We believe it's crucial for participants in lamenting courses and circles to attune themselves to their bodies, focusing not only on melody lines or chords. Emilia Kallonen, therefore, incorporates numerous somatic exercises into the courses and circles she leads.

Consciously or unconsciously, participants in the lamenting circle also engage with somatic memory associated with lamenting. This somatic memory, discussed by Shusterman (2012, 98–99) also with the term muscle memory, serves as a reminder of somatic changes related to sorrow and crying. It prompts the body to respond appropriately to evoke the necessary emotions for lamenting. The lamenting circle provides participants with the opportunity to practice laments, learn correct reactions, and integrate them into their somatic memory. This enables reliance on their body's instinctual knowledge of the correct reactions, bypassing the need for conscious focus. The embodied experience and shared understanding of the somatic aspects of lamenting are integral to the learning process. The orally transmitted cultural heritage, acquired aurally, continues within the lamenting circle through observation, listening to others' laments, and developing a personal relationship with text and melody lines. These elements are then instrumental in evolving individual expressions.

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How closer can methodologies approach life?: The study of "bodily knowing" in Japan

Jiyun Bae

Abstract: *"Bodily knowing" or "*shintai chi*" has emerged in Japan since the 1990s in sports and exercise science, education, and cognitive science. This paper explores specific methodologies used in bodily knowing research to shed light on its future development. Bodily knowing encompasses skills, movements, and knowledge rooted in the body. Various fields advocate for studying bodily knowing, recognizing its potential. The paper highlights existing methodologies in bodily knowing research, including analyzing sports and movement skills, exploring aesthetics in everyday life, and self-support research by individuals with disabilities. These methodologies reveal aspects that traditional scientific approaches may neglect and offer insights into constructing a potent methodology for bodily knowing research.*

1. Introduction

The concept of "*Shintai chi* (hereafter, bodily knowing)"[1] is under discussion in Japan since the 1990s, primarily in the fields of sports and exercise science, education, and cognitive science. This paper aims to examine the methodologies of bodily knowing research, mainly focusing on specific examples, and explore its future methodology.

Shintai chi is a compound word consisting of *shintai* (body) and *chi* (knowledge), representing a dimension of knowledge based on the body, the knowledge possessed by the body or rooted in the body, and embodied knowledge. It narrowly refers to bodily movements and skills such as sports or artisanal skills and, in a broader sense, dimensions of knowledge that are fundamentally bonded to human learning in general. Higuchi (2021) has reviewed the Japanese literature on bodily knowing and listed the main research fields in which it is discussed, such as physical education and sports, education, cultural studies, and system theory. He also describes the possibilities and significance of the research on bodily knowing (Higuchi et al., 2017). In addition, he expects it to expand the base of the notion of knowledge or even change the very system of knowledge or bring about a revolutionary change in academia where objective, reason-centered knowledge prevails (Higuchi, 2021).

In a sense, the emergence of the concept and field of bodily knowing is the antithesis of

1 *Shintai chi* is translates as embodied knowledge, embodied wisdom, and embodied intelligence. I chose to use the verb "knowing" instead of the noun "knowledge" because the focus is on the process of creating knowledge, rather than the knowledge as an object. This understanding aligns with Higuchi (2021)'s perspective on translation.

traditional objective-oriented science. Some phenomena cannot be captured through traditional science that relies on universality, objectivity, or reproducibility principles. A different approach from the so-called "scientific research" has emerged as a necessity to explore these phenomena. As a response, the notion of bodily knowing and its methodologies has begun to be advocated in various fields. At least, within the limited scope of the respective fields where it is found, their potential and academic value is beginning to be recognized. For example, in sports and exercise studies, the *Japan Society of Sport Movement and Behaviour* was established in 1993 under the impact of Akitomo Kaneko's consecutive research on bodily knowing. Moreover, under the influence of Masaki Suwa's research on bodily knowing in the field of artificial intelligence, the Special Interest Group of Skill Science (SIG-SKL), one of the subdivision groups of the *Japanese Society for Artificial Intelligence*, was established in 2005, making 134 presentation reports by 2019. However, these cases have yet to spread beyond their respective fields.

Across diverse fields, including education, sports, and cognitive science, the concept of bodily knowing emphasizes a heightened appreciation for the "body" in the holistic sense of human existence and life. Rather than viewing it as a merely object for measurement or reducing it to the signal transmission to the brain, bodily movement holds significance as an integral part of life. In this sense, as noted by Higuchi (2021, p.43), bodily knowing can be explored and practiced through the context of somaesthetics. Shusterman criticized the academic inclination in philosophy that tends to marginalize the body and nondiscursive somatic experience. He asserts that philosophy should become a discipline dedicated to the art of living, recognizing the individual body as a crucial aspect. Somaesthetics redefines the body—"as a locus of sensory-aesthetic appreciation (aisthesis) and creative self-fashioning" (Shusterman, 2000, p.267)— and critically examines its importance, various theories, and cultures of the body, and vigorously encompasses the dimension of "doing." The act of physically engaging in something is a fundamental aspect of both bodily knowing and somaesthetics. This falls under the umbrella of pragmatism, which seeks to ameliorate the quality of life for individuals.

2. Skill-related and aesthetic-related bodily knowing

The first dimension we consider as bodily knowing is related to the ability to move or the skill that enables specific performance. For example, Saito (1999) called this kind of bodily knowing "bildung"[2] to distinguish it from the lower levels of physiological and reflexive reactions to maintain homeostasis such as fever and sweating. Instead, bodily knowing as *bildung* requires learning and practice, such as riding a bicycle, performances of athletes, playing the piano, and telling an old story. He stresses this dimension, which develops habits, skills, and forms and "imitates and nudges" (Saito, 1999, pp.33–34), as the bodily knowing of others' intercorporeal manner. Here, the first type of bodily knowing supports the ability that makes movement and skills possible, that is, the "skill-related bodily knowing."

A further discussion of bodily knowing reveals that it is not simply skill-oriented but intertwined with aesthetics. Aesthetics, considered counter to reason, is commonly understood as unreliable and inborn, such as *kan*, intuitive sense in Japanese. However, aesthetics connotes the abilities indispensable for living and improving and changing oneself and one's environment.

2 *Bildung* is a German concept that encompasses education, culture and self-cultivation. In Japan, it was embraced by intellectuals during the Taisho period (1912-1926) as a means of refining a culture of oneself. More recently, in the 1990s, it was revived as an educational concept, supporting the idea of holistic education as a means of self-cultivation.

For example, Kuwako (2001) defines aesthetics as "the ability to perceive and respond to changes in the environment and to create one's way of " and emphasizes that when humans make any aesthetic judgment, they cannot escape the spatiotemporal constraints of their bodies such as their location in the environment. Higuchi (2018, p.10) defines aesthetics as the abilities to "perceive the value and quality of things subjectively" and "bring about a sense of one's own position in the world and environment." In a sense, aesthetics is a kind of bodily knowing that we can call "aesthetic-related bodily knowing."

The function of human abilities related to performances, skills, and aesthetics as bodily knowing represents a significant turning point in understanding the structure of individual experience. It allows us to take a different approach to empirical research on human abilities, in addition to analyzing the mechanisms statistically, elucidating the neural pathways of the brain, or giving up on the approach of treating them as mysterious abilities that are difficult to explain. It also demands a renewed understanding of education, aesthetics, and other disciplines that have backed up our understanding of the structure of human experience. In other words, it has the possibility of overcoming the perspective that is a partial and formalized way of understanding (Higuchi, 2018, p.10).

There appears to be some agreement on the significance and importance of bodily knowing. However, it is still regarded as lacking scientific rigor because of its interest in individual cases and subjective experience perspective. Simultaneously, it is true that there are fields can only be understood by the bodily knowing research method. Can the study of human activities, such as education, anthropology, and psychology, be explained without closely exploring the senses of a single human being?

Despite these difficulties, there has been some research on bodily knowing. It is a concept used in different fields; thus, its methodology varies. For example, As an Olympic gymnast and coach, Kaneko has compiled a book on the process of acquiring bodily knowing, particularly the structure of one's experience in cultivating and instructing skills. A first-person methodology by Suwa Masaki delves into the depth of aesthetics that simple, everyday actions and activities can possess. *Tojisha kenkyu* (self-support research) on and by people with disabilities vividly describes how living itself has become a pioneering development process of bodily knowing.

Such methodologies illuminate hidden aspects in the blind spots of so-called scientific methodologies. These existing methodologies show us the possibility of constructing a methodology of bodily knowing related to ability and aesthetics. While following such methodologies, I will discuss the features that the methodology of bodily knowledge research should have.

3. From objective to subjective: Kaneko's sports movement study

Akitomo Kaneko has long been involved in sports and exercise science from the perspective of "bodily knowing" or "*waza*, technique or skill" His research background is based on his practical experiences. He was an elite gymnastics athlete and coach known as the "brain of Japanese gymnastics," having competed in the 1952 Helsinki Olympics as an athlete, the 1960 Rome Olympics as a team leader, and the 1964 Tokyo Olympics as a coach (Kaneko, 1971). With this background, the primary field of bodily knowing in which Kaneko is interested is the art of sports, especially artistic gymnastics. The starting point of his work is how each individual (athlete or student) learns, forms, and cultivates their movements and techniques and how these moves can be taught in a coaching relationship.

Kaneko found issues in the individual's deep structure of movement, which was excluded by the objectivist movement of scientific research, such as kinesiology, which was then (and still is) mainstream. The concern was over the profound disconnect between practice and theory and the mainstream belief that "the feeling of movement is an unreliable and subjective sensory impression cannot be an object to scientific movement analysis" (Kaneko, 2002, p.29). A good sports coach can perceive more in the movement of a practitioner than what can be analyzed and deduced from objectivist scientific research. The coach can identify with the students' movement and sense, judge whether it is good or bad, and even guide the practitioner to appropriate teaching methods. Objectivist kinesiology fails to capture what is taken for granted in the actual scene; subsequently, a gap emerged, which Kaneko's research attempted to fill.

Kaneko seeks an answer to this question from the science of movement of Kurt Meinel, a contemporaneous East German kinesiologist. Meinel's posthumous manuscript "*Asthetik der bewegung*," which Kaneko translated into Japanese under the title "*Ugoki no kanseigaku* (aesthetics of movement)," considers Baumgarten's *Aesthetica* as the core idea of his movement. Kaneko coincides with aesthetics as a human ability that lies at the foundation of Meinel's kinesiology. For example, to "directly perceive whether a movement is good or bad" and to "intuit an actual movement that is given through the senses" (Meinel, 1998, p.7).

Kaneko pioneered the concept of "bodily knowing" in Japan through his study. In the background of his methodology was not only his experience as a practitioner but also some ideas that view movement subjectively and holistically such as Meinel's kinesiology, Goethe's morphology, and the phenomenological anthropology of Husserl, Merleau-Ponty, Weizsäcker, and Bergson. For example, the "body" in Kaneko's thoughts, in accordance with Merleau-Ponty's thought, refers to a vital body, which is "a body that breathes in the here and now, *moving while sensing, sensing while moving*" (Kaneko, 2005a, p.2). In addition, the most fundamental concept in Kaneko's study, "doukan (hereafter, kinetic sensation)," which roughly means the sense of moving, is inspired by Husserl's notion, "*kinästheses*," a compound of *kinēsis* (movement) and *aistēsis* (sensation) (Kaneko, 2005a, p.24).

Kaneko's original terminology is prominent in his study. The term "kinetic sensation" goes beyond the meaning of movement merely occupying space to include emotion and time. For example, it includes the emotion of "the world of pathos, filled with despair in the interrelationship between teacher and student, coach and athlete" and the "premonitory orientation experience" (Kaneko, 2012, pp.1–2) that anticipates movement and the "kinetic melody" (Kaneko, 2005b, p.15), which can be understood as the gestalt of the time axis of movement. As these concepts show, the significance of Kaneko's study lies in his keen understanding that skill-related bodily knowing cannot stand alone but is intertwined with aesthetic-related bodily knowing. Moreover, his study tried structural analysis of this complex intertwining.

Based on his elaborate movement analysis, the structure is complexly subdivided, and each item is named distinctively. Kaneko first classifies bodily knowing into two categories: "emergent bodily knowing," which is the ability to acquire and cultivate movements, and "facilitated bodily knowing," which is the ability of the instructor to encourage the learner's emergent bodily knowing. The two main subcategories are "*kan*," intuitive sense, and "*kotsu*," knack, which are words often used daily. Kaneko conceptualizes them as abilities that lie behind bodily knowing and explains their principles.

Each ability is further categorized and structured. For example, *kotsu* includes the following four subcategories: inspirational ability (initiating the motivation for one's movement), value perception ability (judging whether a movement is good or bad), resonance ability (unifying

disparate movements as a single coherent movement), and schematize ability (allowing one to pick up meaningful, targeted movements from among various fragmental movements). Kaneko has invented a conceptual means and a language of analysis of bodily knowing, that is, an unknown object of inquiry that can only be captured in the lively movement. In order to overcome the gap between practice and scientific theory, Kaneko thoroughly confronted the individual's experience and, consequently, achieved complex and detailed structures for analysis. Ironically, to attain a better perspective on the wholeness of bodily knowing, he adopted a methodology that analyzed it in such detail that it could not be deconstructed any further.

How is this structure perceived in individual practice or instruction? The *Japan Society of Sport Movement and Behaviour* [JSSMB] published *Movement Science of Kan and Kotsu* (2020), an introductory book for sports and physical education instructors that follows Kaneko's study. It "provides an opportunity consciously understand and 'examine' the movement that has become 'so natural' and not explicitly recognized" (JSSMB, 2020, p.iii). The book is edited with a focus on individual case studies, such as gymnastics, as well as other sports, basic movements such as walking, running, and skipping, use of chopsticks, and generation of movement in infants and the visually impaired. Each case study contains, first, a section on Observation/Instruction Case Study, followed by the Related Principles and Essential Laws section. In the former section, the author attempts to identify the sensing and feelings of the person engaged in the exercise and tries to see the unseen parts of the movements, such as motives, internal dialogue, frustrations, and desires, which are difficult, even for the self, to perceive.

In the case study of a child playing on a slide titled "Establishment of a Bet," the observer notices that the child, who keeps repeatedly sliding down the slide, changes the way she slides each time, gradually making slight and subtle changes. In the Related Principles and Essential Laws section, the cultivation structure of the sliding technique can be traced based on Kaneko's study. While mobilizing the various kinetic sensation materials inscribed in the body, the child improvises with tension and anxiety in each slide. The observer analyzes the child's enjoyment of repetitive de-purposeful movement in play and sports as a "gamble" at each try, as "each time they slip, they expect the next slip with a slight expectation of what the new slip will feel like based on the feeling of the previous one" (JSSMB, 2020, p.9).

The methodology of Kaneko's study attempts to unravel the complex and ambiguous bodily knowing in a transcendentalist manner and trace back to the genesis of the morphing bodily knowing of this intertwined situational judgment. This methodology can be described as the foundationalism of bodily knowing. Kaneko attempted to construct an origin of kinetic sensation that pervades movements. He also tried to systematically structure "the capacity of kinetic sensation origin that pervades as the groundwater" (Kaneko, 2012, p.9), regardless of the differences in sports disciplines.

Kaneko quotes Merleau-Ponty, who said, "the thought of movement destroys movement," and understands the contradiction that the analysis of movement entails. Simultaneously, based on phenomenological anthropology, he attempted to search for the essence of bodily knowledge. Placing subjectivity at the center of scientific research does not mean it lacks objectivity and preciseness. Rather, this methodology made it possible to discover the core and *essence* of a movement, which can only be seen through that subjectivity. Individual movement practitioners and leaders now have a framework to refer to in order to be aware and refine their movements more precisely. Simultaneously, however, its essential structure has the contradictory quality of framing subjectivity in bodily knowing.

4. From essence to plasticity: Suwa's first-person methodology

Masaki Suwa has pushed forward a first-person methodology and its specific steps called embodied meta-cognitive verbalization. He has conducted extensive research on the methodology in the field of artificial intelligence and cognitive science in Japan. He has produced a significant amount of research in collaboration with others or while supervising students, which has broadened the scope of this methodology. Suwa (2022, p.212) refers to this research as "lifestyle research, " and it covers a diverse range of topics such as sports skills, clothing coordination, cooking, *sake* tasting, room layout, letter writing, dancing, city walking, spatial cognition, painting and music appreciation, animation production, and stage production.

As its name suggests, the first-person methodology is the restoration of subjectivity to mainstream scientific research methodology to emphasize objectivity. His idea is supported by Varela's first-person methodology and its central notion of autopoiesis, Gibson's affordance theory and ecological psychology, and neuroscience theories on perception and cognition by Damasio and others. However, prior to the theoretical background, Suwa himself had a strong feeling of concern with objectivity-oriented scientific research. He was sure of the dimensions that spill over from such research methods because "the scientific principle relies solely on objectivity and discards the vivid aspects of human life. Can it be said, then, we are discussing the 'living' aspects of human knowledge? Wouldn't that mean we are studying *only partial aspects* of knowledge in which the living aspect is not involved?" (Suwa, 2022, p.9).

Moreover, the subjectivity in first-person methodology has more plasticity than, for example, that in Kaneko's study. He describes the first-person perspective as seeing from where one's body stands, that is, seeing from the inside. Using the cognitive science concept of perception, Suwa refers to Damasio's study and states that perception through the neural circuits relies on neural patterns that have been formed and are constantly being transformed by experience and memory from the past and now. This explanation leads to two different meanings of plasticity in subjectivity: each person's perception of the same situation is different and, even within each individual, subjectivity perceives changes from moment to moment. Suwa sees various types of subjectivity and says, "as people live their lives, each moment, subjectivity guides, sometimes manipulates, generates perceptions and thoughts, and then people act on them" (2022, p.9). The highly plastic subjectivity is both the subject and object of the study. It does not attempt to deduce the mechanisms of bodily knowing, search for the only principles that operate universally, or approach the essence of bodily knowing. Instead, it seeks for each person to face their body and mind with sincerity to uncover the details of life.

The subjectivity in Suwa's study is a situation-dependent heuristic subject embedded in learning and enhancing specific bodily knowing. In this sense, bodily knowing is both the object and the means of research. This idea is supported by the "constructive method" (Suwa, 2016, p.204) in robotics. The methodology repeats the loop: to understand the operating principle of some phenomenon, a system that mimics it is artificially created and operated, discovering the variables by comparing it with the original phenomenon. Suwa proposes that this loop of analysis will well be applied to people who are learning and enhancing their bodily knowing. He calls this specific method the embodied meta-cognition verbalization.

This method assumes two systems of improving bodily knowing: the "body system" and the "language system." The ambiguous events and experiences in the body system will be in the shed of consciousness in the language system to be recognized and conceptualized. Subsequently, this once-conceptualized experience will return to the ambiguous dimension of the body

system, and this loop will repeat. However, even though the same loop is apparently repeated, the subject of experience has changed into a subject that has been through the loop once. In this loop, each individual refines their bodily knowing, and through this "language system," one can grasp a part of the object of study, that is, bodily knowing. The purpose of verbalizing the sensations and experiences that arise in the body system is not to accurately capture but to "utilize the function of words to examine the subtle differences in the experiences, and to keep the experiences connected to one's own language" (Suwa, 2016, p.204).

The embodied meta-cognitive verbalization method itself is also elastic. The object of the research itself is the process by which individuals develop bodily knowing; consequently, instead of predetermining a research method, it adopts a reasonable method that can guide and encourage the depth of the individual's body knowing in developing it. Therefore, although there is a general framework and basic premise of embodied meta-cognitive verbalization, each method varies from one study to another. For example, the four specific examples of first-person research—coziness in a café, city walking, appreciation of "Honesty" by Billy Joel, and track-and-field practice—discussed in the book *Practice and Theory of First-person Research* use the following different research methods; diary, photo, sketches, extraction of pattern language or tags, music analysis, colocation analysis, drawing atmosphere, running trajectory analysis with LED device. In short, instead of matching individual experiences to research methods, methods are drawn to deepen experiences. In this case, the research method is a tool of observation and a discipline for cultivating oneself simultaneously.

How does this methodology ensure scientific rigor? The quantity and quality of primary data seem to be critical factors. Primary data are how one perceives oneself in developing targeted bodily knowing; in other words, experience on the "body system" is projected onto the "language system." Additionally, Suwa's first-person methodology requires enough time, ranging from several months to several years. The repetition of the same experience and body-language system loop over a long period will eventually guarantee the quantity and quality of the primary data, which leads to the rigor of the research.

In the accumulative recording of the primary data, it is not recommended to follow conventional research methods. For example, Suwa (2022, pp. 71–76) recommends "becoming a poet" when recording. Keeping real-life experiences in mind, the active use of imagination and reverie. He also emphasizes the importance of articulating oneself rather than expressing logically and recommends writing similar to a monologue reflecting oneself through words. The first-person methodology centers first and foremost on the subject's experience, and the specific method is a matter of how sincerely one approaches it and captures even the most subtle differences. Moreover, the time accumulation is increasing its accuracy.

5. Methodology as a living: Kumagaya's *Tojisha kenkyu*

Tojisha kenkyu is the research field in which the methodology of the research subject corresponds to the life of the object. It translates to "research that interested persons conduct on themselves" (Toko, 2019). It is both a movement and research for people with disabilities, in which they make themselves the object of research and simultaneously become the subjects. It first started as the peer support program at Bethel's House in Urakawa, Hokkaido, the facility to support the community activities of mentally disabled people. The prototype of *tojisha kenkyu* started from a peer community where people with disabilities disclosed their own hardships. The very first study was by Kawasaki (2002), with schizophrenia, in which he analyzed his "explosion" against his family members.

Among others, Shinichiro Kumagaya's series of *tojisha kenkyu* studies is a significant of this methodology. He has cerebral palsy. The rehabilitation he had received since he was a child was aimed at the normative body movement of healthy people, and he was forced to practice in a way that fitted this image of movement. This, he says, is based on the "medical model" that was widely accepted in Japan by the 1980s, which approached disability from the perspective of treatment. In contrast, the shift to the more liberal "social model," which holds that society is responsible for accepting the diversity of disability, has led to the beginning of research on people with disabilities in Japan.

Through the *tojisha kenkyu* methodology, Kumagaya could confront his own bodily movements. He starts with the most basic question, "Why does my body fall over so easily?" (Kumagaya, 2009, p. 21). Initially, medical and pathological explanations seem to answer this easily. Cerebral palsy is a symptom of brain damage that makes it impossible to carry out movements in accordance with the image of the targeted movement. However, this simple answer hides the world of his internal senses, emotions, sensuality, relationship with the outside world, and constant attempts to construct new ways of movement.

Kumagaya describes the process of his "falling" and "creation of new movement" in a cycle. This cycle and its steps are described and named in a unique terminology based on close observation of his internal senses, alongside medical terminology based on his expertise as a physician. The cycle and steps are as follows.

As the first step of the cycle, Kumagaya explains his internal sensation during movement based on theories of neuroscience and physiology. He says that his movements have an "excessive intra-body coordinative structure" accompanied by "a feeling that the muscles are not segmented in terms of their tensions and that when I try to move one part, other parts of the body move together" (Kumagaya, 2009, p.40). In his movement, he feels separated from the image of the movement of normal people in his mind. He also feels tense with others through the "relationship of gazing/being gazed at" (Kumagaya, 2009, p.69), which occasionally turns into a "violent relationship" (p.74). When the tension reaches its climax, the movement and the body "self-destruct" (Kumagaya, 2009, p.130). At that time, there is a sense of melancholy for the ideal world of "an untangling/embracing relationship" that has failed to be realized, as well as a strange erotic "sensuality of defeat" (Kumagaya, 2009, p.134) that is felt from the contrast between the healthy person's body and his own body and movements, and the sense of relaxation generated from the failure of the targeted movement gives. The creation of a new movement is derived from this moment of the open body feeling given by the “sensuality of defeat.”

The process of describing and examining the stages of this cycle is significant. It is not a systematic analysis or explanation but rather an autobiographical approach. For example, the analysis of the phenomenon named "sensuality of defeat," which is felt when a movement is destructed, includes reflection on old memories. These include the frustration and shame felt when interacting with other kids in kindergarten and elementary school and the obsessive dieting and eating disorder experiences that arose from an unconscious obsession with wanting to be weak in middle school.

The methodology of Kumagaya's research overlaps with his living. The primary research question, "Why does my body fall over so easily?" has been a lifelong concern of his. His method of inquiry was an autobiographical account, that is, an analysis of movement and the composition of cycles through the observation of internal sensations based on the accumulation of the history of life. It has also been immediately adapted to his present living. Having grasped the process of his new movement, he, then, constructs and acquires a new movement, for example, as a doctor

performing blood draws on infants.

Tojisha kenkyu demonstrates the potential of the case-based methodology. The case study is not only a story about a single case of disability but also a research project that impacts medicine, welfare, and society. It has been established as a study "in which not only various components are related within the case but also internal and external components are in a certain relationship" (Kumagaya, 2009, p.103). This study reassures us that certain human-related objects can only be seen in this way. Furthermore, this is not only a research method but also an effective method of learning or education. This idea is based on the transformation of knowledge, in which "knowledge" is context-dependent and structured in terms of orientation and purpose.

6. Bodily knowing study as a living

By analyzing the above research methodologies on bodily knowing, we can identify the methodological principles for researching bodily knowing.

The first one is the focus on a person and one's life due to the agreement of the subject and object of research. In traditional scientific research, objectivity was maintained through a strict separation of the subject and object of the research, but this is impossible in studying bodily knowledge. Despite the appearance of an established relationship between observer and observed in Kaneko's work, the fundamental relationship between them is that of instructor and student. The study of bodily knowing is only possible with subjectivity in its perception and expression, and a first-person or second-person perspective must be assumed.

The study of bodily knowing must put each person first; then, specific research methods and techniques are developed according to the individuality of the case. This method differs from the traditional scientific research approach, which only applies to individual studies after they have been verified for their validity, reliability, and reproducibility using specific research methods. This also has to do with the population or sample size of the research. Unlike a large number of samples, which guarantees objectivity, the number of samples for the bodily knowing study is only one. The reliability of the research is assured by the degree of sincerity, detail, and depth with which the researcher deals with a single sample. In addition, rigor in the bodily knowing study is ensured by time instead of population. "Time" here has two aspects. The first is the accumulation of time as the trajectory of the subject's experience, and the second is the accumulation of the process of bringing the current experience to the conscious dimension. Suwa's first-person methodology requires at least six months of accumulation of this process. Kumagaya's research involved becoming aware of his own 30 more years of life as the research subject.

The specific method used is the verbalization and representation of experiences. It is a process of going back and forth between the internal structure of the individual's experience, and movement has two functions simultaneously. One is a research method, and the other one is the refinement and improvement of the individual's experience. This also overlaps with Dewey's concept of "experience." The two dimensions of experience start from "gross, macroscopic, crude subject-matters in primary experience" and arrive at the secondary experience of "refined, derived objects of reflection" (Dewey, 1981, p.15). The back and forth between primary and secondary experience is done first by making the rough sense of experience conscious, and a typical way of doing this is verbalization. Furthermore, having the secondary experience, returning to the rough primary experience, and this endless process is the growth of bodily knowing and the only means by which bodily knowing can be understood.

The study of bodily knowledge is made possible by deconstructing the common sense of methodology that has become entrenched in existing academia. Looking back on his childhood, Suwa says that a certain methodology style that has become solid and common sense, such as "make a hypothesis and test them using an objective method," is widely accepted even among children. A departure from this common sense is required in research on bodily knowing. Furthermore, the direction of the research is not to search for an absolute truth based on foundationalism but to improve the bodily knowing of the individual.

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The Somaesthetic Body and the Phenomenological Consciousness

Ulrik Winding Søberg

Abstract: *All human beings, regardless of geography, ethnicity or other ancestry, have always been born into a pre-existing world history. It is a world history that has countless stories, many of which deal with human nature, purpose and knowledge, and these themes have often been expounded through mythologies and pedagogical interpretations. Such interpretations of observations and phenomena of man have historically embedded themselves as generational exoteric transmission of constituent ideals of human life, including the view of human consciousness and body. Among the most significant narratives for human philosophy is the story of the body, as the body is the basis for our empirical anchoring in the world. Although man is something else and more than just body (consciousness/spirit), this is immaterial and have throughout history been immensely difficult to conceptualize. Therefore, man has taken detours to be able to speak of consciousness as an essential feature of being human, and one of the most frequently frequented detours has been the body. The visible body is a lot easier to sculpt than the invisible consciousness, why human cultures have often used the body as a representative marker of whatever values the culture in question has held important. With this impact on the concept of "human", the body is always more than just a body and apparently divides man into body and consciousness. The body is with us across culture in all our activities, and with its decisive influence in human idea development and the creation of cultural habits, the body has a fundamental and all too often misinterpreted presence in every crevice of our society.*

Keywords: *Intentionality, Somaesthetics, Phenomenology, Emotions, Chinese philosophy.*

2. Extended Self (and Extended Agency)

The following article will describe fundamental idea-historical and philosophical-anthropological connections between body and consciousness and how they still form the basis of the concept of "man" today. The article will shed light on these connections and their influence on the view of human nature and knowledge up to the present day, and how this has led to a fundamental

exoteric interpretation of human knowledge dominated by a mental activity assigned primarily to consciousness and the body as secondary and as a container and instrument of the same consciousness. The same view of the body will be illustrated as conducive to a misinterpretation of human nature carried by an essentialism in which the senses of the body and the impulses of emotions are inherited evolutionary instincts. This has led to an incomplete perspective on being human in various decisive areas of society. Through analyses of ancient body perspectives, a Hellenistic and a philosophical Taoist, a methodical philosophical practical approach to being human will be outlined. It is a pre-modern approach that aims at a philosophical involvement of all modalities of the individual and it is a view on knowledge in which the body exist as a central somaesthetic fixation point and functions as an equal ideal for various virtues as cognition. These analyses will illuminate a dominating, decisive and reclusive embodied nuance of human knowledge and at the same time outline the potential for the place for body and emotion and their role in educational philosophical practice, as more than a tool for health and learning and more than a medium for the self to express itself through, but as crucial part of the foundation of human knowledge. By extension the body and emotions contribute as an underrated cornerstone of knowledge and exist as a natural path to exercise our experience of knowledge and thus contribute to a broader scope through which the concept of knowledge can be investigated.

Polarised Fundaments

"*A room without books is like a body without a soul.*" The quote is said to have been uttered by Marcus Tullius Cicero (106-43 BC) the lawyer who with his role in the murder of Julius Caesar, sealed his own fate and lost his head and hands as a result. The quote brilliantly encapsulates how man throughout history has strived with ambition for a fixed point of knowledge from which relationships that exist between body and consciousness could be investigated and human culture has sculpted the concept of consciousness or spirit and the idea being human as more than just a body. To identify what we are talking about here, we can begin by establishing the premise of the origin of the concepts (Durkheim, Mauss 1963[1903], 11) and in this case the premise can be said to be that we exist as human beings by virtue of our body. The body is our empirical anchorage in the world, which is shown in, among other things, its services that are necessary for our practical interaction with the world. This allows us to not only sustain ourselves, but also to cultivate ourselves and our communities (society) and thereby create culture. In the words of Marcel Mauss (1872-1950), the body is man's first and most natural instrument (Mauss, 1973, 70-889).[1] For the same reason, the body has a larger and more significant role in establishing the ontology of the individual than it is awarded, because the body confirms that I exist in this physical world.

> *It is historical that soul becomes the normal expression of the emancipated personality; it was a significant shift in language when psyche went from meaning life in all its manifestations to signifying the soul as opposed to the body.* (Grønbech, 1961, 4,41)

It is in the attempt to add this "something" to man as more than just a body that feels and senses, that substance is given to our known concept of consciousness or spirit/soul and can rightly be called a process of mental self-identification when the term "human being" refers to a reflexive subject, as the modern invention of man includes (Foucault, 2005, 364). In addition, this

1 10.1080/03085147300000003

marks the fact that our formative efforts with each other, from early man up to the present day have been the focal point of human culture. The body here can easily be predicated as *something*, as the body is the only thing about man that empirically exist, and it is after all easier to say something certain about the visible body than about the invisible consciousness (spirit). Our body is what we are and through its services we can sustain life, according to Maurice Merleau-Ponty. Because of this insistence, we must also pronounce and articulate the body and being human as more than just a body. We have primarily done so by articulating it as something in relation to something else, most often, consciousness (Shusterman, 245(3), (2008): 293-311).

Thus, the body has acquired a wide range of fields of significance for meaning in human culture and these meanings have had a decisive influence on our view of consciousness, body and human nature. Regardless of whether the body's teleology has been handed down by philosophy, religion, pedagogy, medicine, biology, sport, aesthetics, the art of war, sexology, etc., it has been cultivated and always imposed on an intention. These intentions are based on two existential polarizations; body and consciousness and are founded in an interpretation of good/evil extended into the view of humanity (Aristotle, 1997(1946), 1254b, 14f), where especially specific contradictions have carried the optics of human essence and knowledge into a normative current. Consciousness and language unmistakably belong together and through the division of human characteristics regarding natural opposites, the body ends up on the wrong side of good and evil. Since consciousness and language can easily be constituted, as they symbolize life (soul) and are not immediately up for debate, the body in our cultural circle thus acquires an underlying role as a something and the body must then historically see itself reduced to the tool of consciousness in our interpretations of human nature and knowledge (Høeg, Ræder, 1953, Timaios, 69-70a, p.87, Timaios, 86c, p.106f). Based on the prominent phenomena of the body, a number of exhaustive systems of contradictions about the universe, man and nature were developed, which are interpreted and continued from Plato (428-347 BC) and expressed in the doctrine of the threefold soul. Human life and thus the good life takes shape according to the Platonic words, as an exercise in cultivating and equipping the soul of reason so that it can supplement and support the constant operations of the soul of will to keep the operating soul at bay. This perspective on man is explained by contrasts, where logos (reason) is pure and untainted and soma (the body) with its eternal messages of calm/unrest and pleasure/displeasure is an eternal source of instability for the true and virtuous reason. With this, pure thought and reason are linked to the doctrine of virtue. Later, this human view is conveyed by Aristotle (385-323 BC) and man as a rational animal that finds pleasure in contemplation, which gives birth to a telos. This displacement from natural embodied oppositions embedded in normative value differences can also be seen in i.e., writings of Hippocrates' (460-370 BC) humoral pathology and reproductive doctrine (G.E.R Lloyd, 1984, 317ff), where contradictory mixing ratios between human fluids form the framework for countless scenarios of mood and personality, as well as healing and conception. The normative values interpreted and displaced within natural bodily properties are revealed precisely by the slave's recollection of knowledge and it is established that the slave already possessed reason. Reason was hidden in the slave's consciousness and only had to be nurtured a little before it came to the fore, and the aim is to dissolve the distinction between status and knowledge between slave and citizen and aim for all people to acquire genuine knowledge through cultivation.

Human culture is rarely something we as a species have planned for, but rather something we have developed into habits through a process of cultivation (Norbert, 1998, 8-9). Via especially our productive basis, we have shaped our society with these autonomous processes of cultural

habits and based on the opposition between body and soul, man is divided with the threefold soul into reason, will and drive, synonymous with insight and logic, decision and action and an irrational resistance and autonomous, animal, and unruly desire. Here both body and emotions land on the reviled side of human nature. Feelings and body are attributed to will and urges and with culture as a phenomenon that is never intended and executed, but instead happens by rudimentary volition and interpersonal mechanisms, culture is habits that govern human activity, and the course has been accordingly, a containment and controllability of the emotions and bodily mechanisms. Central to such a formative philosophy have been the emotions, which without sensible direction in this perspective remain disturbing influences on the embodied impulses and hence their disturbing influence on sensible actions. This is the minds habit of thinking in terms of dichotomies. A habit that, with the interpretation of our Platonic legacy have imposed and internalised the ideas and philosophical concepts of this legacy, with convictions that it is the idea that leads the action and not the action that requires an idea, which we subsequently rationalise and scrutinise. Based on this mindset, the body and emotions change several times over the course of the history that has been handed down to us in western cultural circles. The idea of balance between body fluids is rejected and a mechanical and instrumentalist perspective gains ground. With the (in)famous cartesian dualism, body and consciousness transform into reason/unreason with the imperative of keeping the crazy passions from the doorstep of reason.[2] Concurrently the active-passive dualistic variant of Baruch Spinoza (1632-77) also influences the phenomenological legacy, culminating with the Freudian psychoanalysis. Like Plato's three-part soul, the impact of emotions on our embodied action can be surprising, but with the help of rationality they can be systematized, and we can thereby scrutinize them. Hereby the idea of man as a creature with cognition as its pinnacle is obvious. This error-in-apparatus model as a human view, where normatively deviant behaviour is considered a fault in the machinery (body or mind) has great success behind it, especially within pharmacology. Sigmund Freud (1856-1939) bases his psychoanalysis on the same logic. From this, the theory of instinct or drive[3] is designed, where consciousness is determined by the drives of the body and emotions in a dualistic life drive versus death drive. Through the main properties of the personality, the energetic interplay between psyche and soma exists, whereby the human drives are directed to specific pleasures and pleasure profiles. A cardinal point of this variant of the body-soul dichotomy is the legacy of Hellenistic dualism. In his understanding of the energetic interplay, Freud uses a hydraulic principle which is used in Hippocratic humoral pathology, and despite Freud and his more sophisticated system, the logocentric dualism in this variant cannot be overlooked. Unavoidably bound to the body are the senses and hence the emotions, and via various variants of dualistic interpretation of man, our sensuality and emotional life have often been viewed as something we humans have not had much control over. Therefore, they must be primitive evolutionarily inherited instinct impulses which are activated by trauma or "the unconscious" and have therefore led to a crippling of the consciousness(psyche). With the legacy of the Platonic and Cartesian view of human nature as the exoteric view of man, later misleadingly substantiated by Darwin (Barrett, 2018, 35, 158-9), human nature is interpreted as uncontrollable emotional impulses sitting in the brain and expressed through the irrationality of the body and the chaos of emotional life, which are harnessed by rationality. With this, the body and emotions and their importance for knowledge are relegated to a kind of subjective knowledge

2 doi:10.1017/CBO9780511805042.010

3 Natural need that evokes a strong urge to satisfy it.

that quite dualistically stands in opposition to a justified logocentric objective knowledge[4] and at the same time the body is reduced to a container for reason and emotions; in other words, mechanized and instrumentalized apparatus for optimization or mannequin for beautification and mental self-expression. Admittedly, the matter has been more nuanced and the interest in the relationship between body and soul has probably been more thorough than it was initially interpreted, but the perception of man as constituted by this rudimentary essentialism was what survived and remained standing for posterity.

Anti-rationality and emotional sentimentality - polarities

With the phenomenology of the 20th century, our interpretation of man as body and soul is reversed. Reason (the soul as synonymous with intellect and knowledge) loses its primacy and today body and emotions are cultivated in an anti-rationalist mentality and a polarization of body and consciousness is again evident. This shift begins with Edmund Husserl (1859-1938) and with the concept of intentionality, consciousness as "awareness of something" cannot to be overlooked. Phenomenology does not aim to investigate the world in the usual scientific way; empirical, objective, and logical analysing. Rather, it seeks to reach under all these layers and observe the phenomena as they are, reformulating cognition to consist of subjective-objective tension. The aim of phenomenology is to encapsulate the phenomenon in its entirety and thereby intensify a more intuitive and immediate attention to the phenomenon. The body gains ground with Husserl, his break with Cartesian dualism, and his account of man as embodied and being more than body, which can be seen in the concepts of Körper and Leib. These two embodied modes through which man can perceive himself in the world and at the same time recognize the phenomena of the world are constitutive of our temporal sense of both the past and the future.[5] Man as in a body and as having a body has the body in focus, but still serves primarily consciousness and an actual embodied philosophically methodically developed practice does not come of it. On the contrary, phenomenology ends up trying to investigate a consciousness-independent reality through that very same consciousness. With Martin Heidegger (1889-1976) and his phenomenological reduction to being, the role of the body is again in service of consciousness since Heidegger himself cannot or will not reveal his perspective on the physicality of being (Heidegger, 2007, §23, 132). Later, Jean-Paul Sartre (1905-1980) in Being and Nothing (1943) interprets human existence as a consciousness/soul/spirit, where the fleeting movement of consciousness from one moment is replaced by the next, thereby reinterpreting the body into bio-organic mechanics with essence. The body finds a bit more space as an independent player by Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1908-1961). He aims to counter Sartre's philosophical objectification of man and has in his errand both to fix the body as a thought-provoking and thought-setting subject and at the same time deprive the Cartesian cogito of its central place. According to Merleau-Ponty, consciousness is not "I think that", but rather "I can" and this verb belongs to the body. With this and his empirical basis, body and soul are turned around in the exoteric interpretation of human existence and meaning. The body is no longer something I have, but something I am and qua the interpretation of man as a body with essence (consciousness) I am a consciousness (essence) in an aggregate and modern phenomenology has not yet managed to break with the polarized heritage, which is now called "perception as perception about something" (Merleau-Ponty, 2002, 81), a variant of Parmenides

4 I.e., knowledge/imagination, fact/value, thought/emotions.

5 https://doi.org/10.1007/s11097-019-09610-z

(Mejer, 1995, 15) and his "thinking is the thought of something". With this, attempts to think body and mind together are primarily done as a service to consciousness or squeezed under the concepts of intuition (Marion, 2002, 81-104). Rather than a splicing of the two, a variant of the dualistic polarization is interpreted in the form of the anti-rational cultivation of body and emotions we know today from concepts such as "intelligence of emotions" and "the ninth insight", as well as the pleasurable beautification and cultivation of the body we see in gyms and under the constricting sports and health paradigm, where genuine immersion and reflection in embodied activity disappear in favour of a more banal mental activity predominant in embodied practice (Dekkers, 2008, 309-12).

This shows the place of the body (and emotions), which retains the role of apparatus for the mind and is in our Western cultural circle representatively expressed by the late modern experience economy. The open opportunity of life and man to create noema[6] can be found in experiences that "move you" and "makes a difference" for the subject, often accompanied by a rhetoric that can extend to formulating life beyond the banal everyday concepts.

Somaesthetic Cultivation

In the baggage of philosophical Taoism, an antique and fully developed somaesthetic contribution can be found in the descriptions of the harmony between two reciprocal transcendent polarities. According to philosophical Taoism knowledge is facilitated through cognition associated with a subjective bodily awareness. Being familiar with both one's own internal emotional patterns and own sentient flesh lays the ground for thinking, creativity and understanding. It highlights a concept of knowledge, which is subjective and emotional in context with rational objectifying cognition. That the body-emotion-mind in conjunction could calibrate and accommodate to the vicissitudes of the world's phenomena is thus considered to be true knowledge. Knowledge comes in philosophical Taoism by being capable of somatic and emotional heuristics in equal degree with objectifying cognition (such as language) and social interaction with outside influences, although cognition still has an essential place to fill in recognition. This is embedded in all aspects of philosophical Taoism and thus it is evident that the body's sensations and the emotions that come from these links man to nature. It is so, because it is from our senses that we, through our body can feel and experience the world and all its phenomena. With the sensations of the body follows the fact that we become aware of our sensations and thereby the distinctive feature, manifested by our perception of distance and time, appears as our conscious understanding. We will always understand the phenomenon without noticing that, via our bodily sense and emotions, already have recognised the phenomenon. The sensation we feel in the body appears prior to language and does not just give us access to an imperceptible experience of the world, but simultaneously a human way of achieving an understanding of the world and can be exemplified by pointing to aesthetics. Aesthetics is an embodied cultivation of our felt sensory experiences and it is natural for humans to imitate their sensations from the external world, because it arouses emotions that make us resonate with the aesthetic impression of the sensation. Common to all sensations is that we recognize them aesthetically prior to the objective logic of language shapes our conceptions and they contain unknown meanings that differ from the names we otherwise have for the sensation; names that otherwise give us meaning and familiarity with all the world's phenomena (Løgstrup, 1976, 9). A large part of a human life can be said to consist of this effort to make sense of the world and human historicity. Art allows us to delve into our sensations

6 https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/noema

by mediating sensory impressions into aesthetic expressions, so that we can reflect on their meaning. In aesthetic experience and activity, we acquire new layers of meaning and this can be seen in all human art (Løgstrup, 1976, 98-102). From a cognitive perspective, it can be said to be a central trait of being human (Løgstrup, 2008, 13). Such aesthetic expression can be found in the foundation of philosophical Taoism in lyrical writings such as Laozi, which lays ground for methodical somaesthetic practices. Hence one of the most prominent representations of this body-emotion-mind perspective on knowledge is the emphasis in philosophical Taoism on *somaesthetic movement arts* such as Tai Chi. Internal movement arts such as Tai chi are methodical evolved through centuries of research and are practiced with the single unified goal of obtaining a harmonising and not intrusive path to cultivating the body-emotion-mind collaboration via subjective processing and comprehension of emotions and body and the cognition that follows. The methodical somaesthetic curriculum in Taoist philosophy of non-intervention, as described in *Laozi*[7], can find a Western philosophical resemblance in the negative upbringing and the formative plasticity of man. Neither in philosophical Taoism does non-intervention interprets as apathy. In the same way that negative pedagogy should not be interpreted as laizzes-faire pedagogy and thus leave human learning and development to arbitrariness. The inheritance of negative pedagogy forms a framework of the human being in the form of embodiment as we are formed by "nature, our sociality and the things of the world" (Bloom, 1979, 38) and thereby we are inevitably bound to our environment and our body as natural organism. Philosophical Taoism provides a concept of embodiment, in which the splicing together of the mind's discursive intentionality (cognition) and the body as sentient organism (somatic knowledge) provides optimal potential for knowledge and cultivation hereof. More concise formulated; our mind's intentionality and the sensory saturation of body-emotion-mind processing and its essential participation in all aspects of perception and reasoning. The splicing of human understanding can provide a perspective on knowledge and learning as consisting of body, emotions, and mind. They are never separate and always independent and never in any fixed order or hierarchy. They act as the variety never detached from the whole, however, autonomous, and mutually influencing each other.

Body-Brain Knowledge (creation of emotion and meaning)

The automatic simulation of a world by the brain is caused by intrinsic brain and body activity and all basic feelings are derived from this *interoceptive* attendance and maintaining of the body's inner life. Interoception are evolutionary evolved towards "economising" the resources of our body and the saturated flow of sensory stimuli from interoception continues from birth to death (Barrett, 2018, 58). The intrinsic activity is not only a budgeting of the body and mind's potential, but give rise to all simulation such as daydreaming, imagination, etc. and it comes to fruition by the brain's innate ability to make predictions. Through evolutionary efficiency the brain developed as a puzzle solving organ that merge fragments of new sensory input and experience to predict how every fragment concerns your current situation. The brains primary operation of collecting the fragments in coherent meaningful structures consists of prediction loops, where our mental model of the world continually is shaped and reconstructed, and its most vital predictive function is "body-budgeting" (Barrett, 2018, 66-67). Every emotion we consciously feel, are brought forth via brain-networks that attend to the economising of the human organism and are done so by the intrinsic continuous predictive regulation of the

7 In English known as Dao De Jing

organism towards maintaining homeostasis. Since human emotion appears to demonstrate that variety is the norm, despite of our habitual tendency to perceive emotions as intrinsic, any event that impact our inner body-budgeting will become personally *meaningful*. (Barrett, 2018, 70) This can be exemplified by our change of heart rate when someone important to our social situation i.e., our teacher passes by, and he or she might strike up conversation. The feelings we experience in general are derived from a range of basic emotions, called *affect* which are based in basic feelings of pleasantness/unpleasantness and calm/uneasy. This is a cardinal trait of the human experience of the world and us self as beings in it. As described affect are dependent on interoception, which does not mean that the chief function of interoception is to produce affect. It instigates our brain to search for past experiences with phenomena in the world and relate them to every introduced situation we must attend to. This generates *affective realism* where we imbue physical objects in oscillation between arousal and equanimity. This in effect means that we inherently attribute certain phenomena or other people positive or negative characteristics (Barrett, 2018, 75). For our brain this implies how the phenomena or person affects our body budgeting systems in correlation with our past experiences regarding the phenomena/person and its effect on our experiences of the world are tremendous. In fact, interoception has more merit than perception in recognition and as we believe that we are reacting with emotion to our perception we are constructing our perception. Thereby we are participating more in what we are experiencing than we believe we are. What we experience as feelings alters our perception of the world and thus rationality cannot prevail over or subdue emotion, because the condition of the body budget is the foundation of every thought and perception, we have (Barrett, 2018,81). In this, the stealthy and unnoticed brain and body collaboration gives soil to human perception, experience, and knowledge. The brain encodes concepts on categories of phenomena in the outside world. Our emotional concepts of "things worth knowing" can be categorised under various knowledge bookmarks such as, "things worth knowing concerning me" and "things worth knowing about the world in correlation to me in a particular context"[8] etc. (Barrett, 2018, 87-88). The myriads of concepts can thus be considered our knowledge of the phenomena, and we construct the cognitive categories from this knowledge. This results in generation of a surrounding world from where everything of importance to us expresses itself and becomes visible to a being with a body like humans. This unconscious nuance of experience and understanding can be termed inherent meaning and inevitably interconnect the human species to its environment. This is especially manifested by somatic experiences and associated emotions in a developing phase. In particular, the somatic experiences are characterised by general vitality effects (Stern, 1985(2000), 54) which is referred to as intermodal perception. This marks the significance of the ability of young children to meaningfully experience processes of dawning "organizing of things" and the product of this organization can be termed as "the dawning self" (Johnson, 41).

> *The Key to understanding this early sense of an emerging self is its tie to bodily states and processes: The first such organization concerns the body: its coherence, its actions, its inner feeling states, and the memory of all these. That experiential organization with which the sense of a core self is concerned* (Stern, 1985, 46)

The organization of things is undergone by the feeling that experience flows smoothly and progresses, the feeling of flow. This kind of flow sensation of human experience, consist of distinct patterns and structures of felt qualities. The felt qualities appear as contours of the relationship

8 The context of myself in situations of experiencing something I find interesting or the opposite.

between i.e., sounds and words and the somatic experience and feeling of the sounds. The feeling of currents is thus best explained by kinetic concepts such as surging, fading, explosive, volatile, etc. extensively (Johnson, 2007, 41-43). During a person's upbringing we don't bestow these inherent somatic social and relational sensory contours much thought. By contrast, we use them unconsciously to feed our abstract structures of cognition. From we are very young, we form via somatic experience and the associated feelings meaning to the world through first our parents and siblings. Later we form meaning through our friends, family, lovers, colleagues and otherwise a social life. As a result of these cascades of sensory input our brain evolves a *statistical* wiring of learning (Barrett, 2018, 94) which functions as template for emotions chiselled from the concepts and categories. These emotions we constitute as knowledge and young children quickly learn that the knowledge their concepts are missing to obtain meaning, are dwelling in the mind of other humans and the world around them. In continuation of the body-budgeting systems continuous active collaboration it ascertains as essential partaker of knowledge in every second of our life. Even when we are merely imitating emotion and social meaning body-budgeting regions in the brain are dominantly active. Thus, a reclusive body-emotion-mind mechanism fixates as prototypical for human understanding (Barrett, 2018, 13) and reveals the reclusive, yet automatic mechanism of body-emotion-mind, which lays ground for all human experience and knowledge.

The Body as a Brain

As all prototypes the body-emotion-mind mechanism can be cultivated and across cultures this has been sought in various cultural, social, and religious practices and most often this has been done via the body. As humans we formed our culture by cultivation. Often, we did so with reference to mythological worlds of kingdoms and deities, demons and angels who reigned over man. This gap of strength and virtue between man and gods lays ground for the *hybris/nemesis* theme of ancient Greek mythology. The main lesson from this theme is the term *sofrosyne*, which translates to temperance. A man of temperance could merit *Areté* which leads to *Kydos*; qualities any honourable man of Greece should possess. Sofrosyne was applied by Aristotle as the centre point of virtue between abstinence and licentiousness; in his notion of morality known as "the golden middle". The aim of practicing Sofrosyne is the rein of one's sensory experience of pleasure and is primarily that of harmonising the bodily experience of contentment, revel, lust, anticipation etc. A dualistic approach to the human understanding can be discerned in this classical polarised view on body-emotion and rational knowledge the other. In philosophical Taoism the errand differs from this binary approach by its inherent emphasis on man as a whole and the experience of the surrounding environment as basis for knowledge and genuine rationality. Philosophical Taoism perceives the human condition and thus knowledge as fashioned from a dyadic and can be illuminated by the phrasing of the various chapters, exemplified in LZ.2[9]:

> *Everyone in the world knows that when the beautiful strives to be beautiful, it is repulsive. Everyone knows that when the good strives to be good, it is no good. And so, have and to lack generate each other. Difficult and easy give form to each other. Long and short offset each other. High and low incline into each other. Note and rhythm harmonize with each other. Before and after following each other* (Ivanhoe, , 2003, 2).

9 This article will reference Laozi as LZ followed by chapter, i.e., LZ.6

That a binary structure of human understanding is a natural prototypical feature of the human condition is also legible in LZ.11:

> *Thirty spokes are joined in the hub of a wheel. But only by relying on what is not there, do we have the use of the carriage. By adding and removing clay we form a vessel. But only on relying on what is not there, do we have use of the vessel. By carving outdoors and windows we make a room. But only by relying on what is not there, do we have use of the room. And so, what is there is the basis for profit; What is not there is the basis for use-* (Ivanhoe, 2003, 11)

This chapter points to the inherent dualistic structure of human knowledge in the form of the positive and negative existence all phenomena in the world holds (Moeller, 2006, 108). These polarities constitute the concepts of Yin and Yang. By LZ.42 the Yin-Yang are exemplified by the phrasing of conception and birth of the things of the world; "The Way produces One. The One produces two. Two produces three. Three produces the myriad creatures. The myriad creatures shoulder the *yin* and embrace *yang*, and by blending and circulating Qi 齐 they attain harmony (Ivanhoe, 2003, 45). In LZ.42 Yang (male) has behind it, obscurity while moving and facing forward and are the positive aspect of the conception of phenomena and thus knowledge. Obscurity is the negative of knowledge and the unmoved Yin (female), whom all things are nourished by. They are fundamental distinctions of the dyadic constitution of knowledge of the things in the world and are also expressed in LZ.15:

> *Opening, like ice about to break. Honest, like unhewn wood. Broad, like a valley. Turbid, like muddy water. Who can, through stillness, gradually make muddied water clear? Who can, through movement, gradually stir to life what has long been still?"* (Ivanhoe, 2003, 15)

Within the mentioned chapters, symbolic images of universal structures are present, and share one common feature; they are all deprived of positive form; they are so-called "negative" forms (Moeller, 2006, 24). The wood is still not fashioned and whatever it will become is not yet done. The water is muddy and chaotic and the fluvial is enshrouded by unclarity. Once the water is calm, you can clearly see what is below. The valley is immense, vast, and spacious and represents void; potential to be full. The valley is negative space, unlike the full mountains that surround it. Both the wood and the water are like the valley in its original "non-forms", as they are before they take a form we know. The cultural embedding of this notion of continuous fluctuation between two polarities and thus change, can be illustrated by the image of i.e., sun-moon or the sunny and shady side of a mountain (Moeller, 2006, 98). The word sun literally translates tai-yang 太阳, which means "highest yang", while a cloudy weather forecast is called yin-tian 阴天 which translates to "yin heaven".

The propagation of the turning point between conception and birth of the things of the world takes place in obscurity for us humans, be it phenomena of the world, our emotions, or our knowledge. As the plant is nourished by water, we do not see the water in the plant as we do not see many of nature's creations. The plant root is hidden from us, it lies lower emanating its "dark" and hidden efficacy. The creation of our emotions and knowledge takes place in stealth, without contours and the feminine is, in Philosophical Taoism, a marker of where there is no longer and not yet is (Moeller, 2006, 11-15). As the water nourishes itself by producing, by the same token the gate in LZ.6 and as the doors and windows in LZ.11 express a symbolic image of

an emptiness embraced by filling as the empty valley is embraced by rich mountains. The gate, the doors and windows express fertility and femininity, legible in LZ.10; "When the portal of Heaven opens and closes, can you play the part of the feminine" (Ivanhoe, 2003, 10). The word sky/heaven天空 is in Chinese understood as the term "major cycle" or just "natural". Heaven or cycle are the world's central function and exist in harmony in its cycle. The structure is made of universal entities and these entities provide course for the seasons of the years and the passage of time. In this way, the cycle of life is the gate through which life itself passes and the gate of heaven opens and closes for life in the same way as the bellows are depicted in LZ.5: "Is not the space between Heaven and Earth like a bellows? Empty yet inexhaustible!" (Moeller, 2006, 16-20).

In Philosophical Taoism are the distinct realm of existence and presence and its counterpart; non-presence and non-presence precedes the existing world full of presence (Moeller, 2006, 21-32). None-presence is what precedes and produces the present things and their diversity. The relationship between the presence/non-presence is legible in LZ.42 where the numerical concept phrases One as the immediate product of Dao and as the beginning of the process of being. It is a dual significance of solitude and totality, the empty centre, and the complete whole. One makes provision for Two. Two constitutes the universal duality, between he/she empty/full, dark/light etc. In somatic terms (Qi) is the inner brain-body processes, which constitute the ability of breathing and inhaling-exhaling is Two.[10] The inner life[11] of the body is the starting point as an empty, hidden beginning, which leads Two continuously on. The integration between One and Two gives birth to Three, which opens the world of multiplicity and its myriad of all things. In a qualitative definition of One as a symbol image can be pointed to Dao. We are told "The Dao produces One. One produces Two", which emphasises the double meaning of One as both emptiness and unity. One is created by Dao and co-creative force (De德) of the Yin-Yang process that produces all things. This alludes back to LZ.55: "If the hearts direct the Qi, this is called: forcing" (Moeller, 2006, 106) and emphasises the optimal in harmonising by non-intrusive cultivation using the potential of the hidden nuance of the human knowledge and experience. An essential embodied nuance concerning our sensory judgments is legible in LZ.12: "The five colours blind our eyes. The fives notes deafen our ears. The five flavours deaden our palates. Precious goods impede our activities. This is why sages are for the belly and not for the eye; And so, they cast of the one and take up the other" (Ivanhoe, 2003, 12). Tending to and care of Qi is by the art of Qigong, meaning exercise with Qi and Tai Chi, meaning ultimate Qi. As legible in LZ.42 the two polarities optimally splice together in harmony. This harmony of Qi is obtained by a homeostasis or equilibrium in the human condition, the golden middle. The key aspect in tending Qi is the absence of coercion or the use of force. Cultivation be it physical, cognitive, or political, aesthetic, etc. are never intrusive. Rather, it is achieved by not interfering in natural processes. Dao is bifurcated in similar fashion with "One" in LZ.42. Continuously Dao fluctuates between empty-full, being-not being and other universal terms and are more than negation of Being/Full. Given that Dao does not exist as a unit or occurrence anywhere in or outside the universe, but "is" by virtue of creation and the return to the origin Dao is simply nothing. The Chinese word *Wu* 無 (nothingness - the mere potential for fullness/growth/being) engenders concepts as *Wuwei* 無為 (non-action or non-forcing/non-intervening, non-invasive). This leads to a sense of nothing as both creation and non-being. Creation is positive and the positive is derived from the negative and thus Wu is the source of creation and the

10 In/out are two aspects of the same: breathing.

11 Especially the heart.

basis for ontology (Yu, 1981, 485). Nothingness is not just a quality of Dao, but a character trait, the human consciousness has or should have and the link between consciousness and Wu is the encapsulation of embodied experiential phenomena. Such encapsulation is perceived as a subjective inner principle that links man to Dao and its natural currents (Wenning, 2011, 563) Nothingness is described in Zhuangzi:

> *Brilliance queried nothingness, saying: Are you, sir, being or are you nothing? Brilliance, being unable to gain a response, carefully regarded the other's appearance, which was a far-reaching vacuity. He gazed the entire day and saw nothing, listened but heard no sound, reached out but was unable to grasp anything. Brilliance said: How perfect! Who can be as perfect as this! I can grant the fact of nothingness but not the nonbeing of nothingness. As for nothingness, how can one realize such perfection* (Chai, 2014, 664)

Dao is by continuous return and produce its own negation and thus the negation of the negation. A distinction that is central to the understanding of Dao as nothingness and non-being. Non-existence of non-being is not equal to Nothingness[12]. Nothingness permeates ontic non-being, while non-being lacks ontological substance. The ontic non-being acts as a "place and placeholder" for what is now absent: "The things of the world are generated from presence. Presence is generated from non-presence (Moeller, 2006, 39). Dao is a double concept that encapsulates that ontological nothingness lies in the core of all manifested phenomena and is more than just the antithesis of ontological being.

> *There is being, there is nonbeing, there is a not begun to be nonbeing, and there is a not begun to be nonbeing's beginning. Suddenly there is nothingness, and yet when it comes to nothingness I do not know if it is actbeing or nonbeing* (Chai, 2014, 665)

Embodied cultivation of knowledge

The low and hidden is the giver of everything, while at the same time feeding on everything it creates. The upper and thus what we consciously understand (cognition) is Yang and is thus visible and actualized as action. By this, it can be assumed that the cognition of the human organism feeds on unconscious somatic experiences and patterns of emotion (Yin). As Yin both nourishes and gives life to everything above (Johnson, 10-15). Cognition and abstract thought have their place on an equal footing with somatic felt experience and they can both function independently. However, the human organism is in the most optimal state by cooperating and developing both on equal terms. The unconscious somatic experience can be found in i.e., the emotions and abstract concepts we associate with words like rank. Rank we know from the feeling of sitting straight with your back. We know concepts like rectilinearly from our body and the change in our limbs and torso as it changes from i.e., bent to outstretched. The slow and gentle movements of Tai Chi as physiological exercise, lead to dimensions of embodied cognition, which are constantly experienced and corrected by the simulation of the brain. Thus, you experience yourself moving in time and space and are thereby cultivating the body-emotion-mind mechanism and this allows the brain to transfer the experience of movement in time and space to different cognitive models. This helps to explore new spheres of movement experience,

12 Ontological nothingness

as the new situations provide new experiences that in turn create the potential for a new cognitive understanding of something unconscious (Johnson & Lakoff, 1980(2003), 117). This is because a basic understanding of being a human organism in a world comes from the understanding of one's movement in time and space (Johnson, 2007, 21). Both oneself and other elements and how they behave in motion and under different spatial conditions form a fundamental part of one's linguistic ability to express themselves. Linguistic capacity is not just the function of being able to express oneself to the outside world. It is also to be aware of own emotional states by linguistic capacity and vocabulary to differentiate and predicate these emotions. Understanding imparts knowledge that is based on the subject's intuitive sensory understanding of one's own flesh; body movement understood through experience domains (Johnson, 2007, 29-30). This knowledge is also structured using rational and conceptual knowledge in i.e., the form of health and the martial applications. This structure is made up of logically systematized and rationally decoded self-defence functions and body-health optimizations. This structure is continuously linked to an embodied expression and hence a somatic and emotional effect. There is a somaesthetic and cognitive potential to optimize one's presence in all kinds of situations, where body, emotion and mind in infinite combinations complement and support each other (simulation). It is here that the theory of inter-subjective creation of meaning with the world becomes relevant (Johnson, 2007, 35-51). A creation imparted through i.e., sounds and words or sounds and events. For the same reason, Tai Chi has official music in which the movements are pronounced as they are to be performed. Thus, a subjective understanding of the movement and its name is possible for the individual via both voice and tones (Johnson, 2007, 235-63). This subjective understanding is based on a surrounding world and a self as being in and with a body to make sense of itself in the world. Tai Chi, for example, exerts one's sense of fluctuations in own movements and allows one to optimize both the movement's aesthetic expression and its functions. This is achieved by non-forcing through daily practice. Over time, changes will appear to the practitioner. The inner states one becomes aware of are one's emotional concepts (Johnson, 2007, 55-66). The outer states are markers of the inner, which are learned through one's own body. It is these changes that Tai Chi can make one aware of and hence the opportunity for cultivation. However, such a conception may be an insufficient understanding of human cognition and our construction of meaning (Johnson, 2007, 1-8). Meaning and thus knowledge is a depth embedded and inherent body-sensory experience process where language and cognition do not prevail but has its own role. By contrast, the sense of meaning and the formation thereof may be an overall effort of all human primary internal and external somatic capabilities. Hence our concepts and view on knowledge and how it is created is contented by the body and emotions and offers a perspective on human nature and knowledge that in many ways has been forgotten or misinterpreted.

Supplement to Formal Education

The philosophical aim of harmonising the human condition by cultivating emotions is not that they should be subjugated or annulled. Rather they should be exercised by granting attendance to the surreptitious body-emotion collaboration by embodied practice of self-cultivation and their relevance for and impact on cognition. If proper exercised, it can be gateway to an intuitive flexible consciousness, learning and knowledge. When humans in all their modalities practices harmonization, the body is better connected to the mind. When body and mind are accustomed to being as one, they can be united and directed with conscious intentionality. The focus is on the acquisition of knowledge and a universal acceptance of negation. Tai Chi means "highest Qi" because practicing it cultivates Qi (harmonises homeostasis) in body-emotion-mind. When

Qi fluctuates freely through the body, the body is connected to the mind. When body and mind cooperate, they can be united and directed with intent.

> *Specifically, the argument turns on what I call bifurcated intentionality: we need two different concepts of intentionality in order to have fully adequate conception. These two concepts are discursive intentionality, the capacity to engage in linguistic semantic contents within a shared linguistic community, and somatic intentionality, the capacity to engage with ambient environment through a system of bodily relations. These two capacities are individually necessary and jointly sufficient for all reasoning with empirical content, and thus are essentially bound up with perception and action.* (Sachs, 2014, 2)

Intentionality training develops agility, speed, and strength in body as well as thought. Somatic and mental qualities, that express themselves when the need is present and without much effort. It is a sharp intuitive somatic and emotional presence with the present and oneself in it. As mentioned, internal body economisation and especially the heart is the starting point for life in the body. The eyes are the body's two polarizations (sun / light and moon / dark). The head is the sky (yang), and the legs are the earth (yin). In the context of the solar plexus, the head and legs are the body's primary competence.

Hence Tai Chi[13] can exist in formal education as a curricular subject to support subjective learning focus, the practice of learning-resistance and the sociality of an educational environment. This can support a universal trait of accommodating negation, which is a central aspect of learning and experience; of learning how to fail and relish in the experience of becoming wiser for it. If knowledge is available primarily at the end goal (the solution/result), the process of knowledge can be static and has only before it the results my axioms for the starting point allow. Of this, knowledge can be confined to a rudimentary examination of the phenomenon and not its more obscure/hidden characteristics which require scepticism, doubt, and a more concrete handling of negation. Taichi and similar embodied arts, exercises the ability to observe, differentiate and change the minds habit of relying on the emotional concepts brought forth by body-budgeting and cultivating this by way of harmonising the automatic, prototypical biological mechanisms of the human condition. Our inherited view of human nature as mind and body as separate and belonging to each their own paradigm with status and importance to human life can thus be nuanced. A nuance of methodical exploration of human knowledge and meaning-making as not oriented towards the modalities as exhaustive but oriented towards the connections of the individual in wholeness and the surrounding world and its inherent epistemological structure. With the help of this merging of physiological being, emotional experience and cognition, a perspective on human understanding can be provided as consisting of body, emotions and mind in one whole. They are never separate and always independent and never in either mentioned or any other fixed order or rank. They function as a variety, never detached from the whole, but autonomous and yet mutually influencing each other.

> *If you want to learn Taichi, you must be sincere. Without sincerity you will not be able to learn any art. To learn Taichi you must be aware of yourself physically as well as mentally. To learn Taichi is to study yourself. You are the person who must learn, and it is you as a person who will be studied. Taichi as an art form cannot*

13 And similar embodied somaesthetic arts that does not reduce or give precedence to a mental subject (ipse) in its approach to methodology and implemented practice.

> *only be taught but must be experienced. You will learn a dance commonly called the Taichi form. Taichi is more than its form. You learn Taichi by practicing the Form. Without training every day, no one can master it. Taichi can be learned as body therapy, a dance, a method to improve health, as self-defense, it is a living philosophy. Taichi is a very creative art form, but you must learn to be the creator. Taichi teaches you how to live, but it's up to you to live the life you want. Taichi is not a science but can be studied scientifically. However, it must be practiced as an art form* (Pang, 1987).

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