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Spiritual corporeality: towards embodied gnosis through a dancing language

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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 [*linguaging*](#) 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 [*linguaging*](#) 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 [linguaging](#) 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.