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Somaesthetics and Methodology: A Dialogue

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

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

Introduction

Falk Heinrich

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Somaesthetics: Methodological Solipsism or Truthfulness?

Falk Heinrich

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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Methods? What are they?

Max Ryynänen

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Stefano Marino

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

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

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

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

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

1.

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

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

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

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

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

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

2.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

3.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

4.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

5.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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Somaesthetics and future practices of "Doing" aesthetics

Aurosa Alison

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

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

1. Some good methodological premises

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

2. Aesthetics and Somaesthetics of Dwelling

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

3. Somaesthetics and Architecture

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

5. Conclusions

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

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

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

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

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Performing Somaesthetics. Future Methodological Developments

Elena Romagnoli

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

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

1. Space, Time and Body

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

2. The Active and the Passive in Aesthetics

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

3. Following Bodies' Performances

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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