Universiteit
Leiden
The Netherlands

Spiritual corporeality: towards embodied gnosis through a dancing language

Tunca, S.A.

Citation
Tunca, S. A. (2023, October 31). *Spiritual corporeality: towards embodied gnosis through a dancing language*. Retrieved from https://hdl.handle.net/1887/3655503

Version:	Publisher's Version
License:	Licence agreement concerning inclusion of doctoral thesis in the Institutional Repository of the University of Leiden
Downloaded from:	https://hdl.handle.net/1887/3655503

Note: To cite this publication please use the final published version (if applicable).

Spiritual Corporeality:
Towards Embodied Gnosis through a Dancing Language

Proefschrift
ter verkrijging van
de graad van doctor aan de Universiteit Leiden,
op gezag van rector magnificus prof.dr.ir. H. Bijl,
volgens besluit van het college voor promoties
te verdedigen op 31.Oktober 2023
klokke 13:45 uur
door
Suzan Ayşe Tunca
geboren te Rottweil (DE)
in 1975

Promotor: Prof.dr. Janneke Wesseling
Copromotor: Dr. Sher Doruff, Stockholm University of the Arts

Promotiecommissie:
Prof.dr. Kitty Zijlmans
Prof.dr. Anke Haarman
Jeroen Fabius (Amsterdamse Hogeschool voor de Kunsten, artistic director DAS MA Choreography)
Dr. Bryan Brown (University of Exeter)

© Suzan Ayşe Tunca

Spiritual Corporeality:
Towards Embodied Gnosis through a Dancing Language

Table of Contents

Table of Contents 2
Prologue 7
I, my dancing body, and You 9
Perspective and context 12
Staging dance knowledge: artistic-epistemic framing 15
Research questions 17
Dance Language 17
Dancing Language 19
Argument 22
Key concepts 23
Chapter Overview 32
Intentional dispositive 35
PART I 36
Weaving together corporeal language and verbal discourse: history and method 36
CHAPTER 1 37
Circling around the unspeakable: 37
situating the gap between wordless corporeal language and verbal discourse 37
Historical positioning. Circling around the unspeakable with dance and words 38
Dance: between the corporeal and the metaphysical 49
Diving deep and reaching high: underneath and beyond the rational 55
Spiritually ignited: the beginnings of modern dance 58
CHAPTER 2 60
Invitation to Join the Dance: 60

bringing together dance theory and academic scholarship on esotericism.....60
Invitation to dance: Western esotericism 60
Altered states of knowing - spiritual corporeality - embodied gnosis.....64
Where being and knowing embrace: dancing the imaginal 68
Reason, Faith and Gnosis as foundations for constructing worldviews 70
Towards a Dance Language 71
CHAPTER 3.....76
Dancing Language between Mind and Matter: 76
methodology of a dialogue between corporeal theory and discursive practice.....76
Dancing language between mind and matter 77
Complementarity 78
Corporeal Theory + Discursive Practice = Dancing Language 80
DANCING LANGUAGE.....85
Retrospective dance writing as documentation and research method 87
A dancing methodology 92
Methodological positioning 96
PART II 99
Towards Embodied Gnosis through Dance.....99
CHAPTER 4.....100
Into the Subtle Body: Esoteric Forms of Thought and Body-Based Practice.....100
Through a dancing language towards embodied gnosis 100
Into the subtle body: exploring the context of the ‘subtle body’ and related body-based practices 104
Rudolf Steiner and Eurythmy 110
George Ivanovich Gurdjieff (1866-77? - 1949) and Movements 123
Rudolf von Laban and esoterically inclined modern dance 129
The Sema Ceremony and the subtle body in esoteric Islam 134

Carl Gustav Jung: the somatic and the spiritual unconscious 144
Authentic Movement: esoteric influences in contemporary dance.....149
Conclusion.....151
CHAPTER 5.....154
Attuning: orientations for corporeal consciousness in dance 154
Through embodied gnosis towards a dancing language 154
Attuning the Dancing Body 156
Attuning 158
For Dance: let it pass through you.....158
Preparing the canvas.....163
Opening to a dialogue with the real 169
Tuning the psychophysical tonality 176
Activating Axis of Reverence.....182
Euthus Body 186
Conclusion.....194
CHAPTER 6.....198
Dance, Music and Dance Language in SEI.....198
SEI.....198
SEI#1.....201
DUE.....205
SEI & DUE 208
TRE 209
SEI#3.....211
SEI.....214
CONCLUSION.....215
Revisit – Remember 215

The path traversed....218
Potentialities for knowing....221
Artistic Research....225
To be continued....226
Intentional dispositive....227
Epilogue....228
GLOSSARY....229
SUMMARY....238
BIBLIOGRAPHY....240
Curriculum Vitae....254

Prologue

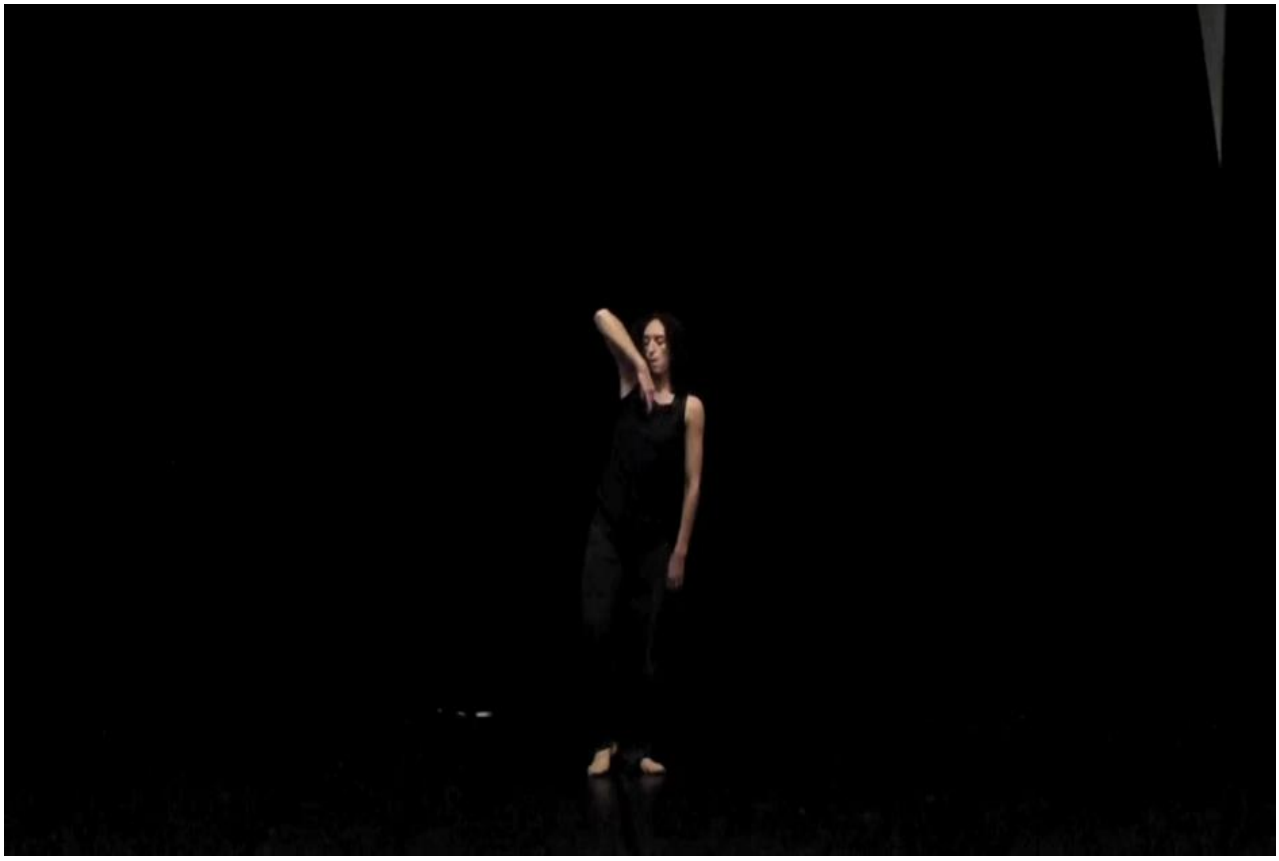
Welcome to my research.
I wish it to be yours as well.

Whenever I say I, me and mine,
I would like you to be able to think and feel I, me and mine as well.

Because we all carry a body and we mostly don't really know and understand what is living in the depths of it's being.

Or how our movements relate to the nature, origin and belonging of our inner life, to each other, to our earth and the life of the cosmos.

May I invite you to dance this search, to search this dance together with me?



The logic of a dancing body, 3: *Infinity Loops* https://vimeo.com/manage/videos/824480971/1dd90ae21f
ATD (Amsterdam school for Theatre and Dance), 2015.

I, my dancing body, and You

I have a lifelong relationship with my body. It speaks to me, and I speak to it. Although we are well acquainted with each other, we often do not understand each other. There remains something intriguingly unknown about the nature and meaning of the spaces between my sense of self, my body, other bodies and the world in which our bodies live. Where do our bodies begin and where do they end?[1] My body can do much of the work of life without me attending to it. While my inner being can be drawn out of my body into a text, an artwork, a person, or something else, my body never forgets gravity, knows how to stand upright, how to walk and to reach out – without the delay of hesitation - to an other who might be stumbling next to me. Who or what animates my body? How is this who or what intertwined with other bodies, our planet and the cosmos? What difference does it make if my inner being is consciously inhabiting my body from the top of my head to the tip of my toes, or not? Is my deepest sense of self corporeal or incorporeal, or both at the same time, and is this deepest sense of self the same for everybody? These somewhat naïve but fundamental questions create the momentum for the movements of my research. It is through experiencing my body in dance, that the continuity of this momentum is maintained, while in the meantime propelling the research forwards. I seek possible responses to these questions through a dancing dialogue between my ever-morphing dancing body and the ever-expanding sense of self it imparts on me. Through dance, the human being I am becomes *differently* than without dance. I see the dancing body as a complex and creative interface between spirit and matter. To dance, can allow a human being to perceive oneself as taking part in and belonging to two worlds at the same time. To be and to belong to something intangible yet real and to concrete physical reality simultaneously. I search for how to communicate this intangible reality as I perceive it through the dancing body. To allow it to infiltrate physical reality and to enter the interiority of whoever encounters this text and the dance that grows in parallel with it.

I do not know what it is that I imprint into space with dance, but there is the urge for it to come out of me. Through dance, it speaks about something unspeakable[2].

[1] Thank you dear Janneke Wesseling for raising this question during a conversation about this research.

[2] For a study about "the unspeakable" in relation to music and esotericism see Wouter J. Hanegraaff, "The Unspeakable and the Law: Esotericism in Anton Webern and the Second Viennese School," 2010, 329–354.

DUE rehearsal Amsterdam, DAS. 2.2.2020.

With this dissertation, language dances in body and words. It is a dance moved by a thirst for mutual illumination of corporeal ways of (not) knowing and communicating and other dimensions of verbally articulated discourse.

Swaying like a pendulum between words and experience, between experience and words, meaning perpetually conceals and reveals itself. At times, words and experience eclipse each other, at other times both shine their light on each other brightly, sparking meaning and insight where movements of thought and body find and infiltrate each other.

SEI, fragment No.6, slow. Amsterdam, Broedplaats de Lely 30.9. 2018.

Documentation

The creative process of the dance and music peformance SEI in collaboration with composer Giuliano Bracci[3] is documented using the method of ***retrospective dance writing****[4]. Fragments from video recordings of rehearsals and performances are here annotated from the first-person perspective of a dance experience.[5]

Glossary

A selection of ideas and concepts that came into being through the dialogue between the movements of my body and other fields of discourse are gathered in the glossary. These ideas are written **bold**, ***cursive*** and are marked with an asterisk* the first time they appear in a chapter. Throughout the rest of the text, they are written *cursively*. Through *hyperlinks* you can directly navigate to this glossary to become familiar with the main ideas behind the conceptual apparatus that supports the architecture of this investigation**.**

Perspective and context

I am writing this dissertation from the perspective of my experience of dance, as it unfolds towards a ***dancing language**** through my ***dancing body**** and written words. With my *dancing body* - which I perceive as a creatively mediating interface - I investigate relationships between the intuitively intelligible and the physically sensible, between mind and matter, between the spiritual and the corporeal. My investigation unfolds through a *dancing language* in body and words, through which I aim to communicate my quest towards proximity with an unspeakable creative source.

[3] Giuliano Bracci is a PhD candidate at ACPA docARTES. "Giuliano Bracci", giulianobracci.com, accessed 7.5.23, https://giulianobracci.com/ .
[4] See also chapter three: dancing language between mind and matter.
[5] "Spiritual Corporeality: Towards Embodied Gnosis through a Dance Language", researchcatalogue.net, https://www.researchcatalogue.net/view/520371/2167629 .

I unveil, challenge and contextualize my non-verbal dance experience through other forms of ***languaging****: poetically inclined and rather abstract verbal language born from the inner realm of my dance experience and esoteric forms of thought[6] related to other body-based practices. I frame the relationship between the inner, wordless experience of my dancing body and the contextualizing verbal discourse as ***complementary**** to each other. Together they become a whole. In this dissertation, the *complementary* relation between the wordless danced experience and the contextualizing verbal discourse is enacted by overlapping and intersecting ***corporeal theory**** with ***discursive practice****. *Corporeal theory* stands for language (non-verbal and verbal) that is articulated from the first-person perspective of the dancing body. *Discursive practice* stands for verbally *languaging* thought from the perspectives of different types of written discourse.

The relation between both modes of performing research is conceptually framed by a third discourse: the Jung-Pauli conjecture, a scientific/philosophical proposition that hypothetically posits mind and matter as *complementary* aspects of a larger unifying whole. This unifying whole is speculatively shared by both aspects yet at the same time transcends both.[7]

Wolfgang Pauli (1900 – 1958, pioneer of quantum physics) and Carl Gustav Jung (1875-1961, founder of analytical psychology) attempted to gain a better understanding of the interface between the physical and the mental and questioned the kind of reality on which it could be grounded. They speculated about a "psychophysically neutral" reality (*unus mundus*) that would both lie beyond the categories of mind and matter as well as mediate between them.[8]

What unites these different types of discourse (corporeal, verbal poetic and abstract based on corporeal experience, academic esoteric, scientific/philosophical), and how do they relate to my experience of dance? They are different takes on the relationship between the metaphysical and the physical, between mind and matter, between psyche and physis,

---

[6] To classify esoteric discourse as "form of thought" is derived from Antoine Faivre's conceptualization of modern Western esotericism. Antoine Faivre was the spearhead of establishing Western esotericism as an internationally recognized academic field of research. Faivre held the chair for the "History of Esoteric and Mystical Currents in Modern and Contemporary Europe" at École Pratique des Hautes Études in Paris. See for example Antoine Faivre and Karen-Claire Voss, "Western Esotericism and the Science of Religions," 1995, 48–77.

[7] The main target of Wolfgang Pauli and C.G. Jung's joint investigation was the relationship between mind and matter, the "psychophysical problem". H. Atmanspacher and C.A. Fuchs, "Introduction: The Pauli-Jung Conjecture," 2014, 1-6.

[8] Harald Atmanspacher, "Notes on Psychophysical Phenomena," *The Pauli Jung Conjecture and its Impact Today,* 2014, 184. (See also chapter five: Attuning).

between the spiritual and the corporeal, between the transcendent and the immanent. These perspectives coalesce in a tapestry of intertwining lines of corporeal motion, words and thoughts.

Please be invited to experience the textures of this dance and the dance of this text as a shared process of sense making that aims to unite a non-verbal corporeal dance language with movements of thought in a dance between mind and matter.

SEI#1 fragment No.9, slow, 15.12.2018 DAS Third Forum.

Staging dance knowledge: artistic-epistemic framing

Informed by extensive dance experience[9], it seems to me to be evident that there is some kind of intrinsic relation between my corporeal being, the physical realm where this corporeality is situated, and the metaphysical realm. With the metaphysical realm I point towards a dimension of reality that is neither perceivable by the senses nor scientifically measurable.[10]

In dance, I intuit an unfathomable and meaningful relation between what lives beyond my skin (not only in the physical realm but reaching further, towards the intuitively intelligible realm), and what lives underneath my skin. How both relate to each other, and what the meaning of this relation could be is unknown to me. Therefore, I am investigating this relation. I am targeting my humble yet sincerely aspiring searching arrow towards a dimension of experiential reality that is not perceivable through my senses, towards what might possibly live behind or underneath sensible phenomena, towards a realm of being that causes in me the urge to seek meaning. With experiential reality I refer to what is real in my experience. I am pointing my searching arrow blindfolded, without seeing the goal, but learning to trust my inner compass, hidden in the dark depths of my corporeal being. It silently waits for me to recognize it and to listen to its hunches. Whatever it is that I cannot sense, but that I intuit, it is real to me. At the innermost point of subjective experience, something may come to light that holds truth for all of us. A ground of being, a fundamental perspective, a natural experience, a pull towards the future interlaced with the fabrics of time that could be the same for every (human) being whether we are consciously aware of it or not. I do not make claims about a true nature of reality, but I suggest that it is possible to get a glimpse of an experience of something ***real**** and sacred through the dancing body understood as a creatively mediating interface between the metaphysical and the physical.

I imagine the dimension of experiential reality that imparts in me a sense of the *real* to be both immanent and transcendent to my corporeal reality. I cannot see, feel, hear, taste or

[9] I performed professionally as a dancer, choreographer, choreographic assistant, dance teacher and dance researcher since 1998. For more information see Curriculum Vitae.

[10] I am working here with definition 2a of "metaphysical" in the Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary: "of or relating to the transcendent or to a reality beyond what is perceptible to the senses," accessed, 30.04.2023, https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/metaphysical .

touch the goal that draws my searching arrow towards it. I can intuit it from the deeper layers of my body, and I experience these deeper layers more intensely through danced motion.
This intuition of the *real* moves me, at times, very deeply. It is passionately personal and aloofly impersonal at the same time. It is the experiential foundation on which this research builds its questioning lines of thought and motion. In dance, I seek to gain proximity with it. It pulls my inner being towards it with a subtle yet mighty force. Through dance, I seek to find ways to articulate and to communicate this inner movement that magnetizes my inner being into proximity with an unspeakable sense of the *real*.
As I need to give the unspeakable a verbal container that allows me to identify and to communicate to a certain extent what this research is about, I will address the unspeakable as a creative source.

I perform this research in and through my dancing body. With the dance and music performance SEI (the performative component of this dissertation) I develop the non-verbal/corporeal aspect of a ***dance language****. Here I dance with the musical landscapes created by composer Giuliano Bracci. By discursively contextualizing the *dance language*, a ***dancing language**** comes into being. With *dance language***,** I refer to the non-verbal language of my dancing body as well to verbal reflections on this experience from the first-person perspective that build up towards a *corporeal theory*. With *dancing language*, I refer to the totality of this dissertation project which brings together wordless movements and verbally articulated movements of thought. The movements and the words influence and complement each other. Through this *dancing language* I question the relations between the physically sensible and the intuitively intelligible metaphysical.

I am not making assumptions about the knowledge of dance in general. I describe the knowledge of dance according to how it informs me. That some of this knowledge can resonate with the experience of other dancers is possible and intended, but not claimed.

In the context of this dissertation, my aim is not (yet) to create a transferrable movement method. It is not a research in dance education or about transferring movement ideas to other dancers. This would be a possible next step. This does not mean that (aspects of) this research could not be performed, translated or interpreted through other approaches to dance. This

also does not mean that I am writing this dissertation only for myself. I do want to address the contemporary dance community, the community of artistic researchers and other academics who are vested in the history and actuality of dance related ideas and practices and who are curious about how artistic knowledge can infiltrate and be infiltrated by other academic disciplines.

Research questions

The main concern of this research is the relation between the metaphysical and the physical, between mind and matter. I explore this relation through a *dancing language.* Twisting, bending, spiraling, extending, balancing, collecting, distributing and metamorphosing movements and words, I carve into space experiences and potentialities for knowing from within the deep fibers of my being. I am questioning how my ***dancing body**** can be attuned to become a ***creative interface**** through which I can gain a deeper understanding of possible relations between the metaphysical and the physical. I am also questioning how I can investigate and communicate my experience and progressive apprehension of these relations through the language of dance.

Dance Language

For this research, I am repurposing my dancing body from being primarily a vehicle to actualize a dance, towards becoming a creative interface that allows me to investigate relations between the physically sensible and the intuitively intelligible. My goal is to amplify an inner knowing about this relation, to learn to understand it better and to communicate it through dance and words. This so that others can participate in it's becoming, so that it can become stronger through us.

More specifically, I am interested in the performative state in an intermediary space between conscious and unconscious movement origination. From within this in between state or space creative qualities and textures of movement can emerge which are yet unknown to me. How to learn to speak and read these movements is one of the main targets of this research.

This means that I am shifting the artistic center of gravity from an emphasis on elaborating a style or an aesthetic signature of movement towards unearthing epistemic potentials from the dancing body and towards finding ways to communicate them. I aim to actualize potentialities of knowing-being through a *dancing body* that seeks to articulate a *dance*

language through which it can communicate a progressive sense of proximity with its creative source.

To be able to investigate and to communicate relations between the physically sensible and the intuitively intelligible through a *dance language*, I also need to become more consciously aware of the states of being that allow me to enter in proximity with that dimension of experience from where I intuit that this relation is meaningful and worth investigating. I am thus also asking how the dancing body can become attuned to gain a deeper sense of proximity with the unspeakable, with the source of its creativity and a sense of the *real* (see chapter five on attuning).

With ***attuning**** I refer to intentional orientations for corporeal consciousness. It stands for cultivating and intensifying a sense of proximity with a creative source, a sense of the *real*. This requires for example making myself transparent, to clean the canvas so to speak, so that the unspeakable may communicate something of itself through my dancing body, so that the observers of the dance can participate in it, so that they can participate in its becoming.

SEI & DUE at Peel Slowly and See Festival, Scheltema, Leiden. 25.9.2021

Dancing Language

With the *dancing language*, the world of words enters the stage and participates in the dance. Through a *dancing language,* I aim to unearth epistemic, ontological and communicative potentials of that dimension of experience from where I perceive to be in touch with a creative source. To allow it to speak through different types of voices.

How the *dancing language* in body and words manifests esthetically is a consequence of this artistic-epistemic framing. With artistic-epistemic framing, I am not only referring to a solely rational kind of epistemic potential. Rational intellection does play an important role in making sense of this dissertation project in body and words, but it is to another kind of knowing that this artistic-epistemic framing seeks to give argumentative space. Through a *dancing language* I seek to communicate about a region of experience that exists somewhere underneath or beyond rational reasoning. Questioning relations between the metaphysical and the physical through my dancing body and through related, but different types of discourse, implies for me also challenging and deepening my understanding of and relation to spirituality. This means that I am re-orienting both the non-verbal corporeal as well as the verbally discursive excursions towards other modes of writing and reading dance.

Following my inner compass, I reorient my understanding of dance towards its sacred and spiritual dimensions. To actualize this re-orientation, I bring together the wordless world of dance with the world of words. My goal is to enable an experience of a spiritually infused corporeality, for myself as well as for the reader of this text and for the observers of the dance. In contemporary dance and its related discourse, the presence of the spiritual within the physical is rarely addressed. On my part, however, I associate a logic of spiritual evolution with complex processes of incarnating consciousness. I posit that dance practice can give a specific perspective - other than biological, scientific, psychological or theological perspectives - on this process of incarnating consciousness. The artistic-epistemic goal is thus in fact also a spiritual-corporeal goal. It is derived from my experience of a specific kind of knowing that can be ignited through dance. The potential for this kind of knowing to grow, becomes more concrete through a progressive exposure of my inner being towards ever receding boundaries of the unknowable. Where will this lead me? I cannot know, I can only speculate. My speculations are based on intuitive hunches, fragments of thought and

intensities of wordless experience that appear from inner and outer spaces and from states of being during the dance where distinctions between the inner and the outer are dissolved. These hints lead me to other fields of discourse that circle around the relation between the corporeal and the spiritual from differing perspectives. I draw these perspectives together, with the aim to make sense, to create some kind of coherent meaning out of a dance of thought and corporeal motion.

In sum, the research questions that generate the momentum for this searching dance, for this dancing search are:

Is it possible to gain new perspectives on the relationship between the physically sensible and the intuitively intelligible through a dancing language that weaves together corporeal and verbal discourse?

How can the dancing body be attuned to act as an interface between the physical and the metaphysical through which I can investigate and communicate a sense of intimate proximity with a creative source?

Fragment SEI, DAS Third Symposium, Amsterdam, 15.12.2018.

https://vimeo.com/328165248/5c9ea7a962https://vimeo.com/328165248/5c9ea7a962

Argument

I perform this research in and through my dancing body. I argue that it is possible to conceive of the dancing body as a complex and creative interface that can mediate between the physical and the metaphysical. I advance the notion that the experience of dance can generate a dimension of experience and a specific state of knowing that I experience as suspended between and in dialogue with the physically sensible and with the intuitively intelligible metaphysical.

I support this argument with excursions into esoteric forms of thought and related body-based practices. I enter in dialogue with this field of discourse from the perspective of a *dance language*. This language evolves through my *dancing body* which I deliberately attune to a state of a radical opening towards the unknown, with trust.

I further argue that this specific state of knowing, for which I have developed the notion of ***embodied gnosis****[11], can be investigated and suggestively communicated through a *dancing language* in body and words. The channels for communication knit together non-verbal corporeal, verbal poetic, esoteric and scientific/philosophical discourses. By framing the relation between my wordless experience of dance and the world of words as being of a *complementary* nature I aim to facilitate a path towards perceiving the metaphysical and the physical as a spiritual-corporeal whole.

The purpose of the *dancing language* is to communicate. It includes spaces of reflective distance and relative objectivity that invite the reader and spectator to participate in this investigative journey, to make sense out of it together.

This *dancing language* speaks through my embodied being in movements of body and thought. It filters through the subjective lens of my experiences, my curiosities and my fascinations yet it is contextualized within a broader framework of related fields of discourse and practice. Relative to my ability to take you - the reader of the text and the spectators of

[11] The term "embodied gnosis" came into being through a dialogue between my dance practice and the study of esoteric forms of thought. I found afterwards one other author who arrived at the same concept, yet through other pathways and in another context: Jeff Gundy," 'What Is It I Know?': Notes Toward an Embodied Gnosis," *MQR Mennonite Quarterly Review*, 2005, 69–88.

the dance - along with me, and to the extent that both of us can remain attuned to a radical opening towards the unknown, the written text and the dance can also become a dance between you and me. It can become our dance towards *embodied gnosis*.

Key concepts

Three key concepts function as focusing lenses, as anchors and bridges that span the abyss between the wordless corporeal logic of my dancing body and other dimensions of discourse that are brought in relation to it: a verbal poetic language born from an idiosyncratic corporeal experience, academic scholarship on esoteric forms of thought and scientific/philosophical discourse. The description of these key concepts evolves throughout this text, gaining new layers and dimensions of significance along the way.

The three key concepts are: ***spiritual corporeality****, ***altered states of knowing**** and ***embodied gnosis****. These concepts came into being by allowing my dance practice and my understanding of it to be infiltrated by vistas opened by the academic study of esotericism.

Drawing together different types of discourse through the lens of these key concepts provides multifaceted perspectives on possible relations between the metaphysical and the physical and their potential significance. These perspectives are grounded in differing ontologies, epistemologies and worldviews. Filtered through the focusing lenses of the key concepts and in response to the research questions, the collected perspectives will be synthesized towards a concluding set of propositions. These propositions are not intended to be interpreted as being true or false, but as potentialities for knowing.[12]

[12] For a proposition understood as a potentiality see Steven Shaviro, *Without Criteria: Kant, Whitehead, Deleuze and Aesthetics*, 2009, 2.

Spiritual corporeality

Based on a definition from Religious Studies, I tentatively define spirituality as a human practice that seeks to establish and maintain contact between the everyday world and an intuitable, but neither verifiable nor falsifiable, meta-empirical source of being, life and meaning.[13] Establishing a meta-empirical (metempiric) research horizon implies working with concepts and relationships that are related to empirically gained knowledge yet reach beyond empirical knowledge towards the metaphysical.[14]

I experience the dancing body as a ***psychophysical resonating space**** that is grounded in the concrete corporeality of the body in motion, yet always also moves in relation to the metaphysical by its intrinsic relation to space, time, mind, being and known and unknown forces.

In dance, I use the term *spiritual corporeality* in a sense whereby cultivating a specific quality and texture of corporeal consciousness through attuning intentional orientations is experienced as a practice of maintaining contact between the everyday world and a psychophysically intuited metaphysical source of being, life and meaning.

[13] This understanding of spirituality is partially based on a definition by Wouter J. Hanegraaff: "I would define as a specific spirituality: 'any human practice which maintains contact between the everyday world and a more general meta-empirical framework of meaning by way of the individual manipulation of symbolic systems'." Hanegraaff, "The Dreams of Theology and the Realities of Christianity," 2003, 719.

[14] "Metempirics," Merriam- Webster Online Dictionary: "the study of concepts and relationships conceived as beyond and yet related to knowledge gained empirically". Accessed 10.11.2019, https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/metempirics.

SEI threshold 4, slow. Filming session at DAS theater, July 2019, Amsterdam. Image Ester Eva Damen. https://vimeo.com/507217763/339c83f36d

In relation to this dissertation project that coalesces non-verbal corporeal discourse with different dimensions of verbal discourse, the concept of *spiritual corporeality* also embraces these complementary research components as a coherent entity that moves towards a unification of complementary counterparts. Not only the movements of the dance, but also the movements of the written text are seen as belonging to a human practice that seeks to establish and maintain contact between the everyday world and an intuitable, but neither verifiable nor falsifiable, meta-empirical source of being, life and meaning. The written text is grounded in the subtle, but nevertheless also concrete corporeality of thoughts and words that unleash movement towards the metaphysical by their intrinsic relation to inner and outer space, time, mind, being and known and unknown forces. The notion of *spiritual corporeality*

thus encompasses movements on a wide spectrum that ranges from the gross materiality of flesh and bones to the more subtle materialities of thoughts and words.

Altered States of Knowing

In the field of transpersonal psychology, a branch of psychology that includes research into spiritual and mystical states that extend beyond the limits of the personal or the individual,[15] Altered States of Consciousness are defined as:

> Any mental state(s), induced by various physiological, psychological, or pharmacological maneuvers or agents, which can be recognized subjectively by the individual (or by an objective observer of the individual) as representing a sufficient deviation in subjective experience or psychological functioning from certain general norms for that individual during alert, waking consciousness.[16]

In his article "Altered States of Knowledge: The Attainment of Gnōsis in the Hermetica,"[17] esotericism scholar Wouter J. Hanegraaff shifts the interpretative perspective on the philosophical Hermetica from emphasizing its Greek and philosophical characteristics to a focus on its Egyptian and religious dimensions. As these texts are based on "ineffable revelatory and salvational insights," he assumes that they were received during extraordinary, ecstatic states of being. Rather than interpreting these texts as literary fictions, Hanegraaff interprets them from the perspective of a "hierarchy of 'levels of knowledge'," in which *gnosis* is seen as the highest attainable level. These altered states of consciousness are understood as "'trans-rational' stages of direct experiential knowledge."[18]

---

[15] "Transpersonal," *Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary*, accessed January 24. 2021, https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/transpersonal.
[16] Ludwig quoted in Pekala and Cardeña, "Methodological issues in the study of altered states of consciousness and anomalous experiences," 2000, 58.
[17] Hanegraaff, "Altered States of Knowledge: The Attainment of Gnōsis in the Hermetica," 2008, 128-163.
[18] Ibid, 128.

With the concept of *altered states of knowing*, I am adapting the notion of "altered states of knowledge" and its relation to *gnosis* towards my research into specific states or dimensions of knowing in danced experience. The choice for replacing *knowledge* by *knowing* has to do with an emphasis on *processes* of gradual embodiment of spiritually oriented states of consciousness that are constantly evolving, open-ended and naturally evade being fixed into pre-defined knowledge categories.

Embodied Gnosis

I propose to interpret the term *embodied gnosis* as a radical opening towards the unknown, with trust. The concepts of *spiritual corporeality* and *altered states of knowing* are a foundation for the idea of *embodied gnosis* in dance, to which I aim to give argumentative substance as a potentiality for knowing. To relate these concepts to already existing categories of knowledge, I suggest affiliating *spiritual corporeality* with ontology, *altered states of knowing* with epistemology, and *embodied gnosis* with "ethico-onto-epistemology", a term coined by physicist and philosopher Karen Barad. "Ethico-onto-epistemology" belongs to the discursive realm of feminist new materialism. It refers to the inseparability of ethics, ontology and epistemology in the work of the creation of (scientific) knowledge.[19] To explore resonances between the notion of *embodied gnosis* and the discourse on feminist new materialism would be a worthwhile endeavor yet falls beyond the scope of this dissertation. One aspect that differentiates the forms of thought that circulate around (*embodied) gnosis* from feminist new materialism is that – to my knowledge – feminist new materialism does not include any explicit reference to the involution of spirit or consciousness as an animating force for the evolution of matter characteristic for esoteric forms of thought. For Barad for example, it is rather the entanglement between matter and meaning that is at stake[20]. In my tentative adaptation of Hanegraaff's definition of spirituality, I define it as a human practice that seeks to establish and maintain contact between the everyday world and an intuitable, but neither verifiable nor falsifiable, meta-empirical source of being, life and meaning.

[19] Karen Barad quoted in Evelien Geerts, "Ethico-onto-epistemology", accessed 31.1.21, https://newmaterialism.eu/almanac/e/ethico-onto-epistem-ology.html.
[20] Barad, *Meeting the Universe Halfway. Quantumphysics and the Entanglement of Matter and Meaning*, 2007.

How the interpretation of meaning in relation to spiritually oriented body-based practices relates to Barad's entanglement between matter and meaning contains a seed for a potentiality for knowing. I will not be able to water this seed here, but I would be happy if someone else would do so.[21]

In line with the radical opening towards the unknown that I suggest with *embodied gnosis*, I propose to keep the three key concepts – *spiritual corporeality*, *altered states of knowing* and *embodied gnosis* - as nothing more and nothing less than focusing lenses, conceptual anchors and bridges that span the abyss between the wordless experience of this dance about gaining proximity with an unspeakable creative source and the world of words in the context of this dissertation. *Embodied gnosis* might be akin to the "ethico-onto-epistemological" dimension according to Barad, yet I intend to enter my argument to substantiate the idea and experience of *embodied gnosis* through another door: the door of a *dance language* in dialogue with esoteric forms of thought and related body-based practices and with the scientific/philosophical worldview that underpins the Pauli-Jung conjecture (see below).

Embodied gnosis suggests a process of entering and deepening a state of knowing-being in dance, where sensory as well as suprasensorial[22] qualities of experience, such as for example performative intuition and projected and incorporated spatial imagination, permeate and transform the corporeality of the motions of the dancer.

The noun "gnosis" can be contextualized within a broad and complex semantic field related to perception, cognition and intuition.[23] In Hellenistic culture, "gnosis" was understood to be a form of knowledge by which the soul of the human being would achieve liberation and salvation from being materially entangled with a physical body, in order to re-unite with the divine mind.[24] The kind of knowledge that is called "gnosis" is suggestive of an investigative

[21] Philosopher and film theorist John Ó Maoilearca investigates for example new spiritualist movements during the 20th century as embodied by artist and mystic Mina Bergson (sister of Henri Bergson) and leader of the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn in relation to Barad's new materialist paradigm in a forthcoming publication: *Revenge of the 'New Spiritualists': Lindsay Seers Meets Karen Barad* (date expected publication unknown).

[22] Related to "suprasensuous," Merriam-Webster online dictionary, accessed 30.4.23, https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/suprasensuous#:~:text=%3A%20transcending%20the%20merely%20sensuous%20or%20sensory .

[23] Brian P. Copenhaver, *Hermetica,* 1992, 96.

[24] Hanegraaff, "Gnosis," 2016, 381.

attitude that is open to divine intuition. “Gnosis” distinctly does not operate only through the intellect. It must be implemented into ethically conceived ways of life or into ethically conceived practices.[25] Gnosis can be described as seeking to make sense out of ineffable experiences by constructing speculative worldviews about the nature of reality.

This dissertation too, may be seen as an attempt at unearthing speculative propositions (potentialities for knowing) about relationships between the metaphysical and the physical derived from ineffable experiences encountered through a *dancing body.* “Gnosis” is based on intuitive, non-discursive and spiritual experiences that may lead to deeper knowledge about one’s self and God via imagination and transformation.[26]

By questioning and working with the notion of *embodied gnosis* in dance, I am performing an experimental inversion of the Hellenistic idea of gnosis (where the soul is being disembodied) by positing the body in danced motion as a potential catalyst for the embodiment, or speaking in religious terms, incarnation of consciousness (or psyche, soul, mind and spirit). This inversion stands for a performative attempt to re-embody the ancient idea of gnosis, originally understood as disembodied knowledge based on religious experience, through a contemporary dancing body situated in the post-secular era[27] of the 21st century.

To discover a new perspective on the relations between the metaphysical, the spiritual and the corporeal in dance, this research began in 2013 with positioning the dancing body between science and religion in an academic context during a MA artistic research at the University of Amsterdam.[28] The relatively young sub-field of religious studies Western

[25] Jean-Pierre Mahé, “Gnostic and Hermetic Ethics,” 1998, 22.

[26] Hanegraaff, “A Dynamic Typological Approach to the Problem of ‘Post-Gnostic’ Gnosticism,” 1992, 17.

[27] The post-secular can refer to discourses that maintain a critical stance towards a hegemonic status of secularism. The main endeavor of post-secular discourses is to “re-enchant” the “dis-enchanted” experiential world partly due to processes of secularization. The religious, [or spiritual] dimensions of the world are given a potentially positive societal role by developing new perspectives on what religion [and spirituality is] and can be. Kenneth Granholm, “Esoteric Currents as Discursive Complexes,” 2013, 65. The [spiritual] in brackets is added to Granholm’s definition of the post-secular by the author of this text.

[28] I am very grateful for the steadfast and inspiring guidance and supervision of my MA thesis “Esoteric Dimensions in the Logic of the Dancing Body” (2015, unpublished) by Dr. Marco Pasi, Associate Professor in History of Hermetic Philosophy and related currents at the University of Amsterdam.

esotericism,[29] whose epistemological dynamics navigate between science and religion[30] has since then been a major academic orientation for the verbally discursive contextualization of the non-verbal dance language that evolves in parallel with this text.

[29] A Chair of "Christian Esotericism" was established in the Religious Studies section of the École Pratique des Hautes Études at the Sorbonne in 1965. Antoine Faivre took over the chair in 1979. The name of the chair was then changed to "History of Esoteric and Mystical Currents in Modern and Contemporary Europe". The chair for the "History of Hermetic Philosophy and related currents" is currently held by Wouter J. Hanegraaff at the University of Amsterdam since 1999.

[30] Andreas B. Kilcher, "Seven Epistemological Theses on Esotericism: Upon the Occasion of the 10th Anniversary of the Amsterdam Chair," *Hermes in the Academy. Ten Years' Study of Western Esotericism at the University of Amsterdam*, 2009, 146.

SEI#1 runthrough, studio de Vlugt, Amsterdam, 26.7.2020

Chapter Overview

In chapter one I will retrace the beginnings of modern dance, highlighting the spiritual, religious and esoteric roots of the art of dance. I will situate the *dancing language* developed through this research in relation to the history of modern dance and in relation to a rough mapping of the contemporary dance landscape. I will emphasize the tension between non-verbal and unspeakable aspects of dance and the realm of concepts and language. I will position my dancing language as an endeavor to investigate and to communicate possible relations between the metaphysical, the spiritual and the corporeal and I lay the foundations for an ontology and epistemology of dance derived from my experience of dance as generating *altered states of knowing* underneath or beyond the rational. I will further highlight the relevance of articulating language from within the logic of dance creation and experience for dance to be able to participate in other knowledge discourses.

In chapter two, I will introduce Western esotericism, an academic field of discourse that engages with the epistemological tensions between scientific knowledge and religious belief.[31] I explain how the three key concepts *spiritual corporeality*, *altered states of knowing* and *embodied gnosis* are derived from bringing dance research in dialogue with this intellectual habitat. I will introduce an artistic adoption of the term ***imaginal**** (a term coined by Islam scholar Henri Corbin)[32] as a place of knowing-being where the sensorial movement logic of a dancing body and a suprasensorial faith in – and at times "gnosis" of – an unseen, yet intuited and transcendent divine or sacred realm of being embrace each other. I will touch on reason, faith and gnosis as interpenetrating foundations for constructing worldviews[33] and I will map them in relation to knowing, believing and imagining as *psychophysical* performative states in dance. I will further situate my approach to *dance language* as an artistic-epistemic process geared towards a transformative knowing of being.

[31] Kilcher, "Seven Epistemological Theses on Esotericism: Upon the Occasion of the 10th Anniversary of the Amsterdam Chair," 2009, 146.
[32] Corbin, *Spiritual Body and Celestial Earth, From Mazdean Iran to Shi'ite Iran,* 1989 and Corbin, "Mundus Imaginalis or the Imaginary and the Imaginal," 1964.
[33] Hanegraaff, "Reason, Faith, and Gnosis: Potentials and Problematics of a Typological Construct," 2008, 138-139.

SEI & DUE rehearsal run-through, Crea Amsterdam, 23.9.21. Image Ester Eva Damen.

In chapter three I will outline the methodology. It is based on understanding the relation between ***corporeal theory**** (corporeal and verbal reflections on dance experience from the first-person perspective) and its contextualizing ***discursive practice**** (articulating thought in dialogue with written discourse from other fields of knowledge) as *complementary*: both approaches may at first sight appear to be incompatible with each other because of their strongly diverging logics and modalities of *languaging*. At the same time, both taken together are seen as necessary to approximate a complete picture of a dancing body that experiences itself as a mediating interface between the physical and the metaphysical. More detailed working procedures for each component (*corporeal theory* and *discursive practice*) and the ***dancing language**** that encompasses both components will be explained and brought in relation to each other and to the three key concepts. The documentation method of ***retrospective dance writing**** will be looked at more in depth and in relation to the three key concepts.

In chapter four I will focus on the notion of the ***subtle body**** in the context of esoteric forms of thought and related body-based practices. The *subtle body* refers to a metaphysically oriented understanding of human spiritual physiology. It can also be conceived of as a mind-matter continuum that encompasses different degrees of ***matter-consciousness****[34]. Subtle body awareness is associated with spiritual development and situates the human being in a context of cosmic evolution. This chapter on the *subtle body* is intersected with ***intermezzi**** textual insertions that complement the main body text with my own experience of dance, contextualized in the contemporary dance field.

Chapter five describes intentional orientations for corporeal consciousness (*attuning* the dancing body towards *embodied gnosis*). These intentional orientations allow the dancing body to recognize and to stabilize its ability to function as a mediating interface that can perceive and communicate subtle yet profound dimensions of experiential reality.
This chapter is intersected with *intermezzi* that respond with theoretical moves from other fields of discourse to terminologies used to describe the intentional orientations from the perspective of the dance practice.

Intermezzi

The *intermezzi* are textual movements inserted in the main body text of chapter four and five. The main body text in chapter four (The Subtle Body) delegates the center of gravity to the theoretical/discursive domain. The main body text in chapter five (Attuning the Dancing Body towards Embodied Gnosis) delegates the center of gravity to *corporeal theory* derived from the dance experience. The aim is to create a state of dynamic balance between *discursive practice* and *corporeal theory*. The three key concepts *spiritual corporeality, altered states of knowing* and *embodied gnosis* facilitate fields of intersection where a clear-cut distinction between *corporeal theory* and *discursive practice* dissolves.

Corporeal theory and *discursive practice* blend with each other in a state of suspense between the physically sensible and the intuitively intelligible, between a gravity bound logic of dance

[34] "Matter-consciousness" is a term developed by Jay Johnston to describe esoteric subtle body subjectivities as onto-ethical desire in a process metaphysical context. Jay Johnston, *Angels of Desire. Esoteric Bodies, Aesthetics and Ethics,* 2008, 2.

and weightless heights of speculative theory. These movements enact a search for the state of *embodied gnosis* also in the written text.

In chapter six I elaborate on the evolution of the creative process of the dance and music performance SEI, the performative practice component of this dissertation. I focus specifically on how the dance language evolves through a variety of performative states accompanied, supported and inspired by the acoustic scenarios created by Giuliano Bracci.

In the conclusion I articulate potentialities for knowing that speculatively address possible relationships between the metaphysical and the physical in dance as well as in relation to contemporary society. These potentialities for knowing are based on a synthesis of the gained vistas that unfold from the main research questions. These vistas will hopefully give argumentative substance to the idea and experience of *embodied gnosis*.

Intentional dispositive

It is my intention with this investigation to maintain a stance of deep humility towards the unknown while at the same time not being afraid to poke the limits of the knowable. I will not attempt to grasp or contain the unspeakable via culturally pre-determined filters of rational reasoning, religious dogma or aesthetic codification. Instead, I am searching for a way of speaking of the dancing body that seeks spiritual realization based on an intuitive hunch, that the human body has an intrinsic spiritually corporeal proximity with its creative source by its very nature. However, we seem to be mostly only barely in touch with it and dance appears to be one possible pathway to amplify the experience of this intuition.

PART I

Weaving together corporeal language and verbal discourse: history and method

Chapter 1:
Circling around the Unspeakable:
situating the gap between wordless corporeal language and verbal discourse……..…37

Chapter 2:
Invitation to Join the Dance:
bringing together dance theory and academic scholarship on esotericism……..60

Chapter 3:
Dancing Language between Mind and Matter:
methodology of a dialogue between corporeal theory and discursive practice…….76

CHAPTER 1

Circling around the unspeakable:
situating the gap between wordless corporeal language and verbal discourse

In this chapter, I will position the ***dancing language**** that I develop with this research in relation to a historical lineage of dance beginning with modern dance as it emerged during the 20th century. While sketching a brief overview of the contemporary dance landscape, different perspectives on the friction between the non-verbal and the unspeakable in dance and the realm of concepts and language are presented.

The focus of this chapter is to give an impression of how the field of tension between dance and verbal discourse/theory has been dealt with by a limited selection of dance artists during the 20th and 21st century. The temporal scope and depth of this dance historical contextualization is intentionally kept concise. The emphasis lies on introducing my approach to working with this friction in relation to these examples.[35]

I will highlight historical mutations of engaging with the creative space between the non-verbal and the verbal in dance. I will differentiate my vision on ***languaging**** [36] dance as a mediating movement that draws together the metaphysical and the corporeal. I will further elaborate on the notion of ***altered states of knowing**** as a possible foundation for a dance specific form of knowledge based on types of cognition that are not readily graspable by

[35] A historical overview of the development of modern dance and how its relation to the verbally discursive shifts during the transition into post-modern and contemporary dance would require an in-depth dance historical approach and lies beyond the scope of this dissertation. This investigation is situated in the domain of artistic research and hence aims to give more space to develop insight and argumentation from the perspective of a contemporary artistic practice.

[36] To give central importance to verbal and corporeal *languaging* as ways to develop a dance signature and to participate in the evolution of the art of dance is largely indebted to my long-term engagement (since 2005) with the choreographic practice of Emio Greco and Pieter C. Scholten (artistic directors or ICK Dans Amsterdam) as a dancer, dance teacher and dance researcher. In their approach to research on dance (an)notation, documentation and knowledge transfer, initiated Bertha Bermúdez and currently (2023 ongoing) continued by myself, the combination of the spoken and written word with precisely articulated corporeal language to develop, preserve and to transmit dance knowledge is explored extensively and in dialogue with various partners. See for example Magnini, *Inspriation. Emio Greco | Pieter C. Scholten. The Multiplicity of Dance,* 2015, De Lahunta, *(Capturing Intention). Documentation, Analysis and Notation Research Based on the Work of Emio Greco |PC*, 2007 and De Lahunta "Language-in-Use: Practical Dance Vocabularies and Knowing," 2020, 259–81 and "Annotation and Documentation: Expressing the Unsayable", ickamsterdam.com, accessed 16.9.2023, https://www.ickamsterdam.com/en/academy/peers-researchers/annotation-and-documentation-47 .

rationalizing intellection. I will bring attention to the need for articulating vocabularies from the inside perspective of dance experience to be able to enter in dialogue with other fields of knowledge and discourse. To historically contextualize my take on *dancing language* understood as a creative mediator that connects the metaphysical with the physical, I will conclude this chapter by drawing attention to the religious and spiritual impulses that gave birth to modern dance.[37]

Historical positioning. Circling around the unspeakable with dance and words

Due to the corporeal and non-verbal nature of dance, its relation to verbal discourse and theory is complex and ambiguous. I experience dance as a language and as a medium to communicate about what appears to remain unspeakable.[38] To perceive myself and the world through the act of dancing has become a means to interrogate and to investigate myself, what this self might be constituted by and how it relates to other selves and to the world.
I treat dance (and choreography) as a ***spatial-corporeal text**** that communicates a specific type of knowledge.[39]

---

[37] The choice to focus here on the beginnings of modern dance during the 20th century is related to the aim of exploring how a spiritually oriented contemporary dance practice can be brought in dialogue with practices that embody esoteric forms on thought which emerged in Western Europe during the same timeframe as modern dance. Since the 1960s which mark the beginnings of postmodern dance, numerous spiritual, immaterial and metaphysical approaches to the art of dance have been explored including performatively embodied references to the sacred, trance, altered states, shamanism, healing, fabulation, the occult, oracular practices and mediumship. Given the lack of academically situated critical discourse on these practices and the limited scope of this chapter, I only reference here examples from the period of the beginnings of modern dance. I warmly thank Jeroen Fabius for alerting me to include and mention here the spiritually oriented but rarely discursively elaborated dance practices since the 1960.

[38] I am aware that the dilemma of communicating the non-verbal has also been addressed by for example T.W. Adorno and J. Derrida in the context of philosophical discourse. To my knowledge, they did not include the (dancing) body and a *dancing language* as departure points for questioning relations between the metaphysical and the physical and to develop lines of argumentation and a conceptual apparatus that seeks to address, contain and intertwine the physically sensible and the intuitively intelligible. How this research may be meaningful against the backdrop of the thoughts of Adorno and Derrida on the communicability of the non-verbal lies beyond my field of expertise and focus of interest. I am very curious about elaborations on this question by other scholars and/or artists based on in depth knowledge of their work. I am grateful to Prof. Dr. Anke Haarmann (Program Director of PhDArts, ACPA) for informing me about the relatability of my questioning to the work of these philosophers.

[39] The notion of *spatial-corporeal text* draws together an understanding of dance and choreography as bodily text and as knowledge of space. Allsopp and Lepecki, "Editorial on Choreography," 2008, 1-6. Lepecki here reflects on the ontology of dance by unpacking "choreography" as a "syncretic fusion" of movement and writing and hence understanding dance and choreography as a form of

This research is fueled by a necessity ignited by dance to learn to speak, write and read the *spatial-corporeal text* that my body communicates in dance. In my approach to dance, I navigate the edge between knowing and not-knowing, between choreographed and spontaneously emerging movements in the moment of the performative event. In speaking, writing and reading the *spatial-corporeal text* of my dancing body I focus specifically on what the dancing body may tell us about possible relations between the metaphysical and the physical.

Globally and historically, dance has existed in nearly all cultural contexts. Dance is often transmitted orally and physically without a written score or theoretical reflection. In many traditional and contemporary forms of dance, the intentions behind the movements of the human body are embodied non-verbally and implicitly within the dance.[40] Making these intentions verbally explicit can become the basis for theoretical and methodological reflections on dance yet very often remain implicit and unspoken.[41] However, in some contemporary dance practices, oral and written verbal reflections have become an integral part of making the implicit knowledge embodied in dance (partially) explicit.

The relationship between dance and theoretical discourse in Western Europe has undergone many mutations since the 18th century until today. During the early phases of modern Western dance, Mary Wigman (1886 – 1973), a pioneer of expressionist dance, stated that it is impossible to capture the message of dance in written or spoken words. She nevertheless wrote a book about *The Language of Dance* (1966)[42] where she explains that

> … even if the danced message, in the uniqueness of its form-turned-revelation, defies capture in the spoken or written word – because it has no need for words – even then one may convey something [in writing about it] of that pure

bodily text. Choreography has also been conceptualized as a "knowledge of space" ["das Wissen vom Raum"] generated and performed through movement. See Böhme and Huschka, *Wissenskultur Tanz: Historische Und Zeitgenössische Vermittlungsakte Zwischen Praktiken Und Diskursen*, 2009, 9-10.

[40] Brandstetter and Klein, *Dance [and] Theory* 2013, 11.

[41] See for example De Lahunta, *(Capturing Intention) Documentation, Analysis and Notation Research Based on the Work of Emio Greco |PC*, 2007.

[42] Wigman, *The Language of Dance*, 1966.

> and profound bliss with which man is blessed when, in moments of full awareness of his being, he opens and shapes the realms of his experience.[43]

Wigmans' description of the gifts of "full awareness of being" when creating experiences through artistic means can also be related to other artistic practices. What is specific to dance though, is the inscription and creation of realms of experience into the human body and through the human body into space. Wigman's contemporary and collaborator Rudolf Laban, also known as the philosopher of expressionist modern dance, was one of the first and most lastingly influential dance theoreticians in the history of modern Western dance.[44] His investments in a theoretical approach to dance resulted in a spatial theory, a *Choreutics*[45] and a symbol-based movement notation system, which is still used, taught and further developed today.[46]

Dance often reflects the experience of the *Zeitgeist* of an era: from the 1920s onwards, expressionist dance (*Ausdruckstanz*) commented aesthetically on the prevailing cultural climate, embodying a critique on the fragmentation and mechanization of society, and propagating a return to a holistic experience of nature. An example are the dance works developed by Rudolf Laban and Mary Wigman during the summer schools of the Asconan counterculture community "Monte Verità" (1913 - 1918). Together they prepared the ground for new forms of expressivity in modern dance by investigating the interdependence of spirit, nature and the human body through dance[47]. Their shared aim was to call a halt to the "progress of disintegrating into disunity"[48].

Dance Theatre in the 1970s increasingly commented on power relations as they were reflected in the behavioral patterns of the body in motion. An example are the works of the icon of German Tanztheater Pina Bausch, who exposed power relations inherent in the theatrical representation of gendered bodies.[49]

---

[43] Wigman, *The Language of Dance* 1966, 9.
[44] Brandstetter and Klein, *Dance [and] Theory*, 11.
[45] Laban, *Choreutics*, 2011 [1966].
[46] See for example "Preserving the Past, Enriching the Present, Securing the Future," Dance Notation Bureau, accessed 30.4.23, http://dancenotation.org/.
[47] Bradley, *Rudolf Laban* 2009, 9.
[48] Laban, *Choreutics* 2011 [1966], 8.
[49] Cody, "Woman, Man, Dog, Tree: Two Decades of Intimate and Monumental Bodies in Pina Bausch's Tanztheater," 1998, 115–31.

Contemporary dance since the 1990s is often engaged with questions related to identity, gender, presence and representation, cultural differences and the relation between the dancing body and language. Examples are Felix Ruckert's performance *Hautnah* (performed between 1995-1999) where he deconstructs the performer-spectator relationship by disrupting the convention of their corporeally separated identity. *Hautnah* blurs the boundaries between the stage and the auditorium through intimate sensual encounters between participating individuals.[50] Or *Dispositif 3.1* (2001) by French choreographer Alain Buffard (1960-2013) where discrepancies and contradictions between a performative event and its surrounding discursive apparatus were highlighted.[51]

According to the editors of *Knowledge in Motion, Perspectives of Artistic and Scientific Research in Dance* (2007), dance in the early 21st century seems to have been given the task of positioning itself in relation to a "knowledge-based society."[52] This book was published as an extension of the 2006 Dance Congress held at the Haus der Kulturen der Welt in Berlin. Examples for dance practices that explicitly engage with the epistemological dimensions of dance are here gathered under the thematic umbrellas of "Artistic Research", "Body Knowledge and Body Memory", "Dance History and Reconstruction", "Reception and Participation", "Professional Education and Retraining in Dance" and "Dance Pedagogy and Cultural Work".[53]

Around 1990 and 2000, new types of dance emerged in Western Europe, characterized by an engaged combination of theory, discourse and dance. They were at that time often grouped under the vividly debated header of "conceptual dance." Prominent examples are Xavier Le Roy and Jérôme Bel. These conceptually oriented dance makers can also be subsumed under the header "non-dance", a movement in contemporary dance that originated around the 1990s in France.

"Non-dance" implies a transdisciplinary orientation where traditional movement vocabulary is discarded in favor of integrating vocabularies from other art forms.[54] Neither artists that

[50] Burt, "Resistant Identities: Anderson and Ruckert," 2007, 208-215.

[51] Marquié, "Dispositif Trouble. When What Is Said Is Not What Is Shown," 2007, 237.

[52] Klein, "Dance in a Knowledge Society," 2007, 27-28.

[53] Gehm, Husemann, and von Wilcke, *Knowledge in Motion. Perspectives of Artistic and Scientific Research in Dance*, 2007.

[54] See for example "Danse contemporaine – Pour une chorégraphie des regards. Un bouleversement des codes. 6 Danse ou Non-Danse: Par où la Danse?", Centre Pompidou, Internet Archive Wayback

were grouped under these terms nor theorists readily embraced these categorizations.[55] These new movements in dance art integrated the impact of experimental performance art on the contemporary art scene during the 1960s and 1970s and were informed by minimalist and conceptual movements in the visual arts. "Conceptual dance" was one of many possible names such as for example "physical theatre", "multimedia performance", "performance art", "body art", "live art" etc.[56]

Conceptually oriented forms of dance often reflect on how dance can be seen in terms of a "performativity of embodied thought." They can be characterized by an increased intellectual engagement with dance, philosophically, politically and experimentally. Central topics are for example the staging of presence, de- and reconstructing conventional ways of theatrical representation and thus critically reframing perception and attention. Experimenting with how the human body is presented on stage can make evident how the perception of the (dancing) human body is conditioned.[57]

Dance theoretician André Lepecki[58] proposes to avoid using the term 'conceptual dance' and to leave these developments nameless.[59] Not because he is critical of these developments (on the contrary, he embraced them wholeheartedly and wrote extensively about them)[60], but because he considered it essential to this heterogeneous movement to remain uncategorized. This choice might also be related to a complex polarization that the use of the term 'conceptual dance' ignited in the dance field. Many artists have rejected to be called 'conceptual' for varying reasons. For example, because the term would often wrongly imply that it abolishes dance as a corporeal practice and that conceptual dance would operate merely on the theoretical plane. Instead, the emphasis would lie on "the conceptualization of dance parameters" and the works are still seen as highly performative and physical.[61]

Machine, last modified 2004, accessed 3.6.2023, https://web.archive.org/web/20110126112022/http://www.centrepompidou.fr/education/ressources/ENS-spectacles-vivants/02-06.html

[55] Fabius, "The missing history of (not) conceptual dance," 2012, 3.

[56] Lepecki, "Concept and Presence. The Contemporary European Dance Scene," 2004, 171-172.

[57] Fabius, "The missing history of (not) conceptual dance," 6-11.

[58] André Lepecki is Associate Professor at the department of Performance Studies at the Tisch School of the Arts, New York.

[59] Lepecki (2004) quoted by Fabius, "The missing history of (not) conceptual dance," 3.

[60] Lepecki, *Exhausting Dance. Performance and the Politics of Movement*, 2006.

[61] Fabius, "The missing history of (not) conceptual dance," 2012, 2.

Lepecki describes this movement in dance art since the early 1990s in more general terms: it includes many choreographers with diverse and diverging training backgrounds, coming from different national and social contexts, with at times conflicting aesthetic orientations and political views. What they share is that they position dance in relation to the larger context of art and of society, dissolving the boundaries between disciplines and categories and including dialogue, thought and research as constitutive components of the labor of dance creation. Lepecki also analyzed these developments as a "radical recasting" of dance, as a departure from a theatrical paradigm (as exemplified by the *Tanztheater* of the 1980s) and as a "political move" towards a performance paradigm.[62]

Rather than labeling these new developments in dance, Lepecki shifts the focus to the ontology of dance by looking at the term 'choreography' (coined in the late seventeenth century by Raoul-Auger Feuillet) as a syncretic fusion of movement and writing. Bringing together the terms of movement and writing has in his view determined the creation and reception of dance performances during the last four hundred years. The relation between movement and writing continues to determine and frame performance practices and their theorizations, especially in relation to 'conceptual' and 'post-conceptual' performance art.[63]

Critics of explicitly intellectual approaches to dance creation argue that it should be enough to merely enjoy the human presence of the performers, that looking at dance is simply a way of experiencing love for movement and the joy of feeling alive.[64] Others argue that conceptual approaches to dance drift too much towards the realm of thought and the mental space, deviating from dance as an intrinsically bodily practice.[65] According to dance critic Pieter 't Jonck, conceptual dance became "a means to think about the relation between the imaginary, the spectator and the performer in a way that is highly critical towards the common construction of images of man and his body or even of society."[66]

I agree that the mere presence of a human body on stage can change our perception of the human being, when skillfully contextualized within a theatrical and discursive framework.

---

[62] Lepecki, "Concept and Presence. The Contemporary European Dance Scene," 2004, 171-172.
[63] Allsopp and Lepecki, "Editorial on Choreography," 2008, 1.
[64] Birringer, "Dance and Not Dance," 2005, 15.
[65] Fabius, "The missing history of (not) conceptual dance," 2012, 2.
[66] T'Jonck, "Dans en paranoïa. Aantekeningen bij Klapstuk #11 (en #10)," 2005, 50. Quoted in Fabius, "The missing history of (not) conceptual dance," 2012, 6.

I am also convinced that such an altered perception can be significant for contemporary society in many ways. The human body on stage is saturated with potential meaning even without much bodily motion or articulated movement vocabulary.

Rather than focusing on critically de- and recomposing already known modes or images of representing the human being in a theatrical setting, I am more interested in how a human body can speak through danced movement about a sense of self or being that is yet unknown. To speak through dance about a sense of belonging to a corporeality that exceeds the limits of the boundaries of my skin. I perceive this altered sense of self to be able to evolve relatively independently from socially constructed images or from political representations of the human being. I believe that dance is a possible pathway for such a sense of self or being to reveal itself. I am interested in how a human being/me can gain a deeper understanding about being human in relation to other beings and to the world through dance. In dance, I perceive my self as situated in between the metaphysical and the physical. I perceive my ***dancing body**** as an interface that participates with two worlds and draws them together through the medium of dance. My hypothesis is that this other sense of self is yet unconscious to a large degree and that the language of a *dancing body* can bring to the surface some of this yet unknown dimension of human beingness. Dance can imprint it into the space, to be eventually interpreted from different angles and perspectives.

One aspect of the creative tension between movement and writing that Lepecki identifies as having framed the evolution of dance creation and reception is reflected in this research in the ***dance language**** (non-verbal and verbal communication from the first-person perspective) and the discursive contextualization thereof with a ***dancing language****.

With the non-verbal dimension of my *dance language* I circumnavigate, question and reach towards the unspeakable through the movements of my body. I interrogate my *dancing body* about its understanding of natural forces, laws, relations and principles and I verbalize some aspects of this understanding. I am not (yet) consciously aware of many of them, but I intuit that my body knows more than I do. Hence, I speculatively frame the language of my *dancing body* as participating in a dialogical relation with the metaphysical and the physical, drawing both dimensions of being together in its experience of dance. In combination with the verbally discursive framing of this *dance language* in dialogue with other fields of discourse, I aim to expand a vision about human corporeality, about its unknown depths and the *altered states*

of knowing it may encounter in the danced experience. If we imagine a dance of the future, how might dances be danced and perceived after having gone through a conceptually reflexive stage? What could be a next step of dance's artistic evolution? What lies beyond the conceptualized body in motion? How does the conceptualization of the body in motion relate to the actual experience of a dancing body? Is the beyond of conceptual theorization of the dancing body something like a corporeal intellect? What is the corporeal intelligence of the body in danced motion, how does it know and what kind of information does it communicate?

I see the increasing cognitive reflexivity and theorization of dance as a necessary step in its further evolution as an art form. It is needed to emancipate dance from being categorized as archaic, visceral and fundamentally irrational art form to allow it to dialogue with other knowledge cultures and to create an ontology and epistemology of dance that can give argumentative authority to other than rational types of knowing embodied in dance. I see the key concepts ***spiritual corporeality****, ***altered states of knowing**** and ***embodied gnosis**** as a foundation for such an ontology and epistemology. I posit that yes, dance is irrational, but not only, and that in its irrationality lies a potential for *altered states of knowing* and perceiving the human body and its relation to other bodies, to the planet and to the cosmos.

Ideas about the nature of dance seen from the perspective of artistic practice vary according to artistic paradigms and to how different choreographers construct them. To give just three examples of how choreographers have reflected on the medium of dance:

> The dance is an object in space and time. The object of the dance is to obliterate that (Merce Cunningham in "Space, Time and Dance," 1952).[67]

> When do we call it dance? It does in fact have something to do with consciousness, with bodily consciousness, and the way we form things. But then it needn't have this kind of aesthetic form and still be dance (Pina Bausch in conversation with Jochen Schmidt, 1978).[68]

[67] Lepecki, "Introduction/ /Dance as Practice of Contemporaneity," 2012, 4.
[68] Lepecki, "Positioning Dance/Theorizing Movement," 2012, 56.

> Its most singular event is dance's capacity to demonstrate that the body is an open system of exchange, ready for all kinds of metamorphosis, revealing a forever unfinished and unfinishable self, and occasioning the event of becoming (Xavier le Roy in "Self-interview" 2000).[69]

André Lepecki distills five key qualities of dance as an aesthetic practice: ephemerality, corporeality, precariousness, scoring and performativity:

Ephemerality refers to the fact that dance does not leave a material object behind after the performance. It thereby opens pathways to conceive the "economies of objecthood in the arts" differently.

Corporeality is understood as dance being able to create variations on modalities of embodiment. The dancer's labor is here defined as "to embody, disembody and re-embody."[70] Dance for Lepecki redefines corporeality by creatively negotiating bodily subjectivity. His view on dance's precariousness is related to the play of forces with which it is naturally engaged and its subaltern position in the economy of the arts. Dance is seen as precarious because it performs the frailty and impermanence of the human condition. On a social level, dance's precariousness is also related to performing and embodying the increasingly vulnerable conditions of life that are threatened by the globalization of neoliberal financial capitalism.

Lepecki also highlights the political aspects of writing scores for dance or choreography. A dance score is a set of tasks or demands that are to be interpreted or fulfilled by the dancer. By performing a score or a choreography, dancers need to submit to the artistic directives of a choreographer. Lepecki critically questions the disciplinarian aspects and "imperative forces" that are implicit in how scores and choreographies are created. The political dimensions of scoring are addressed in terms of "disciplined bodies operating in a regime of obedience for the sake of bringing an art piece into the world." By reflecting on the relations between bodies in motion translated from the abstract space of the black box theatre or rehearsal space to the space of interaction of social forces in the art field and in society,

[69] André Lepecki, "Introduction/ /Dance as Practice of Contemporaneity," 2012, 22.
[70] Ibid, 15.

choreography is imbued with political dimensions and able to propose new forms of social relations.

Lepecki refers to performativity as an "always singular yet always dispersed (or semi-absent) source," insisting on being actualized by and through dance and thereby providing its continuity of presence. For Lepecki, it is the performative aspect of dance that can act as an affective-political force in the field of contemporary art.[71]

Very generally speaking, two major streams can be identified in contemporary Western theatre dance. On the one hand there is the neo-classical stream where classical ballet vocabulary remains the major point of reference for technical and expressive virtuosity. Discursive reflexivity on dance from within the practice so far has remained minimal here, although there are recent initiatives that invite a re-thinking of the position of classical and neo-classical ballet repertoire in relation to contemporary society.[72]

On the other hand, there are developments in contemporary choreography that intensively engage with intellectual and philosophical reflection.[73] Besides the themes mentioned above with reference to conceptually oriented dance, these practices often critically question the consequences of inscribing dance techniques into dancing bodies[74] and the "regimes of obedience"[75] that are associated with them. This critique is partially based on the rejection of the implicit power relations, disciplinarian authority, and a reduced space for freedom of interpretation that characterize classical and modern dance techniques.[76]

Since postmodern dance, dance has emancipated itself from representation and the narrative. Movement can be seen as an artistic medium that is self-sufficient and able to

[71] Ibid, 15-16.

[72] See for example Operaballet.nl, "Het Nationale Ballet: Succesful third edition of the work conference Positioning Ballet 7.3.2023,"accessed 3.6.2023, https://www.operaballet.nl/en/news/successful-third-edition-work-conference-positioning-ballet .

[73] This distinction is derived from Emio Greco and Pieter C. Scholten's positioning of the intuitive body in between the conceptual and the virtuoso body in the dance landscape during the 1990s. See also "The Intuitive Body," ICK Dans Amsterdam, accessed 3.6.2023, https://www.ickamsterdam.com/nl/academy/peers-onderzoekers/intuitive-body-11 .

[74] Bauer, "When Train(ing) Derails," 2009, 74-79.

[75] Lepecki, "Introduction/ /Dance as Practice of Contemporaneity," 15.

[76] Lepecki, "Choreopolice and Choreopolitics: or the task of the dancer," 2013, 13-27.

create its own time and space.[77] Dancers are not expected to pretend whatever it is that they are enacting in the dance. They are "real" persons who actively participate in choice making while being fully "absorbed in process".[78]

In my view, these developments have led to a rather scarce and hesitant engagement with the potential *meaning* of dance. Whereas for example the "identity of the work of art and its authorship" have been questioned and redefined in other art forms throughout the twentieth century, contemporary dance works still lack solid conceptual frames that could be challenged.[79] It has almost become a cliché that general audiences tend not to be able to understand dance, that they respond to it largely only on a visceral and affective level. Likewise, a common response from dance practitioners would be that there is nothing to understand, that movement can stand for itself and for nothing else.

Questions of meaning are addressed in those choreographic practices that invest in the development of conceptual and philosophical frameworks where dance engages with the relational on, for example, micro-political levels of sensation and affect.[80]

Another example of not evading the problem of meaning in contemporary choreographic practice are Emio Greco and Pieter C. Scholten for whom "creativity is incarnate in the body."[81] They are interested in the impulses that create movement and in establishing contact with the motivations behind them.[82] They speak of their choreographic practice in terms of a "language of the flesh":

> There is a certain narrative we call the language of the flesh that needs to be understood. That kind of material cannot be used to tell another story because it already contains a strong element that does not need to be articulated. Once we

[77] Emio Greco and Pieter C. Scholten in Magnini, *Inspriation. Emio Greco | Pieter C. Scholten. The Multiplicity of Dance,* 2015, 7.
[78] Gardner, "Notes on Choreography," 2008, 57.
[79] Louppe (1997) quoted by Gardner in ibid, 55.
[80] See for example SenseLab-3e, accessed 3.6.23, https://senselab.ca/wp2/ and Erin Manning, *The Minor Gesture*, 2016.
[81] Emio Greco and Pieter C. Scholten in Magnini, *Inspriation*, 7.
[82] Ibid*,* 28.

> understand this language, we can articulate the choreography without trying to [cover it up] with a narrative. [83]

A theme that has been introduced recently in conceptually oriented contemporary choreographic practice is the notion of "Expanded Choreography."[84] This term relates to exchanges between art disciplines, where choreographic thinking may be applied for example to curating strategies or as a visual arts methodology. The conceptualization of choreographic approaches allows choreographic ideas to live independently from dancing bodies and to migrate across disciplines. In principle this is indeed a renewal of what choreography and choreographic discourse is and can be. It contributes to an expansion of dance and choreography in the contemporary art circuit. Yet an increased emphasis on transferring choreographic and dance labor to the creation of concepts and to reflective work can also lead towards a decreasing availability and ability of dance artists to confront and to transform the physical resistance of the body in dance creation.

Dance: between the corporeal and the metaphysical

In the following, I will position my approach to dance in the context of the historical and contemporary dance landscape as roughly sketched above.

Most research in dance and choreography is performed in relation to the choreographic. In this research, choreography is not excluded, but the emphasis lies on dance in relation to the dancing body – i.e., to reconsider contemporary choreography from the bottom up: from the *dancing body* and with an explicit focus on dance's corporeality and its many ways of speaking and knowing.[85]

---

[83] Ibid, 16.

[84] See for example "Expanded Choreography MACBA Museu d'Art Contemporani de Barcelona-March 2012," e-flux.com, accessed 30.4.23, https://www.e-flux.com/announcements/34425/expanded-choreography/ .

[85] This positioning is aligned with the choreographic vision of Emio Greco and Pieter C. Scholten about "the intuitive body" (situated between the conceptual and the virtuosic body) as the protagonist of dance creation and as a vehicle to rediscover its own meaning. In this work I explore this vision and extend it through my *dancing body* into areas of knowledge, practice and discourse that my intuitive body is guiding me towards. See for example "The Intuitive Body", ickamsterdam.com, accessed 16.9.23, https://www.ickamsterdam.com/en/academy/peers-researchers/intuitive-body-11 .

According to one of the most influential contemporary choreographers William Forsythe, dance and choreography are distinct practices. In his view, when they coincide, choreography "serves as a channel for the desire to dance."[86] With his idea of the choreographic as an "ecology of idea-logics" that "do not insist on a single path to form-of-thought and persist in the hope of being without enduring", he inquires into the possibility of "choreographic objects", expressions of choreographic thought that are autonomous and that can exist independently from the body.[87] With this proposition, Forsythe counters the assumption that the substance of choreographic thought resides exclusively in the body.
In my view, the concept of "choreographic objects" exemplifies how the conceptualization of the choreographic allows it to become disembodied.[88]

For Forsythe:

> Choreography is a curious and deceptive term. The word itself, like the processes it describes, is elusive, agile, and maddeningly unmanageable.
> To reduce choreography to a single definition is not to understand the most crucial of its mechanisms: to resist and reform previous conceptions of its definition.[89]

Although I agree that defining choreography goes against its nature, I briefly trace here a general outline of the choreographic for the sake of clarity about what this research is *not* focusing on. In simple terms, I would describe choreography as a deliberate scoring and manipulation of movement materials, ideas, principles, energies and forces in time and space.

This dissertation project brings together a *dance language* and its theoretical/discursive contextualization through a *dancing language* in body and words as if it were a choreography. This also includes for example the dialogue with supervisors and the context and "score" of a

[86] Forsythe, "William Forsythe Choreographic Objects," williamforsythe.com, accessed 30.4.2023, https://www.williamforsythe.com/essay.html. See also Neri and Respini, *William Forsythe. Choreographic Objects*, 2018.
[87] Ibid.
[88] "William Forsythe Choreographic Objects, Solo –Exhibitions," williamforsythe.com, accessed 30.4.2023. Date unknown. https://www.williamforsythe.com/exhibitions.html .
[89] "William Forsythe Choreographic Objects," accessed 30.4.2023, https://www.williamforsythe.com/essay.html

promotional trajectory. Yet my investigation rather builds up its lines of thought and corporeal motion from the perspective of the experience of a contemporary dancing body by the dancer (me).[90] To reiterate what I stated in the introduction: I seek a better understanding of the ways a dancing body can know about and communicate possible relations between the metaphysical and the physical. The *dancing language* of this written text embodies this quest by interweaving corporeal with written discourse to deliver potentialities of knowing, and eventually also potentialities of meaning. My focus thus lies specifically on the corporeality of a dancing body and its ways of knowing, being and communicating.

This research unfolds around ontological questions about the nature of corporeality, the possibility of a corporeal epistemology and the language of a *dancing body*, more so than on questions related to the art and craft of choreographic composition. I depart from my own body which becomes here also a research laboratory and a vehicle for communication.

I experience my dancing body as a ***psychophysical resonating space**** where the subtle materiality of the psyche (or the soul, mind, consciousness, spirit – the choice of terminology depends on whether the inner being of the human being is seen from secular scientific, psychological or religious and esoteric point of view) is in intimate and dynamic touch with the dense materiality of the physical body and its surrounding space. As an artistic criterion, I posit that the quality of connection between the psyche (or soul), the body and its surrounding space is reflected in the movement qualities of the dance, while I am not yet fully conscious of the significance of this connection. This self-diagnosis is one of the main motivations driving this investigation. I identify the psyche (or soul, or inner being) as the realm of inner experience that lives in and is in dialogue with the body and the forces that traverse it from inside and outside. With *psychophysical resonating space* I refer on a micro psychobiological scale to the individualized entity of a dancing human being. With the term mind (or consciousness or spirit) I refer to what may reach beyond the individualized psychophysical entity of the human being towards the transcendental and metaphysical

[90] The experience of a (my) contemporary dancing body is situated as a particular and subjective experience of articulating movements of dance through a lived dialogue with the mobility and resistance of the materiality of a specific (my) human body. With the notion of ***embodied gnosis**** I am exploring a spiritual-corporeal mode of experience that enlarges subjective perception towards being an integral part of a supra-sensorially intuited and infinitely larger body beyond the individual human body. For an overview of different "modes of experience" from the perspective of social and cultural theory including classical, objective, subjective, technological and aesthetic experience see Lash, *Experience*, 2018, 1-13.

realm on a macro cosmological scale. I experience the *dancing body* as igniting a process of transformation whereby conscious and unconscious relations of the human being with his or her body, soul, spirit, the earth and the cosmos are engaged in a poetic dialogue of mutual illumination. I position the dancing body as grounded in the concrete corporeality of the body in motion, yet always also moving in relation to the metaphysical by its intrinsic relation to space, time, mind and being.

Dance, as I see it, lives through a body in the duration of a present moment and brings it in relation with tangibly physical (dense) as well as intangibly metaphysical (subtle) aspects of being. Dance does not only live in the body of the dancer(s). The spectators of the dance also participate in it. When the dancer experiences a dancing body, the spectator also experiences a dancing body. The spectator can get a glimpse of the inside of the *dancing body* if the dancer tries to communicate it, through dance or through other means, such as spoken or written text for example. The inner being of the spectator can be touched and moved by the movements that come from the inner being of the dancer, and vice versa.

This research focuses primarily on the inner perspective of the dancer as the main territory for investigation. Everything that is written here as well as in the *spatial-corporeal text* of the dance in the performance SEI comes from my inner being but is brought outwards to reach others as well. By better understanding this inner perspective myself and by finding ways to communicate it through the body and through words, the spectator/reader of this text can participate in what moves my inner being. In this way the spectators' experience of the *dancing body* can be more informed and more layered, so that we can make sense out of it together. Possible meanings of the communication of this text and of the text of the *dancing body* will emerge between the dancer, the dance, the written text, the musical composition, the spectators of the dance and the readers of this text. To elaborate more extensively on these relations would require another dissertation and will not be included here.[91]

The experience of a multiplicity of dimensions of being as perceived through the inner experience of dance happens through a complex intertwinement between the materiality of the body, the psyche and other invisible forces. These forces traverse the body from the inside as well as from the outside. Forces that participate in the dance and that belong to different

[91] Some thoughts about these relations will also be discussed in chapter six: dance, music and dance language in SEI.

categories of being are for example gravity, which is directly perceivable with the physical body, and will and affect, which are invisible forces that cause movement from within the psyche (or soul). In the at times numinous[92] encounter between the psyche, the materiality of the dancing body and the spaces in which it moves, the question rises: what is happening there?

The metaphysical does not necessarily need to be consciously dealt with in dance. Some kind of intuitive convergence between mental, affective, sensorial and corporeal movements leads to the creation of dance. A sometimes also necessarily unconscious intertwinement of forces informs to a large extent intuitive choice making in improvisation as well as in the writing of choreographic scores.

Whether the intertwinement between mental, affective, sensorial and corporeal movement in dance is taken to be a strictly psycho-physiological phenomenon without any metaphysical, or spiritual cause or relation is of course relative to the worldview within which a dance is embedded. This is also relative to what a dance intends to enact.

With this research I am relating yet unconscious factors that inform choice making in dance creation to a hypothetical intrinsic relation between the physical corporeality of a dancing human being and the metaphysical realm. By unfolding different perspectives on the ontological, epistemological and discursive potentials of the corporeality of a contemporary dancing body, I contribute to the burgeoning discourse on dance and spirituality from the perspective of a contemporary artistic practice with an explicit emphasis on questioning its intuited metaphysical and spiritual dimensions. My approach to the subject matter through *languaging* dance differs from somatic approaches to dance where the first-person subjective perception of corporeal sensations is foregrounded. Although there are evident overlaps with somatic practices by giving attention to the language and states of knowing of the *dancing body,* my explorations emphasize the suprasensory, trans-personal and epistemological dimensions of danced experience. Another addition to the already existing academically situated discourse on dance and spirituality (as far as I can overview its main contours) is, that

[92] The term “numinous” refers to an experience of something mysterious, supernatural, and holy. A numinous experience may also be related to an aesthetic sense or force of appeal. “Numinous,” *Merriam- Webster online Dictionary*, https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/numinous, accessed 20.1.19. See also Otto, *The Idea of the Holy*, Oxford University Press, 1936.

my take on it is developed through an artistic research perspective without therapeutical ambitions or connotations which are often referred to in this context. That the practice I am developing might have therapeutical consequences is not excluded but it is not its primary aim.[93]

To recapitulate briefly: I described spirituality as a human practice that seeks to establish and maintain contact between the everyday world and an intuitable, but neither verifiable nor falsifiable, meta-empirical source of meaning.[94] I stated in the introduction that I use the term *spiritual corporeality* in dance in a sense whereby attuning intentional orientations to a specific quality and texture of corporeal consciousness is experienced as a practice of maintaining contact between the everyday world and a psychophysically intuited metaphysical source of being, life and meaning.[95]

Dance covers an extensive scale of being in time from mind (or spirit) to matter and from matter to mind. By inquiring into the relation between the metaphysical and the physical as I experience it from the perspective of my dancing body, my approach to dance is on the one hand a fundamental, curiosity driven research into a vertical self-understanding of a/my dancing body (body-planet-cosmos). On the other hand, how my dancing body communicates its inner experience of relations between the metaphysical and the corporeal and how this communication is received and interpreted is aligned on a horizontal vector (you and I). One vector does not exclude the other, but both enrich and need each other. How the dynamic

[93] Leading scholar in forwarding peer-reviewed academic scholarship on dance, spirituality and somatic practices is Dr. Amanda Williamson. Williamson is Honorary Professor at the Centre for Dance Research at Coventry University, director of the Center for Embodiment & Bio-somatic Dance Movement Naturotherapy and founding editor of the peer-reviewed academic journal *Journal Dance, Movement and Spiritualities (published since 2014).* See *Dance, Movement & Spiritualities (Journal),* intellectbooks.com, accessed 30.4.2023, https://www.intellectbooks.com/dance-movement-spiritualities.
In contrast to therapeutic approaches often elaborated in this context, my take on the subject matter is developed specifically through the lens of an artistic research perspective without therapeutical ambitions or connotations.

[94] This understanding of spirituality is partially based on a definition by Wouter J. Hanegraaff: "I would define as a specific spirituality: 'any human practice which maintains contact between the everyday world and a more general meta-empirical framework of meaning by way of the individual manipulation of symbolic systems'." In Hanegraaff, "The Dreams of Theology and the Realities of Christianity," 2003, 719.

[95] See Chapter five: Attuning.

movements between both vectors unfolds through verbal and corporeal discourse eventually determines the aesthetic outcome of the *dancing language* in body and words.

Diving deep and reaching high: underneath and beyond the rational

That the kinds of knowing that dance can generate for dancers and the observing participants differ from rational and intellectual knowledge is variably shared among dance practitioners. Dance knowledge has also been classified as "the Other of mainstream intellectual academic culture" or as a "negation of modern knowledge[96]". While concerns about the epistemological dimensions of dance are still quite scarce in the professional landscape of contemporary dance, dance as a culture of knowledge with specific characteristics is already firmly established in academic scholarship on dance. To bridge the gap between academic scholarship on dance and the professional landscape of contemporary dance is also one of the targets of this research. Specifics of the knowledge of dance have been identified as for example "articulated in movement and performed in the body" and as implicit knowledge to be discovered in a corporeally stored archive. The knowledge of dance is generally seen as "materialized in the body" and contextualized in various aesthetic and social practices. These practices are often combined with language and image-based explications (through for example dance notation) which can generate precise and historicizing body and movement-based epistemologies.[97]

With my *dancing language* I intend to facilitate a specific understanding of dance as able to generate *altered states of knowing* and thus also as able to generate different kinds of epistemologies that navigate a tension field between what is implicitly unspeakable and its (partial) explication in words.

Based on many exchanges with dance colleagues I believe that the concept of *altered states of knowing* might resonate with other dance practices as well.

For the evolution of the kinds of knowing that are embodied in dance and to emancipate them to be able to dialogue with contemporary knowledge discourses, processes of rationalization are needed. In my view, the knowledge categories that have been proposed so far in relation

[96] Klein, "Dance in a Knowledge Society," 2007, 29.

[97] Quoted, transcribed and translated from German from Böhme and Huschka, *Wissenskultur Tanz,* 2009, 9-10.

to dance and the choreographic (such as for example tacit knowledge, know-how, authentic knowledge, procedural knowledge, declarative knowledge etc.[98]) do not yet sufficiently cover nuances and specificities of the artistic experience of dance and the subliminal[99] sense of (not) knowing it can convey to the dancers. The lack of explicit articulation of knowledge from the inside of the danced experience has also to do with a lack of vocabularies and language development from within dance practices. There are, though, growing efforts to give attention to vocabularies that are specific to contemporary practices of dance and choreography[100]. These vocabularies articulated from the inside perspective of embodied artistic experience can eventually support the development of heterogeneous dance and choreographic epistemologies. But there remains a lot of work to be done in that direction. The accompanying *Glossary* to this dissertation can be seen as one example for a body of terminologies born from the inside perspective of a dance experience yet transformed through a dialogue between dance experience and academic scholarship.

In response to a shared concern among dance professionals that many aspects of dance and performance remain not yet understood, dance scholar Scott deLahunta[101] brings questions and working paradigms from various choreographers and their creative processes in conjunction with other knowledge domains. Exchanges with other knowledge domains are often oriented towards finding new perspectives on understanding the yet unnamed or uncategorized aspects of dance and rely according to deLahunta to a large extent on the use of language to "describe, explain, clarify and probe the experience of dance creation."[102] The

[98] See for example McKechnie and Stevens, "Knowledge unspoken: Contemporary dance and the cycle of practice-led research, basic and applied research, and research-led practice," *Practice-led Research, Research-led Practice in the Creative Arts*, 2009, 84-103 and Nelson, "Practice-as-research and the Problem of Knowledge," 2006, 105-116.

[99] "Subliminal", *Merriam-Webster online Dictionary*, accessed 3.6.2022, https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/subliminal . "1. Inadequate to produce a sensation or a perception", 2. Existing or functioning below the threshold of consciousness."

[100] See for example De Lahunta, "Language-in-Use: Practical Dance Vocabularies and Knowing," 2020, 259 -281, and ICK Amsterdam Academy, "Annotation and Documentation." Accessed 3.6.23. https://www.ickamsterdam.com/en/academy/peers-researchers/annotation-and-documentation-47 .

[101] Scott deLahunta is Professor of Dance at the Centre for Dance Research Coventry University and Co-director of Motion Bank (http://motionbank.org/).

[102] De Lahunta, "Language-in-Use: Practical Dance Vocabularies and Knowing," 2020, 259.

lines of inquiry that deLahunta has contributed to so far can be loosely clustered around the fields of cognitive science, digital technologies and anthropology.

DeLahunta explains that academic dance studies are faced with the insisting friction between conceptualizing dance as a form of writing and conceptualizing dance as "beyond the grasp of all language, especially written language."[103] My search for a *dancing language* that interweaves corporeal with verbal discourse to communicate and to investigate new perspectives on the relationship between the physical and the metaphysical is also situated in that tension field.

Dance knowledge has been scrutinized in academic contexts also from the perspectives of for example phenomenology[104], the social sciences,[105] aesthetics[106] and philosophy.[107] Key themes are often related to politics, gender, identity and performativity.[108]

The orientation of this investigation though is towards the spiritual, metaphysical, mystical or esoteric dimensions of danced experience, which is so far still a rather unexplored territory in academic dance studies. That there is a relation at all can be intuitively glimpsed - subjectively speaking - at rare moments, during experiences that hinge towards the numinous and that may occur during intensified or altered states of consciousness in dance. Yet it remains extremely challenging to find appropriate ways to bring these experiences into the realm of discursive rationality without flattening or banalizing them. To be able to gain a more solid contextual and epistemological foundation for these intuitive glimpses, I propose here to enter in dialogue with other disciplines where the relation between the metaphysical, the spiritual and the corporeal has been questioned thoroughly such as in the context of religious studies and more specifically in the academic study of (Western) esotericism[109] (see chapter

[103] Ibid, 261.

[104] See for example Sheets-Johnstone, *The Phenomenology of Dance*, 1979; Legrand, Grünbaum and Krueger, "Dimensions of Bodily Subjectivity," 2009, 279–83; Ness, "Foucault's Turn From Phenomenology: Implications for Dance Studies," 2011, 19-32.

[105] See for example Klein, "Dance in a Knowledge Society," 2007, 25 -36.

[106] See for example Denana, *Zur Ästhetik des Tanzes*, 2014.

[107] See for example Bunker, Pakes and Rowell, *Thinking through Dance*, 2013.

[108] See for example Franco and Nordera, *Dance Discourses. Keywords in dance research*, 2007, v-vii.

[109] Whether the "Western" in Western esotericism should be dropped or not is a topic of ongoing debate among contemporary scholars in esotericism but is for the time being not relevant to this

two). Although many contemporary dance practitioners develop their own rituals and ideas about spirituality in and through dance, these ideas mostly remain implicit within their art practice. They therefore also remain largely unexamined from academic points of view. This also may be due to a lack of an adequate language that allows dancers to verbally express the relations between dance, metaphysics and spirituality in a way that lives up to their actual experiences. It may also be related to a resistance towards reducing or pinning down continuously morphing experiential phenomena by squeezing them into pre-defined theoretical or conceptual categories through processes of verbalization. Implicitly embodied ideas about spirituality in dance can be very intimate and therefore vulnerable to misinterpretation or banalization.

Spiritually ignited: the beginnings of modern dance

A spiritualized idea about the space of danced embodiment is not new in dance history. Religion and dance have been affiliated with each other since the beginnings of the history of human beings. Dancer, philosopher, scholar of religion and farmer Kimerer La Mothe, goes so far as to state that there is a need to overcome "a conceptual dichotomy between 'religion' and 'dance'" by generating "conceptual resources able to acknowledge the agential presence of dance in religions ringing the world."[110] She proposes to see the movements of religion throughout time and space as a kind of dance, emphasizing the vitalizing qualities of dance and the need to see the rhythmic exchanges between dance and religion throughout time as constitutive of each other.[111]

research. For an impression about some of the main theoretical and methodological concerns see for example Pasi, "Oriental Kabbalah and the Parting of East and West in the Early Theosophical Society," 2010, 151-166; Hanegraaff, "The Globalization of Esotericism," 2015, 55-91; Asprem, "Beyond the West: Towards a New Comparativism in the Study of Esotericism," 2014, 3-33; Irvin, "Western Esotericism, Eastern Spirituality, and the Global Future," 2001, 1-47.

[110] LaMothe, "A History of Theory and Method in the Study of Religion and Dance, Past, Present, Future," 2018, 2.

[111] Ibid, 106. To exemplify her point of view: "… embraced by numerous Indigenous cultures, attested by early scholars of religion and dance, and now supported by recent discoveries in evolutionary biology, neuroscience and developmental psychology: human beings are animals who dance. Dancing is an initial form – the generative ground - of human culture, including and especially of religion." Ibid, 5.

Also the birth of modern dance in the early 20th century appears to have been ignited by spiritual impulses that are evident in the writings of modern dance pioneers such as Ruth St. Denis, Isadora Duncan and Martha Graham. Each of them wrote about the transformative experiences that dance engendered in them and included vocabularies, themes, storylines and symbols from religious discourse into their writings about the art of dance.[112] Rudolf Laban for example developed a spiritualized conception of space in his approach to dance, which was partially informed by integrating esoteric forms of thought into his dance philosophy and practice. A conscious relation with the spiritual origins of modern dance has often faded in the memories of contemporary dancers and choreographers who practice modern dance techniques or reference modern movement vocabularies in choreographic works. Modern dance techniques as they are being taught today in vocational art education, often do not explicitly include their spiritual dimensions or origins due to the secularized environment where these dance forms are being taught. Yet, many contemporary dancers or choreographers are inclined towards spirituality, so far mostly in corporeally implicit rather than in verbally explicit ways.

[112] LaMothe, "Transformation: An ecokinetic approach to the study of ritual dance," 2014, 60.

CHAPTER 2

Invitation to Join the Dance:

bringing together dance theory and academic scholarship on esotericism

In this chapter I invite the academic study of Western esotericism to (metaphorically speaking) join the dance. I will elaborate on how the three key-concepts ***spiritual corporeality****, ***altered states of knowing**** and ***embodied gnosis**** are related to intersecting this research in and through dance with the academic study of esotericism.

In my approach to ***dance language**** I approximate a performative state of *embodied gnosis* through (among others) a process of blending inner movements of knowing, believing and imagining. To contextualize this experience, I will briefly introduce how the dynamic triangle between reason, faith and gnosis has been questioned in studies on esotericism as mutually interpenetrating foundations for worldviews.[113] I conclude this chapter with conceptually framing my *dance language* in dialogue with esoteric forms of thought and related body-based practices.

Invitation to dance: Western esotericism

The historical and conceptual foundations of Western esotericism as a field of research can be traced back to the re-emergence of Platonic Orientalism[114] during the Renaissance. Platonic Orientalism considers Plato's philosophy as an expression of supreme spiritual wisdom rooted in ancient Oriental pagan cultures. Its representative thinkers (middle and Neo-Platonists) emphasize the radical religiosity of Plato's thought, where abstract philosophical thinking is left behind in favor of *gnosis* and with the aim of achieving salvation

[113] I propose an open analogy between knowing and believing as non-verbal performative states and reason and faith. Imagining as a performative state can in my view only approximate an analogy with gnosis when imagination is understood as an epistemic faculty. Hence, I work with the concept of the *imaginal* which is not understood as imaginary in the sense of fiction but as ***real**** understood as relating to a place of being that is suspended between the sensorial and the intelligible. See below p. 69-71.

[114] The term "Platonic Orientalism" was coined in 2001 by John Walbridge, specialist on Oriental theosopher and mystic Shihāb al-Din ibn Habash al-Suhrawardī (1154-1191). Suhrawardī had re-ignited the theosophical wisdom of ancient Persia in the context of Islam. For a critical edition of Suhrawardī's thought, see Walbridge and Ziai, *Suhrawardī. The Philosophy of Illumination*, 1999. For an impression on Suhrawardī's work in relation to the larger context of a lineage of Oriental Theosophy ranging from 1191-1896 see Corbin, *Spiritual Body and Celestial Earth*, 1989 [1977], 110.

(*soteria*) and spiritual enlightenment.[115] The originators of the religious cultures that were assumed to be the source of Plato's wisdom have been speculatively identified with the Persian Zoroaster, the Egyptian Hermes Trismegistus, or the Hebrew Moses throughout the ages. During the Renaissance, Roman Catholic theology, medieval scriptural Jewish hermeneutics and philosophies from late Antiquity had merged into a stream of thought, based on Christian foundations. Elements such as astrology, alchemy and natural magic had entered this stream by the translation of Islamic scholarly materials during the Middle Ages. From the 16th century onwards, these elements were synthesized into worldviews based on Platonic philosophy, which today are addressed with the terms "Hermeticism" and "occult philosophy." Everything that today is gathered under the disciplinary umbrella of Western esotericism can be historically and conceptually re-traceable to these cultural contexts.[116]

One of the recurring themes in contemporary discourse on dance is the question of how the specific kind of knowledge of dance can be positioned in relation to a society that is strongly focused on knowledge production. A question that often rises in this context is also whether it should be labeled as epistemological. With its dynamic nature, its implicitness, sensuality, affect, dynamic physicality and ephemerality, conveyed through kinetic and kinesthetic empathy and imagination, the knowledge of dance is contrasted with discursive, rational and technical forms of knowledge.[117] It is often understood as a non-classifiable transient knowledge, more related to modalities of experience than to categories of cognition.[118]
Dance as a bodily medium has often been classified as "the other" in relation to theories on modern art. The knowledge of dance is often referred to as another type of knowledge. This implies an idea of what a proper or common kind of knowledge should be, which is usually considered to be equivalent to the modernist rationalistic knowledge paradigm.[119] Seen from the perspective of a rationalistic knowledge paradigm, the knowledge of dance can only be understood as a "negation of modern knowledge".

---

[115] Hanegraaff, *Esotericism and the Academy. Rejected Knowledge in Western Culture* 2012, 12, footnote 20.
[116] Hanegraaff, "Teaching Experiential Dimensions of Western Esotericism," 2011, 154-155.
[117] Brandstetter, "Dance as a Culture of Knowledge," 2007, 40.
[118] Klein, "Dance in a Knowledge Society," 2007, 29.
[119] Ibid, 28.

Yet the dance discourse that has emerged from conceptually oriented dance practice does embrace rational, objective, empirical and intellectual modes of thinking, speaking and writing about dance.

Situated rather in the corporeal discursive than in the verbal discursive realm, and speaking from a perspective of cultural critique, dance knowledge has often been described as an authentic kind of knowledge that needs to be uncovered from underneath the traces inscribed into the body by modern civilization. Authentic knowledge and the idea of dance knowledge as direct, physical, practical, transient and non-classifiable knowledge tends to generate a mythologized idea of dance. This may have contributed to its marginalization as "the other", separated from the worldly concerns of society or simply as culturally irrelevant.[120]

In tracing the history of how scholars and intellectuals have imagined the domain of "esotericism, hermeticism, the occult, magic, mysticism, superstition, the irrational," leading scholar in Western esotericism Wouter J. Hanegraaff states that "this domain has always been considered the domain of *the Other*" and has been rejected from mainstream intellectual academic culture that had enforced its sense of identity by negating the "identity's reverse image."

Hanegraaff writes about the domain of Western esotericism as "*the Other"*:

> It has been imagined as a strange country, whose inhabitants think differently from us and live by different laws: whether one felt that it should be conquered and civilized, avoided and ignored, or emulated as a source of inspiration, it has always presented a challenge to our very identity, for better or worse. We seldom realize it, but in trying to explain who 'we' are and what we stand for, we have been at pains to point out that we are not like *them*. In fact, we still do. […] Our perceptions of 'esotericism' or 'the occult' are inextricably entwined with how we think about ourselves: although we are almost never conscious of the fact, our very identity as

[120] Ibid, 29.

> intellectuals or academics depends on an implicit rejection of that identity's reverse mirror image.[121]

In one of his "Seven Epistemological Theses on Esotericism,"[122] Andreas Kilcher[123] writes that esotericism explores knowledge up to its mythological (and literary) boundaries. The orientation of esotericism towards primordial forms of knowledge that have been continuously reconstituted in varying forms throughout history, may be linked here with performativity according to Lepecki: an "always singular yet always dispersed (or semi-absent) source," that insists on being actualized by and through dance. Something very ancient yet always new keeps on pressing itself towards expression through dance. But the ways we may speak about this source and understand it are evolving. To speak about the knowledge related to experiencing this source in dance in terms of a mythological kind of knowledge affiliates it with ancient human history.

According to LaMothe, who sees dance as the "generative ground of human culture, including and especially of religion", there is growing evidence that it was through the act of dancing that primate mammals evolved into proto humans with human traits such as "big brains, empathic hearts, a proclivity for religion, a penchant for cooperating, and ecological adaptability". La Mothe highlights the unique capacity of human beings to "notice, invent, recreate, practice, teach, and become complex patterns of bodily movement. *Human beings are rhythms of bodily becoming*". She pushes this line of thought even further by stating that "the case may be made that primates did not evolve into humans who chose to dance; but rather that the primates who danced were the ones who became *human*"[124].

"Rhythms of bodily becoming" can be experienced through dance in their most primal manifestations as oscillations of energy that travel through the body and bring it into motion. Being receptive to these rhythms of becoming that always and forever can only be experienced in the present moment of unfolding time, might as well be a major foundation

---

[121] Hanegraaff, *Esotericism and the Academy*, 2012, 3.

[122] Kilcher, "Seven Epistemological Theses," 2009, 147.

[123] Andreas Kilcher is the head of the MA History and Philosophy of Knowledge at the ETH Zürich. His research areas are the history of German-Jewish Literature and Culture, Literary and Cultural Studies, Kabbalah and Esoteric Studies.

[124] LaMothe, "A History of Theory and Method in the Study of Religion and Dance," 2018, 5-6.

for the kind of knowing dance can convey to the dancer. But this force or source is very raw, there are no words, symbols or images that travel along with the waves of energy that pass through the human body through movement, at least not in my experience. So how can this primary, ancient yet always new and renewed source of life tell us about what the human body and the human being has the potential to become? How can we speak about it? What kind of knowing are we talking about? Where is natural evolution driving us, through our bodies? Might we be able to unlock some potentialities for knowing about the future of the human being through dancing?

Altered states of knowing - spiritual corporeality - embodied gnosis

In the following I will explain how the three key concepts reflect a convergence between this research in and through dance and the academic study of esotericism.

Gnosis, a Greek word that stands for "intuitive knowledge of God and of one's own self"[125], plays a key role in Western esotericism. Wouter J. Hanegraaff investigated gnosis from the perspective of altered states of consciousness (ASC). Charles Tart, one of the founding fathers of transpersonal psychology[126], introduced ASC into academic discourse. It first came into being in the context of LSD research in the 1960's and has been mainly associated with the use of psychoactive substances, but other types of altered states of consciousness such as meditation, hypnosis and dream consciousness have been also included into its referential scope.[127] Hanegraaff integrated ASC as a conceptual framework for the interpretation of historical sources that belong to the domain of Western esotericism.

[125] Hanegraaff, "Open Access to the Absolute: some remarks on the concept of religion," 2015, 101.
[126] The theoretical foundations for transpersonal psychology are commonly understood to be laid by William James and Carl Gustav Jung. A leading figure in 21st century transpersonal psychology is Stanislav Grof. Transpersonal psychology emerged in the 1960s and focuses on experiences that reach beyond a common sense understanding of self towards processes of spiritual transformation induced by for example mystical experiences, experiences of self transcendence, cosmic self-humor, maximized sense awareness, psychedelic substances etc. Transpersonal psychology interprets these experiences as hinting towards other layers of reality that cannot be accommodated within an exclusively materialistically oriented scientific paradigm. Beauregard, Trent and Schwartz, "Toward a postmaterialist psychology: Theory, research and applications," 2018, 23. For an overview on transpersonal psychology at the beginning of this century see Tart, "Current Status of Transpersonal Psychology," 2006, 83-37.
[127] Hanegraaff, "Reason, Faith, and Gnosis," 2008, 141. Footnote 2.

Taking "the authors seriously on their own terms," Hanegraaff explains one of the reasons for using the ASC as an interpretative lens: "… the authors were faced with the delicate paradox of using discursive language for describing experiences that are typically said to resist verbalization …".[128]

Dancers and choreographers, who work on a visceral, affective, reflective but non-verbal level, share the paradoxical problem of resistance to verbalization while at the same time demonstrating a compelling thrust towards finding appropriate forms of discursivity for the unspeakable as experienced in dance.[129] Lepecki describes this paradox as a "desire to language"[130], springing forth from experiences that usually evade verbalization. What causes this "desire to language" to spring forth from what appears to be unspeakable in dance is subject to speculation. From my experience, I would suggest that it is the depth, intensity and felt significance that dance can generate which triggers a "desire to language". To find a language for deeply meaningful but difficult to grasp experiences can help a dancer to better understand what is happening. It allows these experiences to be shared with the world.

Deviating briefly to the ancient origins of dance in Greek culture, it may be interesting to note that Lucian of Samosata (c. 125 – after 180 AD) - in whose texts the word "esoteric" appears for the first time with reference to exoteric and esoteric groups of Pythagorean students - writes about dance:

> … I forbear to say that not a single ancient mystery-cult can be found that is without dancing, since they were established, of course, by Orpheus and Musaeus, the best dancers of that time, who included it in their prescriptions as something exceptionally beautiful to be initiated with rhythm and dancing. To prove that this is so, although it behooves me to observe silence about the rites on account of the uninitiated, nevertheless there is one thing that everybody has heard; namely, that

[128] Hanegraaff," Teaching Experiential Dimensions of Western Esotericism," 2011, 159.

[129] Lepecki, "Introduction/ /Dance as Practice of Contemporaneity," 2012, 14.

[130] Quoting André Lepecki in his lecture "In the dark" at Studium Generale & Uncut Rietveld Academie. Are You Alive Or Not? Looking at ART through the lens of THEATRE, at theatre De Brakke Grond, Amsterdam, 20.04.2015.

> those who let out the mysteries in conversation are commonly said to 'dance them out' …[131]

In his article "Altered States of Knowledge: The Attainment of Gnōsis in the Hermetica,"[132] Hanegraaff shifts the interpretative perspective on the philosophical Hermetica from its Greek and philosophical dimensions to its Egyptian and religious dimensions. As these texts are based on "ineffable revelatory and salvational insights," he assumes that they were received during extraordinary, ecstatic states of being. Rather than interpreting these texts as literary fiction, Hanegraaff interprets them from the perspective of a "hierarchy of 'levels of knowledge'," in which *gnosis* is seen as the highest attainable level. These altered states of consciousness are understood as "'trans-rational' stages of direct experiential knowledge."[133] He further specifies gnosis as "'knowledge' of divine things … attained not by means of reasoning, the senses, or revealed scriptures, but only by gaining direct, experiential access to the higher spiritual realities themselves."[134]

Comparable to Hanegraaff's shift from a Greek to an Egyptian context, I propose to shift the conceptual and intellectual mode of reading and writing the text of a *dancing body,* to probing into its trans-rational and sacred dimensions. The notion of "trans-rational stages of direct experiential knowledge" could become a useful conceptual tool to shift the verbal and corporeal discourse of dance towards that direction.

In my view, *altered states of knowing* as experienced through dance hint towards a quality of consciousness which might be able to inform us differently than through disembodied rational intellection about what the human being is or might become.

Based on very rare, but recurring numinous experiences in dance, I posit that the *dancing body* can convey a sense of proximity with its creative source. The notion of "creative source" carries here at least two connotations: the origin of one's own being and the source of creativity in danced motion (or any kind of other creative activity). The body in danced motion can carry a dancer towards an intensive encounter with an awe-inspiring life force that

[131] Lucian, "The Dance," 1936/1955, 229.
[132] Hanegraaff, "Altered States of Knowledge," 2008, 128-163.
[133] Ibid, 128.
[134] Hanegraaff, "Teaching Experiential Dimensions of Western Esotericism," 2011, 158.

appears to be both immanent to the body yet simultaneously transcends it. This experience of bodily proximity with an existential ground of being and meaning may engender a sense of something ***real****, of a non-rational but rather spiritual-corporeal modality of knowing of being. Drawing together a non-verbal (ontological) experience of *spiritual corporeality* and the epistemic transformation it ignites through *altered states of knowing*, culminates in a psychophysical state shift which is here tentatively described with the term *embodied gnosis.*

The main argument that I bring forward is that certain meta-empirical[135] dimensions of experiential reality appear to be intuitable through the body in danced motion. The specific quality of experience that has triggered this investigation in the first place is perceived as having a palpable unifying quality that appears to somehow be able to mediate between the mind/body, psyche/physis, I/other or ideas/matter divide.
From an intermediary state of being the experience of *embodied gnosis* draws these dichotomies together along a spectrum of varying degrees of dense and subtle materialities. This quality of experience is here targeted as a source for movement generation the origin of which remains to a large extent unknown. This experience can be intersubjectively shared depending on the ability of the dancer to communicate it and on the receptivity of the spectator or co-performer and their affinity with it.

Embodied gnosis stands for a state of inspired knowing-being that hinges towards the *numinous* where suprasensorial and non-verbal qualities of experience coincide with specific qualities of motion that permeate and transform the corporeality of the dancer. When a numinous experience occurs, it is characterized by a specific state of consciousness, an intermediary zone of awareness where the physical appears to intersect with the metaphysical. At the points of intersection between the physical and the metaphysical, mediated by the ***psychophysical resonating space**** of the human body in danced motion, inspired being may occasionally gain a quality of knowing. The experience of *embodied gnosis* in dance then becomes suggestive of a meta-empirical source of being, meaning and intra- and extra-corporeal movement origination. The *dancing body* becomes a mediating interface,

[135] Merriam- Webster Online Dictionary "metempirics": "the study of concepts and relationships conceived as beyond and yet related to knowledge gained empirically". Accessed 3.6.2023. https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/metempirics.

a complex vehicle for perception that appears to me to be in touch with realms of being that extend far beyond its corporeal boundaries.

Where being and knowing embrace: dancing the imaginal

The intermediary state or zone of awareness that appears to be conducive to *embodied gnosis* could also be described as suspended in an ***imaginal**** realm between the sensorial movement logic of a dancing body and a suprasensorial faith in – and at times *gnosis* of - an unseen yet intuited immanent and transcendent divine or sacred realm of being.

The *imaginal* is a term coined by Islam scholar Henry Corbin. It is distinct from the *imaginary* understood as existing only in the imagination by giving an ontological status of reality to an *imaginal* place of being. In Oriental theosophy, the *imaginal* refers to a "precise level of Being and Knowledge", an intermediary layer of being that is embedded in a worldview comprised of three layers: the pure intellectual world, the world of pure cherubic Intelligences (*'âlam 'aqlî*, *Jabarût*); the *imaginal* world (*'âlam mithâlî, Malakût, Hūrqalyā*), the world of the Soul and of souls, the *mundus imaginalis* and the sensible world (*'âlam hissî*), the world of the material things.[136]

Being suspended in an *imaginal* realm during dance can have a quite literal and clearly readable and transformative impact on the morphing eloquence of the dancing body. Moving in an *imaginal* zone can give a dancer a concrete sense of being in direct touch with the deepest layers of one's being underneath or beyond mental chatter and constructs, underneath or beyond psychological burdens or issues causing emotional turmoil.

It is a place of being that feels utterly *real*, hence my preference for working with the term *imaginal*, rather than *imaginary*.

The body in motion can be literally suspended in between ***gravity**** and a polar opposite force of ***levity**** – an upwards thrust to vertically extend the spine towards what lies (far) beyond it. Levity is an apparently natural, but in dance also aesthetically determining force that extends along a vertical axis, reaching upwards in polar opposition against gravity. Whereas gravity is primarily bound to the physical body in relation to the ground underneath the feet, a sense

[136] Corbin, *Spiritual Body and Celestial Earth,* 1989 and "Mundus Imaginalis or the Imaginary and the Imaginal," 1964, 3-26.

of levity can be conjured up from the depths of one's being by an intentional receptivity towards a vertically upwards thriving energetic connection. A blending of physical strength, will power and imaginative receptivity is needed to lengthen the body vertically and to maintain an energetic connection that creates a channel of communication between gravity and levity, between heaven and earth. I don't consider these poles of experience as strict dichotomies. To me, heaven and earth are rather orientations for corporeal consciousness that literally exist at the same time on two opposite ends of a spectrum of embodied awareness: underneath my feet and above my head. In between there is my body. Gravity and levity are then forces that connect me to what lies above my head and underneath my feet.[137]

I do not claim to have any experiential knowledge about the *imaginal* world of Islamic theosophy. Nevertheless, I see possibilities to explore resonances between this research towards *embodied gnosis* through a *dancing language* that combines non-verbal corporeal and verbal language and an esoteric worldview comprised of three worlds. In Islamic theosophy, the world of the soul is situated in between the world of the intellect and the world of the sensible material things. Transposed to the architecture of this dissertation project, these three worlds could correspond to the intellectual domain of the discursive contextualization of the danced experience, to the sensible corporeality of my physical body and – hovering somewhere between the intellect and the senses – the artistically "ensouled" inner and outer life of the danced experience, for example when my inner being meets the *imaginal* spaces created by the soundscape or when it meets the inner being of the spectator(s) through the dance.

By artistically adopting the term *imaginal*, I refer explicitly to an esoteric worldview that could accommodate the idea of *embodied gnosis* in dance. This adoption is a speculative move. This movement can be smooth, because of the resonances between dance and esotericism that I described so far. Besides the historical connections between dance and esotericism as discussed above, both dance and esotericism self-reflectively positioned themselves as "the Other" of modernity or mainstream academic culture in a more recent timeframe.

[137] See also chapter three: dancing language between mind and matter for more on gravity/levity.

Like pulling the strings of a guitar, I activate these resonances with the dancing dialogue between the experiential logic of a *dancing body* and esoterically inclined forms of thought and worldviews that unfolds throughout this dissertation project.

To dance the *imaginal* implies for me to explore the idea of *embodied gnosis* at the edges between conscious and unconscious movement origination. In this intermediary zone I investigate how blending the human faculties of knowing, believing and imagining influence the creative communication of my *dancing body* and also the other way around: how the *dancing body* generates performative states that blend knowing, believing and imagining towards *embodied gnosis.*

Reason, Faith and Gnosis as foundations for constructing worldviews

Gnosticism scholar Gilles Quispel (1916-2006) proposed a threefold subdivision of what he considered to be the main components of the European cultural tradition of constructing worldviews: "faith" – representing the theologies of the established churches, "reason" – rationalism as it evolved since ancient Greece and "gnosis" – presumed to have emerged in Alexandria during the first centuries. Quispel distinguished "gnosis" from the other two components by characterizing it as being based on "inner experience" and non-discursive expression.[138]

Hanegraaff later took up and nuanced this threefold distinction. Whereas Quispel proposed clear cut distinctions between faith linked to the Christian church, reason linked to science and gnosis linked to what is known today as Western esotericism, Hanegraaff looks at these terms from a different perspective: in his view, the three analytical categories of reason, faith and gnosis appear in all three contexts and also beyond them: they appear in the Christian church and her theologies, in philosophy, in science and as well in the arts, in literature and in Western esotericism. Differentiating between them would merely be a question of differences in degrees of emphasis. Hanegraaff's critique of Quispel's clear cut conceptual distinction is based on the argument, that speaking in terms of gnosis as being radically opposed to scientific rationality and doctrinal faith would re-enforce the already deeply ingrained stereotyped vision of gnostic forms of thought as irrational, heretical and

[138] Hanegraaff, "On the Construction of 'Esoteric Traditions'," 1998, 19.

superstitious. Gnosis does play a crucial role in the writings belonging to esotericism, but other types of knowledge based on rationality, scientific thought, revelation and tradition are vividly present there as well.[139]

In dance, I investigate knowing, believing and imagining through my *dancing body* as psychophysical performative states. Knowing as a performative state in dance can loosely correspond with reason, yet it is based on a corporeal and non-verbal rather than mental and verbalized kind of logic. Believing as a performative state in dance can correspond to faith. I work with this quality as a firm belief in the body's intrinsic creative capacities. A firm conviction that the dancing body can act as a mediating interface between the physically sensible and the intuitively intelligible without me necessarily controlling it consciously or understanding what wants to be communicated through the dance.

In my view, corporeally imagining can shift towards an experience of *embodied gnosis* when a felt experience of something *real* and sacred occurs.

How a psychophysical blending of knowing, believing and imagining contributes to ***attuning***** the *dancing body* to access an experience of *embodied gnosis* will be further discussed in chapter five (Attuning the Dancing Body towards Embodied Gnosis) and six (Dance, Music and Dance Language in SEI).

Towards a Dance Language

The idea of *embodied gnosis* in dance is relatable to practices of trance[140] and religious dances that exist and have existed in countless cultures around the globe and throughout time. Yet my approach in this research is to strip my *dancing body* as much as possible from cultural or aesthetic references. Of course, it is impossible to claim that a dancing body can be a neutral territory or an objective research instrument. Each body that has been educated in a professional dance context carries in its kinesthetic memory inscriptions of all kinds of techniques and repertoire experiences. Professionally dancing bodies are aesthetically and physically shaped and therefore "biased" to a large degree. The language of a *dancing body*

[139] Wouter J. Hanegraaff, "Reason, Faith, and Gnosis," 2008, 138-139.

[140] For a study on trancelike states and ecstatic experiences in contemporary dance and performance productions see for example Huschka, "Aesthetic Strategies of Trance-Gression: The Politics of Bodily Scenes of Ecstasy," 2019, 4–17. I warmly thank Jeroen Fabius for this reference.

that is targeted in this research, aims to generate ways of speaking through dance which are not based on choreographed patterns, systems or cultures of thought and movement.

I search for a *dance language* that neither speaks in terms of a movement genre, tradition or narrative. Instead, I explore how the dancing body - understood as a mediating interface between the metaphysical and the physical - can generate, perceive and communicate new insights about this relation.

Not to speak through already known movement genres that are deeply imprinted into the *dancing body* through education and professional experience might seem an impossible task. Yet consciously directing an artistic orientation towards this goal can create openings, deviations and renewals in movement patterns that have been installed in my body through many years of engaging with various choreographic signatures.

I am performing an archeological excavation into my body in search for inscriptions or motivations to move that I hope to discover underneath or beyond what has already been codified. These may be genetic inscriptions or ancient corporeally stored memories of the body about its heritage and family lineage that are far removed from conscious awareness. Based on intuitively perceiving deeper layers of my body in dance, I assume that these inscriptions are there. To give continuity and visibility to this intuitive assumption I try to create the conditions for these inscriptions to appear from an intermediary psychophysical state between conscious and unconscious movement origination.[141]

I propose another kind of knowledge than procedural (implicit knowledge about how to perform specific tasks) or declarative knowledge (explicit knowledge about how a dance is written). These kinds of knowledge are often being referred to when classifying the knowledge that is at stake in performing and composing contemporary dance.[142]

I search for a naturally spiritual-corporeal knowing of being that can be intuitable through a *dancing body* and that I cannot yet fully grasp and understand with my conscious mind. This quality of corporeal knowing is targeted as a source for movement origination although, or because, it is still unknown.

[141] See also chapter five: Attuning.

[142] McKechnie and Stevens, "Knowledge unspoken: Contemporary dance and the cycle of practice-led research, basic and applied research, and research-led practice", 2009, 86.

I am not looking for a practical know-how of dancing comparable to riding a bike.[143] I search for something less technical, not the automatized virtuosity of performing a dance phrase by kinetic memory without the need of cognitive processing. I search for a kind of knowing of being that does not solidify into a rationalizable or systematized choreographic pattern. My fascination is rather directed towards the mystery of moving and being moved, towards a transformative knowing of being that somehow seems to be related to the mystery of incarnation.

My approach to ***languaging**** dance differs from somatic approaches to dance where the first-person subjective perception of corporeal sensations is foregrounded. I am rather curious about the suprasensory and trans-personal dimensions of danced experience. Through a *dance language* I am asking my dancing body what it is that manifests itself in dance that is not primarily sensible but intuitable from a yet unconscious but maybe potentially superconscious, not sensation-based level of experience.
My interest thus lies specifically in sources of movement origination that appear to stem from underneath or beyond corporeal sensations. I question to which kind of reality these movement impulses that appear to come from suprasensory realms of being may belong.

Suprasensory realms of being and the idea of cultivating the human body to perceive them through dance are also addressed in practices that embody esoteric forms of thought. Important examples from the 20th century are Rudolf Steiner and G.I. Gurdijeff.
Suprasensory realms of being are also related to the notion of the somatic unconscious in Carl Gustav Jung's (1875 – 1961) analytical psychology. Jung posited that intuition is not related to sense perception but to the unconscious.[144] Jung relates the somatic unconscious to subtle body concepts and practices as they are discussed in esoteric forms of thought.[145] We will visit these perspectives in chapter four.

[143] Nelson, "Practice-as-research," 2006, 107.
[144] See for example "Sensing vs. Intuition," *YouTube*, accessed 3.6.23, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W9Fw-YpHoU8.
[145] Jung and Jarrett, *Nietzche's Zarathustra: Notes of the seminar given in 1934 -1939,* 1988, 441.

According to Hanegraaff, truth in gnosis is only experienceable on a personal level. Inner experience remains the sole authority for verifying the truth content of the experience.[146] The same may be said for suprasensorial and trans-personal experience in dance. An attempt at transmitting this inner knowledge would in Hanegraaff's understanding imply a reduction of the ineffable quality of gnosis to rational knowledge via processes of verbalization. On the possibility of communicating inner numinous experiences, I consider artistic practices that relate to unveiling or communicating inner knowledge or processes of knowing by experience as potential candidates for proposing *other* forms of communication of gnosis. A more explicit and elaborated connection between artistic disclosures of inner knowing and gnosis could be dynamically juxtaposed with Hanegraaff's definition of gnosis as being neither communicable nor verifiable or falsifiable.[147] Whether inter-subjective verification of successfully communicated *embodied gnosis* would eventually be possible or not, matters here less than the creative dynamics and meanings that could unfold within this juxtaposition, on artistic as well as on scholarly levels.

To recapitulate:

In this chapter I introduced the academic study of Western esotericism. I explained how the three key concepts *spiritual corporeality*, *altered states of knowing* and *embodied gnosis* came into being through a creative convergence between this research in and through dance and the academic study of esotericism. I introduced the *imaginal* as a place or state where knowing and being can coincide and speculatively positioned it in relation to the notion of *embodied gnosis* in dance. I elaborated on the triangle of reason, faith and gnosis as foundations for constructing worldviews and as linked to various cultural expressions with different degrees of emphasis. I explained how knowing and believing as performative states loosely correspond with reason and faith and how corporeally imagining can shift towards an experience of *embodied gnosis* if a felt experience of something *real* and sacred occurs. Finally, I situated my approach to *dance language* as an artistic-epistemic process geared towards a transformative knowing of being.

[146] Hanegraaff, "A Dynamic Typological Approach," 1992, 10.
[147] Hanegraaff, *Western Esotericism: A Guide for the Perplexed*, 2013, 89.

With this chapter I hope to have been able to make the reader receptive to the *dancing language* that will unfold in the subsequent chapters. Movements of the body and of thought will be navigated between the unspeakable and verbal discourse, between the sensorial and the suprasensorial, between the physical and the metaphysical.

But how does the *dance language* relate to the *dancing language*?
This will be discussed in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 3

Dancing Language between Mind and Matter:
methodology of a dialogue between corporeal theory and discursive practice

In this chapter I will outline the methodological framework of this research.

To recapitulate the main research questions:

Is it possible to gain new perspectives on the relationship between the physically sensible and the intuitively intelligible through a dancing language that weaves together corporeal and verbal discourse?

How can the dancing body be attuned to act as an interface between the physical and the metaphysical through which I can investigate and communicate a sense of intimate proximity with a creative source?

I respond to these questions with dance and words.

On the one hand, with the ***dance language**** that I develop through the dance and music performance SEI. On the other hand, with the ***dancing language**** of this written text. By intertwining complementary modes of non-verbal and verbal ***languaging****, new perspectives on the ontological, epistemological and communicative potentials of a ***dancing body**** come to the fore.

Dancing language between mind and matter

In dance, I explore relations between mind and matter, between the physically sensible and the intuitively intelligible through a wordless search for movement origination and at intersections between conscious and unconscious (or supra- and subconscious - see below) states of being. This exploration happens from within the ***psychophysical resonating space**** of my dancing body, which is in a constant state of becoming.

The *dance language* and the ***corporeal theory**** that builds on it (see below) navigates psychophysically on an intuitive, arational[148] edge between conscious and unconscious performative states of being. Its mode of *languaging* is based on non-verbal dance experience. The theoretical contextualization of this *dance language* – the ***discursive practice**** (see below) - articulates movement of thought through verbalized speculation, poetically inclined language and argumentation. Both ways of doing research (or of extending inner creative processes into the world) might at first sight seem incompatible with each other.

With the theoretical contextualization of the *dance language* (*discursive practice*) I explore mind-matter relations at intersections between metaphysics and revelation (i.e., esoteric forms of thought and related body-based practices) and between physics and psychology (i.e. the Jung-Pauli conjecture).

[148] I adopted the term "arational" from pioneer of transpersonal psychology Charles Tart who proposed it as an alternative term for "irrational". It suggests another ground for reasoning instead of a mere negation of rationality. Tart has investigated the possibilities of understanding phenomena related to Altered States of Consciousness in scientific terms. In "States of Consciousness and State-Specific Sciences" he argues that "reason is a tool (…) wielded in service of assumptions, beliefs, and needs which are not themselves subject to reason. The irrational, or, better yet, the *a*rational, will not disappear from the human situation. Our immense success in the development of the physical sciences has not been particularly successful in (…) increasing our real knowledge of ourselves." In Tart, "States of Consciousness and State-Specific Sciences," 1972, 1209.

Complementarity

Two complementary research trajectories frame this journey into ***spiritual corporeality****, ***altered states of knowing**** and ***embodied gnosis****: the creation of a *dance language* and a theoretical contextualization that accompanies its becoming. The theoretical embrace of the *dance language* navigates movements of thought through diverging fields of knowledge and different modes of *languaging*: artistic, esoteric and scientific/philosophical. Relations between mind and matter play a key role in both trajectories, with different degrees of emphasis and embedded in different ways of perceiving and interpreting the world (from artistically experiential to esoterically inclined, to scholarly academic and back again). Both trajectories taken together become a *dancing language* that builds up its lines of thought through dialogical relations between the artistically empirical and the scientifically empirical[149]. By stretching imagination to its inner and outer edges the *dancing language* narrates alternative perspectives on human corporeal existence and its possible planetary and cosmic embeddedness.

Drawing together the domains of physics and psychology, Pauli and Jung looked at the mind-matter relation through the philosophical worldview of dual-aspect monism. Here, mind and matter are seen as complementary aspects of a larger unifying whole, which both aspects share, and which at the same time transcends both.[150] In this context "two descriptions of a situation are complementary if they are both necessary for a complete description of that situation and at the same time incompatible with each other."[151]

In analogy with this definition of ***complementarity****, I frame the relation between the *corporeal theory* (non-verbal corporeal and verbal reflections on dance experience articulated from the first-person perspective) and the *discursive practice* (verbalized thought engaged in

[149] I warmly thank Sher Doruff for introducing the idea of the artistic empirical in contrast to the scientific empirical. The artistic empirical as I understand it, is based on subjective and intersubjective experience and can include arational and suprasensory observations. The scientific empirical strives for objectivity, although the idea of objective knowledge is not anymore taken for granted since the invention of modern physics.

[150] Atmanspacher and Fuchs, "Introduction: The Pauli-Jung Conjecture," 2014, 1-6.

[151] Atmanspacher and Primas, *Recasting Reality: Wolfgang Pauli's Philosophical Ideas and Contemporary Science*, 2008, 4.

dialogue with written discourses) as complementary to each other. I choose this framing because I have found that both approaches to doing research need to be considered yet they are difficult to reconcile with each other. Each of them speaks through different types of logic and language. In my view, the complementary perspectives of *corporeal theory* and *discursive practice* are needed to approximate a complete description of the *dancing body* experienced as a mediating interface between the metaphysical and the physical. Both approaches are also needed to be able to identify the potential significance of the states of being a dancer may traverse in a movement towards *embodied gnosis*.

I choose *complementarity* to theoretically frame how non-verbal and verbal language move in relation to each other towards sense making. Yet I eventually aim to overcome their apparent incompatibility. The notions of *spiritual corporeality, altered states of knowing* and *embodied gnosis* are intended to allow both modes of *languaging* and of doing research, to blend and to communicate with each other. With the resulting *dancing language* in body and words something like a mind-matter continuum comes into being that embodies different degrees of ***matter-consciousness****.[152] This mind-matter continuum can eventually be seen as something that both aspects share, that blurs their strict distinction and that includes both in a larger frame of reference.[153]

[152] "Matter-consciousness" is a term developed by Jay Johnston to describe esoteric subtle body subjectivities as onto-ethical desire in a process metaphysical context. Johnston, *Angels of Desire. Esoteric Bodies, Aesthetics and Ethics*, 2008, 2. See also chapter four: the Subtle Body.
[153] Atmanspacher and Fuchs, "Introduction: The Pauli-Jung Conjecture," 2014, 1-6.

Corporeal Theory + Discursive Practice = Dancing Language

Corporeal Theory

The *dance language* diffracts on the one hand into the non-verbal, corporeal language that speaks through movement about its search for a sense of proximity with an unspeakable creative source. On the other hand, the *dance language* diffracts into verbal language derived from the danced experience and articulated from the first-person perspective. This verbal output diffracts again into two different rays of expression: poetically inclined transcriptions from my inner experience of the dance through the documentation method of ***retrospective dance writing****[154], and more abstract language that describes intentional orientations /***attunement*** for corporeal consciousness[155]. These intentional orientations are the foundation for the *dance language* to direct its movements towards an experience of *embodied gnosis*. Both types of verbal expression are derived from the non-verbal *dance language* that unfolds with SEI, the dance and music performance which accompanies this written dissertation. The non-verbal and verbal modes of *languaging* rooted in danced experience are taken together and referred to as *corporeal theory* (See Diagram 1 below).

[154] See "Spiritual Corporeality: Through a Dance Language towards Embodied Gnosis", https://www.researchcatalogue.net/view/520371/520372.

[155] See chapter five: Attuning.

CORPOREAL THEORY

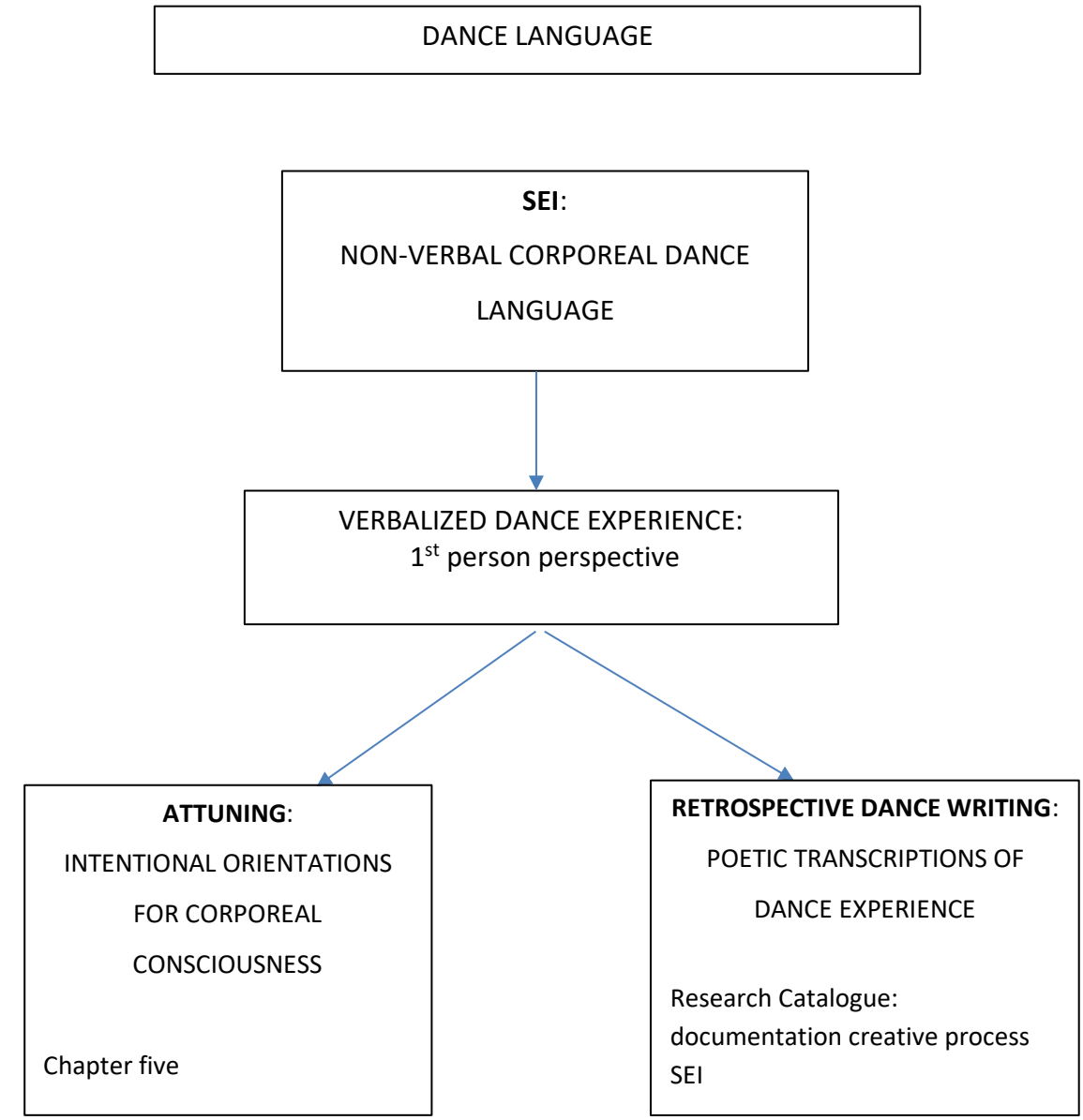


Diagram 1

Discursive Practice

The theoretical context of the *dance language* is on the one hand informed by esoteric forms of thought and related body-based practices and on the other hand by esoterically inclined scientific/philosophical speculations concerned with the relation between mind and matter. An example of the latter are Pauli and Jung who jointly investigated the psychophysical problem, i.e. the question of how mental phenomena relate to physical phenomena and vice versa. The Pauli-Jung conjecture (unproven proposition)[156] – developed mainly between 1946 and 1954 – is a highly speculative philosophical and metaphysical proposition about mind-matter relations. They questioned how to understand the interface between the mental and the physical and on which ideas about reality it could be grounded[157] Pauli and Jung suggested an underlying background domain that would both lie beyond the categories of mind and matter as well as mediate between them (*unus mundus*). [158]
(See Diagram 2 below).

[156] Harald Atmanspacher and Christopher A. Fuchs coined the term "Pauli-Jung Conjecture" based on their conviction that Pauli and Jung's proposition deserves a more substantial status in the history of ideas than "wild speculation". Atmanspacher and Fuchs, "Introduction: The Pauli-Jung Conjecture," 2014, 2-3.
[157] Ibid, 1.
[158] Atmanspacher, "Notes on Psychophysical Phenomena," 2014, 184. See also chapter five: attuning.

DISCURSIVE PRACTICE

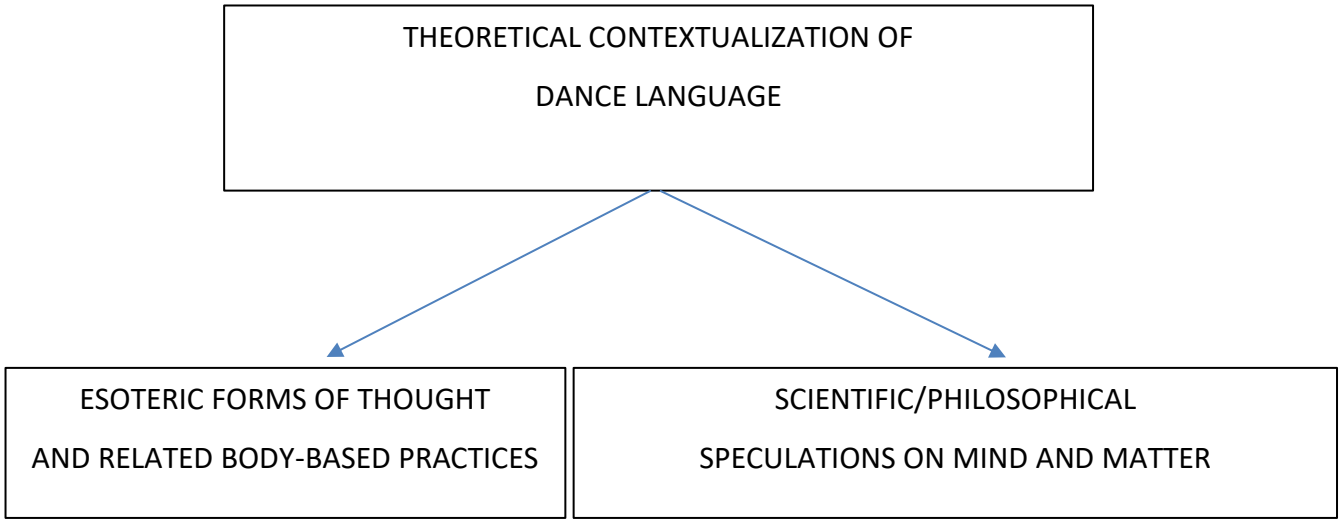


Diagram 2

Dancing Language

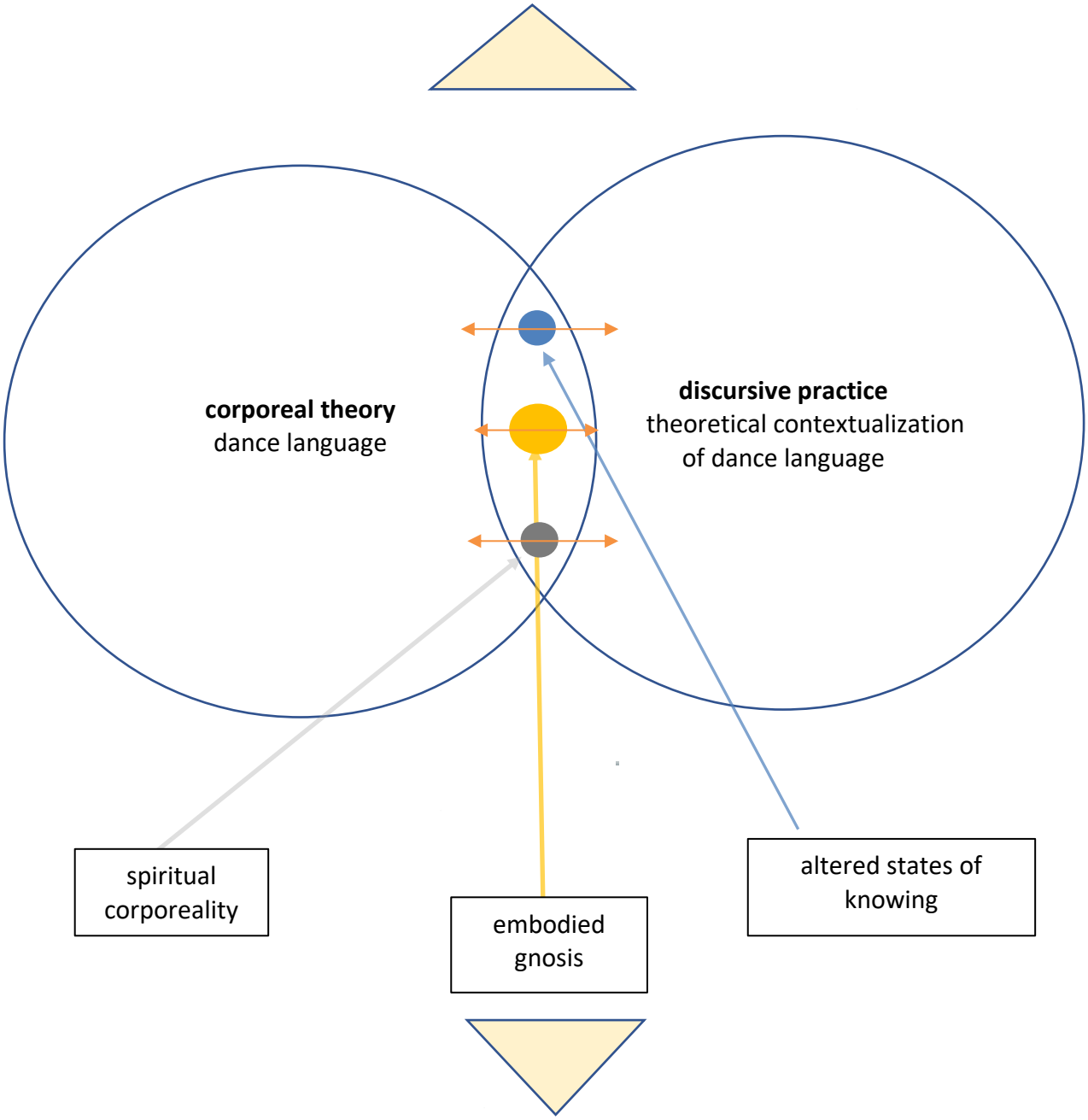
Corporeal theory and *discursive practice* dialogue with each other through ***intermezzi****[159]**.** In these *intermezzi*, sections of the main body text are commented on and complemented by perspectives derived from another kind of logic/epistemic background and language. In these *intermezzi* historical, highly abstract and at times visionary ways of thinking are counterbalanced by a concrete and pragmatic logic of a contemporary dancing body. (See chapter four "The Subtle Body" where esoteric forms of thought and body-based practices are contrasted with a contemporary dance perspective). In chapter five ("Attuning the Dancing Body towards Embodied Gnosis") terminologies from the dance practice are theoretically unpacked through the lens of other fields of academic discourse.

[159] See chapter four and five.

The textual movements of the dance between *corporeal theory* and *discursive practice* are connected through mutually reinforcing or contradicting ideas. The key concepts *spiritual corporeality, altered states of knowing* and *embodied gnosis* create spaces where diverging fields of logic and language, of discourse and practice can intersect and communicate with each other. Different worldviews meet and mingle at places of suspended momentum between gravity (towards the physical) and levity (towards the metaphysical). Here, a strict distinction between *corporeal theory* and *discursive practice* dissolves. In these zones of encounter intuitive dimensions of knowing-being emerge that are suspended between the physically sensible and the intuitively intelligible. In these in between zones the text approximates making sense of the notion of *embodied gnosis* (See Diagram 3 below).

DANCING LANGUAGE

LEVITY – INTUITIVELY INTELLIGIBLE – TOWARDS THE METAPHYSICAL



GRAVITY – PHYSICALLY SENSIBLE – TOWARDS THE PHYSICAL

Diagram 3

Below I will explain my approach to *corporeal theory* more in depth. I will further explain how the *dancing language* that weaves it together with the *discursive practice* functions as an artistically informed methodology for this research.

Corporeal theory

I approach dance as a non-verbal corporeal language that is in a constant state of becoming and that perpetually moves towards the unknown. In its perpetual movement towards an unknown future of the body, it is infused with many layers of supra- and subconscious states of being. Speaking from the perspective of my dance experience, a supraconscious[160] state implies being simultaneously aware of multiple layers of states of being in danced motion. They are a field of experience that allows conscious choice making in the articulation of movement [161].

I associate subconscious (or unconscious) layers of states of being that take part in dance with a reverse mirror image of the *supraconscious* performative layers mentioned above.[162]

---

[160] Merriam Webster Online Dictionary defines "supraconscious" as "existing or functioning above the level of the conscious, rational or logical". Transposed to dance practice I am referring to the "supraconscious" in terms of an intensified state of conscious awareness that is more complex and layered and, in this sense, "above" the level of everyday conscious awareness. "Supraconscious," *Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary*, accessed 3.6.23, https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/supraconscious.

[161] Examples of supraconscious states in dance are being hyper aware of the relation between the movements and the surrounding space; activated full body articulation; charging, dis-charging and re-charging the affective fuels that poeticize motion; projecting and receiving mutually aware sentient awareness between me, other dancers on stage and the audience; communicatively projecting performative energy towards the audience; awareness of rhythm, timing and of the quality of the psychophysical texture of movement; becoming progressively aware of the entire psychophysical resonating space of the dancing body that experiences itself in motion through space.

[162] Examples of subconscious layers of states of being are the relations between the movements of my body and the space of which I am not aware; the spaces and places in my body that withdraw from conscious access and thus from the ability to articulate them through motion; unspeakable and affectively neutral voids of non-articulation; invisible, non-palpable but dimly intuitable threads of other kinds of mutually aware sentient awareness; uncontrolled and unexpected withdrawing of performative energy from projecting it towards the audience towards deep interiority; the arhythmic, timeless and qualitatively indefinable; the dissolution of boundaries between the psychophysical entity of the dancing body and the space within which it moves.

Subconscious states of being imply for me a field of experience where choice making in the articulation of movement comes from yet unknown, not consciously accessible but intuitable areas of movement origination.

It is the state of being at the cutting edge between *supraconscious* and *subconscious* performative states that I am interested in. From within this in between state or space qualities and textures of movement can emerge which are yet unknown to me and that I transform into communicative movement as artistic practice. How to learn to speak and read these movements that come from unknown depths of my dancing body is one of the main targets of this research.

I explore the communicative and epistemological potential of navigating this cutting edge through the non-verbal dance language as it unfolds with the dance and music performance SEI. I also investigate it through writing about my dance experience after the fact (*retrospective dance writing*) and through the proposals for how to be in the body during the dance (intentional orientations for corporeal consciousness, chapter five). Together, they constitute what I call here *corporeal theory*.

Retrospective dance writing as documentation and research method

With the practice of *retrospective dance writing,* I explore and describe how the non-verbal experience of dance may establish contact between the everyday world and a meta-empirical source of meaning. Through annotating[163] segments of video recordings from the creative process of SEI, I make some aspects of the inner experience of dance verbally explicit. This writing practice uncovers to some extent what usually remains hidden and implicit in dance

[163] I have explored various approaches to annotate creative processes of diverse choreographers in the context of dance research at ICK Dans Amsterdam with the use of annotation software developed by Motion Bank (a research institute founded by William Forsythe that combines dance studies, software development and design at Mainz University of Applied Sciences). These experiences in annotating dance revealed a great potential for verbally *languaging* dance and for making explicit implicit dimensions of dance practice. The choice for annotating videos as a still further to be developed research method and documentation is based on these previous experiences. On the practice of dance annotation as a research method see for example de Lahunta, Vincs, and Whatley, "On An/Notations," 2015, 1–2. See also "Annotation and Documentation", ickamsterdam.com, accessed 16.9.23, https://www.ickamsterdam.com/en/academy/peers-researchers/annotation-and-documentation-47 and "Motion Bank", motionbank.org, accessed 16.9.23, https://motionbank.org/projekte .

and what happens on a rather subconscious level during the dance. With *retrospective dance writing* I analyze states of knowing-being as I experience them in dance after the fact. The verbal description of these states also feed into the intentional orientations for corporeal consciousness/attunement (chapter five) which I see as potentially conducive to an experience of *embodied gnosis* in dance.

The transposition from the wordless inner realm of the dance to the realm of words intends to create a meaningful expression of *altered states of knowing* that are generated by the dance. It is a *complementary* expression to the wordless language of the dance itself.
It is a supportive device to identify moments within the dance that have a potential for being interpreted as knowledge processes that arise from the in-between state between conscious and unconscious movement origination. Watching the video recordings of the dance afterwards allows me to see from an outside point of view how these moments may communicate artistically as a *dance language*.

According to Pauli and Jung "the role which measurement plays as a link between epistemic and ontic[164] realities in physics is mirrored by the act in which subjects become consciously aware of 'local mental objects' (…) arising from unconscious contents in psychology."[165]
Pauli observed a kinship between the concepts of "consciousness" and the "unconscious" as epistemological coordinates in psychology and the principle of "complementarity" in physics. He remarked that the unconscious is only accessible indirectly, by its influence on our conscious contents, while attempts to consciously access unconscious contents has a direct influence on these contents. Seen through the eyes of a physician, this implies that the impossibility to control the consequences of the observing subject on the unconscious puts limits on the objective character of the reality of the unconscious and indicates to some extent a rather subjective nature.
Pauli states that to conduct a psychological experiment it is necessary to position a 'cut' between consciousness and the unconscious while the positioning of the 'cut' would belong

[164] The adjective "ontic" refers to something of real existence distinguished from phenomenal appearances. Lexico Online Dictionary, "ontic", accessed 3.6.2020, https://www.dictionary.com/browse/ontic .
[165] Atmanspacher, "Notes on Psychophysical Phenomena," 2014, 184.

to the realm of free choice of the experimenter. Seen from a psychological perspective, an "observed system" would hence not only be constituted by physical objects but includes the unconscious as well, while the role of the "observing device" would be given to consciousness. Pauli here remarks a striking convergence between the description of nature of both microphysics and psychology. Due to the situation of "complementarity" in microphysics, it is not possible to exclude or eliminate the activities of the observers, which implies the impossibility of objective measurement of physical phenomena. While on the other hand he postulates the existence of an unconscious in the realm of psychology that could hint towards an objective reality.[166]

According to Basarab Nicolescu, contemporary theoretical physicist and pioneer of bridging the sciences and the humanities through transdisciplinary research[167], the psychophysical problem (the relationship between spirit and matter) and its implications for our understanding of reality is a pressing issue that still needs to be solved in our current time frame. He summarizes Pauli and Jung's perspective on the psychophysical problem as: "For Pauli, the holistic nature of unus mundus implied that the states describing the material and the psychological fields are nested," meaning that scientific conceptions of reality would need to include both physical and mental aspects while at the same time addressing a realm of reality that lies beyond them. Nicolescu argues that at the heart of the problem of the relationship between matter and spirit lies in the fact that Western civilization persists too brutally on separating the object from the subject, metaphysics and physics, science and religion[168].

I am referencing here Nicolescu to include another contemporary perspective on the Pauli-Jung conjecture. By equating the psychophysical problem with the relationship between spirit and matter Nicolescu explicitly embraces the dimension of spirit in a transdisciplinary approach towards the sciences and the humanities. Nicolescu's perspective can thus be seen as another take on the notion of *spiritual corporeality* while positioning his and Pauli and

[166] Letter from Pauli to Jung in Jung, "On the Nature of the Psyche", 1969, par. 439 footnote 130. Quoted in Atmanspacher, "Notes on Psychophysical Phenomena," 2014, 185.

[167] Nicolescu, "Une nouvelle vision du monde, la transdisciplinarité", accessed 4.6.23, http://ciret-transdisciplinarity.org/transdisciplinarity.php .

[168] Nicolescu, *From Modernity to Cosmodernity*, 2014, 141-142.

Jung's views in relation to what Nicolescu identifies as one of the largest structural problems of contemporary Western society.

In the *altered state of knowing* (suspended between the sensible and the intuitively intelligible) that is suggested with the term *embodied gnosis*, the focus lies on an intermediary zone of awareness where conscious movement choices or the insertion of pre-written (known) choreographic material interact with unconscious (unknown) movements that emerge in the moment. I unearth deeper layers of movement origination and yet unknown qualities of movement expression from within the *psychophysical resonating space* of my dancing body and transform them into a *dance language.*

Navigating movement in the intermediary space between (supra)conscious and sub/unconscious movement origination gradually shifts the position of the "cut" between the conscious and the unconscious, while both keep informing each other. The movements that emerge from the zone of the area of the "cut", communicate the experience of their coming into being with both the observing mind of the dancer as well as with the audience (and the co-dancers in the case of group pieces). Who or what is the subject or the object of the dance becomes unsettled in a mobile triangle between the dancer, the dance and the observers of the dance. Both the dancer and the spectator are the observers of a dance that emerges from a place yet unknown to all of us.

Understanding the *dancing body* as a *psychophysical resonating space* and as an interface between the metaphysical and the physical implies that the "local mental objects" of Pauli and Jung could in principle also be replaced with "local physical objects". With reference to their quest towards finding evidence of the invisible reality that mediates between mind and matter in both quantum physics and the psychology of the unconscious Pauli wrote: "I am quite confident that the final objective is the same, independent of whether one starts from the psyche (ideas) or from physis (matter)." Pauli also speculated that "a science of the future will refer to such a basic reality as neither psychic nor physical but somehow both and neither

of them. He suggested that the mental and material domains of the basic reality should be understood as complementary aspects under which this reality can appear."[169]

I work with *retrospective dance writing* as a documentation and research method. Besides documenting the creative process and thus gaining space for a reflective overview of its phases and progression, this practice allows me to become consciously aware of movements that emerged from the in between state between conscious and unconscious states of movement origination during the dance. From the video registrations of studio rehearsals and performances, I select fragments that I identify as communicative in the direction of the kind of language that I aim to develop. This means that I base my choice of the fragments on whether the movements are relatable to a movement towards *embodied gnosis* on an inwardly oriented experiential level (based on the memory of the experience of the movement) as well as on the outwardly oriented communicative level as an evolving *dance language*.

The radical opening towards the unknown implied in the concept of *embodied gnosis* is reflected in delegating movement origination to progressively deeper layers of the *dancing body*. Through this process, an intuited spiritual intelligence of the human body is engaged, which usually remains slumbering when only working with movement generation from areas of the *dancing body* that can be accessed consciously.

I associate the choice making involved in the selection of the dance fragments with Pauli's conscious positioning of the "'cut' between consciousness and the unconscious." The involvement of the "observing device" of the camera allows me to see the dance from an outside point of view – a perspective that I do not have access to during the dance. This outside point of view is thus one aspect that remains unconscious during the dance. By selecting fragments of dance that happened on a rather unconscious level, I identify which sections of the dance I will bring under conscious scrutiny by retrospectively annotating it. The fact that I consciously observe unconscious expressions of my body also changes its expression in following iterations of the performance. Learning to speak, write and read this

[169] Atmanspacher and Primas, "Pauli's ideas on Mind and Matter in the Context of Contemporary Science," 2006, 24.

dance language then happens through a reiterative and reciprocal dialogue between conscious and unconscious movements extended in time beyond the actual moment of the rehearsal or performance and facilitated by the observing device of the camera.

A dancing methodology

Bringing the two complementary perspectives of *corporeal theory* and *discursive practice* in dialogue with each other, parallels the process of entering and deepening the intermediary state of knowing-being in dance where sensory, (supra)conscious as well as suprasensory/imaginary/***imaginal****[170] (sub/unconscious) qualities of experience permeate the psychophysical texture of my movements. I approximate this intermediary state with the notion of *embodied gnosis*.

With the *dancing language* that encompasses both *corporeal theory* and *discursive practice*, I suspend an epistemological positioning on either the non-verbal, corporeal logic-based dance or the verbally discursive side. The artistic-epistemic goal is to enable a state of creative mediation between them. The effort required to facilitate this mediation is ignited by leaps of faith towards the suprasensorial and the meta-empirical, grounded in and setting off from concrete physical experience. Performing these leaps of faith in the text also parallels the radical opening towards the unknown that I experience as a necessary condition for entering something akin to a state of *embodied gnosis* in dance.

Embodied gnosis could also be described as "contemplating supra-sensory realities of the Imagination under a sensory mode"[171] in an intermediary zone of awareness. In dance, I am working on stabilizing this state of being. This happens among others through *attuning* the dancing body in line with specific intentional orientations for corporeal consciousness (see chapter five.) Through *attuning* the dancing body towards *embodied gnosis,* I seek to establish

[170] I am using here both "imaginary" and "imaginal" as their distinction seems to me to be crucial to whether the state of *embodied gnosis* is achieved or not. When the "imaginary" shifts towards the "imaginal", a sense of the *real* may be generated with the dance. Whether that experienced *real* for the dancer is imaginary or *real* for the observers is left to the speculation and imagination of the observers. When both the dancer and the observers experience a sense of the *real*, the idea of the possibility of communicating *embodied gnosis* gains more credibility.

[171] Henry Corbin, *Spiritual Body and Celestial Earth*, 1989, 155.

and to maintain contact between the everyday world and an intuitable, but neither verifiable nor falsifiable, meta-empirical source of being.

Attuning the dancing body towards *embodied gnosis* stands for an attempt at creating the conditions that allow for a *spiritual-corporeal* way of embodying (the knowledge of) dance.[172] This intermediary state of being, or *altered state of knowing*, can also be described as suspended in an *imaginal* realm. It hovers somewhere between sensorial movement logic and the space that is generated by an expansive stretching of the subtle fibers of our intellectual and imaginative faculties towards a state of being where a suprasensorial faith in, aspiration towards and potentially gnosis of an unseen, intelligible, intuitable, immanent and transcendent divine or sacred realm may come into being. Navigating motion in an *imaginal* realm during dance influences the quality and texture of speaking corporeality in dance. The body of the dancer can be suspended between ***gravity**** and a polar opposite force of what I refer to as ***levity*.** Gravity is an undeniable, but not yet fully scientifically understood physical force. I see the force of levity as an inner intentional disposition that strives towards enlightening matters of gravity, such as the tendency towards inertia of the matter out of which our bodies are constituted or our body's foundational condition of being drawn towards the earth at all times. Gravity and levity interpreted from an artistic esoteric point of view – such as in Rudolf Steiner's movement art Eurythmy - embody human tendencies towards ethos (levity: towards the spiritual) and pathos (gravity: towards the physical/material). [173]

In my approach to *languaging* dance, I work with (among others) two major axes along which I explore communicative movement articulation. Additional facets of my approach to *languaging* dance are described in chapter five (attuning) and chapter six (dance, music and dance language). Whereas the *attunements* are intended as a preparation for entering a state of *embodied gnosis* in dance, the two axes mentioned here relate to the communication of these states from a non-verbal, dance-based logic of experience:

[172] See chapter five.

[173] Rudolf Steiner, *Eurythmie als sichbarer Gesang*, 1984,119.
Many thanks to Eurythmist Gia van den Akker for pin-pointing this from the large oeuvre of Rudolf Steiner.

1. Exploring the dynamics between the experience of gravity and levity: Here I engage with and surrender to these forces. To explore their communicative potentials in relation to each other and to the observers of the dance I play with areas for corporeal expression where both streams of forces intersect in different degrees of emphasis.

2. Activating and engaging with the creative dynamics sparked by the search for unconscious but intuitively intelligible sources of movement origination.

From this foundation, I unearth the communicative and epistemic potentials of the dancing body. Through the becoming of this (non-verbal) *dance language* the *dancing body* is transformed into a ***creative interface**** that experiences itself as mediating between the metaphysical and the physical.

With this dissertation project I elaborate ways to approximate and to communicate a state of *embodied gnosis* in the dance as well as in the written text. At the heart of this endeavor lies the wish to trigger resonances with *embodied gnosis* in the experiential landscape of the spectators as well as in the readers, and to enable a critical interrogation of this idea and experience from different points of view. The artistic-epistemic methodology for this research is not oriented towards making claims about the nature of reality that such a state may point towards. It is rather oriented towards creating potentialities for knowing that come out of experiencing, communicating and questioning it.

The experience of *embodied gnosis* in dance may happen somewhere in between *gravity* and *levity*, in between pathos and ethos. It may happen in between deep and wordless immersion into sensorial and suprasensorial movement logics and intellectual gymnastics before or after the dance where a thirst for meaning kicks in from having digested the dance experience. It is a place and state of an unfathomable convergence of worlds that may eventually catapult a searching dancer towards the unspeakable beyond sense and beyond the intellect.

Embodied gnosis is both an idea derived from bringing my dance practice in dialogue with the academic study of esotericism, as well as an ideal, in the sense of an aim to be achieved. I am not claiming to have achieved it or to be able to invoke it at will, but I can't help being convinced that it is a state of being that is worth striving towards. This conviction is based on an artistically fueled intuition, on rare but potently transformative experiences of

encountering something of a sacred dimension in and through the *dancing body* which I posit here as able to generate *altered states of knowing*.

Complementary to the non-verbal experience of *embodied gnosis* in the dance, its verbally discursive contextualization opens the gaze of thought towards the corporeal/physical as well as towards the spiritual/metaphysical. It identifies regions of potential significance that relate to the mediating concepts of *spiritual corporeality* and *altered states of knowing*. The written text distills points of entry to substantiate the notion of *embodied gnosis*. Through the written text I seek for meaningful intersections between the physical and the metaphysical that resonate with the idea of *embodied gnosis* in dance. Like the *corporeal theory* derived from the non-verbally speaking text of the dancing body, the *discursive practice* activates a relational play with *gravity* and *levity*. Together, they become a *dancing language.*

The text plays with *gravity* and *levity* by switching the center of gravity between the intuitively intelligible and the sensible, between theoretical speculation and corporeal experience. The edges or intermediary zones between both sides communicate with each other through the mediation of the key concepts. The zone of experience referred to with *embodied gnosis* hovers like a double-edged sword that floats in between these polarities of being, takes part in both and draws them together to become a whole that transcends their distinction.

Methodological positioning

Basarab Nicolescu differentiates between the notions of real and reality. Reality in the scientific context is defined in terms of resistance to our human experience. The ***real**** stands for the forever veiled.[174] With Nicolescu, what is irreducibly real involves nonresistance and belongs to the domain of the sacred.[175]

The notion of *spiritual corporeality* contains etymologically both the "real" and "reality". The reality of the body is the first place of resistance to the dance. Openings towards the *real* experienced through the dancing body may hint towards a zone of non-resistance coming forth from within the resistance of the physical body, creating a space for an experience of the sacred.

Altered states of knowing may happen within intermediary and intuitive levels of being that are suspended between what is objectifiable and what is beyond any pre-conceived qualification. They emerge in relation to knowledge processes that progressively move forward through radical openings towards the unknown.

The notion of *embodied gnosis* (rooted in dance experience and brought in dialogue with scholarship on esotericism) needs to be tried out and tested in and through dance practice, in dialogue with other theoretical and discursive contexts and with the dancer as a performative researcher.[176] To attune the dancing body to be able to perceive, to stabilize and to physically understand the state that *embodied gnosis* alludes to, is thus also co-dependent to differing degrees with the knowledge processes that are generated by exploring it from different disciplinary perspectives.

Process philosopher Alfred North Whitehead (1861 -1947) divided 'intuitive judgments' into three classes: affirmative, negative and suspended. While the affirmative and negative intuitive judgments conform to objective data, the suspended intuitive judgment "neither affirms nor denies conformity with the data"[177]. The *dancing body* in a state of *embodied gnosis*, suspended in an *imaginal* realm between the sensorial and a suprasensorial faith in –

[174] Nicolescu, *From Modernity to Cosmodernity*, 2014, 203.

[175] Ibid, 14.

[176] The thought that "new concepts must be tried out without established ways to test or apply them" is derived from Atmanspacher and Primas, *Recasting Reality*, 2008, 2.

[177] Mahootian and Linné, "Jung and Whitehead: An Interplay of Psychological and Philosophical Perspectives on Rationality and Intuition," 2014, 412.

and at times gnosis of - an unseen, yet intuited immanent and transcendent divine or sacred realm of being, may also be understood in this way: as being in a state of suspended intuitive judgment, lifted upwards towards the information derived by studying revelatory insights and metaphysical speculations that hint towards the *real*, and pulled down to earth by the imperative force of gravity and the undeniable resistance of the physical body to the *real* at the same time.

Continuing this line of thought, a comprehensive understanding of the idea of *embodied gnosis* in dance as the artistic-epistemic goal of a research methodology, may be seen as a modulation of methodological agnosticism developed by esotericism scholar Hanegraaff.[178] Methodological agnosticism states that academic scholarship does not have any instrument for gaining access to the true nature of reality and can neither verify nor falsify any claim for the existence of such a reality. In my view, however, it is possible to work with the *dancing body* to be able to perceive and experience aspects of reality that hint towards the *real*, understood and experienced as a sacred dimension of being. Methodological agnosticism does not claim that the Divine or the Absolute does not exist because it is not accessible to science and to scholarship; it rather admits that it is not possible to know it with scholarly methods. *Embodied gnosis* in dance is a proposition, a potentiality of knowing of the sacred by artistically embodied experience.[179]
Methodological agnosticism does not affirm or deny that it might be possible to discover "the true nature of reality" through other means than scholarship.[180] A state of *embodied gnosis* in dance does not necessarily give access to "the true nature of reality", but it can create an opening to perceive something akin to it, something *real,* which cannot become a scientific truth, but the truth of an artistic expression.

In the following two chapters (chapter four: the subtle body and chapter five: attuning) *spiritual corporeality* and *altered states of knowing* function as focusing lenses to filter information from different fields of practice and discourse. The different perspectives that

[178] Hanegraaff, *Western Esotericism: A Guide for the Perplexed*, 2013, 11-12.
[179] For a proposition understood as a potentiality see Shaviro, *Without Criteria*, 2009.
[180] Hanegraaff, *Western Esotericism: A Guide for the Perplexed*, 2013, 11-12.

appear through the lenses of *spiritual corporeality* and *altered states of knowing* culminate towards *embodied gnosis*. Making sense of *embodied gnosis* is the pinnacle in flight towards which this investigation develops its bodily and verbal moves. Making sense of *embodied gnosis* becomes a balancing cord that spans the abyss between the wordless experience of the non-verbal dance language and the written discourse. This balancing cord is kept strung tight by the tension field between the wordless world of danced experience and the world of the word.

PART II

Towards Embodied Gnosis through Dance

Chapter 4:
Into the Subtle Body:
esoteric forms of thought and body-based practices……100

Chapter 5:
Attuning: orientations for corporeal consciousness in dance……154

Chapter 6:
Dance, Music and Dance Language in SEI……198

CHAPTER 4

Into the Subtle Body: Esoteric Forms of Thought and Body-Based Practice

Through a dancing language towards embodied gnosis

In this chapter, speculative movements of thought that reach towards the metaphysical are counterbalanced in ***intermezzi**** where thought is anchored in physical dance experience.
In the next chapter (Attuning: orientations for corporeal consciousness in dance) this set up is reversed: first-person perspectives from a physical dance experience are counterbalanced in *intermezzi* where metaphysical vistas are unleashed by discourse that reaches beyond the physical body.
Chapter four and chapter five thus mirror each other. They keep each other in balance while conducting thought along a spectrum of movements towards the physical on the one hand, and towards the metaphysical on the other.
In both chapters, the body text and the *intermezzi* are not oriented exclusively towards only one end of the spectrum. Both contain aspects of each other: metaphysical resonances are included in the corporeally anchored dance experience while corporeal experience is included (where possible) in discourse about the metaphysical. In dialogue with each other, the body text and the *intermezzi* enact a ***dancing language****.

In this chapter, I will focus specifically on how the field of tension between the metaphysical and the physical unfolds in esoteric forms of thought and related body-based practices. The idea of subtle corporealities - subsumed under the concept of the ***subtle body**** - plays a key role.

First, I will explain a set of ideas that are central to this investigation. Then I will present a summary of the line of argument in this chapter. The three key concepts of my research have been introduced at the beginning of this dissertation and are gradually deepened in the chapters. A collection of the most relevant ideas and concepts is characterized in the glossary.
In the following, I revisit some of them for a better understanding of the psychophysical experiences I encounter in dance and their implications for the research.

Based on numinous experiences in dance, I posit that the dancing body can convey an intuition of spiritual dimensions of embodied experience. Enticed by these experiences, I investigate how dance can provide new perspectives on the relations between the metaphysical and the physical.

I discursively approach the psychophysical states related to numinous experiences in dance with the notions of ***spiritual corporeality****, ***altered states of knowing**** and ***embodied gnosis****. In the following, I will elaborate on these three key concepts by analyzing them and returning to them from varying perspectives. Through an interaction between artistic experiential points of view and scholarly academic points of view I hope to arrive at a rich and layered meaning of these concepts. Therefore, in the text I will treat the concepts of *spiritual corporeality*, *altered states of knowing* and *embodied gnosis* alternately.

While dancing, I intuit that the human body is subliminally informed by relations between the physical and the metaphysical. With "physical" I refer for example to the materiality of the body, the planet, gravity, the concrete space of the performance and the physicality of sound. With "metaphysical" I refer for example to mind, consciousness, cosmic space, levity, invisible forces that traverse the body and suprasensorial experience of sound.

I argue that the ***dancing body**** can engender an intuitive knowing of intrinsic relations between the human body and the metaphysical realm. These relations touch on ethical, ontological and epistemological facets of being.

Embodied gnosis in dance (and possibly elsewhere) describes a state of knowing-being that inclines towards the numinous. In this state, non-verbal and suprasensory qualities of experience, such as spatially realized ***corporeal imagination**** and performative intuition, coincide with specific qualities of communicative motion. These qualities of experience permeate and transform the corporeality and performative state of the dancer. This state of intense presence can be materially effective by creating subtle yet profound changes in the psychophysical texture of the movements of the dance. This state can palpably change the perception of the space of the performance, by extending into the inner experiential landscape of the observers of the dance. To communicate this quality of presence is intended to trigger resonances with the experience of *embodied gnosis* in the observers of the dance as well as in the readers of this text.

With the notion of *altered states of knowing* I explore epistemological aspects of the experience of *embodied gnosis* in dance. The concept of *altered states of knowing* refers to specific states of consciousness where the metaphysical appears to intersect with and manifest itself within and through the physical. In dance, I associate the intuition of an intrinsic relation between physical and metaphysical to the beginnings of movement, to their causation. I speculatively explore movement causation by navigating the cutting edge between unconscious and conscious initiation of movement. I communicate the experience of navigating this edge through a non-verbal corporeal ***dance language***.*

The performative state of *embodied gnosis* is seen as an ideal psychophysical territory for exploring expressive and epistemological aspects of movement. When danced speculation about the origin of a movement turns into an experience of proximity with an ineffable creative source, the state of *embodied gnosis* is actualized. This experience causes a radical opening of my being towards the unknown. The target of experiencing *embodied gnosis* in dance is a forever unfinished endeavor, a forever movement of becoming.

Where the movements that I express through my dancing body and that express themselves through my dancing body come from, or who or what lies at the root of their causation remains to a large extent unknown to me. It might be unknowable by its very nature. That it is unknown, or unknowable contributes to the potentially mesmerizing magic of a performative event. I relate unknown sources of movement origination to meta-empirical realms of being and meaning. The speculative and progressive discovery of their nature is here delegated to the dancing body.

When a *numinous* experience of *embodied gnosis* occurs during a dance, I experience it as a unifying quality of life force that somehow mediates between the mind/body, psyche/physis, I/other or ideas/matter divide. I further associate this mediating quality with a subtle psychophysical materiality. Experiencing this subtle materiality seems to be linked with a performative state where inner spaces are created that enable the energy of movement to pass through the material resistance of the physical body. This state allows one to experience the dancing body as an interface for movements that draw together the metaphysical and the physical. This situation of mediation can be creatively enhanced through processes of ***languaging***.* These processes are nurtured in an experiential space of creative friction between my conscious mind that interrogates the materiality of my body and a to a large degree yet unconscious logic of expression of my bodily being.

With dance, I allow my body to speak up, to spit out the pearls of knowing-being that are hidden deeply within its cellular intelligence. Dance then becomes a language – a communicative expression of an inner experience. Corporeal intelligence suggests to me that the entire body and inner being of a dancer moves within a mind (or soul/spirit/consciousness) that is infinitely larger than the singular entity of the human body. This larger mind (or soul/spirit/consciousness) appears to be conscious in its own ways inside of the body.

I intuit that the not yet fully conscious but nevertheless active layers of my bodily being are in touch with, or *know* something that permeates the body intimately, continuously, with or without me being consciously aware of it. Dancing can enable pathways of communication between conscious awareness and yet unconscious corporeal territories.

This communication appears to me to occur in co-creative dialogue with an ineffable transcendent as well as immanent force and source of life, meaning and purpose. Giving expression to the experience of contact between the physical and the metaphysical through a *dance language* can engender *altered states of knowing* which can create openings to experience something ***real**** and sacred.

Into the subtle body: exploring the context of the 'subtle body' and related body-based practices

In search of other practices and theoretical perspectives that could give argumentative substance and context to my intuitive hunch about a subtle materiality that mediates between mind and matter in dance, my attention has been drawn to the subtle body as described in religious and esoteric worldviews and practices.[181]

First questions are: How may subtle body concepts and practices in religious and esoteric contexts relate to the notions of *spiritual corporeality*, *altered states of knowing* and *embodied gnosis*? How can subtle types of corporeality that are intuitively sensed but for which there is not yet a technical vocabulary in contemporary dance practice and theory, be informed by and enter in dialogue with esoteric subtle body concepts and practices?

Some responses to these questions will unfold throughout this chapter.

Following a brief introduction to the notion of *subtle body*, two prominent examples of esoteric forms of thought-embodied-in-motion will be discussed: Rudolf Steiner (1861 -1925) on Eurythmy and George Ivanovich Gurdjieff (1866 -1949) on Movements. Body-based practices introduced by teachers of esoteric knowledge emerged in Europe during the early 20th century.[182] This time frame also gave birth to modern dance, which was strongly imbued with spiritual impulses evident in the writings of modern dance pioneers such as Ruth St. Denis (1879 – 1968), Isadora Duncan (1877 -1927) and Martha Graham (1898 – 1991). Each of them wrote about transformative experiences engendered by dance. They integrated vocabularies, themes, narratives and symbols from religious contexts into their dance creations and written testimonies about the art of dance.[183]

[181] This text partially integrates and further develops previous research from unpublished papers and a thesis written in the context of a MA artistic research at the University of Amsterdam, 2013-3015, supervised by Associate Professor in History of Hermetic philosophy and related currents at the University of Amsterdam, Marco Pasi.

[182] Cusack, "The Contemporary Context of Gurdjieff's Movements," 2017, 96-122.

[183] LaMothe, "Transformation: An ecokinetic approach to the study of ritual dance," 2014, 60.

Isadora Duncan wrote: "The dance of the future will have to become again a high religious art as it was with the Greeks. For art which is not religious is not art, is mere merchandise."[184]
Steiner and Gurdjieff are highlighted because the esoteric forms of thought that they brought into meaningful relation with the body in motion emerged in a relatively recent time frame, where a rational scientific knowledge paradigm had already been established in mainstream intellectual culture. In their teachings, they emphasize understanding (in addition to belief and faith) and embodiment as necessary conditions for the transposition of their spiritual worldviews towards everyday life. With these examples, esoteric forms of thought are embodied in carefully crafted movements. They made accessible (to a certain extent) what had been considered secret mysteries reserved for an exclusive elite of initiates during earlier time frames.[185] These examples give an orientation for how a movement practice can be meaningfully contextualized in a spiritually informed worldview.
Creating a bridge between body-based esoteric practices and the art of dance, I will briefly visit pioneer of expressionist modern dance Rudolf von Laban who translated and appropriated esoteric forms of thought in his practice and theory of dance.
Both Laban and Gurdjieff were inspired by the Sufi practice of the whirling dervishes.[186] The perspective of esoteric Islam, its views on the subtle body and the embodied practice of the Sema ceremony of the Mevlevi Order is brought into the discussion as well. This practice is rooted in the 8th- 9th centuries in Baghdad and is still vibrantly alive today in both eastern and western areas of the globe.
The perspective of esoteric Islam is included to widen the scope of this excursion beyond the cultural boundaries of esoteric Christianity, here represented by Rudolf Steiner. Although ideas about the subtle body in religious and esoteric contexts can be found in a wide range of spiritual and cultural formations including Buddhism, I will focus here mainly on perspectives from esoteric Christianity and esoteric Islam.

[184] Duncan, *Der Tanz der Zukunft*, trans, 1903, 24.
[185] Lucian, "The Dance," 1936/1955, 229.
[186] Cusack, "The Contemporary Context of Gurdjieff's Movements," 2017, 99-100.

This focus has to do with the aim of initiating a dialogue between a contemporary dance practice and a selection of embodied practices of esoteric forms of thought, rather than striving towards a global mapping of the notion of the subtle body.[187]

To focus on esoteric Christianity and esoteric Islam aligns with my ancestral lineage which includes both Muslims and Christians. It is my conviction that a dialogue between Christian and Islamic worldviews and value systems is relevant and is needed in the heterogeneous global political and cultural situation of today. This situation is marked by severe incompatibilities between secular and religious worldviews, by radicalization, repression and alienation resulting from culturally and religiously polarized worldviews, ideas about life, afterlife and the human body. In the following, we will encounter similarities between Christian and Islamic ideas about the spiritual physiology of the subtle body. Evidently, there are also major differences, and I am not embarking on a comparative analysis or on an impossible mission to reconcile these major Abrahamic religions. But an artistically informed rendering of these influences might contribute in one way or the other, modestly, to a constructive dialogue between them.

Occasionally, I will include points of view from other perspectives when appropriate and supportive for the main argument: to consider the dancing body as a creative interface between the physical and the metaphysical; to consider the dancing body as an instrument of perception that can learn to perceive ineffable and sacred dimensions of embodied experience and to investigate and to communicate this experience through a ***dancing language****.

Jung's ideas are important to the history of psychology as well as to the history of esotericism.[188] His vision on the subtle body is relevant for this research because his ideas about the somatic unconscious, the spiritual unconscious and the subtle body can meaningfully contextualize my search for deep sources of movement origination in dance.

His vision of the active imagination embedded within a symbolic logic of inner alchemy and transformation is integrated with the contemporary somatic practice of Authentic

[187] For a global mapping of the subtle body see for example Samuel and Johnston, *Religion and the Subtle Body in Asia and the West: Between Mind and Body*, 2013.

[188] On Jung's contribution to the "psychologization of religion and sacralization of psychology" see Hanegraaff, *New Age Religion and Western Culture. Esotericism in the Mirror of Secular Thought,* 1998, 224 -255 and 482 ff.

Movement. Esoteric Islam emphasizes active imagination and alchemical psychophysical processes related to spiritual types of corporeality.

By visiting the dance practice of Authentic Movement developed during the 1950s in the United States by Mary Starks Whitehouse (1911-1979), a movement art that is still evolving in the contemporary dance landscape is included in the discussion. Authentic Movement incorporates an esoterically inclined worldview in both performative and dance therapeutic contexts.[189] Although this lineup of esoteric and esoterically inclined forms of thought and related body-based practices invites a comparative analysis of the subtle body in diverging contexts, I will do so only occasionally. Instead, I will sieve through the huge corpus of knowledge with the focusing lenses of the key concepts that are relevant for this study: *spiritual corporeality*, *altered states of knowing* and *embodied gnosis*. The above-mentioned questions will be addressed in the *intermezzi* where I develop perspectives from my dance experience - situated in a contemporary dance context - in relation to the visited perspectives and worldviews. Through the dialogue between the body text and the *intermezzi*, I reflect on how the different perspectives on *spiritual corporeality* and *altered states of knowing* gained during this excursion inform the idea and experience of *embodied gnosis*.

The subtle body

Practices and ideas related to the notion of the subtle body can be found in a wide range of religious and esoteric contexts across different cultures and ages. They are commonly associated with practices oriented towards spiritual development in Indian, East Asian and Indo-Tibetan societies. They also exist in Western contexts including Judaism, Neoplatonism and Islam, yet they have been largely marginalized in the academic writing of the history of Western culture, as they are generally associated with esoteric, occult and mystical

[189] See for example Stromsted, "The Alchemy of Authentic Movement: Awakening Spirit in the Body," 2014, 37 -59.

traditions.[190] Subtle-body ideas and practices appear for example in Tibetan Buddhism, Yoga, Sufism, Theosophy, Anthroposophy and New Age popular literature.[191]

Whereas mainstream Western thought based on the Cartesian distinction between *res cogitans* and *res extensa* treats mind and matter as different in nature, subtle-body schemes consider them as *continuous* and generally assume a *common basis* for both mind and matter. This common basis is often described in terms of intermediate levels *between* mind (or spirit or consciousness) and matter. Consciousness is here attributed with materiality, yet a more subtle kind of materiality than ordinary physical matter.[192]

Ideas about the subtle body and related practices thus challenge conventional Western dualisms such as the mind/ body, matter/spirit, I/the other and reason/emotion divides.[193]

Sanskrit origins

The term "subtle body" was introduced in the English language by the Theosophical Society (founded in the USA in 1875) whose members integrated an adaptation of Hindu and Buddhist esoteric knowledge into their syncretic worldview. The term "subtle body" was used as a translation of the Vedantic term *sūkṣmaśarīra*. In the context of the philosophical work of for example the Indian philosopher Śaṃkara (ca. 800 CE) and even before his time, Indians considered the human body as constituted of three levels of existence (bodies). The subtle body (*sūkṣmaśarīra*) is one of these three bodies, the other two being the material or the physical body (s*thūlaśarīra*) and the causal body (*kāraṇaśarīra*). The ultimate Self (*ātman*) is here identified with the non-dual principle Brahman and lies beyond these three bodies.[194] The three bodies or levels of existence are related to states of consciousness and are described as being enclosed within each other like Russian dolls. The physical body corresponds to waking consciousness, the subtle body to dream consciousness and the causal body to the state of dreamless sleep. In Śaṃkara's school of thought, ultimate truth

[190] Samuel and Johnston, *Religion and the Subtle Body,* xiii- xiv. For an extensive account on how esotericism has been saved from the "trashbin" and found its way into Academia see Wouter J. Hanegraaff, *Esotericism and the Academy. Rejected Knowledge in Western Culture* (Cambridge University Press, 2012).

[191] Samuel and Johnston, *Religion and the Subtle Body,* 2013, 1-9.

[192] Ibid*,* xiii.

[193] Ibid*,* 1-9.

[194] Ibid*,* 2.

(*paramārtha-satya*) is that Brahman (or non-dual and non-intentional consciousness) alone is real, and that the world of experience is only a delusory appearance. The subtle, physical and causal bodies are seen as unreal superimpositions on the ultimate Self (*ātman*). The physical body is seen as a perishable receptacle containing the subtle body, which animates the physical body. The subtle body is related to the mental, vital and sensory functions and is made up of an extremely fine and imperceptible kind of matter. Vital energy (*prāna*) is given shape into the higher mind (*vijñāna* or *buddhi*) and the lower mind (*manas*). The lower mind is linked to the five inner senses (*tanmātras*) that are associated with sound, taste, smell, sight and touch and correspond in the external world to elements of ether (or space), water, earth, fire and air. The subtle body is understood to be more real and durable than the physical body and it withdraws from the physical body at the moment of its death.[195]

The founding mother of Theosophy, Helena Blavatsky (1831-91) incorporated these ideas about the different bodies and levels of existence into her worldview and teaching. She developed a "septenary structure" (*saptaparṇa*) that describes the human being as composed of seven distinct yet connected principles. This structure can be seen as an attempt to understand and to describe how human corporeality and consciousness are related to the bigger context of the universe.[196] These ideas were then further developed by other Theosophical writers such as C.W. Leadbeater (1854-1934), Annie Besant (1847-1933) and by Rudolf Steiner (1861-1925), who eventually left the Theosophical society and founded his own esoteric movement with the Anthroposophical Society in 1912. With some variations, all of these thinkers assume a series of 'higher bodies' (etheric, astral, mental and causal) that coexist with the physical body and that correspond to "higher planes of existence" related to progressively subtler levels of materiality. Although the initial conceptual skeleton of the subtle body schemes developed in the Western cultural context is founded on Indian thought, the Theosophists and Steiner developed the scheme further based on insights derived from psychic and clairvoyant experiences. They developed their own terminologies, which eventually differed quite substantially from the meanings of the original Sanskrit terms in the Indian context. [197]

---

[195] Cross, "Metaphysical Factors behind the Empirical World: Advaita Vedānta," 2013, 132- 135.

[196] Hall, "The Saptaparṇa: The Meaning and Origins of the Theosophical Constitution of Man," 2007, 5.

[197] Samuel, G. and Johnston, *Religion and the Subtle Body,* 2.

Rudolf Steiner and Eurythmy

In the context of the Theosophical Society, Rudolf Steiner (1861, Kralijevec, Croatia - 1925, Dornach, Switzerland) focused on the Western Christian-Rosicrucian spiritual path. This in contrast to other key figures in the Society such as Annie Besant, who inclined more towards Eastern Oriental wisdom traditions.[198] Differences between the Western and the Eastern orientation,[199] and Steiner's preference for artistic approaches to the spiritual life over rational and intellectual approaches, were the main reasons for Steiner's separation from the Theosophical Society.[200]

In "The Story of my Life" Steiner wrote: "the artistic image is more spirit-like than the rationalistic concept. It is also alive and does not kill the spiritual in the soul as does intellectualism."[201] Steiner mentioned that the intolerance of some members of the theosophical movement towards an innovative inclusion of an artistic element in the program of their congress (a reconstruction of the Eleusinian drama by Schuré), lay at the root of the separation of the anthroposophical movement from the theosophical movement.[202] The "Anthroposofische Gesellschaft" was founded on 28.12.1912.[203]

Spiritual corporeality

Steiner's worldview is based on the spiritual evolution of the human being. He highlighted artistic sensibility as central to spiritual life and developed a view on art that endows it with the ability to realize and to manifest [verwirklichen] what lives in the spiritual world through sensory-suprasensory [sinnlich - übersinnlich] modes of cognition.[204]

---

[198] Leijenhorst, "Steiner, Rudolf," in *Dictionary of Gnosis & Western Esotericism*, 2006, 1089.

[199] See also Pasi, "Oriental Kabbalah and the Parting of East and West in the Early Theosophical Society," 2010, 151-166.

[200] Steiner, "The Story of my Life, chapter XXXVIII", Rudolf Steiner Archive, accessed 27.11.2022 https://rsarchive.org/Books/GA028/English/APC1928/GA028_c38.html .

[201] Ibid.

[202] Ibid.

[203] Leijenhorst, "Steiner, Rudolf," 2006, 1090.

[204] Steiner, "Das Sinnlich Übersinnliche in seiner Verwirklichung durch die Kunst. Zwei Vorträge, Berlin, 15. Und 17. Februar 1918," 1941, 81-124. See also Steiner, *Art and Theory of Art. Foundations of a New Aesthetics*, 2021.

In Steiner's aesthetic worldview, the spiritual inhabits each body or object but is depending on individual ensouled participation in this spiritual aspect [das Geistige] for it to be able to share itself. About his movement art Eurythmy, he stated that "Eurythmy beseelt das Geistige" [Eurythmy ensouls the spiritual], meaning that the practice of Eurythmy enacts the ensoulment of the spiritual life hidden in bodies or objects.

According to Steiner, Eurythmy has a transformative effect on the human organism. He considered this practice to be incomplete when the human being is struggling with something in the body that has not yet become soul or ensouled. In eurythmic performance, the entire body must become ensouled.[205]

Intermezzo

Altered states of knowing

Steiner's emphasis on the artistic and creative element in spiritual life in contrast to rational and intellectual approaches to spirituality relates to my own aims. I endeavor to reorient conceptual and intellectual modes of understanding (the making as well as the reception of) dance towards its spiritual dimensions.

The reason for re-orienting the understanding of dance towards its spiritual dimensions is based on an intuition that the epistemological potential of dance is able to transcend the boundaries of rational intellection by means of a spiritually corporeal intelligence. I intuit this potential, but I don't understand it rationally. This type of intelligence can convey an experience of intimate proximity with an ineffable creative source. This experience stubbornly evades verbalization, but it can be communicated through dance. Dance can generate altered states of knowing that convey an awareness of a meaningful relation between the human body, planet earth and cosmic forces of unfathomable origin. For Steiner, eurythmy, which in his view is not to be identified with dance per se, can generate a sense of participation in an "ensouled" cosmic context. I embrace this view. A major difference between most contemporary dance practices and Steiner's approach to eurythmy is that Steiner is explicit

[205] Loosely translated from German in Wagenmann, *Inmitten der teilhabende Mensch. Zur Gesellschaftlichen Wirksamkeit Eurythmischer Bewegung und Methodik*, 2015, 44-45.

about an intuitive sense of the spiritual within the physical. To him, a cosmic context that evolves according to a logic of spiritual evolution is crucial and presupposes a corresponding physical evolution. In contemporary dance and its discourse, the presence of the spiritual within the physical is rarely addressed. On my part, however, I associate a logic of spiritual evolution with complex processes of incarnating consciousness. I posit that dance practice can give a specific perspective - other than biological, scientific, psychological or theological perspectives - on this process of incarnation of consciousness.

Altered states of knowing

Steiner delved deeply into the mystery of incarnation and the creation of his movement art Eurythmy developed in parallel with the development of his Christology. Professor in Religious studies Carole M. Cusack considers Eurythmy to be the first "esoteric movement art directed towards spiritual advancement" that emerged in the context of Western culture during the early 20th century.[206] In *Die Mystik im Aufgang des neuzeitlichen Geisteslebens* (*Mysticism at the Dawn of the Modern Age*, 1901) Steiner argues, that inner mystical experiences and external knowledge of nature should be understood as complementary[207]. Modern science, therefore, should be connected to knowledge gained through an inner mystical path.[208]

In Steiner's view of art, the artist becomes a "tool for the creative powers of the world", whereby impulses from higher invisible worlds are received and brought into material

[206] Cusack, "The Contemporary Context of Gurdjieff's Movements," 2017, 98-99.

[207] I am not aware of what kind of definition of complementarity Steiner worked with in 1901. In a colloquial understanding of complementarity in contemporary physics "two descriptions of a situation are complementary if they are both necessary for a complete description of that situation and at the same time incompatible with each other." Atmanspacher and Primas, *Recasting Reality*, 2008, 4. In line with Pauli's observation of a kinship between "consciousness" and the "unconscious" as epistemological coordinates in psychology and the principle of "complementarity" in physics, the inner mystical experiences Steiner refers to could be mapped with the "unconscious" and the external knowledge of nature with "consciousness". Steiner's anthroposophical approach then brings together consciousness and the unconscious in a specific approach to knowledge through spiritual science.

[208] Leijenhorst, "Steiner, Rudolf," 2006, 1087.

expression.[209] Practicing art therefore needs to be in touch with the realms of the physical, the soul and the spiritual.[210] The anthroposophical[211] movement worked on finding ways to express and manifest a spiritual impulse that Steiner perceived to be given in the early 20th century. The new art form that Steiner saw as especially suited to receive and embody this spiritual impulse was Eurythmy,[212] which emerged organically from the anthroposophical worldview.[213]

By investigating the "inner force of the word" (in reference to the Logos in the Gospel of John), Eurythmy started out as a body language where inner experiences of vowels are impressed into bodily movement. The esoteric philosophy underlying this approach to bodily movement was based on the idea that the sound of vocals (in a later development also consonants) expresses the original feeling modalities of the soul, which dwell in the body.[214] Eurythmic invention of movement is based on sensory-suprasensory observation [*sinnlich-übersinnliche Beobachtung*] of the airy movements of letters formed through the throat center, and the imitation thereof with the arms and the hands.

The movements of the etheric body (see below) are thus harmonized with the expression of the physical body.[215] This form of Eurythmy, Steiner called "speech eurythmy, the visible word."[216]

---

[209] Steiner, "Eurythmie, was sie ist und wie sie entstanden ist. Penmaenmawr, 26. August 1923," 2, Rudolf Steiner Online Archive, accessed 25.04.2015, http://anthroposophie.byu.edu/vortraege/279a.pdf.

[210] Steiner, "Eurythmie, was sie ist und wie sie entstanden ist," 1923, 4.

[211] The term anthroposophy has been introduced already before Steiner by for example the English alchemists Thomas Vaughan (1622 – 1666). It was used later also by the philosopher Immanuel Hermann Fichte (1797-1879) (son of Johann Gottlob Fichte) and by the professor of philosophy Robert Zimmermann (1824-1898) with whom Steiner studied in Vienna. Leijenhorst, "Anthroposophy," in *Dictionary of Gnosis & Western Esotericism*, 2006, 82.

[212] Steiner, "Eurythmie, was sie ist und wie sie entstanden ist," 1923, 4.

[213] Ibid, 2.

[214] For a contemporary application of the eurythmic alphabet see also "Applied Eurythmy – Dean Pollard –Ambidextrousness," uploaded April 21, 2009, YouTube, accessed 05.05.2015 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7Gk6oJhT028.

[215] Steiner, "Eurythmie, was sie ist und wie sie entstanden ist,"1923, 8.

[216] Steiner, "Eurythmy as Visible Singing," Rudolf Steiner Archive, accessed 3.6.23, http://wn.rsarchive.org/Lectures/GA278/English/AMTRP1996/EuViSg_tone.html.

Another form of Eurythmy is "tone eurythmy, visible singing," described as making "visible that which is invisible, but lives audibly, in music."[217] A distinctly subtle and occult physiology lies at the basis of Eurythmy and working with the so called "etheric body" in relation to the physical body plays a central role.

Spiritual corporeality

The subtle body scheme developed by Steiner is subdivided into seven components based on a three-fold division between the physical realm, the realm of the soul and the realm of the spirit:

1. Physical body
2. Etheric Body or Vital body
3. Astral body
4. I as core of the soul [*Ich als Seelenkern*]
5. Spiritual self [*Geistselbst*] as transformed astral body
6. Lifespirit [*Lebensgeist*] as transformed vital body
7. Spiritual man [*Geistesmensch*] as transformed physical body[218]

Eurythmy works with the idea of a sensory-suprasensory human corporeality comprised of several layers of inner and outer "members of being" [*Wesensglieder*].[219] Anthroposophists and Eurythmy practitioners neither assume the psychologically-spiritual [*das Seelisch-Geistige*] as materialistically given properties of the body - as is usually the case in Western psychology and medicine - nor do they follow the Eastern view of the body as Maja, as an illusion that needs to be overcome.[220]

[217] Ibid. For an impression of "tone eurythmy" see also "Symphonie / Eurythmie Mendelssohn (Eurythmeum Stuttgart mit Goetheanumbühne Dornach", published 30.03.2011, YouTube, accessed 3.6.2023, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AfFQnnyuLCs.
[218] Steiner, *Theosophie*, 1955, 59.
[219] For an extensive overview on Steiner's "Wesensglieder", see "Wesensglieder," AnthroWiki, accessed 3.6.2023, https://anthrowiki.at/Wesensglieder.
[220] Fors, *Geschichte der Eurythmie im tanzhistorischen Kontext 1912-1930*, 2015, 49.

Instead, the so-called "carrier of the I" [*der Ich-Träger*] is seen as the spiritual center of the incarnated human being as well as the focal point of the immortal I [*das unsterbliche Ich*]. This "I" works through the incarnation into the physical body and evolves further by working on the transformation of the physical, etheric and astral body. [221]

Altered states of knowing

Anthroposophy is based on the idea that the human being is equipped with two fundamentally different modes of perception: an externally oriented mode via the senses (I *sit on the chair)* and an internally oriented mode that is related to the consciousness of the self (*I* sit on the chair). The path of perception from the inner self-conscious human being is not leading directly towards the outside that is perceivable via the senses. Instead, it loses itself in the unconscious. In this view, there is an abyss between the perception of the outside via the senses and the inner experience of that perception.

According to Steiner, the etheric body is the missing bridge between these two modes of perception. The etheric body is seen as the missing link between the body (external orientation via the senses) and the soul (internally oriented consciousness of the self). The etheric body is supposed to be of a suprasensory nature. It is not psychological [*seelisch*] but physical and belongs to the exterior nature of the human being. The etheric body can be experienced in metamorphoses, in transitions and in movement itself as a temporal process. Steiner calls the etheric body also "*Lebensleib*", "*Bildekräfteleib*", or "*Zeitleib*".[222]

The etheric body is seen as the lowest suprasensory layer of the spiritual physiology of the human being, and all living beings including animals and plants are supposed to have an etheric body.[223]

According to Steiner, Eurythmy only works with those movement impulses that are encompassed with full consciousness. This stands in his view in contradistinction to dance, where the human being supposedly loses him or herself in the movement by working merely from the limbs. In Eurythmy, the soul is supposed to be fully in control of the body while in

[221] "Wesensglieder," AnthroWiki, accessed 3.6.2023, https://anthrowiki.at/Wesensglieder .
[222] Fors, *Geschichte der Eurythmie im tanzhistorischen Kontext 1912-1930*, 2015, 50.
[223] "Ätherleib," AnthroWiki, accessed 2.8.2022, https://anthrowiki.at/%C3%84therleib .

dance the soul would let herself go, spilling into the body in an uncontrolled way. [224] The question of technique in Eurythmy is based on soulful-spiritual [*seelisch-geistig*] mastery of the etheric body in motion. It is the etheric body that is dancing in Eurythmy in the first place, not the physical body.[225]

With Steiner, the human being stands in between two polar forces: whereas the physical body is ruled by the laws of gravity, the etheric body carries oppositional forces to gravity that tend towards lightness. Whereas the physical body tends to contract towards a central point, the etheric body tends towards extending itself peripherally into all directions.

In Eurythmy, an "etheric" quality of motion is related to an experience of being in the lightness, as if being pulled upwards and outwards by a peripheral force.[226]

Contemporary Eurythmist Gail Langstroth describes Eurythmy as an instrument for perception[227]. Eurythmy is understood as a practice that enables to perceive suprasensory impulses from the spiritual realm and that gives expression to these impulses through movement. The physical body is here developed as a vehicle to make the movements of the etheric body visible.[228] In Eurythmy, what counts is not the swinging lines of dance or the rhythms of the movements but "[…] was uns durch den Menschen als kosmische Wesenheit gesagt werden soll, weil er ein geistbeseelter Mensch ist […]."[229]

[224] Fors, *Geschichte der Eurythmie*, 2015, 83.
[225] Ibid, 79.
[226] Loosely translated from German in ibid, 49-51.
[227] Based on a conversation with Gail Langstroth at MIMAGES Eurythmy Festival The Hague September 2019. For an impression of her art see for example "'Halleluiah', performed by Gail Langstroth, YouTube, accessed 4.6.2023, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S1y0omZjAco.
[228] Marti, *The Four Ethers,* 1984, 9.
[229] "[…] what should be communicated to us through the human being as a cosmic being, because he is a spirit-ensouled human being […]" Translated from Steiner quoted in Fors, *Geschichte der Eurythmie*, 2015, 82.

Intermezzo

Altered states of knowing

Contemporary dancers primarily work with the physical body. The idea of an etheric body is not (yet?) part of the vocabulary of contemporary dance. A relatable discourse around energies, fields and transformative forces that are performatively explored is just about to emerge in the globally networked Western European dance circuit.[230] *I am curious about how a spiritually oriented contemporary dance practice can be informed by and enter in dialogue with esoterically informed ideas about human corporeality and related practices. Through a dancing language in body and words, I explore how the dancing body can function as a creative interface through which I can investigate and communicate possible relationships between the physical and the metaphysical.*

The polarity between gravity and the force of lightness (or levity) can be seen as one of the main conditions for determining the logic of expression of the human dancing body. It as an abstract and timeless - metaphysical - condition. At the same time, this polarity is concrete, physical and always anchored in the present moment. The way in which a dance relates to the opposing forces of gravity and levity determines its aesthetic signature. In classical ballet for example, training the body upwards, towards lightness is paramount. The ability to maintain the body in a state of elevation against, yet in dialogue with gravity - conquered through many years of intense physical labor - can deliver the romantic and ethereal enchantment a classical ballet performance may trigger. Very generally speaking, modern dance as it developed during the 20th century responded to this tendency towards otherworldly ephemeral lightness in classical ballet with a much more grounded aesthetic.

[230] See for example Huschka and Gronau, *Energy and Forces as Aesthetic Interventions. Politics of Bodily Scenarios,* 2019.

Spiritual corporeality

One major difference with Steiner's treatment of the upward and downward forces in Eurythmy is, that he interprets them from an esoteric perspective embedded in a cosmic history of spiritual evolution of the human being. Steiner provides a metaphysical framework for the nature of these forces. He anchors their manifestation in concretely described but esoterically conceived layers of the spiritual physiology of the human body: the physical body is related to gravity and the etheric body is working in polar opposition against gravity, towards lightness (levity). With Steiner, levity is attributed to an etheric force that exerts itself in polar opposition to gravitational forces from the earth. He states that it stems from a cosmic dimension related to the spiritual anatomy of the sun. It is also associated with the forces of resurrection.[231]

What then can be perceived in secular artistic terms as an other-worldly, romantic and dream like aesthetic ideal in for example Classical Ballet, becomes with Eurythmy and Steiner's view on art and cosmic life a realization of spiritual forces in the physical realm.

Intermezzo

Altered states of knowing

In the secular discursive context of contemporary dance, levity can be described as an aesthetic force. It can be generated by a combination of intentional aspiration and muscular effort that together create a movement quality of being pulled upwards. Physically and anatomically speaking, the elevation of the torso against gravity enables more freedom and nuance of leg articulation. For this research, I have experimented with the expressive potential of the polar opposition between gravity and levity by modulating a dance phrase in relation to this force field.[232] In an earlier research "A dance phrase articulated in the force field between gravity and levity", levity was imagined as an upward pulling force from outside of

[231] See for example Whicher, *Projective Geometry. Creative Polarities in Space and* 2013, 92 and 262-274.

[232] See Research Catalogue entry "A dance phrase articulated between gravity and levity" https://www.researchcatalogue.net/view/520371/520372.

the body that acts on the body in dialogue with the downward pull of gravity. Dance became the expression of an experience of active and conscious participation with an imagined counterforce to gravity.

Through his anthroposophical epistemology, Steiner attempted to transform modern scientific rationality. He constructed his epistemology in contrast to among others Descartes, whose thought he considered to be a "symptom" of modern scientific thought.[233]
Steiner defended the necessity of spiritual science as opposed to natural materialistic science, to prepare the human being to be able to receive the Christ-impulse from the etheric plane, in the physical plane. The locus of perception that can receive this Christ-impulse is for Steiner the "I" consciousness,[234] and Eurythmy is understood as enabling a practitioner to perceive this impulse. The "I" consciousness is related to the "I" sense [*Ichsinn*]. This sense implies being able to perceive the "I" of another human being, to perceive oneself as one, to perceive the other as a part of oneself.[235]

Towards embodied gnosis

In dance, it is possible to carry the body through space in a way that it seems literally pulled up against gravity. This way of carrying the body can be enacted by blending ***corporeal imagination***** with will power and muscular force. An active pushing of the legs down into the ground results in an immediate opposite elevation of the body. When the space of awareness above the top of the head is opened vertically upwards, it can allow the body to shoot up in length even further. Occasionally, I have experienced something like a force from outside of the body that seemed to support this upwards thrust, as if I were literally being pulled up by*

[233] Clement, "Das Ich in der Erkenntnis – Rudolf Steiner und René Descartes," 2001, 262.
[234] Steiner, "Der Christus-Impuls und die Entwickelung des Ich-Bewusstseins," Rudolf Steiner Archive, accessed 4.6.2023, http://anthroposophie.byu.edu/vortraege/116.pdf .
[235] "Und ein noch intimeres Verhältnis zur Außenwelt als der Denksinn gibt uns derjenige Sinn, der es uns möglich macht, mit einem anderen Wesen so zu fühlen, sich eins zu wissen, dass man es wie sich selbst empfindet. Das ist, wenn man durch das Denken, durch das lebendige Denken, das einem das Wesen zuwendet, das Ich dieses Wesens wahrnimmt – der Ichsinn." In Steiner, *Das Rätsel des Menschen. Die geistigen Hintergründe der menschlichen Geschichte. Kosmische und menschliche Geschichte,1992*, 110. Accessed 4.6.23, Internet Archive, https://archive.org/details/rudolf-steiner-ga-170 .

something outside of me. This "as if" could possibly be due to an increased strength in the upward pulling capacity of the psoas muscle which connects the legs to the torso, or to an increased intelligent orchestration of a variety of muscles, nerves, cells etc. that seem to be able to respond immediately to the inner directives given by upwards thriving ***corporeal imagination**** *and by the will. I associate the sense of being pulled upwards "for real" to being able to experience the peripheral forces exerted on the physical body by the etheric body that Steiner describes and that Eurythmists work with. This implies that a dancing body can potentially know or understand by intuitive experience what Steiner wrote about. It also implies that the realm of experience referred to by Steiner as "the etheric" body is not exclusive to Eurythmy and might be relevant for contemporary dancers as well. Exploring the idea of the "etheric body" experientially can thus open new perspectives on the multilayered psychophysical matters a dance practice can engage with. I don't verify the existence of the etheric body. Instead, I explore the creative potentials of my dancing body as a vehicle for perception, in dialogue with esoterically informed ideas and practices.*

Through this process, an amplified human corporeality that is not limited to the physical body comes into sight. This corporeality includes subtle materialities that are connected to the perception of the body in motion. Although this understanding of human corporeality does not (yet) fit within a materialistic and rationalist scientific knowledge paradigm, it can be explored through an artistic practice as a territory for knowledge generation.

Altered states of knowing

In his epistemology, Steiner disagrees with Kant that our ability to know is limited to how we perceive through our senses and that only perceptions from the physical world can be knowable to us. In Steiner's view, human beings already participate in the spiritual world through the concepts that we are thinking. He claims that concepts do not derive from sense experience but live within human beings as non-physical spiritual entities. Concepts come through a form of "inner seeing" into the spiritual world. Steiner calls this kind of perception intuition which is distinct from sense perception. Through conscious development of a quality of thinking that is independent from the physical senses, it would be possible to attain

knowledge of suprasensory reality. In the act of knowing suprasensory reality, concept and percept are understood to become one and thinking itself becomes a suprasensory object.[236] In *Knowledge of the Higher Worlds and Its Attainment [Wie erlangt man Erkenntnisse der höheren Welten?]* (1904/05) Steiner introduced a path towards the development of spiritual insights into higher realms of existence, traversed by the perceptual faculties of imagination, inspiration and intuition.[237]

Intermezzo

Towards embodied gnosis

Steiner connects imagination, intuition and inspiration with supra-sensory and spiritual dimensions of being which can be perceived through an expanded array of inner and outer senses[238]. In contemporary dance, imagination and intuition are constitutive to any kind of creative process. If and how they are related to a sense of spirituality often remains a private concern. I see Steiner's theoretical, cosmological and epistemological framework, into which Eurythmy is embedded, as a counterpoint to secularized contemporary dance practice and a rationalized dance discourse. In contemporary dance art, intuition and inspiration might be privately experienced as "spiritual", but there are to my knowledge barely any theoretical or epistemological frameworks that allow for a critical discussion of these faculties in relation to spiritually informed points of view.[239] There are probably as many perspectives on spirituality in dance art as there are different aesthetic paradigms.

---

[236] Hindes, "Rudolf Steiner's Epistemology," Rudolf Steiner Web, accessed 4.6.23, https://www.rudolfsteinerweb.com/Rudolf_Steiner%27s_Epistemology.php.

[237] Leijenhorst, "Anthroposophy," in *Dictionary of Gnosis & Western Esotericism*, 2006, 88.

[238] See for example Steiner, *Themen aus dem Gesamtwerk. Zur Sinneslehre*, 2014, 143.

[239] In the field of the visual arts, Museum de Lakenhal in Leiden recently thematized intuition with the exhibition *Imagine Intuition* (14.10.22 – 15.1.23). "Tentoonstelling Imagine Intuition", Museum de Lakenhal, accessed 21.1.23, https://www.lakenhal.nl/nl/verhaal/tentoonstelling-imagine-intuition .The opening was preceded by a workshop hosted by the Lorentz Center titled "Beyond science and art: The role of intuition" (11-13.10.2022). "Beyond science and art: The role of Intuition", Lorentzcenter.nl, accessed 21.1.23, https://www.lorentzcenter.nl/beyond-science-and-art-the-role-of-intuition.html. As a participant of the workshop, it became evident that a

Steiner's epistemology, that he presented as a spiritual-scientific method to penetrate the essential nature of things rather than to create representational models of reality, could function as a point of reference for a dance epistemology. A first step in that direction is my proposition of a new perspective on knowledge that is based on dance experience. Here the dancing body becomes a creative interface, a vehicle for perceiving and speculatively exploring relationships between the physical and the metaphysical.

Steiner states that what counts in Eurythmy is "what should be communicated to us through the human being as a cosmic being, because he is a spirit-ensouled [geistbeseelter] human being [Mensch]"[240]. For me, this statement is a stimulating provocation because I am not yet sufficiently conscious about what wants to be communicated through me as a human being through my non-verbal dance language. Dance practice ignites in me an intuition about a relation between the human body and cosmic dimensions of existence and I investigate this intuition speculatively through dance. I imagine that the art of dance needs a more expansive idea of human corporeality to move sure footed towards the future. The self-diagnosis of not yet being conscious enough is implied in the "towards" embodied gnosis that I am exploring here through a dancing language in body and words.

comprehensive understanding of intuition benefits from combining both artistic and scientific points of view.

[240] Translated from Steiner quoted in Fors, *Geschichte der Eurythmie im tanzhistorischen Kontext 1920-30*, 2015, 82.

George Ivanovich Gurdjieff (1866-77? - 1949) and Movements

G.I. Gurdjieff belongs next to Rudolf Steiner (1861 – 1925) and Helena Blavatsky (1831-1891) to the most influential representatives of esoteric forms of thought in modern esotericism. He began to disseminate his knowledge from 1912 onwards, first in Russia, and then later in the United States and in France. Sacred dances are central to his teachings.[241]

Altered states of knowing

Characteristic of Gurdjieff's thought and practice is his wake-up call to self-consciousness. Gurdjieff classifies consciousness in four states: sleeping, waking consciousness, self-remembering and the attainment of an objective consciousness. With Gurdjieff, it is through a state of objective consciousness that the mind can become aware of the true nature of reality.[242] To strengthen this objective consciousness, intensive work on the alignment of the intellectual, sensory and emotional centers in the human body is required, in harmony with cosmic laws.[243] This work would finally result in the acquirement of a finer body, a subtle body within the body, a soul,[244] or a *kesdjan* body.[245] For Gurdjieff, it is necessary to enter a state of objective consciousness to be able to perceive the unity between the human being, the universe and God. Knowledge of this unity is understood as objective knowledge which he considered to be problematic to be expressed through words or ordinary language.[246]
With Gurdjieff, human beings are composed of three bodies: a physical body corresponding to the planetary sphere, an emotional body corresponding to the astral sphere and a mental body corresponding to the spiritual sphere. Gurdjieff distinguishes three different approaches to spiritual practice whereby asceticism is associated with the physical body and the way of the fakir, religious feeling and sentiment is associated with the way of the monk and the way of reason is associated with the yogi. Gurdjieff's teaching is called The Fourth Way, the way

[241] Cusack, "The Contemporary Context of Gurdjieff's Movements," 2017, 96.
[242] Rosenthal, *The Occult in Russian and Soviet Culture*, 1997, 360.
[243] Cusack, "An Enlightened Life in Text and Image: G. I. Gurdjieff's *Meetings with Remarkable Men* (1963) and Peter Brook's Meetings *with Remarkable Men* (1979)," 2011, 75.
[244] Cusack, ibid, 76.
[245] Cusack, "The Contemporary Context of Gurdjieff's Movements," 2017, 104.
[246] Bennett, "Gurdjieff's all and everything", *Riders Review* 1950, Gurdjieff-Bibliography, accessed 13.11.19, https://gurdjieff-bibliography.com/Current/index.html .

of the divine body. It stands for the synthesis of the three different approaches to spiritual practice leading to self-perfection and the ability to become aware of true reality.[247]

Gurdjieff's Movements[248] are the essence of his teachings. Learning to conduct the body in complexly coordinated motion is central to his school of thought and practice. Two vital functions are attributed to the Movements: the harmonious evolution of the dancers and the transmission of esoteric knowledge.[249] The purpose of the Movements is the alignment of the human centers with the cosmos and with cosmic laws of evolution.[250]

The Movements are inspired by traditional folkloric dances and sacred rituals, which he claimed to have encountered in various Sufi Orders, Buddhist centers and ancient hidden monasteries.[251] The strictly codified movements are seen as sacred dances that represent cosmic and metaphysical laws through embodiment by the dancers. These laws are supposedly only intelligible to those who are acquainted with these laws.[252]

An instructor-dancer and a musician typically conduct a movement class.

Participants explain their experience:

> For participants, movements are essentially interior – where the conjunction of attention, thoughts, feelings, sensory impressions, rhythmic response to music, and attempts at increasingly complex multifaceted physical movement meet and are often countered by predictable patterns of mechanical association. A special opportunity and challenge exists during Gurdjieff's movements exercises – not simply to memorise and repeat the complex sequences in an automatic way, but to recognise moments of opportunity when the ordinary mind cannot control

---

[247] Rosenthal, *The Occult in Russian and Soviet Culture,* 1997, 361.

[248] See for example "Gurdjieff Movements,"accessed 1.5.23, http://gurdjieff-movements.net/ .

[249] Driscoll, J. Walter. "The Art of G.I. Gurdjieff," 25, Gurdjieff-Bibliography, accessed 4.6.23, https://gurdjieff-bibliography.com/Current/index.html .

[250] Cusack, "An Enlightened Life," 2011, 75.

[251] see also Pittman, *Classical Spirituality in Contemporary America. The Confluence and Contribution of G.I. Gurdjieff and Sufism,* 2012, 43.

[252] Ouspensky, *In Search of the Miraculous*. *Fragments of an Unknown Teaching,* date unknown, 23. Archive.org, accessed September 2015, https://archive.org/details/pdfy-AHobOEFHR4B4PBSm/page/n21/mode/2up .

movement and the mechanical side of the moving center has not yet taken over."[253]

Jeanne de Salzmann, dance teacher and pupil of Gurdjieff describes this experience as: "In that moment a feeling of urgency may arise that creates a new energy and attention. The movement can then be taken over by the moving center while remaining connected with this energy that is able to control it and yet leave it free."[254]

Intermezzo

Towards embodied gnosis

In my approach to dance, I enable an intermediary zone of corporeal consciousness where two types of movement origination blend into each other. One type of movement is an intuitive movement that emerges in the moment. The other is movement based on conscious choice making that is based on already known movement materials. Both types of movement origination relate in different ways to the control of motion. Intuitively emerging movement requires a performative state where consciousness releases the urge to control and surrenders choice making to the body. Conscious choice making, on the other hand, happens from a performative state where movement patterns that are already inscribed in the body are re-actualized. I describe the somewhat suspended quality of consciousness that blends these two performative states as a knowing-being zone. Here choice making is intentionally delegated to unknown sources of movement origination deep inside of the body whilst simultaneously reflecting on the emerging movement with conscious awareness. There is an intricate play between allowing the body to initiate movement and a trained reflex to control it, especially when re-actualizing movements that have already been inscribed into the body.

I relate these observations to the de-automised and energizing center of movement as described by Salzmann with reference to Gurdjieff's Movements. This center balances on the edge between controlling the movement and allowing it to pass through the body freely. To

[253] Driscoll, "The Art of G.I. Gurdjieff," 2004, 26.
[254] Salzmann quoted in Driscoll, ibid, 26.

create movement from this state of being, suspended between two states, can give a sense of an immediate and somehow completely reliable creativity. A sense of communion with a creative source that engages with the body in motion from within its corporeal depths as well as from outside of the body.

Negotiating the dynamic and constantly moving thin line between an urge to control the movement and the will to surrender its origination to another, unknown source plays a key role in entering the zone of consciousness in motion that I allude to with the notion of embodied gnosis.

Spiritual corporeality:

Gurdjieff taught about the work of building a new inner body. Conditions required for this work relate to inner and outer objective cosmological laws of evolution. These laws are structured according to the numerical values of sevens, threes and octaves and are understood to affect the involution and evolution of subtle and dense matter. According to Gurdjieff, "this special matter … cannot come into being unconsciously … to build this body inside man is the aim of all religions and all schools; every religion has its own special way, but the aim is always the same."[255]

Comparable to Steiner's scheme of a transforming physiology in line with a logic of spiritual evolution, Gurdjieff speaks about the creation of a subtle form of matter (a soul) through body principles that act on each other, leading to a transformed body. The physical body is described as the first body and as the negative principle. A second body, the active principle of the soul, works upon this body. A kind of inner magnetism is supposed to function as a neutralizing principle between the first and the second body. This magnetism is described as a necessary mediator for the second body to be able to master the physical body. A third body – the mental body - would then be formed within the second body.

With the development of a fourth body, the farthest possible development of a human being would be achieved. This fourth body is associated with the real "I", the state of being of a completed soul. It is characterized by "real will", an active principle that governs all the other bodies and that is immortal. [256]

[255] Gurdjieff, *Views from the Real World. Eearly Talks of G.I. Gurdjieff*, 1984, 202-203.
[256] Gurdjieff, *Views from the Real World*, 1984, 217.

Intermezzo

Towards embodied gnosis

Gurdjieff's description of the various bodies and how they interact presents a good example for a technical vocabulary of an esoteric movement practice that explains subtle psychophysical mechanisms. He clarifies how the various bodies interact with one another and the transformative and evolutionary purpose for their interaction. I assert that this explicit inclusion of subtle psychophysical dimensions of human corporeality is an important additional dimension to strictly anatomical and physiological approaches to contemporary dance techniques. Another meaningful dimension of Gurdjieff's teaching is that he explicitly aligns the ontology of human corporeality with cosmic laws. Like Steiner, Gurdjieff includes the bigger picture of spiritual evolution as one of the main purposes of his movement practice. When movement has no purpose outside itself - a characteristic of the emancipation of postmodern dance from meaning and narrative -, the experience of the inner universe of the dancer can become magnified. The bigger picture of explicit association of the inner and the outer universe is what attracts my curiosity in esoteric approaches to movement practice. Over time and through experience, the dancer may learn to take distance from the body and to enter fully into dialogue, on a more existential level, with movement as it is. Movement can then be experienced as an impersonal, somewhat neutral but all-encompassing force that does not belong to the dancer but that passes through the corporeal being. It can be infused with different qualities and textures, with intentionalities and corporeal articulation. To conceptualize the dancing body as a creative interface is derived from this experience. The inner act of consciously willed and partial disidentification from the physical body, to let movement pass through and act on it freely, eventually allows more mobility and a wider space of expression for different textures of corporeality.

With partial disidentification I mean loosening the grip of control over the body in motion and surrendering the personal will to align with another order of an impersonal unknown will. This inner act of disidentification creates a space where it becomes possible to listen to how the deeper layers of life and movement interact within the physical body; to listen to how the body

receives and produces energies and signals which do not only come from the inside but also from outside of the body. In this wordless inner space, communication between the individual consciousness (the "I") and the life of the materiality of the physical body can come alive. Dance then becomes a dialogue between different qualities of consciousness, different degrees of inhabiting the body by the conscious self. Through this dynamic exchange the life that inhabits the physical body starts to speak. A dance language comes into being through a dialogue between different degrees of control and freedom in movement, conducted by different degrees of filtering impersonal through personal will.

I do not consider the autonomous movements that happen inside of the body and that keep it alive irrespective of my conscious choice. These movements are beyond my ability to access consciously. Yet, this autonomous life intelligence of the body is what I am searching for when digging into deeper layers of yet unconscious movement origination inside of the body. It is always an "I", that actively guides and directs the motions of the body in space. Whether this "I" is a perishable subject, a materially generated epiphenomenon in the brain and nervous system, or whether this "I" is seen as the immortal core of the soul that is incarnated in a body of flesh and bones, is one of the main differences between a secular scientific understanding of a human being and a religious, spiritual and esoteric understanding. Consequently, which perspective is taken also determines the worldview into which a dance language is embedded or that it seeks to create and enter in dialogue with. The perspective taken eventually also influences the intentional dispositions (see chapter five) and the potential interpretative scope of the dance.

So far, we have been looking at movement practices that embody esoteric forms of thought. We now move on to the art of dance and its evolution into a modern art form.

Rudolf von Laban and esoterically inclined modern dance

To my knowledge, among the pioneers of modern dance only Rudolf von Laban (1979-1958) is known to have actively engaged with esoteric discourse and practice: he integrated Kabbalah, Gnosticism, Freemasonry and Hermetic philosophy into his vision of dance and art. He was also responsible for the Ordo Templi Orientis (OTO) lodge at Monte Verità in 1917.[257] Laban is well known in scholarship on esotericism, yet his esoteric affiliations are still largely neglected in contemporary dance scholarship. Laban scholars refer to his 'Rosicrucian period' but comprehensive approaches to how Laban's spiritual philosophy manifests in his theories and dance creations are still very scarce. [258]

It is not my intention to fill this gap here. Laban is brought forward as an example for how a modern dance practice and theory that is still vibrantly alive in the context of contemporary dance is related to esotericism.

Spiritual corporeality:

For Laban, it was not through prayer or intellectual contemplation, but through the body in motion striving towards the spiritual world, that corporeality understood in a materialistic sense was supposed to be overcome.[259] A subtle body scheme is to my knowledge not explicitly addressed in Laban's theoretical and practical work. Instead, Laban proposed principles for orientation in space, notions of the body and its kinesphere, explorations into what he called "dynamosphere," movement scales in space, the division of space through the moving body and the notion of space harmony in his *Choreutics*.[260] In the practice of "space

[257] Cusack, "The Contemporary Context of Gurdjieff's Movements," 2017, 110.

[258] One of the very few artist scholars that are currently working on this is Juliet Chambers-Coe, actress and PhD candidate at University of Surrey. She presented a paper and practical workshop at the August 2019 conference "Cultural, Intercultural and Transnational Dialogues in Dance and Spirituality" at the Centre for Embodiment & Somatic Movement Education and Therapy, Cheltenham. She is investigating how Laban's Rosicrucian philosophy is translated in his dance practice methodology. See also Chambers-Coe, "Rudolf Laban," in *The Routledge Companion to Performance Philosophy*, 2020, 351–61.

[259] Kant, "Mittel zur Transzendenz: Marion Kant über Rudolf von Labans Geheimorden und seine 'Religion der Tat'," 2003, 16-17.

[260] Laban, *Choreutics*, 2011 [1966], v.

harmony," elements of the spiritual philosophies of Plato and Pythagoras are integrated in the architectural design of the dynamic kinesphere of the dancer by mapping the body along the axes and vertices of geometric forms such as the cube, the octahedron and the icosahedron.[261] Laban's philosophical and theoretical reflections on dance became the foundation for a notation system, which was intended to become universally applicable,[262] comparable to the notation system used in music. Laban notation is still used and further developed today and has found many applications also in other disciplines such as for example in acting.

Altered states of knowing:

From 1918 onwards, Laban started to focus on the "psychophysical organization of the body in movement"[263] grounded in the concepts of harmony, rhythm and space. In his first theoretical work *Die Welt des Tänzers*,[264] he integrated interpretations of occult freemasonry, Rosicrucian symbolism, eastern philosophy and western rituals with a proposal for a new dance culture.[265]For Laban, dance was a means for communicating and expressing other dimensions of reality. He saw ecstatic dances and cultic rituals as means to penetrate these interior domains.[266] He termed dance "Ursprache der Phantasognosis," implying that "neither artistic science nor scientific art (…) but practical religion that strives to eradicate with its symbols experiential disturbances and inhibitions of mostly intuitively sensed harmonic laws, can further the development of wisdom."[267]

Laban defines "Phantasognosis" as an elevating wisdom that culminates through the combination of art and knowledge. It should be "free from mysticism" and "free from overestimation of sensuous perception." Working procedures to induce "phantasognostic" states should experiment with the liminal space between intuition and consciousness and aim

[261] Documentary: Living Architecture. Rudolf Laban and the Geometry of Dance, Anna Carlisle and Valerie Preston-Dunlop, 2007.
[262] Manning, "Reinterpreting Laban," 1988, 317.
[263] Preston-Dunlop, *Rudolf Laban. An Extraordinary Life*, 2008, 14.
[264] Laban, *Die Welt des Tänzers*, 1920.
[265] Kant, "Mittel zur Transzendenz",15.
[266] Ibid, 16.
[267] Laban, *Die Welt des Tänzers*, 1920, 244.

at unifying gross and subtle aspects of sense perception. They should bring to consciousness and develop those senses that have not yet been strong enough to be established and understood as "consciousness." These ideas should not be understood as a new form of metaphysics but as a "physics of the not yet comprehensible."[268]

Experiencing the body in the flow of a dynamic space was connected with the idea of a "sixth sense," which Laban called the "sense of movement" (or "sense of vibration" or "sense of fluidity").[269] He stated that by overtly cultivating the sense of time ("causal knowledge"), the human being had lost his/her natural sense of the nature of space ("instinctive knowledge"), which would need to be unearthed from the deep memory of the body.[270]

In contrast with processes of disintegration and fragmentation, which he and many of his contemporary artists had diagnosed in the cultural climate of their time,[271] Laban sought to reestablish a sense of unity between the corporeal, the spiritual and the natural:

> It becomes possible to grasp with our intellect, this old premonitory dream of the human species, the unity of body and spirit. As both are constituted in one single and same movement, with a few variations, we can establish a parallel between this universal phenomenon and the dance. The hostile dualism between spirit and matter cannot anymore be considered as something established and the study of their unity in dance acquires an unsuspected reality.[272]

In the process of integrating spiritual philosophies with artistic working principles, Laban gradually paralleled a conception of spirit with the nature of space. For Laban, "Space is a hidden feature of movement and movement is a visible aspect of space."[273] By theoretically unifying space with movement in one singular entity, he arrived at the theory of unity of body

[268] Ibid.
[269] Laban, *Espace Dynamique*, *Textes inédits, Choreutique, Vision de l'espace Dynamique,* 2003, 21.
[270] Ibid, 237.
[271] Laban, *Choreutics*, 2011 [1966], 8.
[272] Laban, *Espace Dynamique*, 2003, 257.
[273] Ibid, 4.

and spirit in spatially experienced movement. Movement becomes the basic experience of existence[274] and space a "fluid reality."[275]

Spiritual Corporeality

Although Laban does not explicitly address the subtle body in his theory and practice, it is possible to relate his notions of the kinesphere and his view on the unity of body and spirit in spatially experienced motion to how Rudolf Steiner works with the relations between the physical and the etheric body as key aspects of the practice of Eurythmy.

With Steiner, the physical body tends towards centric forces of motion and the etheric body tends towards peripheral forces of motion. The centric forces are supposed to be explainable from the point of view of science, yet the peripheral forces – which are ascribed to the celestial, spiritual and cosmic spheres – would need a supra-sensory and spiritual scientific approach to be understood and explained.[276] This also relates to Laban's experience of "phantasognosis" as a "physics of the not yet comprehensible." Both Steiner's spiritual science [Geisteswissenschaft] and Laban's theory of unification of spirit and matter that may be experienced via a supra-sensory perception of the human body in motion outline a worldview that approaches the nature of reality as constituted by an interpenetration of spiritual and material aspects of being and the human body in danced motion as an instrument for perceiving and actualizing this reality.

Intermezzo

Altered States of Knowing

Laban understood phantasognosis as emerging from a liminal space between intuition and consciousness. This ties in with my research on embodied gnosis and with the focus on an intermediary zone of awareness where the physical and the metaphysical appear to intersect.

[274] Ibid, 6-7.
[275] Ibid, 8.
[276] Marti, *The Four Ethers*, 1984, 32.

I experiment with a state of knowing-being in between conscious movement and spontaneous movement that emerges from not yet conscious, intuitive but not sensation-based strata of my body in danced motion. Working with already known/choreographed movement patterns requires the activation of kinesthetic memory and imagination to re-actualize the intentions that are inscribed into the choreographed patterns. Spontaneously emerging movement from the deeper, yet unconscious strata of the body in motion happens through responding to barely perceivable movement impulses. Here it is not clearly discernible where the impulses to move come from.

Towards embodied gnosis

The previously visited examples converge with what I perceive as a progressively shifting cutting edge between conscious awareness and yet unconscious awareness of a larger source of life. With the idea of embodied gnosis, I explore this source of life inside and outside of the body. The intense and complex experience of the body in motion in dance seems to me to be conducive to the experience of such a state and from the accounts visited so far it looks like I am not the only one.

Both Laban and Gurdjieff were inspired and influenced by the Sufi practice of the whirling dervishes.[277] We will now focus on how the concepts of *spiritual corporeality*, *altered states of knowing* and *embodied gnosis* are relatable to the Sufi ceremony of the whirling prayer, the most widely known practice of embodiment of esoteric form of thought in the context of Islam.

[277] Cusack, "The Contemporary Context of Gurdjieff's Movements," 2017, 99-100.

The Sema Ceremony and the subtle body in esoteric Islam

In Arabic, the terms *ẓāhir* and *bāṭin* correspond to the "exoteric" and the "esoteric". In Islam, the esoteric [*bāṭin*] refers to the hidden meaning of the *Qur'ân*. It points towards that which is unseen [*ghayb*], including angles, demons [*malā'ika*, *jinn*] and the future. In Islamic Theosophy, the esoteric also refers to "the inner [wo][278]man", to the esoteric nature of a human being. This inner being is related to alchemical psycho-spiritual processes including the transformation and metamorphosis of the matters of the human body during the afterlife and on the day of the resurrection.[279] To distinguish between esoteric and exoteric dimensions of religion is shared by Islam, Christianity and Judaism. The similarity of ideas about the unseen among these monotheistic cultures of faith is related to their shared descent from Abrahamic religion. They have common ideas about a creator God, the Day of Judgment, angels and demons and heaven and hell.[280]

Islam scholar Henri Corbin (1903 – 1978) relates nature and history to the visible and exoteric realm. He describes this realm as imitating, corresponding and "symbolizing with"[281] the spiritual world, which is given a status of being "truly real" [*ḥaqīqat*]. Corbin describes the gradual revelation of truth and the hidden meaning of history and nature as "spiritual hermeneutics" [*ta'wīl*]. "Spiritual hermeneutics" is a process whereby everything, every event is brought back to its truth, to its archetype [*aṣl*], by uncovering the hidden and concealing the appearance."[282] An active effort to balance between exoteric and esoteric approaches to Islam is characteristic to the Sufi tradition. According to Sufi Master and advocate of interfaith dialogue Sheikh Khaled Bentounès (1946), it is necessary to establish and to maintain harmony between letter and spirit. An overemphasis on the spirit would lead to too much distance from the earthly world, whereas an overemphasis on the [literal meaning of the] word would lead to a severe impoverishment and flattening of life.

[278] [wo] inserted by author.
[279] Corbin, "IX. The Shaikhī School: Shaikh Aḥmad Aḥsāi," 1989 [1977], 219 and Corbin, *Swedenborg and Esoteric Islam,* 1995, 43.
[280] Sedgwick, "Is there such a thing as Islamic esotericism?" 2019, 217 – 242.
[281] Corbin, *Swedenborg and Esoteric Islam*, 1995, 41.
[282] Ibid, 37.

Bentounès sees the transformation of matter as the task of spirit. The goal of the human being who follows the mystical path [*tasavvuf*], is to achieve an active balance between the vertical and the horizontal axes of being, with the feet firmly rooted in the ground and the head reaching highly upwards. [283] *Tasavvuf* designates the profession to Sufism in distinction to *tashayyu* as the profession to Shiism and *tasannun* to Sunnism.[284] In Turkish language, the term *tasavvuf* translates as "mysticism." The mystical way [*tariqah*] traced by the Sufi path is described by Corbin as navigating between the "literal fact of the Revelation" [*shari'ah*] and "spiritual truth as personal realization" [*haqiqah*]. He attributes the triadic dynamic between these elements to the essence of Sufism as a doctrine and as a way of life.[285]

Altered states of knowing:

Sema is the "Whirling Prayer Ceremony"[286] practiced by members of the Sufi Mevlevi Order. The practice is dedicated to the remembrance of God. The origins of the *sema* ceremony can be traced back to the Sufi practice of "audition" [*samâ'*]. Early developments of collective Sufi practices emerged during the 8th and 9th centuries C.E. in the area of Baghdad. The name of the Mevlevi Order comes from Sufi mystic Jalal ad-Din Rumi (1207, Balkh – 1273, Konya), also known as the Mevlana. Rumi's son Sultan Veled, his disciple Chalabi Husameddin, and his grandson Ulu Arif Chalabi established the Mevlevi order.[287] Following the traditional Islamic Sufi way [*tariqah*], descendants and disciples of Rumi preserved his spiritual practices until today. The *Sema* as it is known today, is based on the ritual ceremony developed by Rumi's great-grandson Pir 'Adil Chelebi (15th century).[288]

Samâ' is a form of "mystical hearing," through which the Sufi can feel inspired to move by entering another level of spiritual consciousness.[289] This faculty of hearing is oriented towards hearing the voice of God in all sounds, in recited verses of the *Qur'ân* and in mystical music

[283] Solt, *Sjeik Khaled Bentounès*. *Sufisme, Hart van de Islam*, 2006, 68.
[284] Corbin, *History of Islamic Philosophy*, 1993, 187.
[285] Ibid, 188.
[286] Gamard, "In Defense of the Whirling Prayer Ceremony (Sema)," Dar-al-Masnavi.org, accessed 21.03.2015, http://www.dar-al-masnavi.org/defense-of-sema.html,
[287] Mevlanafoundation.com, "Mevlevi Order & Sema," accessed 25.03.2015, http://mevlanafoundation.com/mevlevi_order_en.html.
[288] Ibrahim Gamard, "In Defense of the Whirling Prayer Ceremony (Sema)."
[289] Ibid.

and poetry. One of the aims of Sufism is to surrender to the will of God. The preparatory path leading towards a meeting with God is paved by learning to control the *nafs*, which stand for the lower self of the human being.[290] As the seeker learns to subdue the *nafs,* a space in the heart is created where God can enter, leading ultimately to *irfan*, which can be translated as a form of gnosis.[291] Gnosis in Sufism is understood as experience based knowledge that is available to everybody who seeks a personal and direct knowledge of God.[292] Sufism as a distinct spiritual practice aims towards an illuminating quality of knowledge. The path towards illumination is described as consisting of three attainments: the knowledge of certainty, the eye of certainty and the truth of certainty. These stages are represented symbolically by the circumambulations performed by the Dervishes during the Sema ceremony: the first rhythmically stepping circumambulation refers to the knowledge of God (the knowledge of certainty), the second to the seeing of God (the eye of certainty) and the third circumambulation stands for that state of being described as truth of Unity[293] [*Wahdat al-Wujud*].

The whirling movements function as a vehicle for entering an ever-deepening state of immersion into the Divine Will.[294] They are not intended to provide physical pleasure, nor should they respond to impulses of self-will or "whims of the imagination."[295] The efforts of the physical movement are supposed to become detached from inhibitions of conscious thought. In the approach towards an ecstatic state, it is necessary to suspend both thought and will.[296] Member of the Mevlevi order and Rumi scholar Ibrahim Gamard explains the purpose of the ecstatic state [*wajd*] to be the "temporary obliteration of one's ordinary state of ego-entered thoughts and desires and entering into a state of 'annihilation' … in which there is pure awareness of 'except (only) God'[297] [*'illâ 'llâh – Qur'ân* 47:17]."[298]

---

[290] Bakhtiar, *Sufi. Expressions of the Mystic Quest*, 1976, 7.
[291] Sedgwick, *Sufism. The Essentials*, 2003, 11.
[292] Milani, "Classic Sufism and Gnosis," 2019, 329.
[293] And, "The Mevlana Ceremony [Turkey]," 177, 94.
[294] Gamard, "In Defense of the Whirling Prayer Ceremony (Sema)."
[295] Ibid.
[296] And, "The Mevlana Ceremony [Turkey]," 1977, 84.
[297] An alternative translation of the Islamic creed shahada is proposed by Rumi as: "there is no god but God" in Lewis, *Rumi, Past and Present, East and West*, 2000, 133.
[298] Gamard, "In Defense of the Whirling Prayer Ceremony (Sema)."

Sufis of the ecstatic traditions underline the need to attain a state that reaches beyond the level of thought, even if the thought is pious towards God, such as practiced in the rather sober traditions. More specifically, what is aimed at is a state of sobriety after ecstasy. In the words of Shams-i Tabrîzî:

> The man who reaches this perfection is drowned in the light of God and drunk in the pleasure of the Real [Haqq] … Beyond this drunkenness … there is another sobriety [hoshyârî] … The drunkenness of God's Road [râh-i khodâ] is the third level. It is an immense drunkenness, but it is linked with stillness [sikûn], for God has brought him out of what he had fancied it to be. After that is the fourth level - drunkenness in God. That is perfection. After that is sobriety.[299]

Gamard describes the simple rhythmical bodily movements as experiential pathways to continuously deepen a "god centered state of consciousness." He insists on clearly distinguishing the terminology used to describe the Mevlevis in their ceremony from dance: "They are immersed in concentrated worship - not dancing. A whirler is supposed to be called a 'rememberer of God' not a 'dancer'."[300]

Spiritual corporeality:

Seeking to penetrate the inner realms of meaning of their faith, Sufi mystics developed systems of spiritual hierarchies where they synthesized influences from Greek, Persian, Hermetic and Indian philosophies with accounts of experiences of the Prophet Mohammed as described in the *Qur'ân*.[301] "Subtle centers" are understood as psycho-spiritual bodies that mediate between the physical and the transcendental realms. The idea of "subtle centers" became more explicit in the Sufi doctrine during the early Middle Ages and their unique view on the subtle body has proliferated during the 20th century in parallel with its increasing presence as a spiritual practice also in the West.

[299] Tabrizi, *Me & Rumi: The Autobiography of Shems-I Tabrizi*, 2004, 117-119.
[300] Ibrahim Gamard, "In Defense of the Whirling Prayer Ceremony (Sema)."
[301] Milani, "The Subtle Body in Sufism," 2013, 168.

Spiritual or subtle centers [*latâ'if*] are linked in Sufism to theories and practices related to self-transformation. The Sufi term *latîfa* stems from the Arabic word *latîf* and translates as "subtle", "gentle" or "sensitive". In Sufi terminology it refers to non-material aspects of a person, which can be activated through spiritual practice and under the guidance of a Sufi master.[302]

Towards embodied gnosis

According to Adam Hussain, independent dance artist working on a dialogue between dance and Sufism, the goal for a whirling dervish is that the entire body becomes a spiritual heart.[303] Also modern Sufism still emphasizes the experience of God consciousness and the immanence of the divine presence as a goal of their practice.[304] The three transformative stages of the soul (from physical/sensible, to psychic, to spiritual) were developed by Sufis into a system of self-transformation and purification: from the commanding soul [*nafs ammara*] to the blaming soul [*nafs lawwama*] to the soul at peace [*nafs mutma 'inna*]. The idea of the subtle body is structurally embedded in this process of purification by consciously working on transforming the *nafs*, which eventually allows access to the heart [*qalb*] and spirit [*ruh*].[305]

Sufism strives towards a balance between worldly and transcendent aspects of reality. Sufis are generally rather involved in mundane activities than living in meditative seclusion or prayer. The notions of "dying to the self" and "living in God" have remained throughout time the indicators of a practice that is oriented to selfless service, worldly and otherworldly.[306]

During the eleventh, twelfth and thirteenth centuries the subtle body as a spiritual organ of perception and its intimate connection with the human physical body gradually became more articulated. By the fourteenth century, a sevenfold scheme of the subtle body correlated with

[302] Ibid, 169.

[303] Based on a conversation with Adam Hussain, independent dance artist. Hussain works on a dialogue between Sufism and dance by means of an integrative approach to embodied spirituality.

[304] Milani, "The Subtle Body in Sufism," 2013, 178.

[305] Ibid, 175.

[306] Ibid, 178-179.

seven levels of the cosmos, seven prophets, and seven spiritual types emerged. This scheme was complemented with a sevenfold color scheme during the nineteenth century.[307]

Spiritual corporeality

Shaikh Ahmad Ahsā'i (1241/1826) writes about an intricate scheme that encompasses "the physiology of the resurrection body." Here *form* is described as "accident" that disappears forever after the moment of death, while *matter* knows corruptible and incorruptible states. The incorruptible state is based on "incorruptible spiritual matter" and can return to life after having gone through postmortem processes of purification and transmutation.[308]

In Ahsā'i's account the event of the resurrection is related to spiritual alchemy where processes of metamorphosis of physical substance are symbolically equated with psychospiritual processes.[309]

Corbin's translations of the texts by Shaikh Aḥmad Aḥsā'ī that bear the titles "Physiology of the Resurrection Body", "Alchemy and the Resurrection Body" and "The Active Imagination and the Resurrection Body" provide a technical vocabulary and a spiritual logic that underlies the alchemical processes of transformation that according to Aḥsā'ī are inherent to the spiritual physiology of the human being. These processes are related to the notion of transmutation and are situated within an esoteric cosmology comprised of three major realms of being: the pure intellectual world, i.e., the world of pure cherubic Intelligences [*'âlam 'aqlî*, *Jabarût*]; the *imaginal* world [*'âlam mithâlî, Malakût, Hūrqalyā*], i.e. the world of the Soul and of souls and the *mundus imaginalis* and the sensible world [*'âlam hissî*], i.e. the world of the material things.[310]

Shaikh Aḥmad Aḥsā'ī explains the dynamics of spiritual and psychophysiological transmutation by making analogies between the physiology of the resurrection body and the various phases of alchemical work related to the transmutation of the substances of glass and tin into diamond and *lapis philosophorum*.[311]

---

[307] Ibid, 171.

[308] Corbin, "IX. The Shaikhī School: Shaikh Aḥmad Aḥsāi," 1989, 218.

[309] Ibid, 180-221.

[310] Corbin, *Spiritual Body and Celestial Earth,* 1989, ix and Corbin, "Mundus Imaginalis or the Imaginary and the Imaginal," 1964, 3-26.

[311] Corbin, *"IX. The Shaikhī School: Shaikh Aḥmad Aḥsāi,"* 1989, 202-203.

Comparable to Rudolf Steiner's (and Gurdijeff's) scheme of spiritual physiology, Aḥsā'ī also includes the "I-spirit" into his scheme. It is considered to be imperishable and incorruptible.[312] At the moment of death, the Angel of Death is gathering the "I-spirit" from the material body. It preserves its "preterrestrial structure" and survives in the intermediary realm of the *barzakh* "in waking state and in full consciousness."[313]

Aḥsā'ī's scheme of human corporealities includes an eschatology of the soul after death, in the afterlife. This eschatology is embedded in a much larger scale of an eschatology of the totality of being, of humanity and the cosmos. [314]

According to Anthroposophist Lorenzo Ravagli, the different states of corporeality that Aḥsā'ī describes are almost identical with the scheme of spiritual physiology of Rudolf Steiner. But a theory on reincarnation (as R. Steiner developed) is absent from the resurrection eschatology of the Iranian Shaikhs as presented by Henry Corbin in *Spiritual Body and Celestial Earth.*[315]

Towards embodied gnosis

Here we encountered another perspective on relations between the metaphysical and the physical. With the example of esoteric Islam, the scope of meaning of ***spiritual corporeality*** expands to eschatological dimensions of a cosmic order. These dimensions of meaning reach beyond the realm of dance practice and theory as we know it. They also reach beyond what can be perceivable by a *dancing body.*

Correspondences between subtle body schemes in esoteric Islam and in esoteric Christianity according to Steiner are striking and potentially significant. They suggest an "objective reality" based on a spiritual physiology of the human being that is independent of boundaries drawn between different cultures of faith and religious dogma.

The difference between the emphasis on subtle body processes that occur in the afterlife in esoteric Islam, and the emphasis on subtle body processes during incarnation into this world

[312] Ibid, 216 and 218.
[313] Ibid, 216-217.
[314] Ravagli, "Hurqalya, die Erde der Auferstehung" Anthroblog. Anthroposophie im 21. Jarhundert. 4.May 2012, accessed January 2018, https://anthroblog.anthroweb.info/2012/hurqalya-die-erde-der-auferstehung/ .
[315] Ibid.

in esoteric Christianity is meaningful on many levels and invites more research. In the spiritual logic of esoteric Islam as brought forward by Corbin, the physical body lives simultaneously in the heavenly spheres and it is through the spiritual faculty of active imagination that a conscious relation can be established between the world of the here and the world of the hereafter.

Intermezzo

Altered states of knowing

In my approach to dance, I am interested in a state of knowing-being suspended between the physically sensible and the intuitively intelligible. In this state, it is not clearly perceivable whether movement origination is triggered by corporeal sensations, or whether it comes from an intuitively perceived metaphysical realm of being that inhabits my body while at the same time transcending it. With my dance language, I experiment with the communicative and epistemological potentials of creating movement from the field of tension between polarities of being. Such as for example gravity and levity, the immanent and the transcendent and concentric and peripheral forces of motion.

Spiritual corporeality

With the discussed examples so far, we encountered intellectual and corporeal efforts to reconcile the physical with the spiritual that have endured through time.
They engage with the spiritual evolution of the human being in and through the human body in motion, yet with different emphases in orientation, scope of meaning, this- or otherworldly perspectives and esthetic outcomes.
When looking at the embodied practices that accompany the worldviews of esoteric Islam in the Sema ceremony and esoteric Christianity in Eurythmy, there is one common direction of movement orientation: the peripheral movement. With Eurythmy, peripheral movement is directly linked with the etheric body and with cosmic and celestial realms of being that intersect with the physical reality. With the Sufis, one single peripheral movement is

reiterated again and again. It suggests infinity and relates to the celestial spheres of the cosmos.

Intermezzo

Towards embodied gnosis

Esoteric forms of thought and related body-based practices attribute a depth of meaning to movement forces such as the peripheral force and levity which in my view is very interesting. I dialogue with these points of views through discourse as well as through artistic experimentation. The visited examples give verbally discursive substance to unspeakable intuitions that I encounter in the dance. I artistically engage with these ideas by allowing my conscious awareness during the dance to be infiltrated by a larger scope of resonance and potential meaning. Dancing in dialogue with esoteric forms of thought becomes then a corporeally articulated questioning of numinous experiences. How these experiences can be meaningful with reference to the larger context of spirituality and metaphysics is one of the key concerns of this research.

Towards embodied gnosis

I question the onto-epistemological basis in the human body of the intermediate zone of knowing-being suspended between the physically sensible and the intuitively intelligible in dance. This questioning has led me towards the notions of the somatic and the spiritual unconscious of Jung. Many aspects of what Jung considers belonging to the realm of the unconscious, belong with Steiner to the spiritual world. With Steiner, intuition, imagination and inspiration are supra-sensory faculties of cognition that are mostly dormant in ordinary awareness[316] and that require conscious cultivation and schooling. With Jung, the faculty of

[316] Wehr, *Jung & Steiner. The Birth of a New Psychology*, 2002, 140.

intuition is not related to sense perception but to the unconscious.[317] The active imagination also plays a central role with Jung.

[317] See for example "Sensing vs. Intuition," Personality Hacker, accessed 19.09.2014, *YouTube* https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W9Fw-YpHoU8.

Carl Gustav Jung: the somatic and the spiritual unconscious

Spiritual corporeality:

In *Nietzsche's Zarathustra: Notes of the seminar given in 1934* -1939, C.G. Jung speaks of the subtle body, or the body of breath[318] as one of the most important concepts of primitive psychology. It is an idea about the subtle body that enables union between the material body and spirit.[319] In the transcribed seminar about Nietzsche's Zarathustra, Jung explains that when he is speaking about the unconscious, he is referring to the psychological unconscious. Jung considers some aspects of the psychological unconscious to be discriminable and understandable. Yet that part of the unconscious that is referred to with the subtle body would be "exceedingly incomprehensible" as it blends with the functioning of the body, with the "darkness of matter" that is not accessible to our understanding. Jung introduces here the subtle body in relation to Nietzsche's concept of the self, which includes the body. Hence, he considers it necessary to not only include the psychological unconscious in the discussion (the shadow) "but also the physiological unconscious, the so-called somatic unconscious which is the subtle body."

Jung explains:

> You see, somewhere our unconscious becomes material, because the body is the living unit, and our conscious and our unconscious are embedded in it: they contact the body. Somewhere there is a place where the two ends meet and become interlocked. And that is the place where one cannot say whether it is matter, or what one calls 'psyche'.[320]

[318] Jung, "Winter Term January/March 1935,"*Nietzche's Zarathustra: Notes of the seminar given in 1934 -1939,* 1988, 441.
[319] Ibid, 432.
[320] Ibid, 441.

In Jung's' view, what can be represented to the conscious mind is psychological[321], while what cannot become conscious and what can only be expressed by "vague analogies or hints", would be "so dark that one doesn't know whether it has to do with the top or the bottom of the system, whether it leads to the body or into the air."[322]

Jung refers here to the ancient Gnostic worldview where pneuma is situated on the very top of a scheme of being, which corresponds in Jung's view to the divine aspect of the unconscious. On the very bottom of this scheme there is situated the body, or hyle or sarx. In between these two layers he situates the human and psychological realm described as "spiritual unconscious, shen, anima, psyche, somatic unconscious, subtle body, kuei."

In the notes on Jung's seminar, this scheme is represented as[323]:

Animus, pneuma, spiritus

---

spiritual unconscious, shen, anima, psyche

somatic unconscious, subtle body, *kuei*

---

body, *sarx, hyle*

In the realm of the anima, Jung differentiates between a spiritual side (shen in China) of the unconscious and a somatic or corporeal side of the unconscious (in China kuei). This region of being "contains the psychology of the subtle body because it reaches into the sarx."[324]

Jung further explains that the idea of the subtle body plays a significant role in the New Testament and with the docetic doctrine of Christianity.

[321] On Jung's significant contribution to the "psychologization of religion and sacralization of psychology" see Hanegraaff, *New Age Religion and Western Culture. Esotericism in the Mirror of Secular Thought,* 1998, 224 -255 and 482 ff.

[322] Jung, *Nietzche's Zarathustra,*1988, 441.

[323] Ibid, 442.

[324] Ibid*,* 442.

He refers to apostle Paul speaking about the "sarx", the corruptible biological body and about an incorruptible body "which we put on with Christ, because Christ is in a way the soul or the *pneuma*, the incorruptible body that is beyond space and time."[325]

Intermezzo

Altered states of knowing:

It is interesting to note that Jung - who had to justify his theories in a secular scientific context - stated that the subtle body is "beyond our grasp" by definition. It is a transcendental concept that "cannot be expressed in terms of our language or our philosophical views, because they are all inside the categories of time and space."[326]

Steiner and Gurdjieff on the contrary explicitly situated themselves in a lineage of an esoteric knowledge tradition. They did not shy away from systematically integrating the subtle body including its transcendental dimensions beyond time and space into their worldviews and practices. Triangulating these two perspectives (the secular scientific and esoteric) with an artistic perspective, outlines a larger frame of reference for unveiling new relations between the physical and the metaphysical.

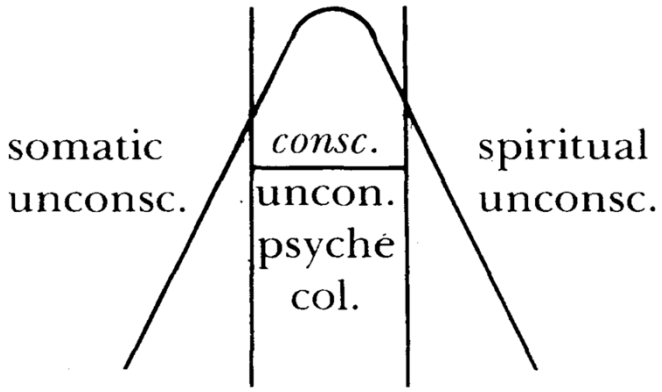
Postmodern choreographer Merce Cunningham stated for example: "The dance is an object in space and time. The object of the dance is to obliterate that."[327] Such a statement accommodates Jung's dilemma about the impossibility of scientifically approaching the subtle body as well the time transcending properties of the subtle body according to esoteric lore.

In my approach to dance, I explore the communicative and epistemological potentials of the non-verbal experience of my dancing body. New perspectives on the relation between the physical and the metaphysical come into being by setting up a dialogue between this practice, esoteric points of view and scientific/philosophical perspectives.

[325] I Corinthians 15:53-54 referenced and interpreted by C.G. Jung in ibid, 443.
[326] Ibid, 443.
[327] Lepecki, "Introduction/ /Dance as Practice of Contemporaneity," 2012, 4.

Towards embodied gnosis

Jung further explains the somatic and the spiritual unconscious: the psyche, or *anima, is associated* with the breath of life, with the living flame that warms the body. This *anima* is subdivided into a spiritual side and a somatic or corporeal side. Jung speculated that the somatic or corporeal region of the *anima* would contain the psychology of the subtle body as it reaches into the *sarx*.[328]



Drawing depicted in Jung and Jarrett*, Nietzsche's Zarathustra, 442.*

Jung explains this sketch:

> The mountain would be the conscious and the unconscious, and the spiritual would be on the one side and the somatic on the other. The greater intensity of life is in the center and the darkness is on either side, on the spiritual side as well as on the side of matter.[329]

[328] Jung, *Nietzsche's Zarathustra,* 1988, 442.
[329] Jung, *Nietzsche's Zarathustra,* 1988, 442.

Intermezzo

Towards embodied gnosis:

Jung's ideas about a somatic and a spiritual side of the unconscious are useful to specify the performative state suspended between the physically sensible and the intuitively intelligible that I am experimenting with. I don't attempt to develop a psychology of the subtle body though. Instead, I am developing a dance language that speaks about the experience of a hypothetical - or imagined - zone of creative convergence between the spiritual and the somatic unconscious. To be able to "locate" this hypothetical zone of creative convergence, I work with ***corporeal imagination****. I imagine it while searching for movement. I experiment with what the act of imagining it triggers in my corporeal experience and in the movement expression. The notions of the spiritual and the somatic unconscious help me to focus the area of imagination on a specific idea. Consequently, I attempt to verbalize what I have experienced by writing about it retrospectively. I interrogate myself in how far the experience carried epistemological value, a knowing-being quality of consciousness, or not, and in how far this knowing-being quality might be intuitively legible in the dance language - for me as well as for the spectators of the dance.*

Jung did not develop a body-based practice, but his ideas and theories have been integrated into somatic practices such as for example "Authentic Movement."

Authentic Movement: esoteric influences in contemporary dance

Authentic Movement began in the 1950s as "movement in depth" by Mary Starks Whitehouse. She was a former student of modern dance pioneers Martha Graham and Mary Wigman[330] and trained as well as a psychotherapist. She pioneered the integration of expressive dance practice with psychotherapeutic work, which then later developed into Authentic Movement (AM).[331] In the contemporary landscape of artistic and spiritually oriented body-based practices, Authentic Movement can be contextualized under the broad header of "Somatic Movement Dance Education". This term encompasses somatic techniques such as Body-Mind Centering, Laban Bartenieff Movement Fundamentals, Ideokinesis, Skinner Releasing Technique, Alexander Technique, Feldenkrais and Authentic Movement. Authentic Movement applies Jungian and post-Jungian theories and concepts such as "active imagination" and "inner alchemy"[332] in combination with somatic movement principles ("sensing the environment," "somatically conscious movement initiations," "connection to breath," "deep body listening" etc.) and integrates these within a broader context of the expressive arts, movement therapy and transpersonal psychologies in artistic and academic contexts.[333]

Altered states of knowing:

According to Janet Adler – leading artist and scholar in the field of dance and movement therapy - Authentic Movement has its foundation in the work of dancers, mystics and healers. The practice of Authentic Movement works with the phenomenon of presence understood as developing consciousness. This quality of consciousness emerges through the shared presence of a mover who sources his or her movement from an intentional interaction between active imagination and movement, an inner witness that observes the emerging movement and the compassionate witnessing presence of an outer witness (the observer). After the session, the mover speaks his or her inner experience by trying to remember what

[330] Adler, *Offerings from the conscious body: The discipline of authentic movement*, 2002, xii.
[331] Foster, *Somatic Patterning: How to Improve Posture and Movement and Ease Pain*, 2004, 358.
[332] Stromsted, "The Alchemy of Authentic Movement: Awakening Spirit in the Body," 2014, 37.
[333] Williamson, Bateson and Whatley, *Dance, Somatics and Spiritualities*, 2014, xxvii-xxix.

he or she was doing in the presence of the outer witness. To verbally describe the inner experience is seen as a bridge between the body and consciousness. The witness equally engages in questioning how he or she was present during the session and how what has been seen can be described in words. In the dialogue between the mover and the witness, the awareness of movement patterns is heightened by naming them. Authentic Movement according to Adler is about "relationship between a mover and an outer witness, between the moving self and an inner witness, between the self and the collective, the self and the Divine."[334]

In her latest book *Offering from the Conscious Body*[335] Adler highlights three aspects of Authentic Movement: The Individual Body, The Collective Body, The Conscious Body. In all three realms she explores "the phenomena of being merged with experience, being in dialogic relationship with it, and being in a unitive state with it."[336]

Spiritual corporeality:

Looking at how the notion of "spirit" has been dealt with among modern dancers whom Adler sees as precursors to Authentic Movement, she refers to Rudolf Laban who also wrote about an inner witness and about the body dancing its soul; to Mary Wigman, who wrote about a specific kind of presence in dance that made her experience a sense of "oneness with the cosmos"; to Isadora Duncan who wrote about her quest towards finding "the divine expression of the human spirit through the medium of the body's movement and about a "great renaissance of religion through the Dance" and to Martha Graham who wrote about the utter truthfulness of movement and about being possessed by an inner flame that creates a rebirth of each moment in time through dance.[337]

Jungian analyst, psychotherapist and Dance/Movement Therapist Tina Stromsted emphasizes alchemical processes in the practice of Authentic Movement:

[334] Adler, "American Dance Therapy Association 37th Annual Conference Keynote Address. From Autism to the Discipline of Authentic Movement," 2003, 13.
[335] Adler, *Offerings from the conscious body: The discipline of authentic movement*, 2002.
[336] Adler, "American Dance Therapy," 2003, 13.
[337] Adler, "American Dance Therapy," 2003, 10.

> Familiarizing ourselves with alchemy's basic elements can illuminate our understanding of *embodied* transformative processes … Both practices [Alchemy and Authentic Movement] bring awareness to what we least value: base matter, known as *prima materia* by the alchemists and as unconscious, 'shadow' qualities by Jung. In fact, some analysts equate the body with the unconscious.[338]

Intermezzo

Towards embodied gnosis:

I don't know if or in which ways Authentic Movement explicitly or implicitly engages with Jung's differentiation between the spiritual and the somatic unconscious. This differentiation can support the idea of embodied gnosis as a state of knowing-being that can be activated in a zone of creative convergence in between these two sides of the unconscious. My practice of retrospective dance writing also resonates with the practice of verbalizing experience in dialogue with an inner and outer witness in Authentic Movement. With retrospective dance writing, I become more conscious of what is happening during the dance rather unconsciously. I articulate it verbally by annotating videos of rehearsals and performances. I communicate aspects of my inner experience and dialogue with peers, supervisors and colleagues to find out if, when and how embodied gnosis can be experienced by the dancer and by the observers. To understand language with Adler as a "bridge between body and consciousness" gives another layer of meaning to the ***corporeal theory**** *developed in this research. This corporeal theory includes non-verbal dance language, retrospective dance writing and attuning (see chapter five).*

Conclusion

This excursion into the subtle body staged an encounter between esoteric forms of thought, related body-based practices and an experiential perspective from my dance practice contextualized in a broader field of contemporary dance and discourse.

[338] Stromsted, "The Alchemy of Authentic Movement," 2014, 37.

The key concepts *spiritual corporeality, altered states of knowing* and *embodied gnosis* allowed both fields of practice and discourse to communicate with each other.

In "Subtle-body processes, towards a non-reductionist understanding", Geoffrey Samuel[339] notes that although it is highly problematic to approximate a scientifically grounded understanding of subtle body ideas and practices, they contain in many ways "real value" and should not be labeled as "a relic of obsolete modes of thought, or as a marginal fantasy of occult and New Age writers."[340] In his attempt to pave the way towards a scientifically grounded understanding of the meaning of subtle body concepts, Samuel highlights the major limitations of "naïve materialism" (i.e. scientific reductionism that is incapable of accommodating religious and supernatural phenomena) and "naïve idealism" (an uncritical appropriation and acceptance of subtle body phenomena as "real").[341] Samuel hints towards understanding subtle body concepts as "a kind of view of the brain and central nervous system from within," as something "relational and constructed" but nevertheless "real". He further states that ideas and hypotheses about the subtle body could eventually be grounded in latest neurophysiological research. He also highlights the ethical dimension that is generally implied in subtle body concepts and practices.[342]

Anatomical and physiological knowledge from the context of neurophysiology linked with somatic movement dance education could also help to ground hypothetical intuitions back into the physical body and its anatomy as we know it.[343]

As a researching dancer embedded in an academic context, I walk a middle path between both extremes of "naïve materialism" and "naïve idealism".

I distribute observations and insights on the one hand towards the empirical domain of my dancing body, which acts as a creative interface and as a vehicle for sensory and intuitive supra-sensory/***imaginal****** perception. On the other hand, I open the gaze of my curiosity towards the meta-empirical domain of metaphysical speculation and spiritual science.

To recapitulate: my main argument is that the intensified experience of dance can amplify an intuition of an intrinsic relation between the corporeality of the dancing body and a

---

[339] Geoffrey Samuel is emeritus professor of religious studies at Cardiff University.

[340] Samuel, "Subtle-body processes. Towards a non-reductionist understanding," 2013, 249.

[341] Ibid, 53-57.

[342] Ibid, 262. On the ethics of gnosis see also for example Mahé, "Gnostic and Hermetic Ethics," 1998, 22.

[343] See also chapter five, 178-179.

metaphysical and spiritual realm. I approximate the state of knowing-being where this intuition appears with the notions of *spiritual corporeality*, *altered states of knowing* and *embodied gnosis*, and I question them from an artistic experiential point of view in dialogue with scholarly academic points of view.

Through this excursion into the subtle body, it has become evident that prominent esoteric teachers of the 20th century have developed body-based practices that anchor their esoteric forms of thought into the human body in motion. The discussed movement practices are embedded in complex worldviews where the human being is seen as a constitutive and participating agent in a cosmic and divine evolutionary plan. The corporeality of the human being is understood in spiritual terms, with an explicit focus on inner work and transformation. This transformation is aimed at spiritualizing the human being, in alignment with cosmic laws of involution and evolution. [344]

Through a *dancing language*, I speculate about the nature and creative potential of human corporeality in dialogue with esoteric forms of thought. I experiment with how an expanded view on human corporeality beyond the physical body can inform an ***artistic truth**** of expression. I invest in this speculation based on the experiential insight that whenever I don't know or cannot know it is still possible that my body knows more than I do, and it speaks to me through intuition.

In the next chapter I will continue to explore experiential perspectives and contextualizing theories about possible relations between the physically sensible and the intuitively intelligible and how these can be related to a contemporary dance practice. This time, verbalized dance experience-based insights and speculation *(corporeal theory),* will take the lead and scientific/academic logic will respond during the *intermezzi (discursive practice).*

[344] I mentioned above (p.115) that in esoteric forms of thought also plants and animals are supposed to have an "etheric body". Without intending to enforce human exceptionalism, I focus in this study exclusively on subtle corporeality related to the human body. The human body is at the center of my artistic practice and the only perspective I can speak from through experience.
I am investigating through a human body in motion, and I speak from the perspective of a human being.

CHAPTER 5

Attuning: orientations for corporeal consciousness in dance

Through embodied gnosis towards a dancing language

In the previous chapter on the subtle body, the ***intermezzi**** are written from the first-person perspective of my dance practice (***corporeal theory****) and they respond to theoretical landscapes (***discursive practice****) outlined in the main text of chapter four. This chapter inversely mirrors the previous chapter. It departs from my dance practice as main text, while theoretical *intermezzi* respond to ideas and concepts based on dance experience through other fields of discourse. The *intermezzi* present different takes on the relationship between the metaphysical and the physical from the perspective of other dance practices, esoteric forms of thought and scientific/philosophical speculations such as the Pauli-Jung conjecture. *Corporeal theory* and *discursive practice* thus switch roles in these two chapters. Through a continuous back and forth movement, a clear distinction between them will gradually dissolve. Where both blend into each other, intuitive dimensions of knowing-being emerge, suspended - like a dance- between the physically sensible and the supra-sensorily intelligible. Different kinds of discourse and avenues towards knowing enter in dialogue with each other through a ***dancing language*.***

Both chapters (chapter four on the subtle body and chapter five on attuning the dancing body) respond to the overarching questions:

Is it possible to gain new perspectives on the relationship between the physical and the metaphysical through a *dancing language* that weaves together corporeal and verbal discourse?

How can a dancing body be attuned to act as an interface between the metaphysical and the physical through which I can investigate and communicate a sense of proximity with a creative source?

In this chapter, I will focus specifically on intentional orientations for attuning the dancing body towards the idea and experience of ***embodied gnosis***.*

In dance, ***levity**** can be experienced by opening the body to peripheral forces and by imaginatively expanding one's spatial awareness. Opening awareness towards a larger periphery can expand the sense of self beyond a limited frame of subjectivity enclosed underneath the skin of the body. The psychophysical texture of movements becomes more subtle and light. Focusing on ***gravity**** on the other hand, contracts the perception of the self towards an innermost sense of singular subjectivity. The psychophysical texture of the movements becomes denser, heavier. In my approach to ***dance language,**** I communicate nonverbally through a spectrum of subtle, light, dense and heavy textures of movement. I process and distribute these qualities through my dancing body and project them into the space.

In analogy with this dance-based logic of expression, the written text of chapters four and five embodies variations of ***languaging**** that range from conceptual density to suggestive lightness. The conversation between the perspectives gained through the various types of languaging is intended to evoke open ended potentialities for knowing.

Dynamic movements of thought gradually accumulate layered meanings of the key concepts ***spiritual corporeality****, ***altered states of knowing****, and ***embodied gnosis****.

Verbalized thought moves along a spectrum of ***matter-consciousness**** that ranges from the concentric pull of deep subjectivity to the peripheral pull of speculative theory that gravitates towards objective forms of knowledge. The dialogue between both directional forces becomes a knowledge process where the epistemological and communicative potential of navigating in-between spaces is explored: between gravity and levity, between the physically sensible and the intuitively intelligible, between deep subjectivity and elusively shifting speculative objectives of truth that are relative to the field of knowledge from where they are posited.[345]

[345] The idea of knowledge processes that develop through an interplay between different regions of subjective and objective realities is implied in the notion of "levels of reality" according to Werner Heisenberg. In Nicolescu, *From Modernity to Cosmodernity*, 2014, 206.

Unfolding movements of thought from the dynamic tensions inherent to these in-between spaces parallels the process of entering and deepening the state of knowing-being described as *embodied gnosis.*

The state of *embodied gnosis* directs attention to a region of experience where deep subjectivity can gain the quality of an objective of truth, or where objectivity can be intuited as resonating with a subjective quality.[346]

Attuning the Dancing Body

Attuning* is here understood as intentional orientations for corporeal consciousness. *Attuning* allows the dancing body to recognize and to stabilize its ability to perceive and to communicate profound dimensions of experiential reality. *Attuning* stands for creatively transforming polarities of forces that condition the logic of expression of a dancing body as I experience it.[347] *Attuning* is an orientation towards a unifying state of being, that blends and transcends opposite ends of a spectrum. It is an orientation towards a region of experience that participates in both aspects of a polarity pair yet overcomes their strict distinction through *altered states of knowing* towards *embodied gnosis*.

Embodied gnosis is suggestive of a metaphysically transcendent, yet also physically immanent layer of an experienced reality that underlies and connects apparently contradictory facets of experience. This unifying quality of experience is here targeted at as an ideal source of movement origination and purpose for danced movement. It can be intersubjectively shared

[346] This also relates to Pauli's vision that "(…) The development of 'microphysics' has unmistakably led to a remarkable convergence of its description of nature with that of the new psychology: While the former, due to the fundamental situation known as 'complementarity', faces the impossibility to eliminate actions of observers by determinable corrections and must therefore in principle relinquish the objective registration of all physical phenomena, the latter could basically complement the merely subjective psychology of consciousness by postulating the existence of an unconscious of largely objective reality." Quoted from a letter from Pauli to Jung in Jung's supplement to *On the Nature of the Psyche* (1969). In Atmanspacher, "Notes on Psychophysical Phenomena," 2014, 185.

[347] For example: the polarities between gravity and levity, between the inside and the outside, between moving and being moved, between the performer and the spectator, between the self-conscious "I" and the yet unconscious depths of the physical body, between spirit and matter, between being and knowing, between the empirical and the meta-empirical, between the physically sensible and the intuitively intelligible.

depending on the ability of the dancer to create and to communicate it and on the receptivity and inner disposition of the spectator or co-performer to understand it intuitively.
Attuning is not meant as a technique in the sense of mastering something in order to control it. Rather the opposite: it is intended to prepare the body to receive and to synthesize corporeal textures of consciousness that allow it to radically open itself towards the unknown, with trust. *Attuning* can then facilitate an inner movement of surrender and of consciously maintained humility towards an unspeakable unknown and creative source. *Attuning* is meant to make the dancing body receptive to cognize and to investigate possible relationships between the metaphysical and the physical. *Attuning* allows the dancing body to learn to know these relationships intimately, so that a spiritual-corporeal intuition of proximity with a creative source can be experienced, communicated and shared.

In the following, I will elaborate attunements for the approach to dance that I am developing. The frame of this dissertation allows me to discuss only a limited selection which I consider most relevant to this study. With the attunements I tentatively describe psychophysical foundations for the state of knowing-being in dance, which I refer to as *embodied gnosis*. The verbal description of these attunements is based on a retrospective analysis of the complexly layered performative states that I engage with during the dance. They consolidate extensive immersion into dance and intensive research into how to make implicit knowledge embodied in dance explicit. They textually incorporate dance-based knowledge from an individual subjective point of view. I am not making assumptions about the art of dance in general. I describe the knowledge of dance according to how it informs me. That some of this knowledge can resonate with the experience of other dancers is possible and intended, but not claimed.

The attunements are also meant to trigger resonances with *embodied gnosis* in your ***corporeal imagination****, dear reader. Just like the dance seeks to trigger resonances with *embodied gnosis* in the spectator(s) of the dance.

To verbally describe intentional orientations for dance experience (*corporeal theory)* and to expose them to theoretical speculations from other fields of knowledge and experience

(*discursive practice*) becomes an attuning process in itself. It is an open-ended trajectory dedicated to generating potentialities for knowing, while maintaining the intentional disposition of a radical opening towards the unknown.

Attuning

For Dance: let it pass through you

Altered states of knowing

For dance, the body needs to be available to let movements of energy pass through. I experience the energy generated and transformed through dance as coming both from the inside as well as from the outside of the human body. From the inside, I consider for example will, feeling, intention, inspiration, intuition and imagination as subtle physical factors that influence the energetic signature and the psychophysical textures of the dance. I understand muscle strength, effort, joint articulation and coordination of the limbs in space through various velocities and mobile architectures as concrete physical transformers of subtle impulses that trigger the body to express itself through dance.

For aspects of energy that pass through the dancing body from the outside, I consider physical factors such as the architecture of the surrounding space and the material texture of the ground underneath the feet. But also, the radiations and frequencies of information a body may receive from our planet and from the cosmos without being consciously aware of them. Non-physical or subtle physical factors such as the gaze of the spectator, gravity, levity (or whatever force it is that aligns and orients our spines vertically) and anything that lives in the unseen contribute to a large degree to the transfer and communication of energy and information that takes place during the dance. As a dancer, one of the foundations of my work is to make myself available to let the movements of energy from the inside and from the outside pass through. That a creative transformation of these rather raw and undefined movements of energy into communicative articulations of movement can occur, is based on this availability.

What specific kind of information is mediated through the dancing body can become more and more conscious, yet also remains to a large degree unconscious, unknown. The process of articulating a non-verbal *dance language* allows me to become more conscious of how my body interprets what passes through it during the dance.

It seems to me that my body knows more about what passes through it than I can be consciously aware of. There is a dichotomy between my conscious self awareness and that part of myself that resides unconsciously inside my body. They are complementary to each other and form together a whole the possible nature of which I am exploring.

With my approach to dance, I try to understand on a more conscious level what is unconsciously processed by the corporeal intelligence of my body; to learn something about the unknown by intentionally delegating choice making in movement to the deeper strata of my body, which I cannot yet access consciously. By developing a *dance language*, I learn to speak about what I encounter in the dance through the language of dance.

Intermezzo

Altered states of knowing

Energy can be understood in a broad sense as "dynamic quality", a "positive spiritual force" or "a fundamental entity of nature that is transferred between parts of a system in the production of physical change within the system."[348]

In contemporary physics, the classical concept of matter as substance has been replaced by more subtle possible facets of matter: "substance/energy/space-time/information". The reductionist emphasis on substance changed by understanding it as only one of several possible attributes of matter.[349] *Energy is one of these attributes.*

[348] "Energy", Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary, accessed 27.3.2020, https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/energy .

[349] Nicolescu, Fro*m Modernity to Cosmodernity*, 2014, 190.

In contemporary discourse on dance, energy or energeia, has been conceptualized as an "aesthetic force field".[350] *It relates to the ability of movement to transform bodies and the spaces of performance.*[351]

Theatre scientist Erika Fischer-Lichte for example, describes the particularity of experiencing performance as "blurring distinctions between artist and audience, body and mind, art and life". Fischer-Lichte laid the foundations for a "new aesthetics" of the performative[352]*. She describes performativity as related to the transfer of energy in the context of the theatre understood as an event space.*[353]

Dance and theater scientist Sabine Huschka describes knowledge about energy in dance and choreographic performance as mostly implicit.[354] *It oscillates between experiential certainty and an explicit not-knowing that is articulated as a dance-specific take on epistemology. This implies that not-knowing can be an intrinsic part of dance's ways of knowing and that uncertainty can function as a possible motor for movement.*[355] *According to Huschka, knowledge about energy in dance also oscillates between aesthetic intervention and utopian longings*[356]*.*

Energy and its expenditure, exhaustion and regeneration are often at stake in dance performances that require intense physical effort and mental presence. Embodied and implicit knowledge about energy in dance performance often includes - more or less consciously or explicitly - metaphysical dimensions. A non-calculative giving of self through generous energy expenditure is characteristic for many dance professionals.[357] *Dancers are often trained to push through their effort thresholds for the sake of the dance. Without being able to grasp rationally or intellectually where a felt imperative for energy expenditure in dance comes from,*

---

[350] Huschka, "Aesthetic Scenarios of Energeia: Bodies as Transformational Fields of Force," 2019, 60.
[351] Ibid, 57.
[352] See for example Fischer-Lichte, *The Transformative Power of Performance*, *A new Aesthetics*, 2008.
[353] Huschka, "Aesthetic Scenarios of Energeia: Bodies as Transformational Fields of Force," 2019, 57, Footnote 2.
[354] Ibid, 56.
[355] See for example Chauchat, "Not-knowing: mobility as a state of unrest", 2018, 131-138.
[356] Huschka, "Aesthetic Scenarios of Energeia: Bodies as Transformational Fields of Force," 2019, 59.
[357] "This relationship to energy expenditure is a fundamental aspect for dance. There is an almost metaphysical dimension, something gratuitous about this 'worthless' expenditure that neither 'counts' nor 'calculates'." Contemporary choreographer Boris Charmatz quoted in ibid, 58, footnote 4.

it is a fundamental factor that determines the transfer of energy in the context of a performance.

The Greek root of energy, energeia, can be translated as "reality, activity". According to Aristotle, the name energeia (reality) is derived from work (ergon) and aims towards completion (entelecheia).[358]

Altered states of knowing

Through my dancing body I intuit that the creative transformation of energy through dance includes regions of reality beyond the physical space and beyond the fleeting moment of the performative event. The idea of energy as "positive spiritual force"[359] comes close to what I perceive to be one of the main motivational engines for dance. My dancing body can regenerate movement again and again, even beyond the experiential edges of deep exhaustion. This regenerative energy appears to not only come from within my physical corporeality but also from an extracorporeal, metaphysical region of being, that somehow works through the physical body. I perceive dance as a vehicle for grounding non-verbally articulated forces or patterns of consciousness that matter, without being able to rationally grasp how, why and what for they matter. Based on these corporeally inspired intuitions, I investigate how esoteric ideas and practices could enlighten my not knowing of what actually is happening through the body when it mediates and creatively transforms energy through dance.

Intermezzo

Spiritual corporeality

A spiritual-corporeal ontology of the human body can inform a deeper understanding of the energy transfer that can happen through dance[360]*. Regardless of whether the subtle body*

[358] "Energeia", Metzler Lexicon Philosophie, accessed 4.8.2020, https://www.spektrum.de/lexikon/philosophie/energeia/557 .

[359] "Energy". Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary, accessed 27.3.2020, https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/energy.

[360] From the context of spiritual research, teachers such as Julie Redstone offer quite explicit and clear definitions of a spiritual-corporeal ontology. Redstone's work aims to unite "all religious

schemes developed in esoteric forms of thought are scientifically verifiable, they can trigger a fundamental re-imagining of human corporeality embedded in a scenario of cosmic evolution. A scientific method for "measuring" what kind of energy is transferred between the dance as a creative agency and dancers, between dancers among each other and between dancers and the audience appears to be for now out of question. To initiate a trans-disciplinary research project that brings together frontier areas in psychology and scientific research on mind-matter relations as promoted by for example Harald Atmanspacher,[361] dance researchers and energy workers experienced in working with subtle body physiology and energy would be an adventurous starting point. Yet this is future music and falls beyond the scope of this dissertation. It is a suggestive idea, a potentiality for knowing.

Towards embodied gnosis

I can activate my body in dance with the speculative idea that it is interpenetrated by an energetic body which is both physical and spiritual. This speculation is based on an insisting corporeal intuition, informed and at times confirmed by esoteric forms of thought. I can imagine that my body in motion resonates with layers of being that encompass a multidimensional idea and sense of self. The energy expenditure involved in dance can then be seen on a larger scale as a labor of self-realization, incarnation and manifestation. Dance thus activates and non-verbally communicates qualities and textures of ***matter-consciousness**** that are both physical and spiritual and that affect several layers or dimensions of being.

traditions under the umbrella of the One that is the Unity of Life." Redstone works with the idea of an "energy body" which she defines as: "The physical-spiritual body that exists within human beings in levels or layers of vibration that link the physical being with the higher dimensions of its own self. All levels or dimensions of energy interpenetrate each other and are not separate." See "About GurujiMa", lightomega.org, accessed 27.3.2022, https://lightomega.org/about-light-omega/about-gurujima/ and "Glossary of Terms for a New Earth," lightomega.org, accessed 31.10.2021, https://lightomega.org/introductory-guides/glossary/ .

[361] Harald Atmanspacher is associate fellow at the Collegium Helveticum ETH Zürich and a faculty member of the C.G. Jung Institute Zürich. He also works at the Institute for Frontier Areas of Psychology and Mental Health in Freiburg. From back cover Atmanspacher and Fuchs, *The Pauli-Jung Conjecture and its Impact Today*, 2014). Atmanspacher is also the president of the Society for Mind-Matter research. *Society for Mind-Matter Research*, mindmatter.de, accessed 17.8.2022, https://www.mindmatter.de/index.html .

Preparing the canvas

Altered states of knowing

My body tends to accumulate psychophysical debris such as for example tensions resulting from self-protection, deeply rooted fears, forced working efforts etc. This debris creates dense spaces within the corporeal texture that obstruct mobility, fluid articulation of movement and the creative communication of energy. Corporeal density can be self-diagnosed (to a certain extent) throughout the entire body: in the joints, in the muscles, in the tendons, maybe even in the bones, in the nervous system, in the brain etc. Numbness of sensation, stagnated energy and limited mobility can be easily observed by scanning the inner landscape of the body with focused awareness. Bringing movement to these places of density and limited mobility can liberate the stagnated energy and allows internal communication between the numbed cells and their far and close neighbors to be re-activated. Not all areas and systems of the body can be accessed consciously through inwardly focused sensing. We often do not feel our bodies unless we are getting signals of discomfort or pain. Bringing tensed and numbed areas into motion, and through motion towards a more conscious relation between the body and the surrounding space, influences states of being in different ways than equanimous observation of sensations in a still posture as is done in many meditation practices.[362] When there is no direct access to specific areas of the body, they can still be accessed by patiently practiced and anatomically informed imagination. Yet there always remains an undefinable space in the inner landscapes of my body. I also refer to this space as the unspeakable unknown. Cleansing the body from psychophysical debris seems to be an endless task whereby the edge of the unspeakable unknown keeps receding further and further into limitless depths of the inner space of the body.

[362] For a Tibetan Buddhist meditation method that aims towards "awakening the sacred body" and that involves bodily movement, see for example Rinpoche, *Awakening the Sacred Body. Tibetan Yogas of Breath and Movement*, 2011.

Intermezzo

The term "psychophysical" is used in the dialogue between Jung and Pauli. The main target in their joint investigation was the relationship between mind and matter, the "psychophysical problem". They attempted to gain a better understanding of the transitions between the physical and the mental and questioned the kind of reality on which it could be grounded.[363] *They speculated about a "psychophysically neutral" reality (unus mundus) that would lie beyond the categories of mind and matter as well as mediate between them.*[364] *This psychophysically neutral reality is conceived of as "radically holistic, without distinctions" and as "discursively inexpressible".*[365]

Altered states of knowing

I believe dance is able to create an experience of blending and unifying opposite forces. In dance, a unity of mind and body can be almost self-evident. It can become an experiential reality that draws together contradictory forces at play in dance into a unifying whole.[366] What may appear during regular waking states as strict dichotomies between the inside and the outside or between conscious self awareness and the unconscious of the body, can blend during an altered state generated by dance towards an experience of an all-encompassing unity. Referencing Jung and Pauli's terminology, the quality of this unifying experience could also be described as a "holistic" experience. Here, distinctions between mind and matter, inside and outside, psyche and physis appear to be dissolvable in a sense of unity of being.
I associate the experience of unity of mind and body in dance with the "psychophysically neutral" domain of Jung and Pauli. It is somewhat paradoxically beyond the distinction between mind and matter while at the same time mediating between polarities of forces that I associate with the physically sensible and the metaphysically intuitable. Rather than

[363] Atmanspacher and Fuchs, "Introduction: The Pauli-Jung Conjecture," 2014, 1.

[364] Atmanspacher, "Notes on Psychophysical Phenomena," 2014, 184.

[365] Atmanspacher, "The Pauli-Jung Conjecture and Its Implications for Exceptional Experiences", 2018, 3.

[366] For another voice on the experience of the unity of mind and body in dance see for example Pieter C. Scholten: "(…) it is an ongoing way of exploiting intuitive movement, a movement which passes through the memory in a split second, generating a unity between mind and body, a consciousness which evokes the next movement. The mental state is a physical state, and the physical state is a mental state (…)". Quoted in Magnini, *Inspiration. Emio Greco | Pieter C. Scholten. The Multiplicity of Dance*, 2015, 115.

experiencing dichotomies between contradictory forces, the dance experience can unfold along a continuum of very dense and very subtle materialities – from cracking bones to almost imperceptible impulses that initiate movement.

Intermezzo

Altered states of knowing

The historical origin of the psychophysical problem begins with Descartes' "substance dualism" where the mental (res cogitans) and the physical (res extensa) are attributed with distinct ontological difference. Closer to Jung's and Pauli's worldview is Spinoza's view on what is known in the philosophy of mind as "dual-aspect monism". As an alternative to the mind-body problem the mental and the physical are here described as epistemic aspects of a single underlying reality. Jung and Pauli related their views also to the psychophysical parallelism of Leibniz.[367] *The dual-aspect monism in Jung and Pauli's speculative theory brings together an ontic monism referring to a "psychophysically neutral background reality" and an epistemic dualism where the mental and the physical provide different epistemological perspectives on the underlying ontic reality, which Jung described with the term "unus mundus".*[368] *The adjective "ontic" refers to something of real existence distinguished from phenomenal appearances.*[369] *In Pauli and Jung's version of dual-aspect monism, aspects are dependent on epistemic contexts; they are not an a priori given. In principle, there can be a limitless amount*

[367] Atmanspacher and Fuchs, "Introduction: The Pauli-Jung Conjecture," 2014, 1.
[368] Atmanspacher, "Notes on Psychophysical Phenomena," 2014, 181.
[369] "Ontic," Lexico Online Dictionary, accessed 26.3.2020, https://www.lexico.com/definition/ontic .

of aspects as much as there can be a limitless amount of contexts. So called "epistemic splits"[370] *generate the distinction of aspects from an unseparated unitary underlying realm.*[371]

Towards embodied gnosis

In this research, two different yet ***complementary**** ontological and epistemological perspectives are brought in dialogue with each other: the perspective of the non-verbal, first-person dance experience and the perspective of its verbally discursive contextualization. Through this dialogue, different ideas about possible relations between the metaphysical and the physical unfold. Both perspectives can be interpreted as hinting towards an *ontic* dimension of reality. They circle around what I intuit through dance as something ***real**** that underlies and passes through the phenomenal world.[372] In my approach to dance, I search for this experience of the *real* in the inner/outer landscape, which I refer to as the unspeakable unknown, or the hypothetical area of being where the somatic and spiritual unconscious converge.

[370] Harald Atmanspacher and Wolfgang Fach discuss the mathematical principle used in theoretical physics referred to as an "epistemic split". They relate it to a "primordial principle in every epistemology." They specify this statement with: "In somewhat more abstract terms, distinctions can be conceived as symmetry breakings. Symmetries in this parlance [referring to the *unus mundus* and mind-matter relations in dual-aspect monism] are invariances under transformations … Symmetry breakings are a powerful mathematical tool in large part of theoretical physics, but we do not know better than by pure speculation which symmetries must be ascribed to the *unus mundus.*" In Atmanspacher and Fach, "Mind-Matter Correlations in Dual-Aspect-Monism According to Pauli and Jung," 2015, 223, note 12.

[371] Atmanspacher, "Notes on Psychophysical Phenomena," 2014, 181.

[372] As an experimental analogy with dual-aspect monism of Jung and Pauli, we could say that the epistemic context of my non-verbal dance language is dance. The epistemic context of the complementary discursive contextualization of this ***dance**** is threefold: discourse derived from the danced experience articulated in its own terms (retrospective dance writing, attuning/intentional orientations for corporeal consciousness), esoteric forms of thought and related body based practices where mind and matter are differentiated on a spectrum that ranges from gross to very subtle forms of "matter-consciousness", and the Jung-Pauli conjecture that posits mind and matter as complementary aspects of a larger unifying whole which is supposed to be shared by both aspects yet at the same time transcends both of them. Both perspectives can be seen as aspects that depend on their respective epistemic contexts. Continuing to adopt the Jung-Pauli conjecture as an analogy for the meta-frame of this dissertation project, we can see it as bringing together a non-verbal *dance language* and its verbally discursive contextualization as aspects of an underlying "unifying whole" that takes part in both yet transcends both through a *dancing language*.

Embodied gnosis implies envisioning the possibility to experience something *real* in dance. This experience also resonates with Jung and Pauli's speculative description of the *unus mundus*.

I understand cleansing the body from psychophysical debris as a preparation for the ***psychophysical resonating space**** of the dancing body to experience *embodied gnosis*. It enables it to penetrate regions of experience where something *real* can be touched. The preparation happens by consciously mobilizing accumulated densities that seem to resist this experience.

Intermezzo

Altered states of knowing

For Pauli and Jung mind and matter are complementary epistemic aspects that are mutually incompatible. At the same time, they emphasize that both aspects are necessary to describe mind-matter systems. The reason for their incompatibility according to Jung and Pauli is the non-Boolean[373] (meaning non-binary in the sense of true or false, 0 or 1, or yes or no) nature of the reality that ontically underlies the epistemic dualism between mind and matter.[374] Although they could not find a direct causal pathway between the mental and the physical, Pauli and Jung speculated about indirect influences via this underlying domain.

[373] "Boolean," Merriam –Webster online dictionary: "of, relating to, or being a logical combinatorial system (such as Boolean algebra) that represents symbolically relationships (such as those implied by the logical operators AND, OR, and NOT) between entities (such as sets, propositions, or on-off computer circuit elements)." Accessed 2.5.23, https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/Boolean. In the language of theoretical chemist Hans Primas in an article on Mind-Matter problems: "The conceptual structure of modern quantum theory suggests to use complementary Boolean descriptions as elements for a more comprehensive non-Boolean description of a world without an *a priori* given mind-matter distinction. Such a description in terms of a locally Boolean but *globally non-Boolean* structure makes allowance for the fact that Boolean descriptions play a privileged role in science." Primas, "Non-Boolean Descriptions for Mind-Matter Problems," 2007, 7.

[374] Atmanspacher, "Notes on Psychophysical Phenomena," 2014, 182.

I am far from being an expert in the field of knowledge where physics and psychology meet to gain new vistas about mind-matter relations and about the nature of reality. I experience and investigate mind-matter relations in and through dance. I see the Pauli-Jung conjecture (and its contemporary elaboration by among others Atmanspacher), as an intriguing additional perspective on possible relations between the metaphysical and the physical.[375]

Intermezzo

Altered states of knowing

With Harald Atmanspacher (in line with the dual-aspect thinking of Pauli-Jung), the physical and the mental are aspects or perspectives through which we can see what the world is made of. What the world is really made of is described as the psychophysically neutral domain, which is neither mental nor physical but something else.
What is called the psychophysically neutral domain in the language of physics since the 20th century can be equated with what Spinoza referred to as the Divine in the language of philosophy during the 17th century.[376]

---

[375] To elucidate how the Pauli-Jung conjecture relates to this dissertation project, I quote Atmanspacher at length. I present his thoughts as a potentiality for knowing, because they can inform ideas about possible relations between the metaphysical and the physical related to yet unknown types of perception. That these thoughts are articulated from a different epistemic context than dance research I see rather as an asset than an obstacle. "In the Pauli-Jung conjecture, the psychophysically neutral domain is apprehensible only indirectly, by its manifestations in the aspects. Their dual-aspect monism is a metaphysical position including both epistemic and ontic elements. Although large parts of the 20th century witnessed an often-pejorative connotation with metaphysics, insight into the nature of reality is in general impossible without metaphysical assumptions and regulative principles. The metaphysical nature of the Pauli-Jung conjecture implies a lack of concrete illustrative examples, which is not due to missing imagination but represent an important feature of their approach. This alludes to the situation in quantum theory, repeatedly expressed by one of its main architects Niels Bohr (1934): '…we are concerned with the recognition of physical laws which lie outside the domain of our ordinary experience and which present difficulties to our accustomed forms of perception'." Atmanspacher, "Notes on Psychophysical Phenomena," 2014, 182.

[376] Loosely transcribed from "The Mind/Matter Problem with Dr. Harald Atmanspacher | The Lex Files, accessed 18.8.2022," https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HpV_6Bxakek, min. 22:40 – 23:39.

Towards embodied gnosis

As already suggested above, I associate the experience of unity of mind and body during the dance with the idea of an undifferentiated "psychophysically neutral reality". I equate the intuitive perception of something ontically *real* through the dancing body (understood as a creatively mediating interface between the metaphysical and the physical) with the experience of proximity with a creative source**.** I investigate, communicate and describe this experience through a *dancing language.*

Opening to a dialogue with the real

Altered states of knowing

Through my dancing body, I sometimes perceive a dimension of being that appears to mediate between my conscious awareness and the unconscious depths of my body in motion.[377] This dimension of being appears to me to live within my body while connecting it at the same time with a larger whole that extends far beyond it. A larger realm of being that might encompass the concrete physical space of this planet as well as invisible metaphysical dimensions of life. I need to consciously open my entire being towards this idea, to actively participate in it, for it to be able to be perceived and communicated through the dance. It is the intuitive intelligence of my body that entices me to know this larger dimension of being through experience. This corporeal intuitive intelligence is personal in the sense that *I* perceive it inside of my body, as well as impersonal, in the sense that it seems to be in touch with impersonal, objective laws of being.[378] It is both *my* corporeal intelligence as well as *a* corporeal intelligence that carries an accumulation of genetic information from uncountable

[377] With Jung, these unconscious depths are related to the somatic or spiritual unconscious and to the subtle body. See chapter four, 172.

[378] To give more epistemological gravity to this personal experience I refer here also to a statement by choreographer and dancer Emio Greco in relation to what intuitive intelligence of the body can perceive through dance. He describes this as "essential physical laws that are understood by the body." From my unpublished notes of a conversation with the artistic directors of ICK and the curators of the exhibition *Imagine Intuition* at De Lakenhal Leiden, 23.2.2022. The explicit addition of the metaphysical dimension to the intuitive intelligence of the body is specific to my approach here.

generations. When being in touch with this dimension of experience through the moving body in dance, a subjective sense of separated selfhood can dissolve into an experience of an "objectively" given oneness of the dancing body with the entirety of the surrounding space. "Objectively" given here refers to a quality of experience where a state of being is perceived to be *real* in an *ontic* sense. It seems to me that the subjective mind inhabiting a singular human body needs to be attuned to this dimension of experience to be able to perceive this "objectively" given scenario. In this case, the scenario is a state of inseparability and "oneness" of the human body with its physical and metaphysical context. The physical and metaphysical context of a dance does then not stop at the walls of the building where the dance takes place. It rather extends itself towards infinite space.

This experience of oneness with the space can also become a sense of oneness with other dancing bodies, or with the spectators. It is an expanded awareness that can come into being when I reach out towards it, when I consciously attune my corporeal consciousness to the possibility of its occurrence.

Considering an "epistemic split" between the aspects of the mental and the physical in relation to dance, it seems to me that it is the faculty of imagination that can mediate creatively between a mental intention and a physical movement.

In dance, there is a continuous back and forth traffic of information/energy that passes between a movement infused with intentionality and a backlash from the movement of the physical body towards the conscious mind. This back-and-forth dialogue between conscious intention and corporeal movement needs an inner process of translation that I perceive to happen by means of infusing the body with ***corporeal imagination****. *Corporeal imagination* can at times unexpectedly flip over to experiencing something *real*. As if the body can realize, manifest and anchor something elusive as imaginative thought. The entire body in motion can metamorphose through intentionally focused imagination. At the same time, the dancing body can trigger different ideas and images from the bottom up – from the physical to the mental. It speaks back. When I encounter a sense of the *real* during the dance, it triggers in me also the idea of a potential humanity, something we can become, but not yet are.

Not always is there the possibility for imaginatively mediated communication between an intention to move and the movement of the physical body. The body is the first place of resistance to the dance.

Often there is much more information coming back from the body than I had consciously intended or expected. This information can be overwhelming. It can be experienced as something like a primal matter of pure potential that stirs light and darkness and that awaits being shaped and molded into expression. These kinds of experience also make me curious about what the body has to say, if I don't predetermine or domesticate its expression through choreographed, intentionally designed movement trajectories. Or what it may be able to mediate towards my conscious awareness from other realms of being that evade the grasp of my conscious mind. To become more conscious of what my body mediates through dance, I intentionally give space for choice making in movement to these unknown depths of my corporeal being.

Intermezzo

In Pauli's and Jung's description of the psychophysical problem of how mind and matter are related to each other, indirect influences from the underlying psychophysically neutral background reality can act on the mental and the physical. Supposed relations between the psychophysically neutral, ontic domain and the mental and material epistemic domains are seen as bidirectional.[379]

Altered states of knowing

How might subjective intentionality and corporeal communication in dance, mediated by imagination, relate to the ontic domain of Pauli and Jung?[380] What is a *real* movement and when can it resonate beyond the phenomenal with the *ontic*?

To me, the ontic points towards a realm of causation beyond the phenomenal world of experience. In the epistemic context of dance, it could point towards an otherworldly realm of causation for intentional and unintentional movement in thought and body. This world could lie beyond the individual self yet simultaneously reach deeply into the dark depths of the yet unconscious matters of my body. I am curious about this realm of causation, and I

[379] Atmanspacher, "Notes on Psychophysical Phenomena," 2014, 185-186.

[380] I warmly thank Sher Doruff for asking this question.

explore it through a search for movement origination from what I call (with Jung) a dimension of knowing-being where the "somatic unconscious" and the "spiritual unconscious" converge. Jung associates this realm with the ***subtle body****, which according to him is not scientifically graspable as it transcends our known categories of space and time. In Pauli and Jung's speculation, the *ontic* realm is psychophysically neutral, meaning neither mental nor physical.

Seen from the perspective of being immersed in a dance, I associate this realm of causation with a higher wisdom and benevolence beyond my comprehension. Could an all-encompassing ground of being beyond the distinctions of mind and matter be intrinsically benevolent? Or does it depend on the human being to which axiological[381] value direction it is being polarized? Whether the association of an intrinsic benevolence with a ground of being is my own irrational projection, my rose-colored glasses of faith or a true or false interpretation of intensely experienced bodily intuitions, I don't know. If I ask my body, it says it might true. At times it communicates to me through showers of inner shivers that seem to get triggered by vibrations of profound meaning and truth of a distinctly benevolent nature. But again - this might be nothing more and nothing less than a question of interpretation. In any case, I infer that the experience of something *real***,** immanent and transcendent, is somehow related to the faculty of creative *corporeal imagination* which I activate through the poetic experience of dance.

I propose to not cage these speculations into Boolean true or false categories. Can we let them be non-Boolean potentialities for knowing?

Towards embodied gnosis

For the dance and music performance SEI, I started to work from an intermediary zone of awareness. Conscious movement choices interact here with unconscious movement patterns that emerge in the moment, searching for a state of being in touch with an unknown *creative*

[381] "Axiology," Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary: "the study of the nature, types and criteria of values and of value judgments especially in ethics," accessed 12.8.2022, https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/axiology#:~:text=%3A%20the%20study%20of%20the%20nature,value%20judgments%20especially%20in%20ethics .

source.[382] Moving from this intermediary state can trigger the experience of being in corporeal proximity with something, which I cannot grasp or understand consciously.

I intuit it through some kind of bodily intelligence. A state of knowing-being that realizes itself as belonging to an infinitely larger realm where mind and matter, or psyche and physis (one's own body as well as the body of the surrounding space and other bodies in the space) appear to be in intimate, indivisible and creative proximity with each other, or simply one.

When I let movement emerge from this state, or when being immersed in dance brings me to that state, the dancing body can become a mediating interface through which impulses for movement can express themselves. A danced movement can become a *real* movement.

This state of knowing-being may be related to an ontic as well as to an epistemic domain: my dancing body perceives some kind of proximity with a dimension of experience that mediates information/energy between my conscious mind and the intuitive mind of my body in motion. I speculatively relate this dimension of experience to an ontic domain because it is not based on sense perception, but on a corporeal intuition. With Jung, I understand intuition as not based on sense perception, but as emerging from the unconscious. Jung associates the somatic/spiritual unconscious with the subtle body.

The *epistemic split* born from this dance-specific ontic context (the hypothetical subtle body), could be related on the one hand to the state of conscious decision-making and on the other hand to the state of allowing movements to emerge in the moment from the intuitive mind of my dancing body.

Through experiencing, observing and interpreting the exchange of information/energy between both states, and through the dialogue with other fields of research, I become more consciously aware of the possibility that both states of being can be seen as emerging from a larger unifying whole. Just one side of the epistemic split is conscious, and the other side is unconscious, or so far maybe only corporeally conscious.

Where conscious awareness hits the ever-receding edge of the unconscious, it can start a dialogue with what may be addressed as the ontic or the *real* underneath or beyond phenomenal experience. This is the space, place or realm of causation for movement that I am curious about. I explore it through a *dance language* that bridges the abyss between the unconscious self that resides in and outside of the body and the becoming consciously aware

[382] On the relation between the dance, music and dance language see chapter six.

of it. The creative process towards this dance language awakens a slumbering potential of embodied being. It creates the conditions for this potential to make itself knowable - to me and to others - through dance.

Intermezzo

Altered states of knowing

The underlying reality Jung and Pauli speculated about, brought Pauli to consider that a science of the future would not treat this reality as being of a psychic or physical order, but rather as something that belongs in a way to both and neither of them. Pauli understood mental and material aspects as complementary aspects from where the one reality can appear.[383]

Relating to the metaphysical issues raised by the Pauli-Jung conjecture, Atmanspacher and Christopher Fuchs[384] *acknowledge, that their contemporary vision on the Pauli-Jung conjecture might be seen as perpetuating the historical schism between the ontic and the epistemic realms. Yet Atmanspacher and Fuchs propose to focus on the interface between these two discourses, which would inevitably need to be defined from both ontic and epistemic perspectives:*

> *Since the frontiers of knowledge have never been rigidly fixed, this interface cannot be defined as a static wall behind which empirical access is outright impossible. What may be ontic from one point of view may be epistemic from another. For a future more refined version of the Pauli-Jung conjecture we envision a metaphysics*

[383] In 1952 Pauli wrote: "For the invisible reality, of which we have small pieces of evidence in both quantum physics and the psychology of the unconscious, a symbolic psychophysical unitary language must ultimately be adequate, and this is the far goal which I actually aspire. I am quite confident that the final objective is the same, independent of whether one starts from the psyche (ideas) or from physis (matter). Therefore, I consider the old distinction between materialism and idealism as obsolete." Atmanspacher and Primas, "Pauli's ideas on Mind and Matter in the Context of Contemporary Science," 2006, 24.

[384] Christopher Fuchs is a senior scientist at the Quantum Information Processing group of Raytheon BBN Technologies in Cambridge and adjunct professor of physics at the University of Waterloo in Canada. From back cover Atmanspacher and Fuchs, *The Pauli-Jung Conjecture and its Impact Today*, 2014.

that distinctly acknowledges participating and committed observers – 'both spectators and actors in the great drama of existence.' [385]

Towards embodied gnosis

Extending these lines of thought further into my exploration, I refer to the place or space of movement origination in dance that I "locate" at a hypothetical interface between the spiritual and the somatic unconscious, as they are differentiated by Jung.[386] Jung relates this area of being to the *subtle body*. The idea of *embodied gnosis* is then a non-verbal corporeal and a verbally discursive approximation towards this space or place of knowing-being.

Embodied gnosis understood as an intermediary zone of knowing-being can also be understood as a kind of *interface*, a mode of cognition enabled by the body in danced motion, that touches on both ontic and epistemic domains, on being and knowing.

[385] Atmanspacher and Fuchs, "Introduction: The Pauli-Jung Conjecture,"2014, 6. The quote referring to the 'great drama of existence' is from Bohr, *Atomic Theory and the Description of Nature,* 1958, 81.

[386] Carl Gustav Jung and James L. Jarrett, "Winter Term January/March 1935,"*Nietzche's Zarathustra: Notes of the seminar given in 1934* -1939, 1988, 442.

Tuning the psychophysical tonality

Altered states of knowing

I understand "psychophysical tonality" as encompassing the state of the psyche as well as the state of the body. If I would consider only the physical aspect of the human being, it would be possible to work with a term such as muscle tonus. To be truthful to my experience, I need to also consider the subtle materialities of thought, feelings and intentional disposition towards movement, that communicate with and through the physical body. The inner spaces of the body resonate with movement impulses that infuse the entire body with conscious and unconscious movement intentions.

If the psychophysical tonality of the dancing body is too tensed, inner liquidity of motion that traverses the entire body and connects everything with each other is not accessible. ***Imaginal**** movement streams that I experience as mediating between mind and matter - or between intentionality and movement quality – have difficulty to pass through the body if it is too tense. Conscious will may direct the body to move in certain ways, but the body – where also an unconscious will resides - is then not available to receive this information.

If the psychophysical tonality is too relaxed, the articulation of movement becomes sloppy, unreadable and weak in expression. I see the ideal state of attuning the psychophysical tonality of the dancing body as a neutral, active/passive state of being. I associate psychophysical tonality also with the corporeal voice of the soul. It speaks or sings with and through the matters of the body. The body resists, until I manage to attune it to the sweet spot where it can start to speak, or even sing. Like tuning an instrument, the dancing body needs to find an ideal balance between tension and relaxation so that its movements may resonate expressively in and with space. This ideal balance is constantly changing, as are the psyche, the body and the circumstances of life. If both aspects are in good health, they are naturally able to adapt to whatever is needed in the moment.

Towards embodied gnosis

The accumulated *matter-consciousness* of these kinds of knowing is a synthesis of direct cognitions of the conditions that frame the logic of expression of my dancing body. The intentional orientations for corporeal consciousness listed here, identify and describe aspects of this materialized consciousness, which always remains incomplete and open-ended. I experience it as intrinsically non-verbal. This means that the cellular configuration of its corporeally crystallized memory happens by a corporeal kind of understanding and intelligence. In my view, this corporeal intelligence has the potential to enable another kind of sense making than rational logic. It can facilitate meaningful communication between the psychological and the physiological inner spaces of a dancing body and the world of outwardly oriented sensorial perception.

With this research, I am working on understanding this idea and experience of materialized consciousness better and to make it more explicit. I also experience this corporeal intelligence as imbued with spiritual and consequently ethically oriented dimensions of knowing and being. For example, it may enhance a sense of community and interpersonal connection. It may also impart a supra-sensory intuition of some kind of transcendental, immensely powerful and radically humbling agency, which appears to me to be immanently present in the corporeality of the human being.

How this corporeal intelligence is informed by activating a dialogue at the edge between consciousness and the unconscious is here looked at through the ***creative interface**** of the dancing body.

Intuitive corporeal intelligence can be activated by giving conscious attention to how the psyche and the body are attuned with each other and with the multi-faceted surfaces of each present moment. Attuning the psychophysical tonality during waking consciousness has also to do with a state of being fully present. In danced motion, the state of being present becomes more complex as the body needs to be navigated through space in a way that is radically different from sitting in a chair or from walking on the street. The directions that the limbs, torso and articulations of the body travel in space multiply exponentially. A multitude of living vectors of motion are experienced simultaneously. They traverse the fingers, the toes, the knees, the shoulders, the pelvis (…) perpetually creating expressive angles in the joints that

cannot but be in a cohesive and collaborative state of union in relation to each other. They can contradict each other, but they are essentially one.

In dance, I need to keep orchestrating all of this while simultaneously listening and responding to it. And the unconscious, the unknown, the unspeakable needs space to be there for the dance that I am searching for to be able to blossom freely.

Full performative presence in dance as I experience it also encompasses to a large extent the ability of being present to the unknown, of opening one's inner being towards the mystery of movement and to allow it to make itself present through dance.

Intermezzo

Altered states of knowing

Bio-Somatic Dance Movement Naturotherapy is a therapeutic practice developed by dance movement therapist and scholar Amanda Williamson[387]. This practice is grounded in what Williamson refers to as "Post-Newtonian anatomy and physiology". It foregrounds an experiential or "post-Cartesian" anatomy where the division of body and mind are integrated in a "holistic body-Self". With her "post-Newtonian" stance she integrates objective knowledge of western anatomy with subjective movement experiences in a conscious dialogue with gravity, imaginatively transcending the functional and mechanical approach of western anatomy.[388] It is a contemporary approach to therapy that emphasizes bodymind awareness and the healing potential of movement.[389] Embodied awareness is here prioritized over cerebral talking although developing language from subjective experience does play a constitutive part in the therapeutic process[390].

[387] Amanda Williamson is principal editor and co-founder of the Journal *Dance, Movement & Spiritualities* (Intellect) established in 2014 and visiting professor at Coventry University.

[388] Williamson, "Post-Newtonian Anatomy and Physiology: The Gravitational and Parasympathetic Experience in Bio-Somatic Dance Movement Naturotherapy, 2020, 172.

[389] For an example from the context of arts therapies where the role of aesthetic engagement in relation to resilience and mental wellbeing is highlighted, see Samaritter, "The Aesthetic Turn in Mental Health: Reflections on an Explorative Study into Practices in the Arts Therapies," 2018, 1–11.

[390] Williamson for example describes how another quality of sense-perception and experience can be generated by re-languaging the vocabulary of traditional anatomy. She works for example with the

Williamson offers another perspective on the idea of "tuning the psychophysical tonality" by balancing the parasympathetic with the sympathetic nervous systems. The parasympathetic nervous system belongs to the autonomic nervous system (ANS) and usually functions underneath conscious awareness.[391] *Participants of therapeutic sessions are encouraged to self-regulate and re-align corporeal misalignments caused by an overarousal of the sympathetic nervous system. This happens by bringing conscious sensory awareness to the unconscious life processes that traverse the body through the parasympathetic nervous system*[392]*.*

Altered states of knowing

The neutral active-passive state which I aim to attune to, can be physiologically grounded by balancing the sympathetic and parasympathetic nervous systems. The dialogue between conscious choice making in movement and intuitively emerging movements from the unconscious, can be associated with Williamson's ideas about becoming aware of the life processes that happen through the parasympathetic nervous system as a movement towards integrative wholeness of "body-Self". An experience-based intuitive knowing about a hypothetical convergence between the somatic and the spiritual unconscious could be explored in line with Williamson's approach of integrating objective anatomical knowledge with subjective experiential knowledge.

expression "each vertebra floats on the intervertebral discs," instead of with "the vertebrae stack or inter-lock on top of each other." In Williamson, "Post-Newtonian Anatomy and Physiology: The Gravitational and Parasympathetic Experience in Bio-Somatic Dance Movement Naturotherapy," 2020, 187.

[391] Ibid, 191.

[392] Interesting to note here is the importance given to the vagus nerve as an essential part of the parasympathetic nervous system. The vagus nerve literally connects the brain with the body and facilitates a bidirectional flow between the brain and the guts (the stomach and intestines). In Williamson's words "… a client can tune into the brain-gut axis" by consciously accessing the vagus nerve. In Williamson, "Post-Newtonian Anatomy and Physiology," 2020, 183-185.

Spiritual corporeality

When being immersed in a dance for a substantial amount of time, I start to experience a psychophysical state of "inner liquidity" that becomes the experiential ground for movement origination. This "inner liquidity" enables integrative communication between subtle inner movements of personal and possibly universal aspects of the psyche or the mind and the more solid reality of the body. This state changes the experience of my corporeality. "Inner liquidity" can be looked at from the perspective of relational fluid systems that operate underneath the threshold of everyday consciousness. In conversation, Williamson expressed her view based on many years of working and teaching in somatic movement education, that the presence of the "spiritual" inside of the body seems to her to be physiologically rooted in these relational fluid systems.[393]

Towards embodied gnosis

To synthesize my insight into the concept of *embodied gnosis* so far:
This research differs from somatic approaches to dance where the first-person subjective perception of corporeal sensations is foregrounded by exploring the suprasensory dimensions of danced experience. I am asking questions about a possible dimension of being that is not directly perceivable through the senses as we know them, but intuitable from a yet unconscious level of experience. For Jung, intuition is not related to sense perception but to the unconscious.[394] He associates the spiritual and the somatic unconscious with the *subtle body.*[395] The hypothetical interface between the *somatic* and the *spiritual unconscious* and the *subtle body* so far thus appear to be the key areas to look at with my questioning about the relationship between the metaphysical and the physical.
So how can I attune the psychophysical tonality of my dancing body towards being able to investigate the subtle body at the edge between the somatic and the spiritual unconscious?

[393] This conversation took place at the conference "Cultural, Intercultural and Transnational Dialogues in Dance and Spirituality" organized by Moving Soma, Centre for Embodiment and Bio Somatic Dance Movement Naturotherapy, Cheltenham UK in August 2019.
[394] See for example "Sensing vs. Intuition," Personlity Hacker, accessed 19.09.2014, *YouTube* https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W9Fw-YpHoU8.
[395] Jung and Jarrett, "Winter Term January/March 1935," 1988, 441.

With Steiner, the etheric body (a supra-sensory layer of consciousness beyond the physical body) bridges the abyss between inner perception directed towards the consciousness of the self ("soul oriented") and outer perception by means of the senses. Steiner states that the path towards inner perception loses itself in the unconscious and does not directly connect with perceiving outwardly through the senses.[396] The edges of this abyss have captured my curiosity, and I associate them with a metaphorical double-edged sword of gnosis. It slices in between on the one hand the limits of conscious awareness of my corporeal being and on the other hand the place or space or dimension of experience where the unconscious begins.[397]
Through artistic means, I can speculatively interrogate ideas about the subtle body gathered so far. With the help of ***corporeal imagination**** I can perform a dance with the intention to move as if my body is receiving information from the vast periphery of a cosmic "I".[398]
I can invite movement to come from a place where my conscious awareness encounters an edge of perception that leads towards my inner being, or to something like a yet unconscious will that I intuit to reside somewhere deep inside of my body. I can corporeally imagine that there is a path from my inner being towards the outer world enabled by a subtle kind of corporeality, and I can study – together with the observers of the dance - how the movement language generated by this speculative scenario speaks.
The place underneath sensorial perception that I am curious about, the *ontic* domain, or the unspeakable unknown might as well be nothing more than the unconscious areas of my body that I cannot access consciously. Whereas Williamson's perspective on the unconscious residing in the parasympathetic nervous system informs my intuition about a subtle kind of corporeality linked to the state of *embodied gnosis* from the anatomical, inwardly oriented side, Steiner's perspective on the etheric body also includes a bridge between the unconscious inside of the body and the unconscious cosmic outside. An insight that I can

[396] Fors, *Geschichte der Eurythmie im tanzhistorischen Kontext 1912-1930*, 2015, 50.
[397] I also relate this edge to the "cut" between consciousness and the unconscious that according to Pauli needs to be positioned by the experimenting researcher, wisely (my addition). See also chapter three, 90.
[398] With Steiner, the etheric body is associated with a counterforce against gravity and with peripherally informed movement (as opposed to concentrically condensed movement). It is supposed to provide the inner body (with Steiner also the astral body) with elements/substance/information that the etheric body sucks out of the cosmos, out of the cosmic "I". Steiner, *Das Johannes Evangelium, Ein Zyklus von zwölf Vorträgen, Hamburg 18.-31. Mai 1908,* Rudolf Steiner Online Archiv, 4. Auflage 2010, 207.

derive from the various perspectives on subtle corporeality in combination with my experience is that human corporeality can be intuitively experienced as spiritually informed although it is yet unconscious and largely unknown to us.

Even though some of these perspectives are not compatible with a materialist knowledge paradigm, I can explore them artistically. As a dance researcher embedded in an academic context, I maintain a suspended position between "naïve materialism" and "naïve idealism" by considering both the anatomy based (Williamson) and the spiritual science-based (Steiner) perspectives on the human body in developing my own views on the subject matter.[399]

Activating Axis of Reverence

Altered states of knowing

Imagine standing right in front of something awe-inspiring: maybe a gigantic ancient tree, or a baroque Cathedral, or an Egyptian Pyramid - something that wordlessly radiates supreme authority, wisdom and significance, just by being there.[400]

[399] I am referring here to Geoffrey Samuel's work on a scientifically grounded understanding of the meaning of subtle body concepts as described in chapter four on the subtle body. To reiterate here for the convenience of the reader: Samuel highlights the major limitations of "naïve materialism" (i.e., scientific reductionism that is incapable of accommodating religious and supernatural phenomena) and "naïve idealism" (an uncritical appropriation and acceptance of subtle body phenomena as "real"). Samuel hints towards understanding subtle body concepts as "a kind of view of the brain and central nervous system from within," as something "relational and constructed" but nevertheless "real". He further states that ideas and hypotheses about the subtle body could eventually be grounded in latest neurophysiological research. Samuel, "Subtle-body processes. Towards a non-reductionist understanding," 2013, 53-57. I do not mean to imply here that Williamsons' and Steiner's work are in any way to be considered naïve in a demeaning sense. On the contrary, I highly respect their work. I am situating their work here on a spectrum between practices primarily grounded in the physical anatomy of the human body (Williamson) and practices that emphasize the subtle body and its metaphysical connotations such as Steiner's Eurythmy.

[400] I am aware that this description may activate an association with the discourse surrounding the "sublime" and questions about its relation to the "numinous". German Lutheran theologian and scholar of religion (1869-1937) Rudolf Otto equated the "numinous" with the "sublime" in his famous work *The Idea of the Holy*. Poland, "The Idea of the Holy and the History of the Sublime," 1992, 176. In recent research in the field of social psychology, spiritual experiences have been categorized in a typology that unpacks these mental states into numinous experience (numinous, revelatory, synchronicity), mystical experience (unity, self-loss, aesthetic nature, aesthetic art) and paranormal experience (paranormal known, paranormal unknown). Yaden and Newberg, "Types of Spiritual Experience," 2022, 161. In this research, I am referring in the first place to "numinous" experiences in dance which enticed me to develop the notion of *embodied gnosis*. Associations with the "sublime" are possible but I refrain here from including discourse on the sublime in the thematic scope of the *discursive practice*. It is a large field that I cannot do justice to within the scope of this

In such a moment, a subtle movement of my inner being urges me to remember reverence, to remember humility. This impulse appears to me as something naturally human. The inner stirring to remember humility does not happen because of religious indoctrination, which I have not been subject to. What matters to me, is that this subtle inner movement happens. If I perceive it, the body will express this impulse either by bending my torso downwards, starting from a softening and emptying the area of the center of the chest, or by sliding the distribution of my weight on my feet slightly backwards and upwards along my spine, almost growing vertically from inside *with* the experience of magnitude of significance of what I encounter. It is as if my body knows how to carry itself when faced with the awe-inspiring. Energetically, there is a clear difference in how I carry myself when my central vertical axis is inclined in such a way, that my weight is distributed in a casual manner on my feet, or whether I carry myself with awareness of an imperative to humility caused by an unknown origin. When the attitude of humility spreads through my body vertically upwards instead of downwards by bowing down, the distance between the vertical poles above my head and below my feet increases. The spaces between the vertebrae of the spine open ever so slightly, the psychophysical tonality of my being is attuned to a higher frequency of oscillation. I then stand in readiness of something beyond measure, in relation to something invisible yet most real. I refer to this embodied state as being aligned along an "axis of reverence". I do not often encounter things, events, people or other beings that evoke deep reverence in me. These moments are rare yet keep resonating for a long time.

With attuning the dancing body to be aligned along an "axis of reverence", this state can become temporally expanded by solidifying it into *matter-consciousness*. It becomes an intention infused cellular configuration of a corporeal attitude. I inscribe it into my corporeal memory. This helps me to remember to stand in readiness in relation to an unfathomable unknown. It helps me to not take anything for granted and to remember the bigger picture. It supports my dance to participate in it, by remembering physically how to carry myself with respect towards it. Dancing being aligned on an axis of reverence also refers to an alignment

---

investigation. It is important to note that I am not only exploring a mental state (as mostly referred to in research on spiritual experience) but a *psychophysical* state, and I emphasize the reality of the *dancing body* as constitutive to the experience of *embodied gnosis*. In relation to the typology developed by Yaden and Newberg, *embodied gnosis* could be mapped across the specified areas of numinous and mystical experience.

between conscious personal will, unconscious will and an impersonal objective will. The process of blending and aligning these aspects of will in relation to each other can lead towards the experience of an ***artistic truth**** in dance.

Intermezzo

Spiritual corporeality

In her work on dismantling the conceptual dichotomy between "religion" and "dance", which contributed to western Christian hostile attitudes towards dance traditions across the globe, Kimerer LaMothe extensively mapped "the generative interdependence of phenomena that appear as "dance" and/or "religion"[401]*. In "A History of Theory and Method in the Study of Religion and Dance", LaMothe presents the n|om dance of the Kalahari Bushmen as one of these phenomena. N|om stands for a universal life force which the elders of the bushmen describe as "receiving God's love"*[402]*. In non-bushmen terminology N|om can be described as a "spiritual energy" generated by an altered state of consciousness induced by a communal dance experience. For the bushmen N|om is not experienced as a "material" body being filled with "spiritual" energy.*[403] *The bushmen do not distinguish between the spiritual or the material, the profane and the sacred. Their experience of dance brings all these aspects together.*[404]

Altered states of knowing

When n|om is first invited and then "heated", dancers become able to "send arrows of n|om into other people" bringing about an "experience-shift to love".[405] *The participants become*

[401] LaMothe, "A History of Theory and Method in the Study of Religion and Dance, Past, Present, Future," 2018, 1.
[402] Ibid, 91.
[403] Ibid, 94.
[404] Ibid, 89.
[405] Ibid, 98.

movement[406]*, there is no distinction between mind and body, the bodily sense of self becomes a "vibration of love."*[407] *For the bushmen "God is movement" and dance is a "rope" to being and becoming God, a way of participating in God.* [408]

LaMothe emphasizes the sensory awareness and quality of knowledge induced by participating in the dance and its ability to "catalyze the creative potency of one's bodily becoming."[409] *She states that "…dancing n|om knowledge is not an intellectual belief. It is love. It is a knowledge that exists as real relationships that occur between and among those in the dance."*[410]

Towards Embodied Gnosis

Once the alignment with an *axis of reverence* is experientially solidified - meaning clearly inscribed and memorized in the intention infused corporeality (or *matter-consciousness*) – this axis can be oriented towards multiple directions. An *axis of reverence* is most easily accessible from a vertical standing position. It can also be tilted and bent towards any direction while moving through the space. As with all the attunements listed here, they may gradually recede into the unconscious during the dance. Yet the experiential basis of an axis of reverence stays solidly incorporated as a baseline throughout dance experience.

Participating in the axis of reverence through danced movement (alone or with a community) can eventually generate an "aesthetic forcefield" [411] of love. When this field of love is experienced by the participants of the performative event (dancer(s) and spectators) as tangibly generated by the dance, a dance may be said to move in the

[406] Ibid, 94.
[407] Ibid, 99.
[408] Ibid, 101.
[409] LaMothe suggests that the words used by the bushmen to verbalize their experience must again fold back into the experience of dance. She states that the words don't refer to a nonverbal realm that exists independently from the words. The names given by the bushmen to their experience in dance "point to realities that the experience of participating in the dance allows people to think and feel and know viscerally as true." Ibid, 101. This also relates to the gap between wordless corporeal language and verbal discourse thematized in chapter one.
[410] Ibid, 102.
[411] Huschka, "Aesthetic Scenarios of Energeia: Bodies as Transformational Fields of Force," 2019, 60.

direction of becoming a vehicle for an *embodied gnosis*. A vehicle for a visceral experience of an ***artistic truth**** of a dance that conveys a sense of proximity with an unspeakable creative source.

Euthus Body

Altered states of knowing

During the creative process of the performance SEI, conscious choice making in movement based on already known/written movement materials became less interesting. This happened, because I experienced more creative freedom in exploring the other side of the *epistemic split* between conscious choice making and immediately emerging movement. To let emerge movement from an expanded sense of corporeality that extends its limbs towards the metaphysical, lured me more convincingly into proximity with the unspeakable unknown. The undefined open space of movement without a predefined choreographic score created a condition to encounter the unspeakable unknown in every moment of the performance - if I open myself towards the unknown with trust. To allow movement to emerge immediately during each moment of the performance without premeditation, allows me to experience an immanent transcendence that loosens and liberates the resistance of the materiality of the physical body. That the movements that appear are not empty or meaningless is related to the implicit incorporation of the other attunements as described above. This means that the aim to perform *real* movements has somehow already inscribed itself into *matter-consciousness* without having to consciously evoke it time and time again.

Spiritual corporeality

"Euthus" is a Greek term translatable as straight, immediately, upright, true, sincere and straightforward.[412] The idea of an ***euthus body**** came up during a dialogue with Eurythmist

[412] "Euthus," Biblestudytools, https://www.biblestudytools.com/lexicons/greek/nas/euthus.html, accessed 9.8.2022. In his article "How soon is 'immediately' in Mark", former New Testament Honorary Professor at the University of Aberdeen Paul Ellingworth (1931-2018), notes that the Greek adverb "euthus" appears forty-two times in the Gospel of Mark, which is a high amount

and poet Gail Lansgstroth.[413] She invented the term during a conversation about the different bodies of Steiner[414] and how they are worked with in Eurythmy. We concluded that the *euthus body* could be a contemporary creative adaptation of Steiner's bodies. We understand it as a multilayered body of the now. A body of immediacy that includes the layers of the physical, etheric, astral and physical body as well as the "I" as core of the soul, which directs all the bodies in coordinated motion. "Euthus" carries not only a temporal dimension in its meaning, but also an ethical dimension.[415]

I work with attuning to the *euthus body* by observing how sincerely I stay aligned with an undefined yet at the same time very specific (suprasensorial) sense of intimate proximity with an *artistic truth* during each moment of the dance. This sense is related to orchestrating a dialogue between my personal will and the quest to align an unconscious will inside of my body with an immanent and transcendent objective and impersonal will.

Towards embodied gnosis

The kind of knowing that speaks through the *euthus body* can in principle be experienced by everybody. To me, the *euthus body* communicates that:

The dancing body can be a home for a creative source to speak through movement. This creative source is infinite, and I can make myself empty, receptive and non-resistant towards it. That it can be experienced more fully has something to do with spaciousness inside of the body, which is intimately linked with spaciousness inside of my psyche or my soul. It requires my participation in it, and there is a choice to do so or not. There is a living presence in the

compared to rest of the New Testament. Pondering its significance and possible translations, Ellingworth unpacks several possible meanings of "euthus". Considering its position in the context, he suggests not always translating it as "immediately". "Euthus" may also be understood as marking a new beginning or a transition, as highlighting a first event in a story or as a catalyst towards a climax or a conclusion. Ellingworth, "How Soon Is "Immediately" in Mark?", 1978, 414–18.

[413] Next to performing and teaching Eurythmy and to writing poetry, Gail Langstroth followed an anthroposophical priest training where philology and the study of ancient texts of the Bible play an important role in living faith.

[414] To recapitulate Steiner's bodies: physical body, etheric or vital body, astral body, I as core of the soul, spiritual self, lifespirit, spiritual man as transformed physical body. Rudolf Steiner, *Theosophie*, 1955, 59.

[415] In the context of the Bible, the adjectives upright, true and sincere are "measured" in relation to God. "Euthus" refers as well as to the "right" and "straight" way from "God's point A to God's point B". "2117.euthus," Biblehub, accessed 4.4.2023, https://biblehub.com/greek/2117.htm .

movement of dance. This presence is independent from being attributed with meaning beyond movement as such, or not. It just is. It instills in me an imperative towards humility. I can move within a spectrum of polarities in a way that they can be experienced as a continuum rather than as dualistic forces. *Corporeal imagination* can cross a threshold towards an experience of something *real.* Dance ignites my intuition of something real, sacred and truthful that extends beyond the boundaries of the physical body to become another kind of body, towards another kind of experience of time and space.

To be fully present during a dance as I experience it, encompasses to a large extent also the ability of being present to the unknown, of opening one's inner being towards the mystery of movement by means of traveling with it through the infinity within and without, to allow it to make itself present and knowable through dance.

Intermezzo

Towards embodied gnosis

Seyyed Hossein Nasr is an Iranian philosopher and spokesperson of traditional Islam. Nasr is one of the few scholars (as among others also Basarab Nicolescu), who includes a spiritual dimension in his view on science[416]*. His life and work are aligned with the school of Traditionalism and Perennialism. This esoteric school is characterized by a belief in a primordial Tradition of other than human origin received by humanity. It focuses on the shared principles of various religious and metaphysical traditions and is largely incompatible with Modern Western culture, science and civilization. Subscribing to the mission of keeping alive the core of this Tradition in contemporary times implies for Nasr to fully embrace fundamental Traditional values.*[417]

Nasr has worked on rejuvenating and defending the notions of traditional science and scientia sacra in relation to contemporary global culture based on his firm belief, that these

[416] Widiyanto, "Traditional Science and Scientia Sacra: Origin and Dimensions of Seyyed Hossein Nasr's Concept of Science," 2017, 250.

[417] Hanegraaff, "Traditionalism/Perennialism", in *Dictionary of Gnosis and Western Esotericism*, 2006, 1132.

approaches to knowledge contain a perennial and universal wisdom.[418] *According to Nasr, a human being can be liberated from all limitations by means of scientia sacra, the ultimate aim of which is the infinite*. *This is possible because the human being is imbued by the Sacred. A condition for achieving deliverance is that a human being needs to fulfill this knowledge with the entirety of his or her being, involving will, psyche and intelligence. Scientia sacra can be seen as a liberating and unifying science with an axiological function of achieving a state of deliverance and union with the Sacred. The ontological foundations for scientia sacra are based on the ideas that there lives something within the human being that bears similarity with God, that God is a Pure Being that is by its very nature infinite and that the essence of a human being is spiritual and thus time- and space-less.*

The physical body is understood as limiting the freedom of a human being. Therefore, a human being needs to be attentive to the physical desires of the body to find deliverance and to be able to return to an original state of limitlessness. To be able to know the Divine through the Divine in the human being, the soul must be purified and virtues such as charity, humility and truthfulness need to be upheld.

Seen from the perspective of scientia sacra, true reality is to be found in the immaterial world, the reality of God is seen as concrete reality while other realities are considered as its abstractions, as a theophany and manifestation of a Divine Essence. Scientia sacra is not defined as theoretical knowledge of reality but as practically significant in helping the human being to attain the sacred. Scientia sacra leads to the transformation of the human being toward realizing gnosis by opening the human mind to perceive higher orders of reality.[419] *Gnosis here is related to the principle of "knowledge by presence" which is "self-evident, self-present, and self-objective – which means the consciousness and the cognizable reality are the same."*[420]

<u>Towards embodied gnosis</u>

In the introduction, I state that by questioning and working with the notion of *embodied gnosis* in dance, I am performing an experimental inversion of the Hellenistic idea of gnosis

[418] Widiyanto, "Traditional Science and Scientia Sacra," 2017, 251.
[419] Widiyanto, "Traditional Science and Scientia Sacra," 2017, 263 -264.
[420] Ibid, 262.

(understood as disembodied knowledge based on religious experience) by positing the body in danced motion as a potential catalyst for the embodiment, or speaking in religious terms, incarnation of consciousness (or psyche, soul, mind and spirit). I also state that this inversion stands for a performative attempt to re-embody the ancient idea of gnosis through a contemporary dancing body situated in the post-secular era of the 21st century.

Including the description of gnosis in Traditionalism in the parade of perspectives on relations between the metaphysical and the physical, invites for a more nuanced elaboration of my introductory statement on the idea of *embodied gnosis*.

The Traditionalist idea of gnosis is related to direct experiential knowledge of the sacred by presence. It aims to reconcile various religious expressions by defending and consolidating their shared essence. The aim of scientia sacra is a realized gnosis that transforms and liberates the human being by a unification with God. The human body is seen as a limitation to that freedom based on its desires. These desires contradict and resist the spiritual essence of time- and space-less infinity within the human being.

I also state in the introduction that I don't attempt to grasp or contain the unspeakable unknown by means of culturally pre-determined filters of rational reasoning, religious dogma or aesthetic codification.

Instead, I am searching for a way of speaking of the human dancing body as having an intrinsic spiritually corporeal proximity with its creative source by its very nature. I also posit that dance appears to be one possible pathway to amplify the experience of this intuition.

Some ideas from Nasr's perspective resonate with how I verbally describe dance experience. I recognize terminologies such as the idea of direct experiential knowledge, spiritual realization and a sense of an overlap between immanent and transcendent infinity. A major difference between my and his position though is that Nasr speaks from the perspective of an ancient and timeless wisdom tradition whereas I am speaking from the perspective of a contemporary dance practice. Although Traditionalism open-mindedly aims to connect various religious traditions through their shared essence, it still obliges a commitment to fundamental religious principles and to a battle against the materialist, rationalist and disenchanted principles of Western culture. This reversal of Western ideas is striking and an endless cause for intense culture clashes. It implies that the ultimate reality is to be found in the immaterial world, that the reality of God is seen as the only concrete reality while other realities would only be abstractions or manifestation of a Divine Essence.

I do not make claims about the true nature of reality, but I suggest that it is possible to get a glimpse of an experience of something *real* and sacred through the dancing body understood as a creatively mediating interface between the metaphysical and the physical. This happens through an experience of proximity with an unspeakable unknown creative source. I encounter this unspeakable unknown from within the experience of my body when engaged in danced motion and I speculate about how the dancing body can be seen as an interface that allows to perceive an intrinsic connection between the human physical body and a metaphysical realm. An ethical dimension is intrinsically hooked up with this experience because it ignites a thorough re-consideration of what it means to be human with respect to each other and to cosmic evolution. The imperative in Traditionalism to "purify the soul" could be related to the idea of "cleansing the dancing body from psychophysical debris."

I agree that the mirror of the inner awareness of the dancer needs to be as "clean" as possible to be able to perceive something real in the dance.

I outlined in this chapter how the physical body is the first place of resistance to movement but also the enabler of knowing through movement. I described some aspects of how it can be attuned towards encountering a sense of proximity with a creative source.

When attuning the dancing body to become an *euthus body*, the dance can transport me towards an experience of artistic realization. Artistic realization can be read as a modulation of spiritual realization. It is disengaged from traditional religious contexts yet dialogues with them through the perspective of a contemporary dance art practice. To explore the idea of *embodied gnosis* in dance and in written text, is then also a post-secular project to explicitly re-enchant a secularized art practice. In my view, dance has never lost its ability to enchant and to open new vistas on what a human being embedded in a cosmic context is and can become. Perhaps it is rather the reading of it, its reception, that seems to me to be in need of acknowledging the human value and cultural significance of this ability. With this research, I do not intend to reverse the merits of dance as having gained independence from representing unambiguous meaning and linear narratives during its post-modern and contemporary phases of evolution. But I do intend to include metaphysical dimensions of *matter-consciousness* in questioning and re-defining the ontological, epistemological and communicative potentials of dance in the 21st century. A movement towards one possible future of many other possible futures of dance is enacted here through a dialogue between

the intuitive intelligence of a dancing body and various other perspectives on the relation between the metaphysical and the physical.

Intermezzo

Towards embodied gnosis

Steiner equates what he calls the "astral body" with a faith body [Glaubensleib]. The "etheric body" or the "life body" is equated with the love body [Liebeleib]. Steiner posits the "I" in the center of the human being, as a central kernel. This "I" is enveloped by the faith body [Glaubensleib], and the faith body is enveloped by the love body [Liebeleib]. Steiner describes the power of love [Liebekraft] as a life force that resides even deeper within the human being than faith. Those forces that act from within the depths of our body through the etheric body are expressed by the ability of the human being to love, on all levels of existence. [421]

Towards embodied gnosis

The idea and experience of an *euthus body* incorporates the conceptual culmination of experiences of various dimensions of being in dance. These dimensions can come into conscious awareness, when its edges leading to the inner depths of the human body are continuously shifted towards the spiritual/somatic unconscious of the dancing body. What then can dwell upwards from within, can be interpreted as forces of faith and love. Steiner provides a possible spiritual ontology and vocabulary for forces that I also experience as naturally immanent to the human body. This does not mean that I claim to be able to prove empirically that the etheric body or the astral body exist. I can only testify to having witnessed the emergence of these forces from within, triggered through the dance. That they are activated through dance might have to do with the deep engagement and revolution of the inner landscapes of the body that are needed for dance. Maybe poeticized motion can trigger some of these forces in a different way than everyday functional activities. Dance can also

[421] Steiner, *Das Esoterische Christentum und die Geistige Führung der Menschheit. Dreiundzwanzig Vorträge, gehalten in den Jahren 1911 und 1912 in verschiedenen Städten*, 1995, 174-175.

trigger the opposite of these forces (such as fear and destructive forces). I perceive it to be a matter of choice, which direction of force is chosen and amplified in a dance creation. The play of forces becomes then the dramaturgical substance for the *dance language**.*** Dancing and speaking with the *euthus body* then also imply to artistically transform a battle between polarizing forces into a language of a unity of being. The "I" of the dancer is then in charge of how, for whom and to what purpose these forces are projected into space.

Intermezzo

In Steiner's vision about the evolution of the human being, Christianity needed to first be a matter of faith [Glaubenssache] and only gradually begins to become a matter of knowing [Wissensache]. "Es wird eine Wissenssache werden".[422]

Towards embodied gnosis

When faith in the *artistic truth* of the dance that my body invents through an experience of intimate proximity with a creative source becomes a matter of trust based on direct experiential knowing of its being, the *euthus body* can mediate an experience of *embodied gnosis.*

[422] Steiner, *Exkurse in Das Gebiet Des Markus-Evangeliums. Dreizehn Vorträge, Gehalten in Berlin, München, Hannover Und Koblenz Zwischen Dem 17.Oktober 1910 and Dem 10.Juni 1911, Und Eine Fragenbeantwortung Vom 18. Dezember 1910*, 1995, 61.

Conclusion

Inversely mirroring the previous chapter, this chapter presents in the main body text a limited selection of intentional orientations for corporeal consciousness in dance (*attuning*). These intentional orientations are articulated from the first-person perspective of the researching dancer *(corporeal theory)*. In the *intermezzi* some of the vocabularies and concepts used to describe the attunements are looked at through a range of different fields of discourse and practice that share a focus on the relationship between the metaphysical and the physical *(discursive practice)*. The epistemic contexts touched during the *intermezzi* are either based on scientific/philosophical speculations about relations between mind and matter or on esoteric forms of thought and related body-based practices.

As in chapter four, the key concepts *spiritual corporeality*, *altered states of knowing* and *embodied gnosis* enable communication between diverging perspectives from different fields of discourse. Fields of convergence between *corporeal theory* and *discursive practice* emerge throughout the text. They are suspended between the physically sensible and the intuitively intelligible whereby a strict distinction between them gradually resolves (*dancing language*). Through the dialogue between the different perspectives, the three key concepts are enriched with accumulating layers of potential meaning. They trace vectors for future research and potentialities for knowing. At the sections gathered under the header of "*towards embodied gnosis*", newly gained vistas on *spiritual corporeality* and *altered states of knowing* are synthesized and incorporated into an artistically grounded language and logic.

In this chapter I focused mainly on the question of how the dancing body can be attuned to act as an interface between the metaphysical and the physical through which I can investigate and communicate a sense of intimate proximity with a creative source.

More concretely speaking, this implies questioning how the dancing body can be attuned to the idea and experience of *embodied gnosis.*

In the following, I will briefly recapitulate and summarize the intentional orientations for corporeal consciousness (*attuning*) that I elaborate in this chapter in response to these questions.

With **"**For Dance: let it pass through you", I described how the dancing body mediates and transforms energy that passes through it. I focused on how my approach to *dance language* is informed by dynamic exchanges between conscious awareness and the unconscious. I proposed to look at how spiritually informed ontologies of the human body might possibly enlighten contemporary dancer's not-knowing about the nature of energy exchange in performative events and might give meaning to some of their utopian longings. In the movement towards *embodied gnosis*, I suggested that embedding the labor of dance in a cosmically oriented and metaphysically informed corporeal ontology could expand the significance of dance to larger scales of self-realization, incarnation and manifestation.

With "Preparing the canvas", I focused on cleansing the inner landscape of the body from *psychophysical debris* to prepare the *psychophysical resonating space* to be able to creatively mediate between mind and matter. The term "psychophysical" was unpacked from the perspective of the Pauli-Jung conjecture and with reference to their speculative venture to solve the psychophysical problem of the relation between mind and matter. I briefly visited Pauli and Jung's worldview of dual-aspect monism which brings together an ontic monism (a psychophysically neutral background reality) and an epistemic dualism where the mental and the physical enable different but complementary perspectives on the underlying *ontic* reality. Moving towards *embodied gnosis*, I connected the ontic realm with an experience of something *real* beyond the phenomenal world.

In "Opening towards a dialogue with the real", I described how I perceive intuitive corporeal intelligence to hint towards a larger dimension of being that can be experienced as bearing subjective as well as objective qualities. In the movement towards *embodied gnosis*, I explained how this intermediary state of knowing-being is relatable to the *ontic* domain, because it is based on a (suprasensorial) corporeal intuition rather than on sense perception. At the same time, this intermediary state becomes an epistemic domain through the *epistemic split* between two performative states that enables the description of an intermediary state. I introduced the idea of an interface between ontic and epistemic realms according to Atmanspacher and Fuchs and related it to conceptualizing the dancing body as a creatively mediating interface that enables an altered experience of knowing-being.

In the **"**Tuning the psychophysical tonality" a somewhat neutral, active-passive state was described as an ideal state of tuning the psychophysical disposition to enter a dance. I elaborated on the idea of intuitive corporeal intelligence understood as *matter-consciousness*. I described it as being able to "make sense" in other ways than rational logic. This happens for example by enabling meaningful communication between the psychological and physiological inner spaces of the dancing body and outwardly oriented sensorial perception.
Moving towards *embodied gnosis*, I explained how I speculatively synthesize and balance anatomically informed and spiritual science informed ideas about human corporeality artistically.

In "Activating Axis of Reverence" I explained how aligning along an axis of reverence is related to harmonizing personal will, unconscious will and something like an impersonal objective will. I associate this alignment also with an experience of *artistic truth*. Another perspective on psychophysically aligning with a "spiritual energy" was introduced through the n|om dance of the Kalahari Bushmen for whom dance is a way to participate in God. I concluded this section towards *embodied gnosis* by pointing to how attunements can materialize inside of the body as an incorporated memory or as *matter-consciousness*. I further adopted the bushmen's "field of love" and associated it with an "aesthetic force field" which connects performers and spectators in a shared uplifting experience.

The ***euthus body**** was presented as a conceptual and experiential culmination of this journey towards *embodied gnosis* so far. In the movement towards *embodied gnosis*, I roughly summarized the kind of knowing that can speak through the *euthus body* – and potentially to everybody - according to my current capacity of perception and cognition. To close the circle of excursions into esoteric forms of thought that include both Christian and Islamic variations, I introduced the idea of "scientia sacra" in Seyyed Hossein Nasr's school of Traditionalism. I sharpened my idea of *embodied gnosis* in dance by juxtaposing it with Nasr's perspective. I further defined *embodied gnosis* in dance as a post-secular project of re-enchanting and re-valuating a secularized art practice without dropping the merits of having gained independence from meaning and narrative conquered during the post-modern and contemporary evolution of dance. To this end, I included potential metaphysical dimensions

of *matter-consciousness* in questioning and re-defining one of the possible futures of the ontological, epistemological and communicative potentials of dance in the 21st century. I concluded this section with Steiner's visionary idea about an evolutionary movement from matters of faith to matters of knowledge and I transposed this idea towards an artistic proposition: When faith in the *artistic truth* of the dance that my body invents through an experience of intimate proximity with a creative source becomes a matter of trust based on direct experiential knowing of its being, the *euthus body* can mediate an experience of *embodied gnosis*.

CHAPTER 6

Dance, Music and Dance Language in SEI

SEI

(SEI#1→ DUE → SEI & DUE→ TRE → SEI#3 → SEI)

SEI is a dance and music performance that we developed between 2018-2023 in collaboration with composer Giuliano Bracci[423]. SEI is the practice component of this dissertation and evolved in parallel with the written text[424]. The creative process developed in relation to the question of how the dancing body can be attuned to act as an interface between the metaphysical and the physical through which I can investigate and communicate a sense of intimate proximity with a creative source.[425] I respond to this question in the written text. In the performance we respond to it from non-verbal and performative perspectives through dance and music.

[423] Giuliano Bracci is a PhD candidate at ACPA docARTES. "Giuliano Bracci", giulianobracci.com, accessed 7.5.23, https://giulianobracci.com/ .

[424] SEI#1 was performed at Broedplaats de Lely in Amsterdam (30.9.2018) and at the celebration of the ten-year anniversary of ACPA in Leiden (18.10.2018). "Individual Project", phdarts.eu, accessed 6.4.2023, https://phdarts.eu/Individual-Projects/2018-09-30-Sei , "PhDArts conference/Celebrating 10 years PhDArts,"Koninklijke Academie van Beeldende Kunsten, Kabk.nl, accessed 6.4.2023, https://www.kabk.nl/agenda/phdarts-conference-celebrating-10-years-phdarts. The integration of SEI & DUE (SEI#2) was performed at the ARC (art_research_convergence) session of the Academy of Creative and Performing Arts (ACPA) during the Peel Slowly and See Festival in Leiden (25.8.2021). "ARC session SEI & DUE Dance and Music Performance by Giuliano Bracci and Suzan Tunca," universiteitleiden.nl, accessed 19.3.2023, https://www.universiteitleiden.nl/en/events/2021/09/sei--due-dance-and-music-performance-by-giuliano-bracci-and-suzan-tunca ; "ARC_view", researchcatalogue.net, accessed 19.3.2023 https://www.researchcatalogue.net/view/1118707/1118708 (please scroll to the right to SEI & DUE). The integration of TRE into SEI & DUE (SEI#3) was performed at the University Theater of the University of Amsterdam (16. + 17. April 2022).

[425] To recapitulate my research questions: Is it possible to gain new perspectives on the relationship between the physical and the metaphysical through a dancing language that weaves together corporeal and verbal discourse? How can the dancing body be attuned to act as an interface between the metaphysical and the physical through which I can investigate and communicate a sense of intimate proximity with a creative source?

Bracci's PhD research is focused on transcribing musical works from the past in the context of contemporary music. He conceptualizes the practice of transcribing as "a form of listening, (…) as creating a new relation to an existing musical work; a relation that establishes itself in a composer-transcriber's musical imagination: the other work is transformed; it is reimagined, reinvented, rewritten."[426]

In SEI we bring together Bracci's research on transcribing the music of the past and my research on how to embody the ancient idea of gnosis through a ***dance language****.*

The *dance language* evolves in relation to distinct and evocative acoustic landscapes created by Bracci. Throughout the performance I enact different aspects of a quest for intimate proximity with an unspeakable creative source. ***Languaging**** this quest nonverbally through dance is intended to activate the potential to experience ***embodied gnosis**** and to communicate this state to the spectators. The polyphonic musical dimensions created by Bracci allow me to dis- and re-orient myself in ways that support me to enter that state.

The ***attunements**** in chapter five describe a selection of psychophysical foundations for this state of knowing-being in dance. In this chapter, I describe how I communicate the search for this state through dance and in dialogue with the acoustic landscapes created by Bracci. With "acoustic landscapes" I refer to the potential of the music to shape the space in which I am dancing. The music creates acoustic fields of tension that challenge my sense of internal and external orientation. It triggers an articulation of pathways of movement through which I performatively explore communicative connections between inner and outer movement impulses.

[426] docARTES, "Transcribing: between listening, memory and invention," Research project Giuliano Bracci, accessed 5.3.2023, https://www.docartes.be/en/research-projects/transcription-and-the-role-of-memory .

In the following, I will describe the overarching lines of the evolution of the performance. SEI#1, DUE, SEI&DUE, TRE and SEI#3 correspond to the linear progression in time of the phases of the creative process.

Timeline creative process SEI:

SEI#1: 2018-2019→ **DUE**: 2019 -2020→ **SEI&DUE**: 2021→**TRE**: 2022→**SEI#3-SEI**: 2022-2023

Be welcome to visit a more detailed documentation of the creative process including annotated visual excerpts where I implement the method of ***retrospective dance writing****: https://www.researchcatalogue.net/view/520371/2167629

SEI#1, topshot, DAS AHK Amsterdam, July 2019.

SEI#1

In SEI#1, I dance with the "Ciaccona,"[427] a solo violin composition by Johan Sebastian Bach, re-mixed live by Giuliano Bracci. SEI#1 inhabits a performative space suspended between improvisation and choreography/composition, between predetermination and intuitive creative emergence.

The "Ciaccona" is the fifth movement of Partita No. 2 in D-minor. This Partita is part of a larger compositional structure of three Sonatas *da chiesa* and three Partitas of dance movements for unaccompanied violin composed in 1720.[428] The six Sonatas and Partitas are titled by J.S. Bach "Sei Solo."

In his re-interpretation of the "Ciaccona", Bracci creates a polyphonic space where the "Ciaccona" is multiplied: two 21st century recordings of the "Ciaccona" are remixed live by Bracci using nine parallel musical layers. This live mixing instrument was designed to support my exploration into different corporealities in dance, to speak through a ***polyphonic body****** that speaks with different textures of psychophysical tonalities. Two of the nine layers are interpretations of the "Ciaccona" by Janine Jansen (2003) and Gideon Kremer (2001). In six additional layers, the sounds of both interpretations are manipulated by electronic filters. One additional layer introduces a composition for vocals by Bracci ("Non sta, si svolge e gira", 2012), which is inspired by a collage of texts written by Giordano Bruno between 1584 and 1585 about "the infinity of the universe and the human condition in a space that has not a predetermined center."[429]

Bracci manipulates the behavior of the "Ciaccona" in a multilayered space where individual and independent voices interact. The general form of the piece is given by the "Ciaccona". Within this structure, the number of layers involved and their spatial origin (variable through a surround sound system), the changes of density, clarity, quality and the type of voice shape the acoustic and spatial experience of the performance.

---

[427] J.S. Bach, *Partita No.2 in D minor for solo violin, BWV 1004*.

[428] Shute, *Sei Solo: Symbolum? The Theology of J.S. Bach's Solo Violin Works*, 2016, xxiii.

[429] Giuliano Bracci, "Non sta, si svolge gira" (2012), http://giulianobracci.com/non-sta-si-svolge-e-gira/. The works by Giordano Bruno that Bracci has used for his collage are *De l'Infinito, universo e mondi*, *De gli eroici furori* and *De la causa, principio et uno*.

The presence and unpredictable unfolding of these layered voices support me in discovering new textures of corporeality and different kinds of orientations for incorporated and spatially projected movement articulation in dialogue with the sounds.

During each iteration of SEI#1, Bracci's acoustic universe supports me in discovering a variety of states of being. These states accumulate as experiential knowledge by psychophysically cognizing layers of reality which I communicate nonverbally through the dance.[430] Bracci responds to the performative states that I enter along the way by making choices in the live-mixing of the nine tracks based on my behavior and his musical intuition.

These choices influence again my experience of the "Ciaccona" and its expression through dance. When the quality of the relation between the dance and the sounds settles in a state of repetition or predictability, Bracci purposely disrupts the *status quo*. He reorients the musical dimension in a way that I cannot relate anymore to the stable structure of the "Ciaccona", except by imagining its continuity in my inner ear. Losing the ability to predict what is happening in the music, I also lose a concrete and stable reference of musical elements to dialogue with through the dance. I then allow the deeper layers of my body to take over the choice making in terms of movement origination, articulation, dynamics, spatial positioning and orientation. Being forced to explore other relational references than the stable score of the "Ciaccona", I dive deeper into unknown areas of movement origination inside and outside of my body. The possible referents for communicative relations become more and more speculative. Who or what is the subject of the *dance language* or the objective of its communication becomes unsettled in a mobile triangle between the dancer, the dance and the observers of the dance. Both, the conscious awareness of a dancer that witnesses movements from unconscious strata of her body and the spectator are the observers of a dance that emerges from an unknown place.

In SEI#1, two polarity pairs and the spectrum of experience between them that draws them together are the foundational axes for the logic of expression of my dancing body: known (choreographed) and unknown (spontaneously emerging) movement and gravity and levity.

[430] The *attunements* as described in chapter five are a limited selection of verbal descriptions of this psychophysically accumulated experiential knowledge. They have been identified through a retrospective analysis of the creative process.

In the dynamic spectrum between known and unknown movement I play with the two different types of movement origination and the intermediary zone of experience that enables a creative dialogue between them. The main difference between both approaches to generate movement is that performing choreographed movement reactivates movement patterns that have already been inscribed in the body. These patterns can be accessed consciously, they are already known to the dancer. The spontaneously emerging movements, on the other hand, come from an unknown – or unconscious - place of origin. I associate the ability to intuit this place of movement origination with the presence of the metaphysical within the physical. Performing movements in relation to the spectrum between the (physically sensible) known and the (intuitively intelligible) unknown becomes a way of experientially exploring possible relations between the two of them. A clear-cut distinction dissolves in the intermediary zone between both approaches. This enables another state of being, knowing and speaking through dance to come "online". By letting go of pre-defined movements (which I tend to reference during moments of not-knowing how to continue the dance), I experience a more challenging situation that forces me to rely exclusively on what my body comes up with in each moment of the performance. At the same time, the possibility to encounter the unspeakable unknown becomes more concretely tangible by searching for movement origination from a sense of an expanded corporeality that extends its limbs through the physical towards the metaphysical inside and outside of my body.

Engaging movement with the dynamic tension field between gravity and levity adds another experiential layer to my exploration. I work here with a felt connection between the force of will and the experience of gravity and levity: different qualities of will traverse my dancing body and influence the texture of the dance. I associate my individual personal will with the force of gravity, with how I engage my weight in relation to the ground underneath my feet. I associate something like an impersonal, cosmic, evolutionary or maybe even artistic will with levity, with the infinite space above my head. In the dance of SEI#1, I explore the tension field between individual personal will and an infinitely larger and more potent will as a vehicle for expression. At the same time, I explore how to communicate this vertically aligned orientation horizontally, to the observers that are present in the performative space.

My approach to dance differs from a free dance and music improvisation because of the artistic-epistemic goal that motivates the dance: to be informed by my dancing body about potential relationships between the metaphysical and the physical through processes of *languaging* the experience of their interpenetration.

I am engaged in the performance as a performer who creates a dance and as a researcher who wants to explore the meaning and nature of an intuited spiritual-corporeal intelligence that fuels my creative output. The sounds that give rise to the polyphonic musical dimensions resonate in the psychophysical space of my dancing body and I transform these resonances into danced expressions. This communication can evoke in me the ability to perceive a spiritual-corporeal layer of reality where the physical appears to blend with the metaphysical. It is not evident to me whether I perceive it because I unconsciously generate it by searching for it, or whether it is there anyway, and I am enabled to perceive it through processing movement as non-verbal communication.

It is impossible for me to estimate or predict how this communication is perceived by the spectator. As mentioned in chapter one, possible meanings of this text and of the text of the dancing body emerges between the dancer (me), the dance, the musical composition, this written text, the spectators of the dance and the readers of this text. The intensity of the experience of the dance is amplified by the presence of the spectators. The spectators also experience the resonance of the sounds, but this experience is not exteriorized through spatially articulated movement. When the frequency and intensity of my exteriorized inner movements resonate with and meet the frequency and intensity of the inner movements of the spectator, our beings can meet in the spaces in and between us, the dance and the sounds. A shared experience of the potential of *embodied gnosis* may come into being.

SEI#1 begins with mapping my body in motion as exactly as possible with the melody, dynamics and affective intensity of the sound of the violin. Gradually adding musical and performative layers (along the two foundational axes for the logic of expression of my dancing body as described above) provokes a deviation from the direct relation between the movements of the body and the sounds of the violin. This deviation creates an opening, an in between space for other layers of communicative corporeality to come into being.

As SEI#1 unfolds in time (ca. 15 min. in total), I deliberately detach from known patterns and delegate the choice making to the deeper, yet unknown layers of my body.[431] Intuitively emerging movements (from the spiritual/somatic unconscious or the subtle body) then dialogue with the polyphonic dimensions that Bracci creates from Bach's composition.[432]
I then enter a performative state where the movements emerge from a psychophysical texture of inner liquidity, suspended between gravity and levity. The dance then starts to speak through me, my dancing body almost articulates itself. In this performative state I search for the cutting edge between uninhibited surrender and just enough control to be able to articulate the movement and to navigate the body through the space.[433]

DUE

I started generating the movements for DUE in silence, from the state of being I find myself after performing SEI#1. My psychophysical center of gravity has shifted towards a higher place inside of my body. A state of being suspended between gravity and levity can now be sustained during longer amounts of time. In DUE, I continue to work from the dynamic field of tension between choreographed and intuitively emerging movement and between gravity and levity. As an extension of SEI#1 into another musical and performative dimension, I continue to search in DUE for progressively deeper sources of movement origination. The deeper I enter the unknown depths of my body, the subtler these sources become.
They appear to be of such a subtle nature that it becomes increasingly difficult to discern whether these movements originate from a corporeal sensation, or whether they come from some kind of zone of being that precedes or causes corporeal sensation.

[431] For an annotated visual impression of a segment of dance from deeper strata of movement origination see "SEI deeper", researchcatalogue.net, https://www.researchcatalogue.net/view/520371/652390 .
[432] For an annotated visual impression of performative states and related corporealities in SEI please visit "Thresholds", researchcatalogue.net, https://www.researchcatalogue.net/view/520371/694147
[433] For an annotated visual impression of a segment of dance from deeper strata of movement origination see "SEI deeper", researchcatalogue.net, https://www.researchcatalogue.net/view/520371/652390.

A place of being that lives at the same time underneath as well as far beyond the borders of the skin of my physical body.

I synthesized the first movement experiments of DUE into an improvised sequence in silence. I recorded this sequence and sent the video to Bracci who used it as a departure point for a new composition. Bracci watched the video and created a first landscape of sound that builds on pre-recorded instrumental and vocal materials from two of his earlier compositions: *Utopia sottile* for hyper organ and large ensemble (2019) and *Se non in ombra e specchio* (2019) for eight voices on texts by Giordano Bruno. These are fragments from *De l'infinito, universo e mondi* where Bruno relinquishes the idea of a hierarchically structured universe; *De gli eroici furori* (with dialogues on the love of the human being for the divine nature) and *De la causa, principio et uno* (1584-85). The libretto of *Se non in ombra e specchio* consists of a collage from these texts by Bruno, without a linear narrative.[434] For the composition of DUE, Bracci worked with superimposing, cutting and filtering the pre-recorded materials and adding autonomous, digitally generated electronic musical layers.

I continued to work by myself in the studio with this first landscape and suggested some changes in the composition. Bracci responded to the feedback, adapted the composition and sent a new audio file. We repeated this back-and-forth procedure four to five times until DUE settled into a fixed composition.

While engaging with the soundscapes of DUE, I delegate choice making in movement to my body in the first place. I allow it as much as possible to respond to the sounds without consciously intervening. On the level of conscious choice making and *languaging* of movement, I manipulate what comes from the body in line with additional motives that accumulated during the creation phase of the composition in iterative dialogue with the dance sequences.[435]

---

[434] Giuliano Bracci, "Se non in ombra e specchio for 8 voices", giulianobracci.com, accessed 6.4.2023, http://giulianobracci.com/se-non-in-ombra-e-specchio/ .

[435] Some of these motives are: Stretching the time of being suspended between the forces of gravity and levity to emphasize the "in between" state; engaging in a speculative dialogue with the hypothetical subtle body as a creative source; ***etheric listening****:* i.e. imaginatively moving with a subtle, spiritual-corporeal energetic substance of the sounds and responding to it from the hypothetical somatic unconscious; Searching for another kind of body, a new body; Creating spatial configurations of the body that imaginatively respond to the spatial experience of the sounds; contrasting sounds that are extended in in time with dynamic sub-articulations of movement; transposing reverberations of sound events into the ***psychophysical resonating space**** of the dancing body; Creating and un-creating forms; engaging and disengaging from the body; searching

DUE stands for a new beginning, for a transitional journey into unchartered territory. The path traversed in DUE enacts a psychophysical preparation for a radical opening towards the unknown in TRE. In DUE, I attempt to enter the domain of the hypothetical subtle body, suggesting a place or state of being beyond time and space. I navigate islands of sound events and longer silences from an inner compass, from a place where I trust that my body knows where to go and what to do.

The human voices that appear occasionally give a touch of humanity to the vast, in comparison with SEI#1, rather impersonal and abstract acoustic landscape of DUE. My body responds to this acoustic touch. In DUE, I allow my dancing body to interpret the sound while at the same time playing with the idea of producing the sounds. As if the sounds of the composition are created by the movements of my body. This is indeed indirectly true, as the composition came into being in response to propositions given by the dancing body in silence, from the state of being after having traversed SEI#1. During the performance, the temporal duration of the back-and-forth movements between my dance and Bracci's composition are collapsed in time. The distance of space and time between the creation of the movements and the creation of the sounds is abolished, they are in a direct, immediate relation with each other. In this state of creative proximity between the movements and the sounds I can explore the experience of a sense of proximity with the unspeakable unknown. The acoustic landscape of DUE helps me to sustain this state in time and space because it evokes in me a sense of infinite space. I work with it as both an abstract and concrete relational reference and as a dialogue partner for the movements.

---

communicative connections between different layers of the experience of self moving; tracing infinity loops and elliptical curves in the joints in relation to the sliding pitch of the voices in the soundscape; orchestrating affective articulation of rotating angles in different velocities through the joints of the full body in motion; velocities and momentum of movement as forms of speech; Silences as forms of speech; leaving undefined spaces for the emergence of spontaneous creativity; Stabilizing the inner performative state towards an ***inner heaven****. For visual reference see documentation in research catalogue.

SEI & DUE

For the occasion of performing our work during an ARC (art_research_convergence)[436] session of the Academy of Creative and Performing Arts (ACPA) at the Peel Slowly and See Festival in Leiden on 25.8.2021[437], we integrated DUE with SEI#1. During three studio sessions, we experimented with how the two parts of the performance could be combined in a way that they strengthen each other. We wanted to develop an artistic proposal that was aligned with our research priorities, while at the same time making sense as a performance without necessarily making the research component explicit. Pondering the question of how to integrate DUE with SEI#1, Bracci reflected on the different connotations of inserting musical segments as quotations or as references. When we would begin with Bracci's composition DUE and then insert the live re-mixed composition of J.S. Bach, SEI#1 could be read as a quotation of Bach inside of Bracci's composition. While, when beginning with Bach and SEI#1, the insertion of Bracci's composition DUE could be read as a comment on Bach by Bracci.

Based on the experiential dramaturgy of performing SEI#1 as a vehicle to activate a *polyphonic body* before diving deeper into the unknown domain of the ***subtle body****, we decided to insert DUE into SEI#1 by cutting the "Ciaccona" in two parts. From a compositional point of view, in that version of our performance (SEI & DUE), Bracci then quoted himself as an excursion during his live re-mixing of Bach.

After having performed SEI & DUE with an audience, we experienced the insertion of DUE as a valid enlargement of SEI#1. It opened new dimensions for another kind of performative state and communicative corporeality to come forward. In our experience the piece could now stand by itself as a dance and music performance, with or without an explicitation of the research component.

---

[436] "ARC session SEI & DUE Dance and Music Performance by Giuliano Bracci and Suzan Tunca," universiteitleiden.nl, accessed 19.3.2023, https://www.universiteitleiden.nl/en/events/2021/09/sei--due-dance-and-music-performance-by-giuliano-bracci-and-suzan-tunca .

[437] "ARC_view, SEI &DUE, Dance and Music Performance by Giuliano Bracci and Suzan Tunca", researchcatalogue.net," accessed 19.3.2023, https://www.researchcatalogue.net/view/1118707/1118708 (please scroll to the right to SEI & DUE).

Screenshot of Bracci's live-mixing instrument for SEI & DUE

TRE

Imagining future scenarios during the beginning phase of our collaboration we envisioned the creation of a triptych. After having performed SEI & DUE we were still convinced that there was more space for adding new elements. For a third part TRE we wanted to create a new environment, a different zone of collaboration.

To expand Bracci's live-mixing instrument with additional layers, we added the first eighteen bars of the introduction of the *St. John Passion* by J.S. Bach. I chose this musical reference because of the inner movement that it stirs in me. This movement is exemplary for what I experience as an irresistible pull towards an unspeakable unknown which I am exploring and responding to with this research. This inner movement is also exemplary for a sense of

proximity with a creative source that both transcends my corporeal being while at the same time activating a resonance with it in its deepest layers.[438]

From a compositional perspective the choice for another Bach reference was also economical. Bracci was cautious about working with too many ingredients. To work with Bach and his own compositions as the two main anchor points for the composition was already rich and challenging enough.

Yet we still wanted to find a way to include Islamic resonances next to the Christian stream of faith represented by Bach. Next to honoring my ancestral lineage, which includes both Muslims and Christians, this also made sense in relation to chapter four on the subtle body, which includes a reference to the Sufi Sema Ceremony. As one additional layer to include the presence of Islam in the performative space, we added an a cappella voice by Sufi singer Ahmet Çalısır, reciting a prayer for a Sema Cermony.[439]

[438] The choice for a fragment from Bach's St. John Passion also echoes an affinity of this research with the Johannine mystery according to "The Acts of John", a gnostic text from the second half of the second century AD belonging to the family of Christian apocrypha. Bremmer, *The Apocryphal Acts of John*, 1995, 120. These documents were sacred scripture for early Christian communities but were excluded from the canon because they were classified as heretical in the polemics surrounding the early formation of the Christian Church. Ehrman, *Lost Scriptures. Books that did not make it into the New Testament*, 2003, 2-3. "The Acts of John" include a narrative supposedly told by the apostle John. It describes Jesus gathering his disciples in a singing and dancing ritual hymn before being delivered. This ritual has also been described as an "alternative sacrament at the place where the Synoptics narrate the institution of the Last Supper." Lalleman, *The Acts of John. A Two-Stage Initiation into Johannine Gnosticism*, 1998, 65. Studies on the segments in the text that describe the dance refer to it in terms of an initiatic dance where Christ directs a ritual act that is explicitly addressed in terms of a mystery and is intended to convey knowledge to the disciples. The segments that narrate the dance ritual are 94-97 and 101. Junod and Kaestli,"Acta Iohannis," 1983, 621. Theosophist, scholar and writer G.R.S. Mead (1863-1933) referred to this text fragment as "The Hymn of Jesus" and saw it as possibly the oldest textually preserved Christian mystery ritual. Goodrick-Clarke, *G.R.S. Mead and the Gnostic Quest*, 2005, 155.

[439] Ahmet Çalısır, vocalist, CD: *Dergahta Sema-Sema Töreni, Aşr-ı-Şerif*, Yenikapı Müzik 2005.

SEI#3

For the creation of TRE and the integration of the sections elaborated so far, we collaborated during a two-week residency at the University Theater of the University of Amsterdam between 4-17 April 2022.[440] We started TRE by performing sketches that allowed SEI & DUE to expand in time and space, adding the two elements of the introduction to the *Passion of St. John* by Bach and the Islamic prayer. Instead of aiming to create a fixed composition as with DUE, we used the theatrical space to improvise together with these musical materials.
We searched for how the different elements could dialogue with each other in organic and fluent ways, while at the same time carrying the performative space towards a climactic experience.

Technically speaking, the compositional procedure for TRE was divided into two parts:
Part one consisted of setting up the acoustic environment to play with during the live improvisations. Bracci decided how many tracks would be used, which layer would be situated on which track and which effects would be used to manipulate which tracks. He set up the live-mixing instrument in a way that the audio files could be treated in advance as well as live. He prepared some audio files at fixed positions in the linear timeline and others to be moved and adjusted in terms of volume and position live, in dialogue with the dance. Some of the tracks were treated with extra effects which he could control live.
With TRE we moved towards a performative dimension where the characteristics of the previous two chapters could be potentiated. The surround sound system with four speakers allowed us to have a polyphonic space into which we and the audience could be immersed in a clear and effective way. Bracci could control how the sounds move in the space, in terms of provenience, direction and closeness. He used this possibility for the improvised experiments of TRE.

[440] With much gratitude to Henk Danner (UVA Theatrescience) and to ODN (Omscholing Dansers Nederland) for making this possible.

The now wider and more complex heterogeneity of the materials required a larger musical time and structure to unfold. Gradually, the integration of the three chapters settled at a duration of ca. 30 minutes. We worked on developing the conditions for an inner journey that could make sense in line with our research interests but also as a performative event that could be meaningful in its own terms, without necessarily making the research interests that moved us in the first place explicit.

In TRE, I keep on searching for yet deeper layers of movement origination while exploring how the changing movements relate to the sound and to the space. At the same time, I observe what they might communicate - to me who undergoes and transforms these movements while they come out of my body as well as to the observers. Bracci continues to implement his disorientation strategy which helps me to keep exploring other textures of corporeality that emerge in dialogue with the sounds in a flexible, polyphonic, unsettled and unpredictable space.

TRE became a radical opening towards the unknown. We kept TRE open in the sense of not pre-determining how it would unfold and how it would communicate through the languages of dance and sound in dialogue with each other. TRE kept changing with each performance, and we listened to what it wanted to become and to communicate. During some informal and spontaneous moments of playing with the elements a peculiar atmosphere started to come into being. Both of us had the impression that this atmosphere made intuitive sense as a culmination of the first two parts. We were not able though to technically retrace how this atmosphere had come about, except that it happened from a playful and non-strategic approach. We called this atmosphere “the soup” and kept searching for how to recreate it.

The performance integrating all sections now settled into an extension of SEI&DUE with TRE. It starts with SEI#1 part 1, followed by an insertion of DUE, leading into SEI#1 part 2 and culminating in TRE.

SEI#3

SEI#1 part 1 - DUE - SEI#1 part 2 - TRE

In the University Theatre I perform SEI#1 part 1 on the proscenium stage. For DUE, SEI#1 part 2 and TRE I move down to the manège, the flat floor space on the same level as the first row of the audience. For SEI#1 part 1, Bracci plays only with the two interpretations of the "Ciaccona" by a female and a male violinist (Janine Jansen and Gidon Kremer). Once I move down to the flat floor, he gets more prominently involved as a live co-creating performer. During the performance we continue to explore different variations of navigating the edge between fixing things and letting them emerge.

During the public presentations on 16. and 17. April a change in our working mode had occurred. While in the "research mode", we were less concerned with making mistakes or wrong choices. The "performance mode" required another focus and more effectivity in choice making. While the idea (and the pressure) of judging our experiments as performances to be potentially presented to an audience was not present during our research, it started to appear together with the presence of the audience. Many choices could still be made from an aesthetical point of view. Yet we kept prioritizing the sense-making from our understanding of the goals of the performance as embodying an in depth and extensive research trajectory. In line with Bracci's disorientation strategy to support me in searching for other kinds of bodies and consequently other kinds of movement expression, we unsettled meaning once it started to settle in predictable or one-dimensional ways.
We wanted to keep meaning emerging as open and as undefined as possible to be able to maintain a state of a radical opening towards the unknown – with trust.

At this point, to allow this to happen, we need to be very aware of each other's choices during the performance: Being in tune with each other and truly listening to each other's choice making is one of the most important criterions for us to evaluate our performance. We want to aesthetically articulate the full journey of SEI in a way that it can be perceived in different ways. At the same time, we search for a suggestive balance between an inner private

experience and its public communication that can trigger the imagination of the spectators and provoke reflection on the potential of *embodied gnosis*. We search for the ***euthus body**** of SEI, the sweet spot where our individual artistic intuitions mediated through the languages of dance and sound meet each other in the will of the performance, bringing forth a sense of the ***real****. We search for a contained creative freedom that is attuned and aligned with a sense of ***artistic truth**** and that does not settle into a fixed form or meaning.

SEI

SEI draws together in one performative event the different stages of the creative process (SEI#1→ DUE → SEI & DUE→ TRE → SEI#3 → SEI). The dramaturgy of performative states and related textures of corporeality that I traverse in SEI facilitates one possible pathway to explore how to experience and communicate a state of *embodied gnosis* through activating a *polyphonic body.* In SEI#1 part 1 I begin with a one-to-one relation between the *dancing body* and the music. I start to duplicate this body in dialogue with the two different interpretations of the "Ciaccona", speaking with two distinct corporeal textures. In DUE I speculatively enter the domain of the *subtle body*, suggesting a region of being beyond space and time, modulating the perception of space and time in the performative space. In SEI#1 part 2 I play with more than two bodies, continuing to search for deeper sources of movement origination. TRE enacts a climactic radical opening towards the unknown with trust, where the *dance language* addresses the unspeakable unknown through perpetually newly emerging corporeal textures.

Whether or not and if so, how it responds, is still to be discovered, together.

CONCLUSION

Revisit – Remember

With this dissertation, I developed written and danced responses to the questions posited at the outset:

Is it possible to gain new perspectives on the relationship between the physical and the metaphysical through a dancing language that weaves together corporeal and verbal discourse?

How can a dancing body be attuned to act as an interface between the metaphysical and the physical through which I can investigate and communicate a sense of intimate proximity with a creative source?

At this point, these questions can be condensed to one central question:

How can the idea of embodied gnosis be experienced, investigated and communicated through a dancing language?

One of my goals with this dissertation was to strengthen and better understand an intuitive knowing - amplified by dance experience – about meaningful living relations between mind/spirit/consciousness and matter, and more specifically the matters of the human body. I aimed to find ways to communicate and to elaborate on this intuitive knowing through dance and words so that others can participate in its becoming, so that it may become stronger through us.

Another goal of this research was to learn how to speak and to read the movements that come from the unknown depths of a (my) dancing body. From this perspective, I wanted to explore how to shift from a conceptual and intellectual mode of reading and writing the text of the dancing body to probing into its trans-rational and sacred dimensions.

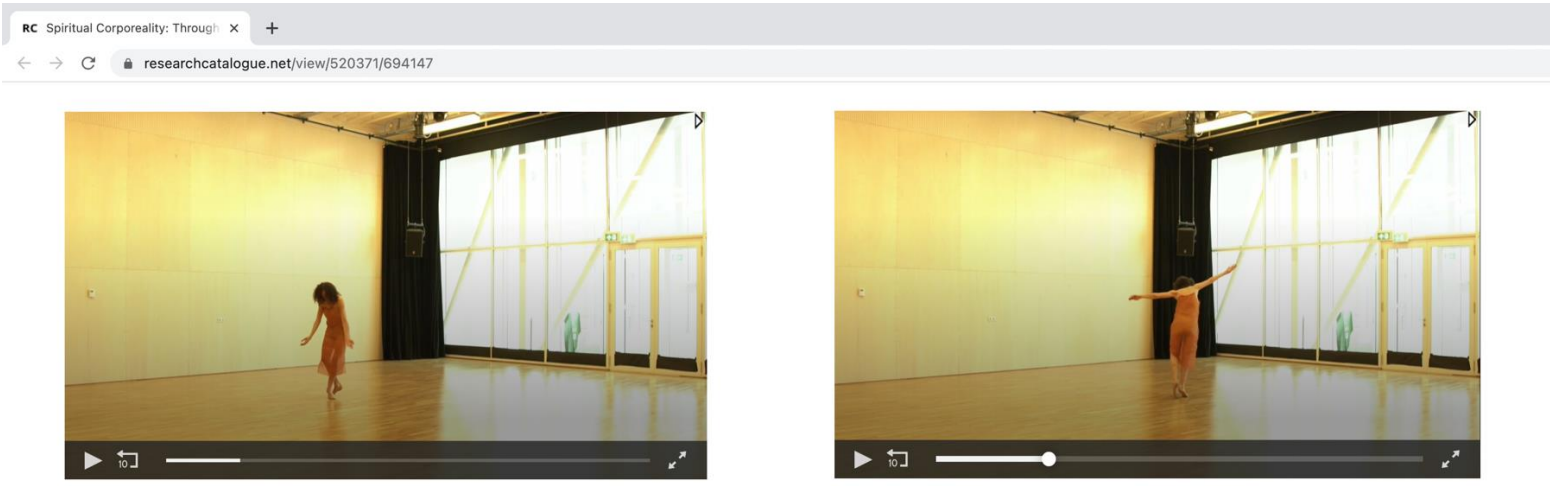
The dance and music performance SEI, the written dissertation, and the online documentation of the creative process with the ***retrospective dance writing**** are the outcomes of these targets. They respond to the research questions from various perspectives and through non-verbal corporeal and verbal modes of ***languaging****.

I framed the relation between my wordless experience of dance and the world of words as complementary to each other. A ***dancing language**** [441] suspended between the physically sensible and the intuitively intelligible draws both realms of experience together to become a larger ***spiritual-corporeal**** whole that transcends their strict distinction. It bridges apparent incompatibilities between non-verbal and verbal modes of performing research through a method derived from the experiential logic of a ***dancing body*.***

Through ***altered states of knowing**** enacted and communicated by means of a *dancing language* I hope to have carved a path for perceiving the metaphysical and the physical as mutually interpenetrating aspects of a spiritual-corporeal whole. I also hope that this path may in one way or the other eventually enable the realization of a state of ***embodied gnosis****.

The perspectives gained through the dance and music performance SEI, the written dissertation, and the online documentation of the creative process support the main argument: that it is possible to conceive of the dancing body as an interface that can creatively mediate between the metaphysical and the physical; that an artistic-epistemological state of *embodied gnosis* can be investigated through a *dancing language* suspended between and in dialogue with the physically sensible and the intuitively intelligible metaphysical, and that the dancing body carries in itself the potentiality for realizing and communicating this state.

[441] See diagram 3, chapter three ("Dancing Language between Mind and Matter"), 87.



threshold 5

The voices remind me of something
beyond what we can imagine to be.

I bow my head and I open my palms.

From that place of beyond what we can
imagine to be, the dance enters back in
with yet another texture of corporeality.

It has to come down, working on it, bring
it down, bring it down.

Movements written before the moment
of this dance become containers and
vehicles to bring through the life juice of
the dance.

That juice then breaks open again what
has been written and finds another path
to spill itself outwards.

I am about to disappear in the sound.

Screenshot Research Catalogue exposition [“Through a dance language towards Embodied Gnosis”](#).

The path traversed

I began this journey with situating the gap between the non-verbal corporeal language of dance and verbal discourse in relation to a historical lineage ranging from the early phases of modern dance to latest developments in contemporary dance. Positioning dance as an artistic-epistemic practice, I highlighted how dance specific forms of knowing keep evading the analytic grip of rational understanding and pre-defined knowledge categories. I affirmed the intrinsic irrationality (or arationality) of dance. Yet I emphasized its potential for articulating knowledge from another ground for reasoning, based on *altered states of knowing*. These altered states are generated by a human body engaged in danced motion that perceives its relation to other bodies, to the planet and to the cosmos otherwise. I emphasized the need for creating vocabularies from the inside perspective of dance experience to make dance knowledge more explicit and thus able to dialogue with other fields of knowledge and discourse. I drew attention to the spiritual impulses that ignited the evolution of modern dance and to the tension between implicitly experienced embodied spirituality in contemporary dance and the problems surrounding its verbal explication (chapter one).

I invited the academic discipline of Western esotericism to, metaphorically speaking, join the dance. I elaborated on how the dialogue with this field from the perspective of dance research led to the key concepts *spiritual corporeality*, *altered states of knowing* and *embodied gnosis*. I introduced the triangle of reason, faith and gnosis as foundations for constructing worldviews and associated them with the performative states of knowing, believing and imagining. I posited that these states can blend into an experience of *embodied gnosis* if a felt experience of something ***real**** understood as sacred occurs (chapter two).

I outlined a methodology derived from the experiential logic of a *dancing body* that experiences itself in a state of being suspended between the intuitively intelligible/metaphysical (levity) and the physically sensible (gravity). These two mutually interpenetrating artistic-epistemological orientations are drawn together through a *dancing language*.

Two ***complementary**** variations on performing research speak to each other to enable a dance specific knowledge process: ***corporeal theory**** (non-verbal corporeal and verbal reflections on dance experience from the first-person perspective) and ***discursive practice****

(articulating thought with written discourse from other fields of knowledge). Through this dialogue a different kind of sense making comes into being. It brings together various perspectives that range from the non-verbal corporeal to the verbally contemplated intelligible, from the first-person subjective experience to objectively reflective distance and philosophical speculation. A strict distinction between *corporeal theory* and *discursive practice* dissolves along the way. Through the key concepts *spiritual corporeality* and *altered states of knowing*, they are drawn together and blend with each other in intermediary zones of knowing-being suspended between the physically sensible and the intuitively intelligible in a movement towards making sense of *embodied gnosis* (chapter three).

Different perspectives on the idea of the ***subtle body**** were explored in relation to esoteric forms of thought and related body-based practices. In *intermezzi* I dialogued with these perspectives from the point of view of my dance experience, contextualized in the contemporary dance field.

I epistemologically situated this research as walking a middle path between "naïve materialism" (i.e., scientific reductionism that is incapable of accommodating religious and supernatural phenomena) and "naïve idealism" (an uncritical appropriation and acceptance of subtle body phenomena as "real").[442]

To be able to experiment in dance with an expanded understanding of human corporeality, I work with the *subtle body* understood as a mind-matter continuum of subtle and dense corporealities that encompasses different degrees of ***matter-consciousness****.

This speculatively expanded idea of corporeality can inform an ***artistic truth**** of expression that generates and makes perceivable multilayered and meaningful relations between the physically sensible and the intuitively intelligible. It can impart a sense of the ***real**** that shines through from underneath or beyond phenomenal reality (chapter four).

I verbally described intentional orientations for corporeal consciousness to elaborate on how the dancing body can be attuned to act as an interface between the metaphysical and the physical. These ***attunements**** are presented as psychophysical foundations for the state of *embodied gnosis* in dance through which I can explore a sense of intimate proximity with a creative source.

[442] Samuel, "Subtle-body processes. Towards a non-reductionist understanding," 2013, 53-57.

In *intermezzi,* a vocabulary and concepts drawn from the danced experience (*corporeal theory*) are explored in relation to other fields of discourse such as esoteric forms of thought, the scientific/philosophical speculations of Pauli and Jung and other dance practices invested in embodied spirituality (*discursive practice*) (chapter five).

I outlined the creative process leading to the dance and music performance SEI, the performative component of this dissertation. In SEI, I perform a quest to enter the state of *embodied gnosis* while at the same time exploring how to communicate this quest through a non-verbal corporeal ***dance language****. I described how the dramaturgy of performative states that I traverse in SEI are supported and inspired by the musical scenarios created by composer Giuliano Bracci. The deepening stages of performative states become through activating a ***polyphonic body**** - a multilayered, sensory-suprasensory creative vehicle comprised of very dense to very subtle aspects of *matter-consciousness.*

A conclusive insight gained is, that experiencing the state of *embodied gnosis* in dance seems to be intimately intertwined with processes of *languaging*/communicating this state with the intent to activate a resonance with it in the observers or other participants of the dance. This implies that the potential to realize this state appears to be co-dependent to some degree with its communicability.[443]

[443] In Walter Benjamin's essay "On Language as Such and on the Language of Man", Benjamin defines language as always tending towards the communication of mental meanings in diverging contexts of for example art, technology, justice and religion. Language with Benjamin is the direct expression of "that which communicates *itself* in it" while the "itself" is seen as a mental entity. With my take on *dance language* and *dancing language* as mediators between the physically sensible and intuitively intelligible, I am exploring what is communicating *itself* through my *dancing body*, and how this non-verbal communication can become meaningful through a dialogue with other types of language and discourse that are also concerned with the relations between the physically sensible and the intuitively intelligible. That it is my *dancing body* that allows expression to unfold implies that the "mental entity" is here seen as inhabiting the entire body while at the same time transcending it in the context of a larger spiritual-corporeal whole beyond the individual entity of a dancing body. The "I" as the prism through which the unspeakable unknown that expresses itself is experienced through the *dance language* does then not only imply the consciousness of an individual human being but also the larger (unknown and unconscious) metaphysical-physical context that speaks through the *dancing body*. *Embodied gnosis* in dance is communicable when it triggers a resonance with or speak to the "I" of the observers of the dance and to the readers of this text. An inner subjective experience of a dancer can then resonate with the inner subjective experience of an observer of a dance. This experience can be mediated by an outer – speculatively objective – reality of a larger "I" shared among the participants of a dance that speaks itself through the dance. The esoteric and the exoteric then blend into each other, dissolving a clear-cut distinction between them. Benjamin, "On Language as Such and on the Language of Man", 2012, 233. I warmly thank Prof.dr. Anke Haarmann for her questioning which enticed me to develop this line of thought.

Potentialities for knowing

With this dissertation, I have presented insights into dance specific knowledge processes based on an understanding of the dancing body as an interface between the physically sensible and the intuitively intelligible. These insights are derived from how dance informs me. They are enriched through a dialogue with other fields of knowledge that have drawn my curiosity because they reveal other perspectives on relations between mind, spirit or consciousness and the matters of our body. These relations lie at the heart of dance as I experience it. That my discursively enriched perspective may resonate with the experience of other dancers is possible and intended, but not claimed.

In contemporary dance and its discourse, the presence of the spiritual within the physical is only rarely addressed. On my part, however, I associate a logic of spiritual evolution with complex processes of incarnating consciousness. I posit that dance practice and research can give a unique perspective - other than biological, scientific, psychological or theological perspectives - on this process of incarnating consciousness.

I hope to have been able to give an insight into how the *dancing body* can provide new perspectives on relationships between the physically sensible and the intuitively intelligible in a way that it can trigger the speculative imagination of the readers and the spectators. I also hope to have given credibility to the idea that human corporeality can be intuitively experienced as spiritually informed. Although this hypothetical aspect of human corporeality is yet unconscious to a large degree, I posit that it might hint towards a transformative future of the human body that is yet unknown to us.

The idea and experience of *embodied gnosis* in dance is an attempt at refining and explicating a potentiality for knowing that I intuit to be amplified by dance experience, but it might eventually be possible to be experienced in everyday life and by everybody as well.

This potentiality for knowing can be meaningful in relation to society at large because we all carry a body and are carried by a body, regardless of political orientation, faith, gender, nationality, social status, background, skin color etc.

I understand the movement towards *embodied gnosis* through a *dancing language* as a post-secular project that seeks to give space and societal relevance to an artistically fuelled, non-dogmatic questioning of the possibility of an embodied realization of spirituality. It is intended as a positive, meaning giving impulse in the context of a secular society that appears to be in dire need for new values that unite people with each other and with our planet. I hope that this impulse may contribute to re-enchanting the creation as well as the reception of a secularized art practice without forgetting the merits of having gained independence from representation, meaning and linear narrative during the post-modern and contemporary evolution of dance.

Instead of verbally describing my approach to languaging dance in terms of representation, meaning and narrative, I work with a dramaturgy based on the realization of psychophysical states as foundations for movement generation and as an artistic-epistemic framing for the dance. I speculatively explore an intertwinement between metaphysical and physical dimensions of *matter-consciousness*, to trace one of the many possible futures of the ontological, epistemological, communicative and esthetic potentials of dance in the 21st century. An ethical dimension is intrinsically hooked up with the search for *embodied gnosis* because it ignites a thorough re-consideration of what it means to be human with respect to our own bodies, to each other, to our planet, to the living beings we share this planet with and to cosmic evolution.

Through the dialogue between my experience of the dancing body as an interface between the physically sensible and the intuitively intelligible and other fields of discourse concerned with the relations between mind/spirit/consciousness and matter, a variety of perspectives have been presented. Despite diverging experiential and epistemological backgrounds, they all point in the direction of a worldview that approaches the nature of reality as constituted by an interpenetration of spiritual and material realms of being. I posited that a human body engaged in danced motion can act as a vehicle that enables the perception as well as the actualization of this speculative idea about reality. Although I refrain from making any claims about a true nature of reality, I do suggest that it is possible to experience a glimpse of something ***real**** and sacred through the dancing body.

With the dance and music performance SEI, we want to actualize or at least spark critical questioning of a sense of the *real* and its relation to subjective and intersubjective experiences of an ***artistic truth**** . These questions could lead to new perspectives which might be

meaningful in relation to other fields of knowledge as well as in relation to re-conceptualizing the value of the arts in society. Evidently, the notion of *artistic truth* in artistic discourse cannot be equated with a scientific truth. Artistic truth is subjective or intersubjective rather than objective. Yet from the point of view of being immersed into artistic creation processes, there appears to me to be an objective of art, a will and an agency of the artwork that supersedes my individual personal will and that I associate with a compelling presence of a positive spiritual force that drives us forward from within and possibly without, physical reality. In the context of a worldview where physical and spiritual aspects of reality blend with each other, a work of art can facilitate an opening, an alethic[444] experience, a revelation of the presence of the spiritual within the physical, its liberation into perceivability, igniting a sense of the *real.*

I positioned this research as navigating a middle line between a scientific reductionist approach that is incapable of accommodating religious and supernatural phenomena and an uncritical appropriation of a reality of the subtle body that exists beyond our categories of space and time. Against the background of reason, faith and gnosis seen as mutually interpenetrating foundations for constructing worldviews[445], I traverse this middle line from an artistic-epistemic point of view. Whether and to which degrees the *polyphonic body* that I work with in SEI corresponds to the layers of the subtle body as described in esoteric forms of thought is subject to speculation.

Subtle body ideas and practices are suggestive of an ontology of human existence that extends along a continuum ranging from dense physicality to increasingly subtle and even divine dimensions of being. Discourse around the *subtle body* and especially the so-called "ether body" is concerned with understanding the enduringly unresolved question about the nature and the existence of the human soul and its mortality or immortality.[446]

---

[444] "Alethic," Merriam-webster online dictionary, accessed 27.4.23 https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/alethic. "Of or relating to truth, Greek *alēthikos*, from *alētheia* meaning truth."

[445] Hanegraaff, "Reason, Faith, and Gnosis: Potentials and Problematics of a Typological Construct," 2008, 138-139.

[446] As a speculative anthropological counterpart to ether metaphysics in esoteric forms of thought, speculations about the continuity of the subtle body beyond physical life extend beyond philosophical, religious and esoteric discourse into the fields of epistemology and cognition and problematize the subjective and intersubjective boundaries of the self. In Asprem, "Pondering Imponderables: Occultism in the Mirror of Late Classical Physics," 2011, 149.

The *subtle body* is thus suggestive of an amplified idea of human corporeality that is not limited to the physical body. Although this understanding of human corporeality is incompatible with a materialistic scientific knowledge paradigm, I have inhabited it as a territory for generating knowledge processes. These processes were triggered by altered states of perception experienced through the *dancing body*. From subjective and intersubjective points of view, it is evident that the space between the body of a dancer and the surrounding space, or between the bodies of several dancers is neither empty nor insignificant. A dance can change the experience of the space around and in between us. This space behaves like another kind of body, a ***spatial body****. Its quality can be influenced by the inner life of thoughts and feelings, it can be positively or negatively imprinted through psychophysical states that extend from underneath the skin into the body of the space outside of the skin. How this perceivable energetic presence of a *spatial body* relates to a possible afterlife is veiled to my ability to perceive. But I am confident to claim that an inner intentional disposition can palpably change the body of the space between us and that this changed quality can be shared intersubjectively. I experience this *spatial body* as a most subtle kind of corporeality. It is possible to attune one's awareness to it and it can change the quality of the space between us in this life.

One of the main differences between a secular scientific and a religious, esoteric and spiritual understanding of human existence is whether a self-conscious "I" is seen as a perishable subject, a materially generated epiphenomenon in the brain and nervous system, or whether this "I" is seen as the immortal core of a soul incarnated in a body of flesh and bones. Consequently, the perspective taken also determines the worldview into which a dance is embedded or that it seeks to create and enter in dialogue with. The perspective taken eventually also influences the intentional dispositions of the dance and the potential interpretative scope of the dance.

Embodied gnosis as explored in this dissertation and in the performance SEI, proposes a sense of an "I" as the deepest core of subjective experience, as an unspeakable unknown cause for creative movement and as an impulse to communicate and to share itself. Neither SEI nor this written dissertation give an answer to the question about the nature and existence of the soul and whether it is perishable or immortal. Yet they provide an experiential and performative scenario that may trigger an imaginative contemplation of this question.

Artistic Research

Literature, music and the visual arts have already been extensively investigated in relation to scholarship on esotericism, yet there still remains a largely undiscovered territory to be explored in these areas.[447] Research performed in and through art practices related to scholarship on esotericism are still very rare.[448] Research in and through artistic practice implies that the creative process itself (or aspects of it) constitute the pathway by which new perspectives on knowledge, insight, as well as new artistic creations come into being.[449]

Whereas spiritual and esoteric interests may be implicitly present in several contemporary choreographic and dance practices, a critical relation between these practices and the academic study of esotericism has to my knowledge not yet been established. This dissertation project may be seen as a first baby step into this direction.

I see the "insider" perspective of the artist and the "outsider"[450] perspective of the artist as scholar as complementary to each other. They might seem incompatible with each other at first sight because the artistic experimental perspective is necessarily subjective, while the scholarly academic perspective obliges to a certain extent to maintain a sense of neutrality and objectivity. Yet I posit that both perspectives are needed to gain a more encompassing picture about the possibility to understand the dancing body as a mediating interface between the physically sensible and the intuitively intelligible. Both sides are needed to enable an attuned alignment and a living bridge between concepts and experience and I see the academic discipline of artistic research as perfectly able to facilitate this bridge.

---

[447] See for example Wuidar, *Music and Esotericism,* 2010 and Bauduin, "Science, Occultism, and the Art of the Avant-Garde in the Early Twentieth Century," 2012, 23 -55. For a bibliography on Theosophy and the Visual Arts focusing mainly on the art and art writings of Piet Mondriaan and Wassily Kandinsky see: The History of Art Research Portal, "Enchanted Modernities. Theosophy, Modernism and the arts, c. 1865-1960 https://hoaportal.york.ac.uk/hoaportal/enchanted-modernities-bibliography.jsp. For Literature and Esotericism see for example Versluis, *Restoring Paradise. Western Esotericism, Literature, Art, and Consciousness*, 2004.

[448] For the seminal article by Henk Borgdorff about the distinction between research *for* and *in and through* art, see Borgdorff, "The Production of Knowledge in Artistic Research," 2011, 44-63.

[449] Borgdorff, Ibid, 46. Henk Borgdorff is Professor emeritus Theory of Research in the Arts at the Academy of Creative and Performing Arts Leiden University.

[450] For an in-depth analysis of the tensions between "insider" and "outsider" perspectives in the context of Western Esotericism exemplified by Antoine Faivre, the first scholar who conceptualized and established esotericism as an academic field of study, see Hanegraaff, Brach, and Pasi, "Antoine Faivre (1924-2021) The Insider as Outsider," 2022, 167–204.

With this dissertation project, I define artistic research as a creative investigation anchored in an artistic practice that allows itself to be transformed through a dialogue with academic scholarship and other (artistic) practices. Its aim is to contribute to the further evolution of the artistic and epistemological potentials of the art of dance. Artistic research generates new perspectives on knowledge processes in and beyond an art practice (here dance) by synthesizing ideas and concepts with embodied experiences.

To be continued

Many speculative ideas that emerged through the encounter between my perspective on dance experience and other fields of practice and discourse remain potentialities for knowing that could be explored in further research. For example, how the idea of mind and matter as not separated from each other but intertwined in a spectrum of dense to subtle *matter-consciousness* relates to the Pauli-Jung conjecture, to their ideas about dual-aspect monism and an underlying psychophysically neutral reality that takes part in both aspects yet transcends their distinction in a larger whole (*unus mundus*) has not been elaborated here. This could be taken up by whoever would see value in pursuing this line of thought.

Another worthwhile endeavor would be to elaborate on possible resonances between the idea and experience of *embodied gnosis* and the entanglement of matter and meaning in feminist new materialism. I stated in the introduction that I chose to not include this discourse in this investigation because it would require an in-depth study of new materialist thought on my side but also because I chose to limit the scope of discourse to a creative process in dance brought in dialogue with scholarship on esotericism and the Pauli-Jung conjecture.

I also did not venture into a comparative analysis between Christian and Islamic subtle body schemes. This would be a fertile area to explore spiritually informed ideas about human corporeality and could possibly contribute to interfaith dialogue. The difference between the emphasis on subtle body processes that occur in the afterlife in esoteric Islam, and the emphasis on subtle body processes during the incarnation into this world in esoteric Christianity is meaningful on many levels and invites more research.

For the continuity of the *dance language* and the *corporeal theory* derived from it, a next step would be to expand the list of *attunements* as presented in chapter five. In parallel, I envision to continue to explore different dramaturgies for realizing and communicating psychophysical states through dance and music creations, related to the idea of *embodied gnosis* or to other

states that might appear as worth striving for along the way. The *attunements* could eventually also be transposed into a transferrable movement practice.[451] This would require another research trajectory in an educational setting where I could test and observe how other dancers would experience these orientations for corporeal consciousness and what kinds of *dance language* and *corporeal theories* might emerge from their experiences.

Intentional dispositive

It has been my intention to cultivate and to maintain a stance of deep humility towards the unspeakable unknown while at the same time not being afraid to poke the limits of the knowable. I have attempted to not grasp or contain the unspeakable via culturally pre-determined filters of rational reasoning, religious dogma or aesthetic codification. Instead, I am searching for a way of speaking of the dancing body that seeks spiritual realization based on an intuitive hunch that the human body has an intrinsic spiritually corporeal proximity with its creative source by its very nature. However, we seem to be mostly only barely in touch with it and I argue that dance appears to be one possible pathway to amplify this intuition.
I hope that this research can inspire other dancers and choreographers to open their practice to other knowledge domains for the further evolution of the art of dance and its enduring significance for society at large. I also hope that academic institutions will increasingly realize the value of knowledge processes generated in and through the arts and that a dialogue between different avenues towards knowing will become common sense. I also hope that this research may open doors to better understand and connect with the natural regenerative intelligence of our bodies, supported by forces that stem from outside of their physical boundaries. May this work inspire and support the dancers of the future to carry forward the evolutionary forces as they manifest through dance.

[451] Another worthwhile trajectory could be to explore the development of conceptual and ethical tools to ensure that (neuro)diverse realities can be included in the experiences generated by this practice and in finding ways to integrate the acknowledgement of harm and trauma. Although a therapeutic approach has so far not been included in my goals for this research it could nevertheless be interesting to explore this potential. Many thanks to Jeroen Fabius to alerting me to also consider the ethics of inclusivity in further steps.

Epilogue

Thank you so very much,
for accepting the invitation to dance this search, to search this dance together with me.

Whenever you read I, me, mine – could you think and feel I, me mine as well?
Most probably not always, but maybe once in a while?

Could there be something that holds truth for all of us at our innermost point of subjective experience?

Do you think we can meet each other there, to become one thought, one body, one idea?

Because we all carry and are carried by a body.

I wish that traversing this exploration towards embodied gnosis through a dancing language could be an opening.

To be able to realize how our movements relate to the nature, origin and belonging of our life, to each other, to our earth and to the life of the cosmos.

A radical opening towards the unknown with trust.

To the miraculous creation of our bodies, to the possibility of perceiving a spiritual-corporeal, creative and benevolent presence inside of our flesh and bones.

May more of this presence be liberated into this world, so it may become more glorious, more peaceful, more humane, more overflowing with love for life and for each other.

GLOSSARY

This glossary collects ideas from the knowledge process engendered by the dialogue between different perspectives on relationships between the metaphysical and the physical as staged in this dissertation project. In the dissertation text, these ideas are written bold, *cursive* and with an asterisk (*) the first time they appear in a chapter. Throughout the rest of the chapters, they are written *cursive.* Through *hyperlinks* the reader can directly navigate to this glossary to become familiar with the main ideas behind the conceptual apparatus that supports the architecture of this investigation. The definitions of these ideas are relative to the context of this research. Throughout the dissertation text, these ideas accumulate layers of meaning that draw together the metaphysical with the physical from different perspectives and through different constellations of words. Some aspects of these layers of meaning are condensed here to brief definitions.

ALTERED STATES OF KNOWING 🗝 (key-concept):

States of consciousness experienced in dance where the metaphysical appears to intersect with the physical. Psychophysical epistemological foundation for the state and experience of ***embodied gnosis***. A modulation of "altered states of knowledge" coined by Wouter J. Hanegraaff. "Altered states of knowledge" are defined as trans-rational stages of direct experiential knowledge and relate to "gnosis" as the highest possible attainable level of realization. Replacing *knowledge* with *knowing* highlights spiritually oriented processes in dance that aim towards a realization of *embodied gnosis.* These processes are constantly evolving, open-ended and evade being fixed into predefined knowledge categories.
One of the three key concepts.

ARTISTIC TRUTH:

Generates and makes perceivable multilayered and meaningful relations between the physically sensible and the intuitively intelligible. Imparts a sense of the ***real*** that shines

through from underneath or beyond phenomenal reality. Stirs an innermost sense of knowing. Relating to a subjective and/or intersubjective sense of truth. Artistic empiricism is here understood in the sense of resonating with an objective given by an unknown agency that seeks to be made perceivable through artistic creation yet evades being categorized in fixed ideas about its meaning.

ATTUNING (singular) **/ ATTUNEMENTS** (plural):

Intentional orientations for corporeal consciousness. Intended to cultivate and intensify a sense of proximity with a creative source and a sense of the ***real***. Enables the ***dancing body*** to recognize and to stabilize its ability to create, to perceive and to communicate subtle yet profound dimensions of being and experiential reality. Oriented towards a unifying state of being that blends and transcends opposite ends of a spectrum towards a region of experience that participates in both aspects of a polarity pair yet overcomes their strict distinction through ***altered states of knowing***. Psychophysical preparation to enable an experience of ***embodied gnosis.***

CORPOREAL IMAGINATION:

Lives in the intermediary state of knowing-being suspended between the physically sensible and the intuitively intelligible. A vehicle to enter the ***imaginal*** realm. A state-shift towards ***embodied gnosis*** happens when a movement infused with imagination blends with the performative states of knowing and believing in such a way that it transforms into a ***real*** movement.

CORPOREAL THEORY:

Corporeal nonverbal and verbal reflections on dance experience articulated from the first-person perspective.

CREATIVE INTERFACE:

The ***dancing body,*** understood as a vehicle for perceiving and communicating dimensions of being where the metaphysical and the physical intersect. Through a dialogue between the conscious awareness of the dancer and the spiritual-corporeal intelligence of the body

(hypothetically rooted in the somatic unconscious) movements triggered by experiencing fields of intersection between the physical and the metaphysical are transformed into a *dance language*.

COMPLEMENTARITY:

In the context of this research, complementarity stands for two modes of ***languaging*** based on the one hand on non-verbal corporeal experience (***corporeal theory***) and on the other hand on verbal discourse that engages with diverging fields of knowledge (***discursive practice***). Both modes of ***languaging*** may seem incompatible with each other at first sight, yet they are seen as necessary to approximate a complete picture of a *dancing body* understood as a mediating interface between the physical and the metaphysical. Both modes of doing research become aspects of a larger whole (***dancing language****)* that transcends a strict distinction between them. This definition of complementarity is an artistic modulation of the colloquial definition of *complementarity* in contemporary physics according to Harald Atmanspacher and Hans Primas *Recasting Reality.* (see p.113, footnote 199)

DANCE:

A non-verbal corporeal movement towards the unknown in a constant state of becoming. A dynamic and poetic exchange between different degrees of consciously inhabiting the body and the unconscious spiritual-corporeal intelligence of the body. An inspired way to be in the human body. A positive spiritual force that animates the subtle and dense matters of the body. A monumental movement that disrupts inertia and that surrects the matters of the body.

DANCING BODY:

A ***creative interface*** that participates in the physical and the metaphysical and that draws them together through the medium of ***dance*****.** A ***psychophysical resonating space*** animated by the dancer in motion through space. A research laboratory and vehicle for enhanced perception. The ***dancing body*** generates a state of suspended intuitive judgment. An animated vehicle for perception that appears to be in touch with realms of being that extend far beyond its corporeal boundaries. An interface between spirit and matter.

DANCE LANGUAGE:

A way to communicate the unspeakable as experienced by the body in danced motion through space. A way to speak about what I encounter in the dance through the language of dance and through the written word. The foundation for a ***corporeal theory***. Speaks about a sense of belonging to and being a member of a larger corporeality that exceeds the limits of the boundaries of my skin. A way for a potential humanity to reveal itself. A way to communicate a journey into incarnation. A process of consciously transforming what passes through the body unconsciously.

DANCING LANGUAGE:

A language that navigates movements of body and thought through a dialogue between ***corporeal theory*** (non-verbal and verbal language derived from dance experience) and ***discursive practice*** (verbalized thought derived from written discourse). An open-ended process of becoming. A creative mediator that connects the metaphysical with the physical in a dancing search for sense making. Navigates movements of thought on a spectrum of ***matter-consciousness*** that ranges from very dense to very subtle materialities and from the concentric pull of deep subjectivity to the peripheral pull of speculative theory where thought hinges towards objective forms of knowledge.

DISCURSIVE PRACTICE:

Verbally ***languaging*** movements of thought generated by a dialogue between different perspectives from various fields of written discourse.

EMBODIED GNOSIS 🗝 (key-concept):

Suggestive of a process of entering and deepening a state of knowing-being in dance, where a blending of sensory as well as supra-sensory qualities of experience permeate and transform the corporeality of the motions of the dancer. A psychophysical state that hinges towards the numinous. Suggestive of a metaphysically transcendent, yet also physically immanent layer of an experienced reality that underlies and connects apparently

contradictory facets of experience. A performative attempt to re-embody the ancient idea of gnosis, originally understood as disembodied knowledge based on religious experience, through a contemporary dancing body situated in the post-secular era of the 21st century. The alpha and the omega, the departure point as well as the point of arrival for the creation of a dance language. A radical opening towards the unknown, with trust.

ETHERIC LISTENING:

Imaginal movement in co-creative dialogue with subtle spiritual-corporeal materialities of sound perceived through the ***polyphonic body*.**

EUTHUS BODY:

A multilayered sensory-suprasensory body of the now. Relates to the dancing body as well as to the body of SEI#3. Aligns its members and layers of consciousness with an undefined yet specific sense of intimate proximity with an ***artistic truth*** during each moment of the dance. Orchestrating movements between personal will and an unconscious will inside of the ***dancing body*** to enter in resonance with an immanent and transcendent, objective and impersonal will.

GRAVITY:

An absolute force. Causing a movement of consciousness towards the physically sensible. A counterforce to ***levity*.** The quality of experiencing gravity is related to the force of will. Different qualities of will influence psychophysical textures of movement that engage the weight of the dancing body in relation to a magnetic force exerted from the core of the earth. Focusing on *gravity* during dance contracts the perception of the self towards an innermost center of singular subjectivity.

IMAGINAL:

A place and state of knowing-being suspended between the sensorial movement logic of a ***dancing body*** and a supra-sensorial faith in – and at times *gnosis* of - an unseen, yet intuited immanent and transcendent divine or sacred realm of being. An artistic adoption of the term *imaginal* coined by Islam scholar Henry Corbin. It is distinct from the *imaginary* by giving an

ontological status of reality to a specific level of being and knowledge. In oriental theosophy this level is the world of the soul and of souls and is situated in between the intellectual world and the sensible world.

INNER HEAVEN:

A stabilized state of knowing-being where the distinction between contradictory forces or poles of being is transcended and transformed into a sense of a unity of being.

INTERMEZZO:

Textual insertion that comments on and complements the main body text from the perspectives of either ***corporeal theory*** or ***discursive practice*** (in chapter four and chapter five). The three key concepts ***spiritual corporeality***, ***altered states of knowing*** and ***embodied gnosis*** enable fields of intersection where a clear-cut distinction between ***corporeal theory*** and ***discursive practice*** dissolves.

LANGUAGING:

Verbal and non-verbal processes of becoming language.

LEVITY:

A cosmic force related to the sun. Causes a movement towards the intuitively intelligible. Surrects matters of gravity such as the tendency towards inertia. An aesthetic force in dance that energizes a vertically upwards thrust in polar opposition against *gravity*. Whereas gravity is primarily bound to the physical body, a sense of *levity* can be conjured up from the depths of one's being by an intentional receptivity towards a vertically upwards tending energetic pull. Can be experienced in dance by imaginatively expanding one's spatial awareness and by opening the body to peripheral forces. Opening awareness towards a larger periphery can expand the sense of self beyond a limited frame of subjectivity enclosed underneath the skin of the body. A "rope to God" (this term is adopted from the Kalahari Bushmen describing their experience of the n|om dance).

MATTER-CONSCIOUSNESS:

A spectrum of consciousness that traverses the ***dancing body.*** It ranges from very dense to very subtle materialities. Draws together physically sensible and intuitively intelligible realms of being. A mind-matter continuum articulated through a ***dancing language***. An artistic adaptation of "matter-consciousness" coined Jay Johnston to describe esoteric subtle body subjectivities as onto-ethical desires in a process metaphysical context.

POLYPHONIC BODY:

Artistic modulation of the idea of a spiritual-corporeal human physiology constituted by dense and subtle aspects of ***matter-consciousness***. A multilayered, sensory-suprasensory creative vehicle that draws known and unknown layers of being together through ***altered states of knowing.*** Through a ***dancing language*** the ***polyphonic body*** activates different layers of ***matter-consciousness*** in the performative event and in the written text. It speaks through different textures of psychophysical tonalities characterized by different degrees of intersection between the physical and the metaphysical.

PSYCHOPHYSICAL RESONATING SPACE:

Refers on a micro psychobiological scale to the inner spaces of an individualized entity of a dancing human being where the energy and sound of movement can pass through. On a macro cosmological scale, mind or consciousness or spirit reach beyond the individualized psychophysical entity of the human being towards the transcendental and metaphysical realm. Through the inner spaces of the ***dancing body*** the movement of the dance enables a resonance between the inner spaces of the dancing human being and the vast spaces of mind, spirit and consciousness.

REAL:

Basarab Nicolescu differentiates between the notions of *real* and *reality*: *reality* in the scientific context is defined in terms of resistance to our human experience. The *real* stands for that which is forever veiled. With Nicolescu, what is irreducibly real involves nonresistance and belongs to the domain of the sacred. The notion of ***spiritual corporeality*** contains

etymologically both the *real* and *reality*. The reality of the body is the first place of resistance to the dance. Openings towards the *real* experienced through the dancing body in a state of ***embodied gnosis*** hint towards a zone of non-resistance coming forth from within the resistance of the physical body, creating a space for an experience of the sacred.

RETROSPECTIVE DANCE WRITING:

Retrospective analysis of the creative process towards a ***dance language*** in SEI-DUE-TRE by annotating segments of video recordings of rehearsals and performances. Subcomponent of *corporeal theory.* Verbal explication and poetic transcription of nonverbal dance experience from the first person perspective. A cut between the conscious and the unconscious. Uncovers and communicates what usually remains hidden and implicit in dance and what happens on unconscious levels during the dance.

SPATIAL BODY:

The quality of the space between the body of a dancer and the surrounding space, or between the bodies of several dancers. A dance can change the experience of the space around and in between people. This space behaves like another kind of body, a *spatial body.* Its quality can be influenced by the inner life of thoughts and feelings, it can be positively or negatively imprinted through psychophysical states that extend from underneath the skin into the body of the space outside of the skin.

SUBTLE BODY:

An idea about human physiology that synthesizes metaphysical and spiritual dimensions with the physical reality of the human body. Differentiated yet interpenetrating layers of the subtle body can also be conceived of as a mind-matter continuum that encompasses different degrees of ***matter-consciousness.*** In religious and esoteric discourse and related body-based practices, subtle body awareness is associated with spiritual development and situates the human being in the context of cosmic evolution.

SPATIAL-CORPOREAL TEXT:

Draws together an understanding of dance as bodily text (Lepecki) and as knowledge of space ("Das Wissen vom Raum," Böhme and Huschka).

SPIRITUAL CORPOREALITY 🗝 (key-concept):

Cultivating a specific quality and texture of corporeal consciousness through ***attuning*** intentional orientations as a practice of maintaining contact between the everyday world and a psychophysically intuited metaphysical source of being, life and meaning (partially based on a definition of a spirituality by Wouter J. Hanegraaff)

Encompasses movements on a spectrum ranging from the gross materiality of flesh and bones to the more subtle materialities of thoughts and words.

SUMMARY

SPIRITUAL CORPOREALITY:
TOWARDS EMBODIED GNOSIS THROUGH A DANCING LANGUAGE

The artistic-epistemic aim of this investigation is to unveil new perspectives on relations between the sensible and the intuitively intelligible. It is my aim to weave *corporeal theory* and *discursive practice* together into a *dancing language*. This *dancing language* conducts movement and thought from a state of being suspended between the physically sensible and the intuitively intelligible towards a place where they come together. *Corporeal theory* refers to embodied as well as verbal reflections on dance experience as seen from my perspective. The *discursive practice* engages thought in dialogue with perspectives from physics and psychology on the one hand and metaphysics and revelation on the other.

The interaction between *corporeal theory* and *discursive practice* and its resulting *dancing language* supports the main argument: that the dancing body can act as a *creative interface* between the physical and the metaphysical. The *dancing body* is attuned to become a vehicle for perception and cognition through which I investigate and communicate numinous dimensions of embodied experience.

The gap between a wordless corporeal and a verbal, interrogating discourse is bridged by three key concepts: *spiritual corporeality*, *altered states of knowing* and *embodied gnosis*. Outcomes of this investigation are a dance and music performance that enacts radical openings towards the unknown; a research documentation based on the method of retrospective dance writing by annotating videos of the creative process; and a written dissertation. Together, they unfold meaning, uniting dichotomies between gravity and levity, between physis and psyche, between matter and spirit. The aim is to better understand the nature and potential meaning of deep incorporation of consciousness and its evolving expression.

GEESTELIJKE LICHAMELIJKHEID:
NAAR BELICHAAMDE GNOSIS DOOR EEN DANSENDE TAAL

Het artistiek-epistemische doel van dit onderzoek is om nieuwe perspectieven op de relatie tussen het zintuiglijk waarneembare en dat wat intuïtief begrijpelijk is tevoorschijn te brengen. Ik beoog om *lichamelijke theorie* en *discursieve praktijk* te verweven tot een *dansende taal*. Deze *dansende taal* leidt het lichaam en het denken vanuit een staat van zijn die balanceert tussen het fysiek zintuiglijk waarneembare en het intuïtief begrijpelijke naar een plek waar beide samenkomen.
Lichamelijke theorie verwijst naar zowel lichamelijke alsook verbale reflecties op de ervaring van dans, gezien vanuit mijn eigen perspectief. De *discursieve praktijk* ontwikkelt het denken in samenspraak met gezichtspunten uit de fysica en psychologie enerzijds en metafysica en openbaring anderzijds.
De interactie tussen *lichamelijke theorie* en *discursieve praktijk* en de hieruit voortvloeiende *dansende taal* ondersteunt het kernargument van mijn onderzoek: dat het dansende lichaam kan optreden als een *creatieve interface* tussen het fysieke en het metafysische. Het dansende lichaam wordt afgestemd om een voertuig voor perceptie en cognitie te worden. Met dit voertuig onderzoek en communiceer ik numineuze dimensies van de belichaamde ervaring.
De kloof tussen een woordeloos lichamelijk en een verbaal, bevragend discours wordt overbrugd door drie sleutelconcepten: *geestelijke lichamelijkheid*, *veranderde staten van weten* en *belichaamde gnosis*. De resultaten van dit onderzoek zijn een dans- en muziekvoorstelling die radicale openingen naar het onbekende ensceneert; een documentatie van het onderzoek gebaseerd op de methode van *retrospectief dansschrijven* door annotatie van video's van het creatieve proces; en een geschreven proefschrift. Samen ontvouwen ze betekenis en verenigen ze dichotomieën tussen zwaartekracht en lichtheid, tussen fysica en psyche, tussen materie en geest. Het doel is om de aard en potentiële betekenis van een diepe belichaming van bewustzijn en van expressie daarvan beter te begrijpen.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Adler, Janet. *Offerings from the conscious body: The discipline of authentic movement.* Rochester: Inner Traditions, 2002.

———. "American Dance Therapy Association 37th Annual Conference Keynote Address. From Autism to the Discipline of Authentic Movement." *American Journal of Dance Therapy* 25:1 (2003): 5-16.

Allsopp, Ric and André Lepecki. "Editorial on Choreography." *Performance Research* 13:1 (2008): 1-6.

And, Metin. "The Mevlana Ceremony [Turkey]." *The Drama Review: TDR* 21, no.3 (1977): 83-94.

Asprem, Egil. "Pondering Imponderables: Occultism in the Mirror of Late Classical Physics." *ARIES - Journal for the Study of Western Esotericism* 11, no. 2 (2011): 129–65.

———. "Beyond the West: Towards a New Comparativism in the Study of Esotericism," *Correspondences* 2, no.1 (2014), 3-33.

Atmanspacher, H. and C.A. Fuchs, "Introduction: The Pauli-Jung Conjecture." In *The Pauli Jung Conjecture and its Impact Today,* edited by Harald Atmanspacher and Christopher A. Fuchs, 1-6. Exeter: Imprint Academic, 2014.

———. *The Pauli Jung Conjecture and its Impact Today,* edited by Harald Atmanspacher and Christopher A. Fuchs. Exeter: Imprint Academic, 2014.

Atmanspacher, Harald. "Notes on Psychophysical Phenomena." In *The Pauli Jung Conjecture and its Impact Today,* edited by Harald Atmanspacher and Christopher A. Fuchs, 181-199. Exeter: Imprint Academic, 2014.

———. "The Pauli-Jung Conjecture and Its Implications for Exceptional Experiences", lecture synopsis in flyer *Analytical Psychology meets Academic Research, Pre-Conference to the 4th European Congress of Analytical Psychology August 29-30 in Avignon,* 2018. https://jungstudies.net/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/Flyer_PreC_p.pdf

Atmanspacher, Harald and Hans Primas. "Pauli's ideas on Mind and Matter in the Context of Contemporary Science." *Journal of Consciousness Studies* 13, no.3 (2006): 5-50.

———. Eds. *Recasting Reality: Wolfgang Pauli's Philosophical Ideas and Contemporary Science.* Berlin/Heidelberg: Springer, 2008.

Atmanspacher, Harald and Wolfgang Fach. "Mind-Matter Correlations in Dual-Aspect-Monism According to Pauli and Jung." In *Beyond Physicalism, Toward Reconciliation of Science and Spirituality,* edited by Edward F. Kelly, Adam Crabtree, and Paul Marshall, 195-226. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2015.

Bach, Johann Sebastian. *The Sonatas and Partitas for Violin Solo*. *Partita No.2 in D minor for solo violin. BWV 1004*. *5. Ciaccona.* Performed by violinist Gidon Kremer. CD: ECM New Series: 2005.

Bach, Johann Sebastian. *The Sonatas and Partitas for Violin Solo*. *Partita No.2 in D minor for solo violin. BWV 1004*. *5. Ciaccona.* Performed by violinist Janine Jansen. CD: *Bach: Inventions & Partita*, *Partita for Violin Solo No.2, BWV 1004: 5. Ciaccona*. Janine Jansen, Maxim Rysanov, Torleif Thedéen. DECCA: Klassiek, 2013.

Bakhtiar, Laleh. *Sufi. Expressions of the Mystic Quest.* London: Thames and Hudson, 1976.

Barad, Karen. *Meeting the Universe Halfway. Quantumphysics and the Entanglement of Matter and Meaning.* Durham/London: Duke University Press, 2007.

Bauer, Bojana. "When Train(ing) Derails." *Performance Research* 14, no.2 (2009): 74-79.

Bauduin, Tessel M. "Science, Occultism, and the Art of the Avant-Garde in the Early Twentieth Century." *Journal of Religion in Europe* 5 (2012): 23 -55.

Beauregard, Mario, Natalie L. Trent, Gary E. Schwartz. "Toward a postmaterialist psychology: Theory, research and applications." *New Ideas in Psychology* 50 (2018): 21-33.

Benjamin, Walter. "On Language as Such and on the Language of Man". In Briankle G. Chang, and Garnet C. Butchart, *Philosophy of Communication*, 233- 244. Cambridge, Mass: The MIT Press, 2012.

Bennett, J.G. "Gurdjieff's all and everything." *Riders Review 1950*. Gurdjieff-Bibliography. Accessed 13.11.2019. https://gurdjieff-bibliography.com/Current/12_bennetts_beelzebub_2004-07-03.pdf .

Birringer, Johannes. "Dance and Not Dance." *Performing Arts Journal* 27, no.2 (2005): 10-27.

Bohr, Niels. *Atomic Theory and the Description of Nature*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1958.

Borgdorff, Henk. "The Production of Knowledge in Artistic Research." In *The Routledge Companion to Research in the Arts,* eds. Michael Biggs and Henrik Karlsson, 44-63. London/New York: Routledge, 2011.

Böhme, Hartmut und Sabine Huschka. "Prolog." In *Wissenskultur Tanz: Historische Und Zeitgenössische Vermittlungsakte Zwischen Praktiken Und Diskursen*, edited by Sabine Huschka, 7–22. Bielefeld: transcript Verlag, 2009.

Bracci, Giuliano, composer. *Non sta, si svolge gira for 4 voices*. 2012. Soundcloud Audio File. Published by BabelSCORES. Giulianobracci.com. Accessed 4.6.23. http://giulianobracci.com/non-sta-si-svolge-e-gira/

Bracci, Giuliano, composer. *Se non in ombra e specchio for 8 voices*. Soundcloud Audio File. Published by BabelSCORES. Giulianobracci.com.. Accessed 4.6.23. http://giulianobracci.com/se-non-in-ombra-e-specchio/ .

Bremmer, Jan, ed. *The Apocryphal Acts of John.* Kampen: Kok Pharos, 1995.

Bradley, Karen. *Rudolf Laban*. New York: Routledge, 2009.

Brandstetter, Gabriele. "Dance as a Culture of Knowledge." In *Knowledge in Motion. Perspectives of Artistic and Scientific Research in Dance,* edited by Sabine Gehm, Panikko Husemann and Katharina von Wilcke, 37-48. Bielefeld: transcript Verlag, 2007.

Brandstetter, Gabriele and Gabriele Klein, ed. *Dance [and] Theory.* Bielefeld: transcript Verlag, 2013.

Bunker Jenny, Anna Pakes and Bonnie Rowell, eds. *Thinking through Dance*. Hampshire: Dance Books Ltd., 2013.

Burt, Ramsay. "Resistant Identities: Anderson and Ruckert." In *Dance Discourses: Keywords in Dance Research*, 208–20. New York: Routledge, 2007.

Çalısır, Ahmet, vocalist. *Aşr-ı-Şerif. Dergahta Sema-Sema Töreni.* CD: Yenikapı Müzik: 2005.

Carlisle, Anna and Valerie Preston-Dunlop. Documentary: *Living Architecture. Rudolf Laban and the Geometry of Dance,* 2007. Accessed 2013 at library Amsterdam Hogeschool voor de Kunsten.

Chambers-Coe, Juliet. "Rudolf Laban." In *The Routledge Companion to Performance Philosophy*, edited by Laura Cull Ó Maoilearca and Alice Lagaay, 351–61. New York: Routledge, 2020.

Chauchat, Alice. "Not-knowing: mobility as a state of unrest." *Movement Research Performance Journal* no.51 (2018): 131-138.

Clement, Christian. "Das Ich in der Erkenntnis – Rudolf Steiner und René Descartes." In *Erkennen und Wirklichkeit. Zum Studium der "Philosophie der Freiheit" Rudolf Steiners*, ed. Thomas Kracht, 261-294. Stuttgart: Freies Geistesleben, 2001. Accessed 4.6.23. https://www.steinerkritischeausgabe.com/steineriana-descartes .

Cody, Gabrielle. "Woman, Man, Dog, Tree: Two Decades of Intimate and Monumental Bodies in Pina Bausch's Tanztheater." *The Drama Review (1988 -)* 42, no. 2 (1998): 115–31.

Copenhaver, Brian P. *Hermetica.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992.

Corbin, Henry. “Mundus Imaginalis or the Imaginary and the Imaginal.” *Cahiers internationaux de symbolisme*, no.6 (1964): 3-26. http://www.bahaistudies.net/asma/mundus_imaginalis.pdf. Accessed, April 2014.

———. “IX. The Shaikhī School: Shaikh Aḥmad Aḥsāi.” In *Spiritual Body and Celestial Earth. From Mazdean Iran to Shi’ite Iran,* trans. Nancy Pearson, 180-221. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989 [1977].

———. *Spiritual Body and Celestial Earth. From Mazdean Iran to Shi’ite Iran.* Translated by Nancy Pearson. Princeton: Princeton University Press*,* 1989 [1977].

———. *History of Islamic Philosophy*. Translated by Liadain and Philip Sherrard. London/New York: Kegan Paul International, 1993. Accessed 4.6.23. http://www.fatuma.net/text/Corbin_-_The_History_of_Islamic_Philosophy.pdf.

———*. Swedenborg and Esoteric Islam.* Translated by Leonard Fox. West Chester, Pennsylvania: Swedenborg Foundation Press, 1995.

Cross, Steven. “Metaphysical Factors behind the Empirical World: Advaita Vedānta.” In *Schopenhauer’s Encounter with Indian Thought*, 132- 135. University of Hawai’i Press, 2013.

Cusack, Carole M. “An Enlightened Life in Text and Image: G. I. Gurdjieff’s *Meetings With Remarkable Men* (1963) and Peter Brook’s *Meetings With Remarkable Men* (1979).” *Literature & Aesthetics* 21, no.1 (June 2011): 72-97.

———. “The Contemporary Context of Gurdjieff’s Movements.” *Religion and the Arts* 21 (2017): 96-122.

Dance, Movement and Spiritualities (Journal). Ed. Amanda Williamson. Intellect Books. First published in 2014. https://www.intellectbooks.com/dance-movement-spiritualities .

De Lahunta, Scott. *(Capturing Intention). Documentation, Analysis and Notation Research Based on the Work of Emio Greco |PC*. Amsterdam: Emio Greco |PC and Amsterdam Hogeschool voor de Kunsten, 2007.

———. “Language-in-Use: Practical Dance Vocabularies and Knowing.” *Biblioteca Teatrale: Rivista Trimestrale Di Studi e Ricerche Sullo Spettacolo* 134, no. 2 (2020): 259–81.

De Lahunta, Scott, Kim Vincs, and Sarah Whatley. “On An/Notations.” *Performance Research* 20, no. 6 (2015): 1–2.

Denana, Malda. *Zur Ästhetik des Tanzes.* Bielefeld: transcript Verlag, 2014.

Driscoll, J. Walter, ed. “Gurdjieff: a Reading Guide.” Gurdjieff-Bibliography.com. 4th edition 2017. Accessed 4.6.23. https://gurdjieff-bibliography.com/Current/index.html .

Duncan, Isadora. *Der Tanz der Zukunft.* Trans. Karl Federn. Leipzig: Eugen Diederichs, 1903.

Ehrman, Bart D, ed. *Lost Scriptures*. *Books that did not make it into the New Testament.* New York: Oxford University Press, 2003.

———. “The Acts of John.” In *Lost Scriptures. Books that did not make it into the New Testament*, edited by Bart D. Ehrman, 93-108. New York: Oxford University Press, 2003.

Ellingworth, Paul. “How Soon Is “Immediately” in Mark?” *The Bible Translator* 29, no. 4 (1978): 414–19.

Fabius, Jeroen. “The missing history of (not) conceptual dance.” In *Danswetenschap in Nederland, deel 7,* edited by Merel Heering, Ruth Naber, Bianca Nieuwboer en Liesbeth Wildschut. Amsterdam: Vereniging voor Dansonderzoek, 2012.

Faivre, Antoine and Karen-Claire Voss. “Western Esotericism and the Science of Religions.” *Numen* 42, no. 1 (1995): 48–77.

Fischer-Lichte, Erika. *The Transformative Power of Performance*. Translated by Saskia Iris Jain. London and New York: Routledge, 2008.

Fors, Hans. *Geschichte der Eurythmie im tanzhistorischen Kontext 1920-30.* Wien: Edition des Centrums für Dramaturgische Studien, 2015.

Foster, Mary Ann. *Somatic Patterning: How to Improve Posture and Movement and Erase Pain.* Colorado: EMS Press, 2004.

Franco, Susanne and Marina Nordera, ed. *Dance Discourses. Keywords in dance research.* London/New York: Routledge, 2007.

Gamard, Ibrahim. “In Defense of the Whirling Prayer.” 2012. Dar-al-Masnavi.org. Accessed 4.6.23. http://www.dar-al-masnavi.org/defense-of-sema.html.

Gardner, Sally. “Notes on Choreography.” *Performance Research* 13, no. 1 (2008): 55–60.

Gehm, Sabine, Panikko Huseman and Katharina von Wilcke, eds. *Knowledge in Motion. Perspectives of Artistic and Scientific Research in Dance*. Bielefeld: transcript Verlag, 2007.

Goodrick-Clarke, Clare and Nicholas. *G.R.S. Mead and the Gnostic Quest.* Berkeley: North Atlantic Books, 2005.

Granholm, Kenneth. “Esoteric Currents as Discursive Complexes.” *Religion* 43, no. 1 (2013): 46–69.

Gundy, Jeff. “‘What Is It I Know?’: Notes Toward an Embodied Gnosis.” *MQR Mennonite Quarterly Review*, no. 79 (January 2005): 69–88.

Gurdjieff, G.I. *Views from the Real World*. New York: Penguin Compass, 1973.

Hall, Julie. “The Saptaparṇa: The Meaning and Origins of the Theosophical Constitution of Man.” *Theosophical History, A Quarterly Journal of Research* XIII, no.4 (October 2007): 5-38.

Hanegraaff, Wouter J. “A Dynamic Typological Approach to the Problem of ‘Post-Gnostic’ Gnosticism.” *Aries* (old series), no. 16 (1992): 5-43.

———. *New Age Religion and Western Culture. Esotericism in the Mirror of Secular Thought.* New York: State University of New York Press, 1998.

———. “On the Construction of ‘Esoteric Traditions’.” In *Western Esotericism and the Science of Religion*, edited by A. Faivre and W.J. Hanegraaff, 11-61. Leuven: Peeters, 1998.

———. “The Dreams of Theology and the Realities of Christianity.” In *Theology and Conversation. Towards a Relational Theology,* eds. J. Haers and P. De Mey, 709 -735. Leuven: Leuven/Peeters, 2003.

———. Ed. *Dictionary of Gnosis & Western Esotericism*. Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2006.

———. “Traditionalism/Perennialism.” In *Dictionary of Gnosis & Western Esotericism*, edites by Wouter J. Hanegraaff, 1132 -1134. Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2006.

———. “Altered States of Knowledge: The Attainment of Gnōsis in the Hermetica.” *The International Journal of the Platonic Tradition* 2 (2008): 128-163.

———. “Reason, Faith, and Gnosis: Potentials and Problematics of a Typological Construct.” In *Clashes of Knowledge. Orthodoxies and Heterodoxies in Science and Religion,* edited by Peter Meusburger, Michael Welker and Edgar Wunder, 133-144. Springer Science + Business Media B.V.: 2008.

———. “The Unspeakable and the Law: Esotericism in Anton Webern and the Second Viennese School.” In *Music and Esotericism*, edited by Laurence Wuidar, 329–54. Aries Book Series. Leiden: Brill, 2010.

———. ”Teaching Experiential Dimensions of Western Esotericism.” In *Teaching Mysticism*, edited by William B. Parsons, 154-172. Oxford University Press, 2011.

———. *Esotericism and the Academy. Rejected Knowledge in Western Culture.* Cambridge University Press, 2012.

———. *Western Esotericism: A Guide for the Perplexed*. London: Bloomsbury, 2013.

———. “Open Access to the Absolute: some remarks on the concept of religion.” In *Religion. Perspectives from the Engelsberg seminar 2014*, ed. Kurt Almqvist and Alexander Linklater, 89 -102. Stockholm: Axel and Margaret Ax:son Johnson Foundation, 2015.

———. “The Globalization of Esotericism,” *Correspondences* 3 (2015): 55-91.

———. “Gnosis”. In *The Cambridge Handbook of Western Mysticism and Esotericism,* edited by Glenn Alexander Magee, 381-392. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016.

Hanegraaff, Wouter J., Jean-Pierre Brach and Marco Pasi. “Antoine Faivre (1924-2021) The Insider as Outsider.” *ARIES - Journal for the Study of Western Esotericism*, no. 22 (2022): 167–204.

Hindes, James. “Rudolf Steiner’s Epistemology.” Rudolf Steiner Web. Accessed 4.6.23. https://www.rudolfsteinerweb.com/Rudolf_Steiner%27s_Epistemology.php.

Huschka, Sabine. “Aesthetic Scenarios of Energeia: Bodies as Transformational Fields of Force.” In *Energy and Forces as Aesthetic Interventions: Politics of Bodily Scenarios,* eds. Sabine Huschka and Barbara Gronau, 55-70. Bielefeld: Transcript Verlag, 2019.

———. “Aesthetic Strategies of Trance-Gression: The Politics of Bodily Scenes of Ecstasy.” *Dance Research Journal* 51, no. 2 (2019): 4–17.

Huschka, Sabine, Barbara Gronau, ed. *Energy and Forces as Aesthetic Interventions. Politics of Bodily Scenarios.* Bielefeld: transcript Verlag, 2019.

ICK Dans Amsterdam. “The Intuitive Body.” Ickamsterdam.com. Accessed 4.6.2023. https://www.ickamsterdam.com/nl/academy/peers-onderzoekers/intuitive-body-11.

Irvin, Lee. “Western Esotericism, Eastern Spirituality, and the Global Future.” *Esoterica*, III (2001): 1-47.

Johnston, Jay. *Angels of Desire. Esoteric Bodies, Aesthetics and Ethics.* London/Oakville: Equinox Publishing Ltd., 2008.

Jung, Carl Gustav. “On the nature of the psyche.” In *The Structure and Dynamics of the Psyche, Collected Works of C.G.Jung, Vol.8*, edited by R.F.C. Hull, 159-234. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969.

———. *Nietzche’s Zarathustra: Notes of the seminar given in 1934 -1939 (2 vols.).* Edited by James L. Jarrett. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988.

———. “Winter Term January/March 1935.” In *Nietzche’s Zarathustra: Notes of the seminar given in 1934 -1939 (2 vols.)*, edited by James L. Jarrett, 321-454. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988.

Junod, Eric and Jean-Daniel Kaestli, eds. “Acta Iohannis.”*CORPVS CHRISTIANORVM. Series Apocryphorum* 1. Brepols: Turnhout, 1983.

Kant, Marion. “Mittel zur Transzendenz: Marion Kant über Rudolf von Labans Geheimorden und seine ‘Religion der Tat’.” *Tanzjournal* 6 (2003): 15-22.

Kilcher, Andreas B. “Seven Epistemological Theses on Esotericism: Upon the Occasion of the 10th Anniversary of the Amsterdam Chair.” In *Hermes in the Academy. Ten Years’ Study of Western Esotericism at the University of Amsterdam*, edited by Wouter J. Hanegraaff and Joyce Pijnenburg, 143-148. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2009.

Klein, Gabriele. “Dance in a Knowledge Society.” In *Knowledge in Motion. Perspectives of Artistic and Scientific Research in Dance,* edited by Sabine Gehm, Panikko Husemann and Katharina von Wilcke, 25-36. Bielefeld: transcript Verlag, 2007.

Laban, Rudolf. *Choreutics.* Edited by Lisa Ullmann. Alton: Dance Books, 2011 [1966].

Laban, Rudolf. *Die Welt des Tänzers.* Stuttgart: Walter Seifert Verlag, 1920.

———. *Espace Dynamique. Textes inédits, Choreutique, Vision de l’espace Dynamique.* Trans. Edited by Élisabeth Schwartz-Rémy. Brussels: Contredanse, 2003.

Lalleman, Pieter J. *The Acts of John. A Two-Stage Initiation into Johannine Gnosticism.* Leuven: Peeters, 1998.

LaMothe, Kimerer. “Transformation: An ecokinetic approach to the study of ritual dance.” *Dance, Movement & Spiritualities* 1, no. 1 (2014): 57- 72.

———. “A History of Theory and Method in the Study of Religion and Dance, Past, Present, Future.” *Brill Research Perspectives in Religion and the Arts* 2, no.1 (2018): 1-116.

Lash, Scott. *Experience.* Cambridge: Polity Press, 2018.

Legrand, Dorothée, T. Grünbaum and J. Krueger, “Dimensions of Bodily Subjectivity.” *Phenomenology and the Cognitive Sciences* 8, no.3 (2009): 279–83.

Leijenhorst, Cees. “Anthroposophy.” In *Dictionary of Gnosis & Western Esotericism*, edited by Wouter J. Hanegraaff, 82- 89. Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2006.

———. "Steiner, Rudolf." In *Dictionary of Gnosis & Western Esotericism,* edited by Wouter J. Hanegraaff, 1084 -1091. Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2006.

Lepecki, André. *Exhausting Dance. Performance and the Politics of Movement*. London/New York: Routledge, 2006.

———. “Concept and Presence. The Contemporary European Dance Scene.” In *Rethinking Dance History. A Reader*, edited by A. Carter, 170–81. London: Routledge, 2004.

———. Ed. *DANCE.* Cambridge/Massachusetts: The MIT Press. London: Whitechapel Gallery, 2012.

———. Ed. “Introduction/ /Dance as Practice of Contemporaneity.” In DANCE, 14-23. Cambridge/Massachusetts: The MIT Press. London: Whitechapel Gallery, 2012.

———. Ed. “Positioning Dance/Theorizing Movement.” In DANCE, 56 -99. Cambridge/Massachusetts: The MIT Press. London: Whitechapel Gallery, 2012.

———. “Choreopolice and Choreopolitics: or the task of the dancer.” *TDR: The Drama Review* 57, no.4 (2013): 13-27.

———. Lecture: “In the dark” at *Studium Generale & Uncut Rietveld Academie. Are You Alive Or Not? Looking at ART through the lens of THEATRE*. Amsterdam, Theatre De Brakke Grond, 20.04.2015.

Lewis, Franklin D. *Rumi, Past and Present, East and West.* Oxford: Oneworld Publications, 2000.

Louppe, Laurence. *Poétique de la Danse Contemporaine*. Brussells: Contredanse, 1997.

Lucian. “The Dance.” In *Lucian in eight volumes, V*, edited by T.E. Page, translated by A.M. Harmon, 209-290. Cambridge/Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, [1936] 1955.

Magnini, Francesca. *Inspriation. Emio Greco | Pieter C. Scholten. The Multiplicity of Dance.* Rome: Artegrafica, 2015.

Mahé, Jean-Pierre. “Gnostic and Hermetic Ethics.” In *Gnosis and Hermeticism from Antiquity to Modern Times,* edited by Roelof v.d. Broek en Wouter J. Hanegraaff, 21-36. New York: State University of New York Press, 1998.

Mahootian, Farzad and Tara-Marie Linné. “Jung and Whitehead: An Interplay of Psychological and Philosophical Perspectives on Rationality and Intuition.” In *Rational Intuition: Philosophical Roots, Scientific Investigations*, edited by Lisa M. Osbeck and Barbara S. Held, 395-420. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014.

Manning, Erin. *The Minor Gesture*. Durham/London: Duke University Press, 2016.

Manning, Susan. “Reinterpreting Laban.” Rev. of Vera Maletic. *Body-Space-Expression: The Development of Rudolf Laban’s Movement and Dance Concepts*, and Martin Green, *Mountain of Truth: The Counterculture Begins- Ascona, 1900-1920. Dance Chronicle* 11, no.2 (1988): 315-320.

Marti, Ernst. *The Four Ethers.* Translated by Eva Lauterbach and James Langbecker. Roselle, Illinois: Schaumburg Publications, 1984.

Marquié, Hélène. “Dispositif Trouble. When What Is Said Is Not What Is Shown.” In *Dance Discourses: Key Words in Dance Research,* edited by Susanne Franco and Marina Nordera, 236–50. New York: Routledge, 2007.

McKechnie, Shirley and Catherine Stevens. “Knowledge unspoken: Contemporary dance and the cycle of practice-led research, basic and applied research, and research-led practice.” In *Practice-led Research, Research-led Practice in the Creative Arts*, edited by Robert T. Dean and Hazel Smith, 84-103. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009.

Milani, Milad. “The Subtle Body in Sufism.” In *Religion and the Subtle Body in Asia and the West: Between Mind and Body,* edited by Geoffrey Samuel and Jay Johnston, 168-183. London: Routledge, 2013.

———. “Classic Sufism and Gnosis.” In *The Gnostic world*, edited by Garry W. Trompf, Gunner B. Mikkelsen and Jay Johnston, 328 – 336. New York: Routledge, 2019.

Nelson, Robin. “Practice-as-research and the Problem of Knowledge.” *Performance Research* 11, no. 4 (2006): 105-116.

Neri, Louise, and Eva Respini. *William Forsythe. Choreographic Objects*. Boston: Institute of Contemporary Art and DelMonico Books, 2018.

Ness, Sally Ann. “Foucault’s Turn From Phenomenology: Implications for Dance Studies.” *Dance Research Journal* 43, no.2 (winter 2011): 19-32.

Nicolescu, Basarab. *From Modernity to Cosmodernity: Science, Culture and Spirituality*. New York Albany: State University of New York Press, 2014.

———. “Une nouvelle vision du monde, la transdisciplinarité.” Centre International de Recherches et Études Transdisciplinaires. Ciret-transdisciplinarity.org. Accessed 4.6.2023. http://ciret-transdisciplinarity.org/transdisciplinarity.php.

Otto, Rudolf. *The Idea of the Holy*. Oxford University Press, 1936.

Ouspensky, P.D. *In Search of the Miraculous*. *Fragments of an Unknown Teaching*. Internet Archive. Archive.org. Accessed 4.6.23. https://archive.org/details/pdfy-AHobOEFHR4B4PBSm.

Pasi, Marco, “Oriental Kabbalah and the Parting of East and West in the Early Theosophical Society.” In *Kabbalah and Modernity*, edited by Boaz Huss, Marco Pasi and Kocku von Stuckrad, 151-166. Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2010.

Pekala, Ronald J. and Etzel Cardeña. “Methodological issues in the study of altered states of consciousness and anomalous experiences.” In *Varieties of anomalous experience: Examining the scientific evidence,* edited by Etzel Cardeña, Steven Jay Lynn and Stanley Krippner, 47-82. Washington DC: American Psychological Association, 2000.

Pittman, Michael S. *Classical Spirituality in Contemporary America. The Confluence and Contribution of G.I. Gurdjieff and Sufism.* New York: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2012.

Poland, Lynn. “The Idea of the Holy and the History of the Sublime.” *The Journal of Religion* 72, no.2 (April 1992): 175–97.

Preston-Dunlop, Valerie. *Rudolf Laban. An Extraordinary Life*. Alton, Hampshire: Dance Books Ltd., 2008.

Primas, Hans. “Non-Boolean Descriptions for Mind-Matter Problems.” *Mind & Matter* 5, no. 1 (2007): 7-44.

Ravagli, Lorenzo. “Hurqalya, die Erde der Auferstehung.” Anthroblog. Anthroposophie im 21. Jarhundert. 4.May 2012. Accessed 4.6.23. https://anthroblog.anthroweb.info/2012/hurqalya-die-erde-der-auferstehung/

Rinpoche, Tenzin Wangyal. *Awakening the Sacred Body. Tibetan Yogas of Breath and Movement*. Edited by Marcy Vaughn. Hay House Inc.: 2011.

Rosenthal, Bernice G. *The Occult in Russian and Soviet Culture*. Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1997.

Samaritter, Rosemarie. “The Aesthetic Turn in Mental Health: Reflections on an Explorative Study into Practices in the Arts Therapies.” *Behavioral Sciences* 8, no. 41 (2018): 1–11.

Samuel, G. and Johnston, J., eds. *Religion and the Subtle Body in Asia and the West: Between Mind and Body.* London: Routledge, 2013.

Samuel, Geoffrey. “Subtle-body processes. Towards a non-reductionist understanding.” In *Religion and the Subtle Body in Asia and the West: Between Mind and Body,* edited by Geoffrey Samuel and Jay Johnston, 249-266. London: Routledge, 2013.

Sedgwick, Mark. “Is there such a thing as Islamic esotericism?” In *Hermes Explains: Thirty Questions about Western Esotericism*, edited by Wouter J. Hanegraaff, Peter J. Forshaw and Marco Pasi, 217 – 242. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2019.

———. *Sufism. The Essentials.* Cairo/New York: The American University in Cairo Press, 2003.

Shaviro, Steven. *Without Criteria: Kant, Whitehead, Deleuze and Aesthetics.* MIT Press, 2009.

Sheets-Johnstone, Maxine. *The Phenomenology of Dance.* London: Dance Books, 1979.

Shute, Benjamin. *Sei Solo: Symbolum? The Theology of J.S. Bach’s Solo Violin Works.* Eugene, Oregon: Pickwick Publications, 2016.

Solt, Bruno and Romana. *Sjeik Khaled Bentounès*. *Sufisme, Hart van de Islam*. Haarlem: Altamira-Brecht BV, 2006.

Steiner, Rudolf. “Eurythmie, was sie ist und wie sie entstanden ist. Penmaenmawr, 26. August 1923.” Rudolf Steiner Online Archiv. Accessed 3.6.23. http://anthroposophie.byu.edu/vortraege/279a.pdf.

———. “Eurythmy as Visible Singing, GA 278. III Melodic Movement; the Ensouling of the Three Dimensions through Pitch, Rhythm and Beat. 21. February 1924.” The Rudolf Steiner Archive. Accessed 3.6.23. http://wn.rsarchive.org/Lectures/GA278/English/AMTRP1996/19240221p01.html.

———. “Eurythmy as visible singing, 1924.” The Rudolf Steiner Archive. Accessed 3.6.23. https://rsarchive.org/Lectures/GA278/English/AMTRP1996/EuViSg_tone.html .

———. “The Story of my Life, chapter XXXVIII, 1925.” The Rudolf Steiner Archive. Accessed 3.6.23. https://rsarchive.org/Books/GA028/English/APC1928/GA028_c38.html

———. “Das Sinnlich Übersinnliche in seiner Verwirklichung durch die Kunst. Zwei Vorträge, Berlin, 15. Und 17. Februar 1918, Erstveröffentlichung: Dornach 1941 (GA 271, 81-124)”. Rudolf Steiner Online Archiv. Accessed 3.6.23. http://anthroposophie.byu.edu/vortraege/271_02.pdf .

———. *Theosophie*. Stuttgart: Verlag Freies Geistesleben, 1955.

———. *Eurythmie als sichbarer Gesang*. Dornach: Rudolf Steiner Verlag, 1984.

———. *Das Rätsel des Menschen. Die geistigen Hintergründe der menschlichen Geschichte. Kosmische und menschliche Geschichte. Erster Band. Fünfzehn Vorträge, gehalten in Dornach vom 29.Juli bis 3.September 1916*. Dornach: Rudolf Steiner Verlag, 1992. Internet Archive. Accessed 3.6.23. https://archive.org/details/rudolf-steiner-ga-170 .

———. *Das Esoterische Christentum und die Geistige Führung der Menscheit. Dreiundzwanzig Vorträge, Gehalten in den Jahren 1911 und 1912 in verschiedenen Städten*. Dornach, Schweiz: Rudolf Steiner Verlag, 1995. Http://fvn-archiv.net/PDF/GA/GA130.pdf .

———. *Exkurse in das Gebiet des Markus-Evangeliums. Dreizehn Vorträge, Gehalten in Berlin, München, Hannover und Koblenz Zwischen dem 17.Oktober 1910 und dem 10.Juni 1911, und eine Fragenbeantwortung vom 18. Dezember 1910*. Dornach, Schweiz: Rudolf Steiner Verlag, 1995. Internet Archive. Accessed 3.6.23. https://archive.org/details/rudolf-steiner-ga-124/page/n1/mode/2up .

———. *Das Johannes Evangelium, Ein Zyklus von zwölf Vorträgen, Hamburg 18.-31. Mai 1908*. Rudolf Steiner Online Archiv. 4. Auflage 2010. Accessed 3.6.23. http://anthroposophie.byu.edu/vortraege/103.pdf.

———. *Der Christus-Impuls und die Entwickelung des Ich-Bewusstseins. Sieben Vorträge, Berlin 25.Oktober 1909 - 8.Mai 1910*. Rudolf Steiner Online Archiv. Accessed 3.6.23. http://anthroposophie.byu.edu/vortraege/116.pdf

———. *Themen Aus Dem Gesamtwerk 3. Zur Sinneslehre*. Stuttgart: Verlag Freies Geistesleben, 2014.

———. *Art and Theory of Art. Foundations of a New Aesthetics.* Translated by Dorit Winter and Clifford Venho. Collected Works (CW) of Rudolf Steiner 271. Hudson, NY: Steiner Books, 2021.

Stromsted, Tina. "The Alchemy of Authentic Movement: Awakening Spirit in the Body." In *Dance, Somatics and Spiritualities*, edited by Amanda Williamson, Glenna Bateson and Sarah Whatley, 37-59. Chicago/Bristol: Intellect, 2014.

Tabrizi, Shams-I. *Me & Rumi: The Autobiography of Shems-I Tabrizi*. Translated by William Chittick. Louisville, KY: Fons Vitae, 2004.

Tart, Charles. "States of Consciousness and State-Specific Sciences." *Science (New Series)* 176, no. 4040 (June 16, 1972): 1203–10.

———. "Current Status of Transpersonal Psychology." *Journal of Consciousness Studies* 13, no.4 (2006): 83-37.

The History of Art Research Portal. "Enchanted Modernities. Theosophy, Modernism and the arts, c. 1865-1960." Accessed 3.6.2023. https://hoaportal.york.ac.uk/hoaportal/enchanted-modernities-bibliography.jsp.

T'Jonck, Pieter. "Dans en paranoïa. Aantekeningen bij Klapstuk #11 (en #10)." *Etcetera: Tijdschrift voor Podiumkunsten* 95 (februari) (2005): 49-52.

Versluis, Arthur. *Restoring Paradise. Western Esotericism, Literature, Art, and Consciousness.* New York: State University of New York Press, 2004.

Wagenmann, Hans. *Inmitten der teilhabende Mensch. Zur Gesellschaftlichen Wirksamkeit Eurythmischer Bewegung und Methodik*. Alfter: Verlag Kunst im Dialog, 2015.

Walbridge, John and Hossein Ziai, eds. *Suhrawardī. The Philosophy of Illumination*. Utah, Provo: Brighan Young University Press, 1999.

Wehr, Gerhard. *Jung & Steiner. The Birth of a New Psychology*. Translated by Magdalene Jaeckel. Anthroposophic Press, 2002.

Whicher, Olive. *Projective Geometry. Creative Polarities in Space and Time.* Hillside House: Sophia Books, Rudolf Steiner Press, 2013.

Widiyanto, Asfa. "Traditional Science and Scientia Sacra: Origin and Dimensions of Seyyed Hossein Nasr's Concept of Science." *Intellectual Discourse* 25, no. 1 (2017): 249–74.

Wigman, Mary. *The Language of Dance.* Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 1966.

Williamson, Amanda, Glenna Bateson and Sarah Whatley. *Dance, Somatics and Spiritualities.* Chicago/Bristol: Intellect, 2014.

Williamson, Amanda. "Post-Newtonian Anatomy and Physiology: The Gravitational and Parasympathetic Experience in Bio-Somatic Dance Movement Naturotherapy." *Dance, Movement & Spiritualities* 6, no. 1 & 2 (2020): 171–98.

Wuidar, Laurence, ed. *Music and Esotericism.* Leiden: Brill, 2010.

Yaden, David B., and Andrew B. Newberg. "Types of Spiritual Experience." In *The Varieties of Spiritual Experience: 21st Century Research and Perspectives*, 145–64. New York: Oxford Academic, 2022.

Curriculum Vitae

Suzan Tunca (29.12.1975, Rottweil, Germany) studied theatre dance at the Dance Academy Arnhem (1994–97). Since 1998 she worked as a dancer, dance teacher, dance researcher, choreographer and choreographic assistant in the Netherlands and internationally, among others with Krisztina de Châtel and Dylan Newcomb. Between 2005–2013 she danced with Emio Greco | PC. She was nominated for the “swan most impressive dance performance” in the Netherlands (2007). She completed a MA artistic research at the University of Amsterdam with a video work and live performance at the Stedelijk Museum Bureau Amsterdam (2015). Suzan is currently the head of the Academy at ICK Dans Amsterdam (International Choreographic Arts Center). She developed and implemented an artistic research curriculum for dancers at CODARTS University of the Arts, Rotterdam and is an alumni of DAS research THIRD (Academy of Theatre and Dance Amsterdam). Through her work as a dance researcher in professional and educational contexts and as a performing artist, she aims to contribute to the continuous regeneration and evolution of the art of dance as an invaluable source for embodied knowledge and understanding.