

SPINOZA: PASSIONATE ACTION

HUMAN BEING IS A MEASURE

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West

SUMMER SCHOOL

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Passionate Action

Baruch Gottlieb



The theme of our Summer School was 'Passionate Action', an oxymoron, at least as far as classical philosophy goes. Spinoza equates action with reason and passion with affect, in principle they appear mutually exclusive, but in us, passion and action necessarily coincide or at least oscillate with each other, informing each other. Reason propels us into unexpected or unfamiliar interactions which assail us in turn with affects, engendering irrepressible passions. Our task, in this sense, was to learn how to understand, navigate and elaborate the oscillations between passion and action.

We live in a world informed by processes which take place at the speed of light and at scales both smaller than an atom and larger than our galaxy. The questions of how we 'know' about such things, and how we can share and build on our experience of this environment become politically and culturally fraught.

Electronic information, genetic modification, quantum physics, global economics, climate change, these phenomena act at extremes of scale which undermine our conventions, The metaphors we use are all inadequate, and we need to cultivate new skills and strategies, modes of exchange, to act with agency.

Our curriculum was structured with the anticipation that this sort of oscillation would be where practice met theory. We started each day with feminist political philosophy from Ewa, digested this over lunch, and began each afternoon with embodiment and listening practice from Florence, concluding with historical-(new)materialist epistemology discussions moderated by myself. When Cassie joined us after the first three days, we were well prepared to launch ourselves into her deeply emotional, psychologically and physically demanding exercises.

Decentered yet persistently paradigmatic, pulled in various ways and even to some degree pulled apart by new materialism, post-humanism and quantum physics, is the epistemically ineluctable figure of human being. 'Human being' seems to have been obsolesced by our contemporary technical condition, tied into systems of information and communication which are at once here and now and everywhere at once. The classically apprehended contours of our bodies, the edges, of ourselves, appear to fall away. Our *usness* is radically opened to the rest of the materiality of the planet and the universe, which has always been its true condition, this integrity unacknowledged nor even sanctioned in the modernity of individuals. We vibrate with the immensity of the thick present, all 'vibrant matter', as Jane Bennet calls it. Human being exists in a rich and intricate matrix of other beings and materialities and cosmic natureculture which nurture us and which we, in turn, transform. We are not separate, yet we also can be free, not absolutely free, contingently free. We have ideas, yet these are embodied in human bodies enmeshed in the rich matrix of life. Conventional understandings of human being need to be revisited, reformulated and radically reworked.

The institution of individualism, of the radical autonomy of the person, has never really rung true. We are conditioned beings, conditioned by our physical experience of living on the planet, and not the least by the sociality which has produced us and which reproduces our desires and our possibility to fulfill them should we choose to. We are enmeshed and transfused by materialities and ideas never purely our own. Concurrently, however, we are completely atomized, separated, unique datapoints in the census, the voters roll, or at the bank. We do have our own, irrepressibly urgent, desires and fears. We have identity and that identity has incontestable political and economic consequences. Reality, the material truth of ourselves may be quantum physics, but politically, and existentially we are atomic, classical physics.

Can practices of embodied thinking, understanding cogitation as a corporate, physical process, help us navigate these tensions, between quantum physics reality and classical physics citizenship, between social conditioning and individual responsibility, between human and non-human? Following Silvia Federici, we must first assert that even the exercise of thinking embodied thinking needs to be reproduced materially, through innumerable material practices some voluntary and some forced, some well paid some badly and some not at all. The freedom to endeavor our investigation and to elaborate our methods comes from the peace and security of the space which is afforded to us, the ready access to nourishment and sanitation, institutional affordances reproduced through other people whose capacities to act in those manners which we rely on, must themselves be materially reproduced. Philosophy is a cognitive product of the body of societies as it were, today, to varying extent made up of the contributions of people all around the world. Embodied thinking is thus immanently politically and economically conditioned, unlike 'pure' thinking which exists, if it does, only in the most abstract theoretical science, in mathematics, though even mathematics is nothing without its materialization, within human beings and institutions which must be materially reproduced.

Is it fair then to claim all thinking is embodied thinking? Yes. And is all thinking conditioned by the body which reproduces the capacity of thought? Yes. Our embodied thinking thus qualifies each thought, such that a thought is only conventionally and not actually defined, in relation to the material conditions which permitted the thought to take place, in us, in our discussions, in media. In the broader social sense, such concerns are not new, from the early 20th century we have read marxist speculation on such figures as Napoleon's janitor or Einstein's cook. But today, more than ever we need to develop modes of social participation and contribution which explicitly synthesize recognition of the material conditions of any thought or idea into the semantic, heuristic or cognitive content of the thought or idea itself. There is no immateriality, no immaterial concept, no immaterial labour, no immaterial finance. Everything, in order to be operative in the world must appear and be reproduced on a material support, and that support is subject to politics and economy.

There would be no nuclear bomb or nuclear power without the janitors, cooks and spouses who, paid and unpaid, reproduced the conditions for great science to take place: reproductive labour, the fundamental concept from Federici, without which all human industry, all progress would brake. Similarly today, all striving towards the emancipation of networked computation towards the justest management of all the world's resources, assuming total access and dominion, is fatally beholden to global affordances of productive and reproductive labour continuing inexorably into the future under the prevailing conditions, fair and unfair, exploitative and humiliating, voluntary or forced.

The slow work of the world which over millions of years squeezed dead life into fluid, incomparably energy dense, the fount of all our post-war prosperity, radical mundanity on the edge of falling away entirely into the immenseness of being. This contribution of the planet also includes the regeneration of planetary life, the capacity to reproduce life at ambient temperatures with just sun and water and soil; the origination of such things as seeds which can sit on a shelf for 30 years yet spout onto edible plants once dropped into moist soil. This is slow technology, at a scale alien to our mortal experience. All the successes of bioscience only piggyback on the yeoman's work done by the planet over millions of years. There is no separating technology, the fruits of science and the cultural and social effects built upon them, from the mundane material conditions of their reproduction.

Planetary processes likewise constitute every thinking body, within and without 'us', where 'us' is just the name we give to the weakest most contingent membrane which allows a distinction to be made. We are the distinction between ourselves and everything else. Human we may be, barely, if in name only and with the most provisional of consensus. Human being remains then useful as a 'Denkfigur', something to help us in our practice towards an everyday radically embodied thinking

A name, intelligible only to those like us, 'human'.

Human being can only ever be a liminal space, as thin as the distinction between north and south, imperceptible except in argument. All around us and also inside us is something else, not human, maybe colonized by human will, but defiant and transcending that will, what has always and will always surpass us, whoever we are, that which is addressed with the name Nature. Nature without us, Nature within us and only the thinnest of limits, which provisionally permeatably circumscribe us.

Staying with Donna Haraway's provocative 'we have never been human', we must examine, through techniques such as embodied thinking, to what extent the figure of *anthropos* can still be useful to us in our projects. Conventionally, the meaning we make and the meaning we seek is understood to be produced from experience through our senses. And though we are all different, and the differences are important, what makes experience meaningful is our capacity to find commonalities and share these through language, gestures, sounds and signals. As it comes time to act socially, politically, to confront the planetary destiny we share, the old words, expressions and tropes are failing us, they need to be reprocessed into new strategies, new rituals, new ways of building, sustaining and nurturing community long-term, in a hostile environment.

A pathology becomes conscious in embodied thinking, a kind of agony. Of course the 'path-' means pain. Beyond merely living we need to learn ways to think in agony, because agony is our true condition, as reflected in the word we use when we assert individual agency: protagonist. The agony is the (human) nature of our existential liminal state, schizophrenia of sensing separateness and knowing togetherness.

At the dawn of our age of automation, Benedict de Spinoza famously examined this difficulty, challenging his readers to imagine freedom as contingent with Nature. Our freedom, to reason and to act, is an expression of that same freedom incipient in Nature. For Spinoza, reason is the paradigmatic form of action. Reason is possible in us because it is a property of Nature, and so when we reason, we express this property of Nature. Spinoza saw something extraordinary in the way, through reason, human beings can come to consensus, and choose to act together, and even choose to constrain and associate their actions to make the most of our shared planetary condition.

There is no individual thing in the universe more advantageous to human beings than one who lives by the guidance of reason. For the most advantageous thing to human beings is that which agrees most closely with their nature that is (as is self-evident), a human being. — Spinoza, Ethics, part IV, Prop. 35, Coll.1

When we speak of passionate action, we mean an empathic, listening reason, an oscillation between radical openness to each other and the world (which we can hardly impede), and methodical contemplation of this experience towards more fruitful cooperation.

The last two days of our Summer School were dedicated to participants' process. We asked how each could signal to each other the kind of assistance and support they need so that we may gain maximal benefit of our being together. Artistic externalization takes place as a means of convening, producing moments of common experience which can help us overcome our differences in order to address difficult concerns together, and even forge longer-term commitments to ourselves and to each other. Art work, through and beyond language, returns us to the here and now we share, the only time and place we truly can be active,

Donna Haraway demands that we strive to improve our condition only to the extent we attend to our beholdenness as humans to the other things, living and not, of the planet, which respond to us, as we do to them, though perhaps in ways we do not have the cultural or critical modes to perceive, enjoy or express. Her 'thick present' also includes automated affordances wrought of the things of the earth which now seemingly work automatically. Because, we do, in



principle, have a say over the attendant processes which fuel these. Humanity, such that it is, has sovereignty over its machines, machines made of languages which coalesced the potentials of people into the perplexingly partly preposterously prosperous project of our contemporary condition.

In her *Manifesto for Cyborgs* Haraway elucidates the figure of the socialist feminist cyborg, a hybrid figure of affinities between human, animal, and machine, where intellect courses through our materialities as a vital force, where our emancipation depends on our embrace of uneasy combinations and critical incompleteness.

One is too few, and two is only one possibility. Intense pleasure in skill, machine skill, ceases to be a sin, but an aspect of embodiment. The machine is not an it to be animated, worshiped and dominated. The machine is us, our processes, an aspect of our embodiment. We can be responsible for machines; they do not dominate or threaten us. We are responsible for boundaries; we are they.
— Cyborg Manifesto p.38

We cannot go back to a time before we lived in institutions built by language and human ordering, but, in the ways of our bodies, we have also never left that time. Through the careful art of listening, we have immediate access to our incontestable transtemporal fact. The challenge is to integrate our consciousness into actions which serve to sustain our commitments to each other and to ourselves. Together, during the closing synthetic exercises of the last two days, we sketched out speculative institutionalities which would be able to provide the shelter to cultivate the practices we begin to detect we require. Our School program, including the texts in this volume are meant to provide some indications towards a method for generating and sustaining such institutionalities.

Cold Depression + Contamination

A glossary

Cassie Thornton



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*In her book, *A Paradise Built in Hell*, Rebecca Solnit says that collectively experienced disasters can bring people together. Somehow depression has the opposite effect, but that doesn't disqualify it as a natural disaster. According to a prescription from a yoga guru with a history of abuse and corruption, I take a cold shower every morning to deal with my cold depression. I follow his instructions though I know they may be contaminated by a historical abuse of power. That was the basis of a workshop: to get other people to go into cold water with me, and experience the sting of waking up in contradictory and contaminated water. Water, which is contaminated, but which is still medicinal. Cold which stings, but also transforms.*

I prepared a somatic and discursive workshop specifically for Summer School 2019 Spinoza: Passionate Action at West Den Haag, an important element of which would take place while facing, or inside of the Atlantic Ocean near The Hague on 19.07.2019, combining many practices I adapted from Kundalini Yoga.

De-pres-sion:

/dēˈpreSH(ə)n/

These are notes taken when I asked the COLD DEPRESSION + CONTAMINATION workshop participants to interview each other about depression. Afterwards, they each presented one sentence to the group, in response to the question: 'What can we teach each other about depression?'

- *One person, a neuroscientist, leaves.*
- *'When I think I should be a part of a group, but I feel outside.'*
- *'Sit in the mud, you need other people to join you in the mud.'*
- *'Struggles with communication, how to communicate about it.'*
- *'My convictions are easily challenged in a conversation.'*
- *'Fear of other people, becomes depression.'*
- *'I have no idea if I am depressed.'*
- *'What is the distinction between sick and not sick?'*
- *'Clinical depression versus capitalist depression?'*
- *'Do neuroscientists experience depression?'*

You Need to Have Sweat on Your Skin E-ve-ry Day:

/yoo nēd too hav swet ən yôr skin 'evrē dā/

INFO OVERLOAD UNRELENTING STRESS AND RAPID CHANGE, THE GLANDULAR AND NERVOUS SYSTEM ARE NOT EQUIPPED — WE GET RUSHED BY THE RUSH. TOO MUCH TO PROCESS. YOU NEED TO SWEAT AND MOVE YOUR NERVOUS AND ENDOCRINE SYSTEMS.

A great exercise when you find yourself confined in any way.

Directions:

(hand typed and emailed to me)

- You will jump while swinging arms
- Swinging forward and then back and keep repeating forward and back while jumping
- The place where the direction of the swinging changes is at the heart with arms directly out front body, palms down
- Eyes focused straight ahead like a wolf with total precision, focus at horizon on where you are going, where you have been, where you are going and what needs clear out of the way to give you direct laser focus neutrality.

Cold Show-ers:

/kōld SHou(ə)rs/

The magic is in a cold shower, a form of hydrotherapy. This yogic trick is so simple, but it's not always easy.

Benefits:

1. Brings blood to the capillaries
2. Cleans the circulatory system
3. Reduces blood pressure on internal organs, flushing internal organs and giving them a new supply of blood
4. Strengthens the parasympathetic and sympathetic nervous systems
5. Contracts the muscles and causes them to eliminate toxins and poisons more quickly
6. Brings the power of resistance and resilience to the body
7. Strengthens the mucous membranes
8. Keeps the skin young and shining
9. Prevents the body from developing an extra layer of fat, which affects the liver
10. Balances all the glands
11. Circulation and nerve problems can be prevented by regular cold showers.

Cold De-pres-sion:

/kōld də'preSH(ə)n/

External demand is greater than the internal capacity to deliver and we have spent our reserves. We are depressed but numb to our self, we do not feel it — it is cold. This leads to anger and frustration, isolation from our soul. Cold Depression is when we are cut off from ourselves and we have anxiety and no meaning. The silence of the soul. — Yogi Bhajan

Cold depression is a theoretical collective illness defined by Yogi Bhajan. He defined Cold Depression as a specific type of futuristic depression that would be felt among most people between the years of 2012-2038. This disease would not be known by its carriers, and thus it would grow infinitely. Cold Depression would be so common that it would seem normal, like an adaptation, hidden in everyone, in plain site.

Self diagnosis: DO YOU HAVE THE COLD DEPRESSION?

(of course you do, but you don't know it, that's symptom number 1)

- I. A person in Cold Depression does not seem depressed. You are busy, active, energized. You think you are normal.
- II. What once gave you joy no longer holds appeal.

- III. You attempt to counter Cold Depression with behaviour that stimulates: you overwork, create emergencies, and drink energy drinks.
- IV. You compensate by sleeping too much or not at all.
- V. You feel limited, small, undercut, neglected, or rejected.
- VI. You are going back to your past and reaching for an old identity that you have outgrown for the return of old habits or addictions.
- VII. You have little patience or tolerance for others. You see them as blocks along your path.

Yo-gi Bha-jan, Mas-ters in E-co-nom-ics:

/(yogi bhajan,) 'mastərs in ˌekə'nämiks/

Yogi Bhajan was the founder of the 'Kundalini Yoga' brand and yoga practice. His legacy is in question because of many sexual abuse allegations that have been brought forward. Kundalini Yoga books are now being printed without his image on the cover, in order to allow people to practice this form of yoga without being traumatized by his presence. Previously, he was a student of many yogic traditions in India until 1968. Until 1964, he was also a civil servant in India, and an economics student. He arrived in Los Angeles for the 'guru boom' and organized the hippie masses to practice an exotic health regimen, to replace psychedelic drugs with psychedelic meditation, and to become Sikhs. In 1972 he inaugurated the first of many annual women's camps, where he taught social technology to turn 'chicks into eagles.'

He began to start businesses that would hire and financially support his followers and their children, who were mostly white hippies in white turbans, whose lifestyle made them somewhat unemployable. For instance, Bhajan started a company called Peace Cereal, which was said to have produced the first non-gmo cereal in the us. Myth has it that Yogi B wanted to produce a chemical free cereal to serve children who will have thrilling challenges to face in their lives, so (paraphrasing) 'it would be better if they weren't high on chemicals'. He also started Yogi Tea, Peace Cereal, Yogi Tea, and Akal Security among many other corporations. The New York Times reported in 2004 that Akal Security brought in more than \$1 Billion per year.

A-kal Se-cu-ri-ty:

/(akal) sə'kyoorədē/

Akal Security, Inc. is a security company which has federal contracts to guard immigration detention centers, federal courthouses, NASA facilities, federal buildings in Washington, D.C., and numerous embassies under construction. Akal Security and a subsidiary company, Coastal International Security, have received over \$1 billion in federal security contracts. Akal Security, Inc. was co-founded in 1980 by Yogi Bhajan, after Gurutej Singh Khalsa (a white

American convert to ЗНО) found that, 'his beard and turban prevented him from getting a job'.

The Trump administration introduced its zero tolerance immigration policy in the spring of 2018, which led to child separations at the southern US border. In June of 2018, allegations began circulating on social media that Akal Security, Inc, was involved in these inhuman operations. As of now, Akal Security is documented as working for ICE, performing removals of immigrant children from their families.

Con-ta-mi-na-tion:

/kən,tamə'nāSH(ə)n/

verb

contaminate; 3rd person present: contaminates; past tense: contaminated; past participle: contaminated; gerund or present participle: contaminating, make (something) impure by exposure to or addition of a poisonous or polluting substance.

'the site was found to be contaminated by radioactivity'

Similar:

- I. pollute
- II. adulterate
- III. make impure
- IV. defile
- V. debase
- VI. corrupt
- VII. taint
- VIII. infect
- IX. blight
- X. foul
- XI. spoil
- XII. soil
- XIII. mar
- XIV. impair
- XV. stain
- XVI. befoul
- XVII. sully
- XVIII. tarnish
- XIX. poison
- XX. radioactivate
- XXI. vitiate

Opposite:
purify

Origin

Late Middle English: from Latin *contaminat-* 'made impure', from the verb *contaminare*, from *contamen* 'contact, pollution', from *con-* 'together with' + the base of *tangere* 'to touch'.

ICE: /aɪs/ *noun*

- Intentional Community in Exile
- Ice is water frozen into a solid state, plays a key role in Earth's water cycle and climate. It falls as snowflakes and hail or occurs as frost, icicles or ice spikes.
- Image Correction and Enhancement
- In Case of Emergency
- U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement

Trop-ic-al De-pres-sion:

/ˈtrɒpək(ə)l dəˈpreʃ(ə)n/

Also known as a low-pressure system, an area where the atmospheric pressure is lower than that of the area surrounding it. Lows are usually associated with high winds, warm air, and atmospheric lifting. Under these conditions, lows normally produce turbulent weather, such as hurricanes and cyclones. Low barometric pressure can cause headaches or migraines by creating a pressure difference between the atmosphere and the air-filled sinuses. Cold air stops a low pressure system, cold water on the feet and hands generally fixes my migraines.

Once a group of individual thunderstorms has come together under the right atmospheric conditions for a long enough time, they may organize into a tropical depression. When viewed from a satellite, tropical depressions appear to have little organization. Instead of a round appearance similar to hurricanes, tropical depressions look like individual thunderstorms that are grouped together. Once a tropical depression has intensified to a point it becomes a tropical storm. It is at this time that it is assigned a name, but I've never seen this happen socially without a lot of institutional force. During this time, the storm itself becomes more organized and begins to become more circular in shape — resembling a hurricane. The rotation of a tropical storm is more recognizable than for a tropical depression. Tropical storms can cause a lot of problems even without becoming a hurricane.

Man-i-fest-o by Wil-lem Van Spron-sen:

/,manə'festō bī (Willem) væn (Spronsen)/

when i was a boy, in post war holland, later france, my head was filled with stories of the rise of fascism in the 30's. i promised myself that i would not be one of those who stands by as neighbors are torn from their homes and imprisoned for somehow being perceived as lesser.

you don't have to burn the motherfucker down, but are you just going to stand by?

this is the test of our fundamental belief in real freedom and our responsibility to each other.

this is a call to patriots, too, to stand against this travesty against everything that you hold sacred. i know you. i know that in your hearts, you see the dishonor in these camps. it's time for you, too, to stand up to the money pulling the strings of **every** goddamn puppet pretending to represent us.

i'm a man who loves you all and this spinning ball so much that i'm going to fulfill my childhood promise to myself to be noble.

here it is, in these corporate **for profit** concentration camps.

here it is, in brown and non conforming folks afraid to show their faces for fear of the police/ migra/ proud boys/ the boss/ beekies...

here it is, a planet almost used up by the market's greed.

i'm a black and white thinker.

detention camps are an abomination.

i'm not standing by.

i really shouldn't have to say any more than this.

i set aside my broken heart and i heal the only way i know how- by being useful.

i efficiently compartmentalize my pain...

and i joyfully go about this work.

(to those burdened with the wreckage from my actions, i hope that you will make the best use of that burden.)

This manifesto was written by Willem Van Spronsen on July 13, 2019 before he gave his life to stop some ICE ('Immigrations and Customs Enforcement', US government agency) buses by setting them afire at The Northwest Detention Facility In Tacoma, Washington (a private immigrant detention center) in an effort to discontinue the deportations. He was killed by police.

I felt so angry for so many years, at the same time feeling so powerless. I've never seen a fight for social justice work 'well', with a happy ending that makes the place I call home better. If you want to do something, you have to do it yourself? I moved away from the San Francisco Bay Area, scalded by the experience of watching the wealthy drink cappuccinos on the doorstep of the half of the city who was homeless and dying of neglect, and all I could do was buy the neglected a cookie. I am used to seeing wealthy survivors walk by human

wreckage, continuing with life as usual, while they practice or enforce self care and take anti-depressants to give them the ability to continue WHILE EVERYTHING WE LOVE IS BURNING.

I had texted with my friend Yasmin, and we asked back and forth why no one was blowing up the ICE facilities? Why are we so afraid, disempowered, or 'above' that kind of attempt to use our lives to physically stop something horrible? Why don't I? This feels like one of many unresolvable questions from a hyper individualist society. Why can we not risk our lives to stop something horrible from happening?

When I saw this manifesto, I entered a different time period of my life.

De-pres-sion is a Nat-u-ral Dis-as-ter:

/də'preSH(ə)n iz ā 'naCH(ə)rəl də'zastər/

(plural: depressions are natural disasters)

- I. A natural disaster is described as an event such as a flood, earthquake, hurricane, or epidemic that causes great damage or loss of life, to land, water or atmosphere, and everything living in it.
- II. Depression is an epidemic. The suicide rate is highest in high-income countries. Suicide was the second leading cause of death among young people aged 15-29 years, after road injury, in 2019.
- III. An epidemic is a natural disaster, especially when it is so normalized that it is invisible, inevitable, unstoppable. Of course you are depressed, of course I am depressed. If we focus on the US alone, 15% of the population is taking anti-depressants. This 'human problem' extends back to the land and water. Anti-depressant and anti-anxiety medications are found everywhere, in sewage, surface water, ground water, drinking water, soil, and accumulating in wildlife tissues. Scientific reports describe changing animal behaviour where even traces of anti-depressants leaked into the water system. As we know, human disasters are not separate from natural disasters.

I-so-no-mi-a:

/(isonomia)/

'I don't want it if everyone can't have it.'

Excerpt from an interview with Debbie Notkin.

CASSIE I love the idea of 'I don't want it if everyone can't have it' because it perplexes me. I love the idea of desire for what is inclusive instead of exclusive, which is something I have been asking people to meditate on. But for you, what does it do? Is it possible to practice isonomia as an individual? Can it be a practice or only an idea? I like how it crosses out guilt or self sabotage. I met with this young reporter who is writing

about the indigenous genocide in my city and he's honestly so driven by the guilt for having a family that was involved with hideous white supremacist projects of many kinds that his work reeks of his need to be forgiven. So I've been thinking about isonomia as the opposite — as an idea of being driven by a differently oriented desire than we can usually access. Anyway, I love how you reveal words that I can follow for years at a time. I love your words so much.

DEBBIE I wouldn't have thought of it in the context of guilt/shame/forgiveness, but I think that's potentially very fruitful. The things we have to get over to effect real change seem to me to be: 1) guilt and shame; 2) pain avoidance; and 3) compassion fatigue. When I think about isonomia, I think about it most in the context of compassion fatigue. If other people are me or at least are people I want to have stand exactly as tall as I stand, then what I feel for them is not compassion (or a different kind of compassion?), and seems to me to be less vulnerable to fatigue. But the same is probably true of guilt and shame — if my ancestors did it as much to me as to others, then I need to feel righteous anger and an urge to set it right, rather than guilt and shame.

As for fear of pain, I think we are just (as a group) overprivileged wusses. When I think about what the suffragettes, or the 1960s civil rights workers (let alone uprising slaves) were willing to risk, and I hear activists saying 'Of course, don't risk yourself!' I get super judgemental. Why there aren't more of us in jail, I do not know. (Why am I not in jail? Honestly, it's more lack of compatriots to be there with than anything else. Or at least I think that because I don't have compatriots, but maybe that's an excuse.)

Unlearning the neoliberal school. Bordercrossing together.

Ewa Majewska

Only your labels split me. — **Gloria Anzaldua.**

Education is a bordercrossing. The experience varies depending on your passport, the type and location of the border, but there always is you, a state or territory you leave and another one you get to, sometimes getting stuck in-between, some functionaries tirelessly engaging in interpellation, a piece of luggage you are or are not allowed to take with you, liquids you have to abandon and cultural norms, according to which you will be called Sir/Madam, or just merely 'you'. There are other people, and rules, and – as in Franz Kafka's *The Trial* — there is the Law. Gloria Anzaldua wrote that 'it is not me, who crossed the border, the border crossed me'. I think she was right. Bordercrossing together was the central element of our Spinoza Passionate Action Summer School. This process was affectionate, embodied, intense and creative, and it inspired my need to reflect on method. I will try to write about it here. It will be very scattered, as the experience is hybrid and contingent. Yet — it also feels safe.

For decades, or even centuries now, we have all been preoccupied with overcoming the binary distinction of body and mind, spirit and matter, so sharply divided in Western metaphysics, and so fundamental for our understanding of what we are and how we function. In education these sharp binary oppositions had helped to create a model, in which the teacher occupies an active, intellectually engaged position versus the supposedly passive 'matter' of the students. Thousands of schools and universities have sustained this model, keeping us conveniently stabilized in the normalizing binary of speaking and listening, moving and sitting still, guiding and following. The biopolitics of 'sitting still', 'not fidgeting', 'put your hand up if you want to speak' guarantee conformity and submission. The process of interpellation forms us as passive subjects of our teachers' knowledge and their authority permeates every aspect of our

adult lives, resulting not only in acquiescence to the capitalist world's abusive models of production and debt, but also influencing ways we decide to oppose them.

During the Spinoza Summer School some alternatives to these classical education patterns were developed, with a clear focus on Spinoza, embodiment, sharing and solidarity. Inspired by Spinoza's *Ethics*, where thinking is affirmed as embodied, proceeding by means of affect, we could not practice the typical ways of knowledge production, which — in the vast majority of schools still consist in silencing the affect, emphasizing the passivity and receptiveness of the students, and the active position of the teachers. Switching variously between speaking, moving, dreaming, yoga, performance and group processes, we were all affectionately entangled, moving between strategies and formats, sometimes also getting tired and impatient, at times — also inspired. Sometimes we were strong, as in the moments of discovering something, in the powerful moments of understanding each other and being together. We were sometimes very weak, as in experiencing the limitations or scarcity of things we find necessary, like understanding or ability to express, as well as in failing our own expectations or the (often imagined) expectations of others. There was some deep sense of connection in the process of the things we built and the things that were collapsing. We most definitely were there together, learning and unlearning, producing various situated knowledges, sharing. As a part of such an inspiring constellation of humans, nature, architecture and small animals, I felt safe. I felt my being weak can be a part of the weakness of us all, as well as my strength. We were crossing borders, attempting at successes and failures, we practiced alternative patterns of legitimizing and forming resistance, different from the heroic paradigm imposed in the productive mode of neoliberal economy.

Although I learned about pedagogy, quite a lot actually, my formative experiences with it have always been those from the classroom. I was a very impatient kid. One, that would be silenced all the time, but one teacher found a use for my hyperactivity. She would tell me to tell stories for the other kids. The teachers would leave, to have coffee and cigarettes, and I would start with 'A long, long time ago...' and give a 30 minutes story to the other 5-year olds. It was perhaps contrary to the pedagogy of the time, but in the end everybody was happy — I was not silenced, and the kids clearly enjoyed the stories, as this happened several times.

Spinoza tells us on multiple occasions, that our knowledge is in the body, determined by it, in fact — determined by our affective capacity. This sounds like the exact opposite of what we usually learn at schools, where the only affect we are

allowed to experience is crying when we fall, and even this is often denied to boys, who — as the saying has it - 'do not cry'.

Sometimes a story, a theory or a lecture begins in a boringly conventional way, and takes us all beyond what we have been. Sometimes such shifts happen in the middle of traditional schooling. A good example of such a situation happened when I was teaching philosophy at the Department of Pedagogy at the University of Warsaw almost 20 years ago. History of philosophy was one of those boring things students had to pass in order to move further. Once they all said they had not read this short piece of Aristotle's *Metaphysics* they were supposed to read. They came unprepared to discuss the fundamental matters of *form*, *essence*, *substance* and *matter*. I asked them to work in four groups and find as much as they could about each of these notions, as I went for a cigarette. When I came back, they were all discussing, fully engaged in the effort to figure out what was what. We started discussing the issue of spoken/written knowledge, the issues of failure, mistake and how they influence knowledge production, the contradictions of *pharmakon* — the stabilizing, but also annihilating powers of the text, as Derrida defined it. Aristotle's *Metaphysics* is composed of student's notes, it sometimes literally follows him stitching different definitions of fundamental concepts, changing them. It is a work in process, and it was in the middle of this chaos, that I found my students, who at first accused Aristotle of being illogical, the audacity of which took my breath away. From there we went through the text together, I, learning to look at this book anew, which I had thought utterly boring until that day, and the students suddenly persuaded me that there is some value in defining basic concepts. I believe that without such moments of uncertainty, steps in deep darkness of chaos and contradictions, philosophy would be an unnecessary effort, a boring exercise or obligation. It was precisely the walk through these tacks, this preliminary suture of thought, that made everyone, me included, curious about what will happen next, and how the concepts would finally be defined. I understood that Aristotle was above all a teacher, he had been one for over 2200 years.

Sometimes I wonder whether the rejection of old patterns is the only way to make education better. We definitely want to move away from authoritarian paternalism, and Aristotle is perhaps a good example of this tendency. But isn't he also many other things? How do we preserve necessary things from those we don't need anymore? How do we not get seduced by the fetishism in neoliberalism for novelty and innovation, deeming every institutionalized form of agency to be obsolete?

Class-wise from a mixed background, and from a formerly socialist country, I have seen many different forms of education, institutionalized and grassroots. I taught in squats and universities, art spaces and museums; elitist educational

forums and grassroots initiatives. I worked transversally, for state institutions and anti-state initiatives, organized schooling and disorganizing networks. There is — and I only realize this now — probably no format of education, that I am unfamiliar with, except perhaps the military school model, although I also taught in one corrective institution. This is probably also the reason why I found writing this text so amazingly difficult. How can I discuss pedagogy based in such a hybridic constellation of knowledges and experiences, collaborations, conflicts, debates, solidarity practices? And for some mysterious reason, at the outset I really wanted to discuss method, as I believe one of the best parts of the Spinoza Summer School was the method, or in fact — combination of many different methods and approaches. Perhaps the passionate monism offered by Spinoza, and the hybridic theoretical and artistic strategies of what we all were doing gave me a sense of safety necessary to build a narrative from pieces. Writing this piece actually feels very much like an act of translation, which for Walter Benjamin recalls the mending of a broken vessel. It will not make it a new one, traces of dismantledness will remain, yet — it will be offered an afterlife, and lovingly.

My parents met in an educational institution for young men who committed minor crimes, and 'needed help'. They were teaching there, volunteering. You might say, that pedagogy is my origin, this is where I come from. I might have a lot of it in my DNA, with both parents being teachers: father — young professor of theoretical physics, later - unemployed political activist, and later — a prominent politician, and mother — a teacher, but also a woman and artist, who pursued her goal far more than women around her. I might also have an additional gene for disobedience and resistance.

I discovered the details of their first meeting only much later, when I offered free lessons of feminism, which I cleverly disguised as 'ethics of social life', to a similar school for boys in early 2000s. At first — they would not listen. They simply shouted at pretty girls walking behind the window or talked among themselves, while I tried to inspire them (one of the worst attitudes, as my experience tells me, trying to 'inspire someone') with some references to popular culture, while trying to explain the basic elements of ethics. After a few minutes, in desperation, I decided to talk about something I really know and value — the biography of one interesting example of a very consequent, perhaps even stubborn person — Socrates. And there it all was — silence, attention, and comments, including: 'he must have been a great guy, did you know him?'. We started discussing the influence of law, cultural norms and the justice system on individuals, the *surveiller et punir* of ancient Athens, in a rather hip-hop version, but there it was — the discussion of what it means to actually have ethics, its expression, origins, consequences, what society and its norms are, and how they can create borders impossible to cross. Socrates, a teacher,

and a queer one, seduced some youth again. I was saved, and the contact was made. I was perhaps a funny stranger, but the opportunity to discuss normativity, not merely becoming its object, apparently was very seductive. We later had another lesson — about prejudice and violence. They knew all about it, and they showed me the power of transition towards empathy, from a very isolated place. They had all had experiences of domestic violence, and they were actually surprised by the fact that there are ways of unlearning it, that they might try to have a different life. I was surprised they noticed. In that moment of a different life prospect, there was joy, and regret, that they had not known earlier.

In *Feminist Theory. From Margin to Center* bell hooks presents a model of feminism as collective practice of emancipation, embracing the differences between us — our social and ethnic contexts, gender and sexuality, class and cultural capital. For her feminism is a constant education, unlearning the patriarchal patterns of racist, capitalist societies. Hooks is influenced by many others, including Paolo Freire and his *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, where the idea of freedom organizes a search for egalitarian, emancipatory education, understood as a part of the social and political constellation we are all parts of. I believe that this sense of freedom taken as an experience of crossing the borders of inequality together is one necessary in any pedagogics. In the Summer School in West den Haag we experienced the margin vs. center dynamics on multiple occasions — in our discussions of geopolitics and location, in our work with theory's margin's and our bodies centers and peripheries... The issues of technology, embodiment, gender and housing, to name just a few, were entangled with the search for what the bodies can do, the affects we generate and the performances we invent. I believe our work was a particular variation on staying *with* the trouble — be it in our own ideas or in institutions, theories and praxis, body and thoughts. The experience of sharing the trouble was one allowing some sense of community and practice of being many, together.

The individualist logic of neoliberal education reduces learning to grades, credits and diplomas, neglecting large parts of the experience's essence — hypothesis, mistakes, failures, misunderstanding etc, as well as the affects we invest while learning. Such education conveniently reduced to deeply simplified 'effects' does not allow crossing any borders, entering any crisis, it only strengthens the little chauvinisms of our own idiosyncratic backgrounds and fears. Such education is the opposite of freedom. The phrase 'neoliberal pedagogy' itself sounds like an oxymoron — neoliberalism being a system of a 'know it all' and pedagogy being the opposite — a practice of learning. From the perspective of knowledge production, neoliberalism is a system where pedagogy is impossible. No border can be crossed.

The university is an institution and a workplace, therefore various forms of labour struggle can also happen there, and it can also become a process of learning. When I was teaching at the University in Kraków, and I was told that my contract would not be renewed in the next semester, I did not expect anything to happen. I thought I would just quietly disappear from the institution, where I was not well known, where I had worked only for one year, in a city I never really lived. To my surprise, some students came to my office hour, saying that there is an agreement between most of them, backed up by some of the professors, that I should stay, and therefore they would like to know, whether I would have anything against them taking action. As my leaving the department would have changed the program — there would be nobody teaching gender studies — and as there were other changes planned for the next semester, which the students did not accept, they wanted to protest and to begin a solidarity strike in case if the dean and the rector did not accept their demands. The students arguments included those we all use in criticizing neoliberal academia — that people and programs are not fully replaceable, and that university is not a factory, where people and programs can be 'cut'. This was perhaps the first solidarity protest at that university in 30 years, and it was effective — I was re-hired, and stayed for almost 2 more years. It was the best lesson of solidarity. My colleague commented that the critical theory program we were teaching had just presented one of its possible applications.

The Spinoza Summer School was definitely a place of protest. Against corrections and speaking too fast, against the incessant demands for the artists to do something new, against instant satisfaction and constant profitability. It was a school of bordercrossing and one where I really started observing the method. And although now I think I know it better, I also believe I do not know what it is.

**Questions for & on THICK PRESENCE -
an exercise in retrospective embodiment
or notes on *The Spinoza Summer School*
from during the shiftings**
Florence Freitag

What is your relation ...
... to joy/pleasure?

What is your relation ...
... to movement?

What is your relation...
... to resistance?

Possible questions — Possible answers

What can a body do? — *Does it matter?*

What can a mind do? — *Does it matter?*

How much can we absorb and process? — *Who defines limits?*

How much info can we bring in, expand and grow with? — *Who is given space to do so?*

How do your belief systems function in your body? — *Whose belief systems are the loudest?*

How can I let my experiences grow without judging them? —
Who validates experiences?

How can one share knowledge? — *What is accepted as knowledge?*

What if the body is the instrument? — *Is your instrument tuned?*

How does gender play in this? — *Is gender based on thoughts?*

What is our scale to measure what is good or enough? — *Did you sleep enough today?*

Why do we see differences as negative? — *What is different?*

What are the benefits of freedom? — *Why do we think in terms of (mercantile) benefits?*
How do you create something new? — *Does 'new' exist?*
How do you create new space without taking away space from others? — *Are you aware of who does not get space?*
Does the subconscious exist? — *Who invented the separation?*
How are our bodies functioning? — *Do we need to 'function' for anybody?*
How are we formed as subjects? — *And by whom?*
How do you define common issues? — *How can there be a new common?*
What is public? — *And for whom?*
What is private? — *And who defines it?*
Who is included? — *Does something like full inclusion exist at all?*
Whose voices are heard? — *And whose are not?*

Can your body be an institution? — *Can an institution be a shared body?*
How to de/colonize our own body? — *Have you tried listening to its needs?*
The body as a common ground for whom? — *Do I want my body to be common ground?*
Can your body be counterpublics? — *Who defines it?*
Can your body be counterpolitics? — *Who defines it?*
If your body is not just one but several, how do you create common ground between all the identities inside of it? — *I as a collective.*

Who is HERE? — *Who had access to this Summer School at WEST?*
Who is NOT HERE? — *Look around !*
Where do our ideas come from? — *Where does an idea start?*

What are your affective capacities right now? — *Listen*
What is missing? — *Listen again*

Anything came up while listening to the questions? Feel free to share it with me via West.

Connecting threads in the age of ...

How did I get there? How to start this one year later? How to start anything while we're all in it already? Maybe everything has already started? Maybe the processes of the Spinoza Summer School had started for all of us way before we even met in person. Maybe we were already on the way to it before knowing, maybe our bodies knew before we did.

I would like to trace it back to trace forward and thread around our shared embodied experience in that month of June 2019 and how it resonates right now.

The decision to facilitate during the Summer School of West Den Hague had an almost uncanny digital foreplay, connecting dots and lines exclusively in the www, knitting knots in an algorithmic spider web (thinking now, in July 2020, that this spider web has gained a total new importance).

From digging the fields of a permaculture project in Northern Italy, I was called on Skype by Baruch Gottlieb, the sun helping me to think about the proposal and my skin being thankful for that moment of light.

This is it? EMBODYing

Upon my return I skype-discussed rest & resistance with Ewa Majewska. The piece of paper next to my computer couldn't hold the references I wanted to put down or put forward all at once. I closed it feeling circular and inspired, suddenly thinking that this was how I wished to exchange knowledge, whatever that means.

I then google-searched' the feminist economics department', aka Cassie, who would later on alter my healing relationship to money and many more world-views completely.

From these connecting threads, questions arose; questions I needed to have answers for; questions that maybe were the answers themselves and questions that had to be embodied instead of lost in the digital ether.

Where did I leave my body while writing and preparing? How can I possibly facilitate this if I'm glued to my desktop? (Questions that from the now pandemic-perspective would be quickly answered: you find a way how to.)

It's an 'unstable equilibrium' (to speak with experimental filmmaker and lifelong muse Maya Deren) between two states: reaching for something and being at the same time so far away from it. So however digital, what brought me to that beach in The Hague was not entirely disembodied:

From a dancer friend that didn't know my 'methods' but knew my *movements*, to somebody never having seen me in person, but hearing my *voice*, via my queer feminist collective family, starting an ongoing discussion on embodied knowledge with a movement *activist* in our shared queer feminist collective; there was something about this between cosmic connection and planetary body/mind trouble (which we saw already coming).

A studio-talk lying on the floor with Diana Thielen (movementactivism.com) on Embodied Thinking, Gender & Rest

F *What is your relation to the two words embodied & thinking?*

- D** *I entered the subject through questions around embodied gender and how my body is not just a physical entity, but how all my movements are in fact gendered. And it was through my friend Kristin Horrigan (Prof. for dance and gender studies in the U.S.), who gave me the article 'Throwing like a girl' by Iris Marion Young. I understood that gender is not just a theoretical term, but that our body is literally thinking in a gendered way. I understood it not intellectually, but in a physical way, in my way of moving through the city or through dancing, dancing with another body. After realising this, my body got its agency back. By reflecting on gendered bodies, I could enter the realm of embodied thinking.*
- F** *So everything about how we culturally and socially understand and talk about gender is influencing how bodies are seen and moved.*
- D** *Yes, if we agree on gender as a concept, not being born with it, but gender as developing through socialization. Through our way of interacting with the people around us, but also from birth on, how our caring persons, our environment acts and engages with us. If this is the shortcut version of gender, then Iris Marion Young states that due to this socialization our physical understanding of us in relation to the space around us is already gendered. The way I perceive the space around me is gendered. Through the analogy of throwing a ball, she analyses how we take or do not take space, how we perceive our body not as a unit that can take space, but more like separate fractals. She creates a physical understanding of how our environment and other people act on us. If an object comes towards me, I am passive, rather than actively going to the object. From the beginning on there is a different understanding of you going towards space. Afterwards I read Sarah Ahmed 'Queer Phenomenology' and I do believe that I now have an embodied understanding of both texts.*
- F** *While reading it or concerning the concepts they are referring to?*
- D** *Both. Even when I am reading it, I have a physical experience of it.*
- F** *Because of how you relate to your space and to society.*
- D** *Yes. Because of many years of regular dance training I have quite easy access to my body. The body and my mind are not so separate for me. As soon as something relates to orientation or to space or something physical, I link it to an embodied understanding.*
- F** *So, everything we learn and say and talk about is affecting us, affecting how we relate to others, is affecting the vocabulary we use. How can we open this*

up and really use 'embodied thinking' as a tool for social and environmental understanding? This is not at all present in education. And this becomes now, in times of the pandemic and of social movements (movements that of course are not new but maybe gaining new attention) even more important. We need to be accountable for the vocabulary we use and realize how words affect our bodies and bodies around us and especially marginalised bodies.

D *When I think of the term 'embodied thinking' it still makes the differentiation between the body and the mind. I cannot really put it into words, this entanglement between the body and the mind, but I believe through regular movement practice, I can appropriate myself this knowledge. In my last project for instance, we read Sarah Ahmed and Hannah Arendt together, and both are highly complex writers. I believe that I appropriated myself Hannah Arendt. I don't know if I really understand what's written, but I have a clear embodied understanding of it. 'Embodied Thinking' for me brings up the permission to entangle the body and the mind, the permission also to maybe not make sense with our intellect.*

Can I appropriate Spinozean thinking through my body? How could i put my desires and ideas for this Summer School into a shareable, contextualised form and into something that floats from embodied experience to philosophical thinking, while maintaining the balance of the 'in between' and navigating what it means to have a body (any kind of) and act/think with/through it?

Embodiment is one of the most radical political actions we can take. The more we actually know our bodies and can feel them, the less susceptible we are to marketing, fear tactics, manipulation and occupation by life-negating narratives and beliefs. — Rennee Sills

I am quoting the astrologer Rennee Sills because my life and work are influenced (so i believe) by what's happening around the planets and stars, by the other dust we're made of. Sills is also known under the name 'Embodied Astrology', which suddenly felt like such an obvious connection. When on Skype preparing with Ewa we made clear what we were looking for: a shared space to be safe in, one to resist the neoliberal system in and one that was filled with experiences of any kind. A space that now, in the midst of a pandemic has completely changed form, but is more important than ever. How would we do this now, if we would have to do it again?

My thoughts were in the sky that day (and much more on the earth these days) and while lying my city-body down to the floor, listening to Renee Sills, the following came up:

- Our minds are used to constantly creating contrasts.
- We become what we think and what we speak, every day.
- We embody what we think. Therefore (living in a world of terminology and systematization and thoughts and ideas) we need new vocabulary.

Practicing radical softness with ourselves necessarily influences the softness of our communication, our thought processes and our words.

Re-thinking this now, COVID-19 and the Black Lives Matter movement in mind, I am being even more aware of the correlation between what we say and think every and what the body feels and tells us, especially white bodies perpetuating internalised racism and supremacist reflections unaware of the harm of their words, thoughts and gestures. Where do language and thoughts come from if not also from our bodies and its processes? And how do we treat those bodies? How can evolving through our bodies equal with evolving our thoughts and verbalizations and therefore our communication with one another? And what comes first in this process? What do our belief systems create in our bodies and how we can let our experiences grow within it and nurture it/us without being disrupted by a value system that focuses on everything our bodies do not need (aka becoming capitalist work-time machines)? And most of all, how do we learn about what we need and from *whom* and *where*? What's the counterpublics (thinking of Nancy Fraser's 'counterpublics' that Ewa brought in, meaning alternative, parallel spheres to the public space) we need and how can we create them and what from?

Questions to myself:

What are my needs and fears and how can I share those in a way that is still fruitful for a group of people that came to 'learn' something from me? How do I work with expectations (my own and from others)? How can I bring Spinoza's writing to touch my endocrine system?

Upon arrival in The Hague I understood that trusting my own fears, my own vulnerabilities and knowledge meant to handle them over into the vulnerabilities and knowledge of others (& and into the waves of the North Sea) and to understand the value of shared body-thought-space. I suddenly wasn't alone anymore with my questions and the I became a we.

TRUST in (better) failure

Perhaps it is more important to be in community, vulnerable and real and whole, than to be right, or to be winning. — Adrienne Maree Brown (Joyful Militancy, p. 129)



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Holding space is something I am ongoingly learning. It is an entanglement of many layers to pay attention to, with on the one hand a certain desire to give input and knowledge (and a certain, very subjective view on what that knowledge is) and on the other hand the wish for creating space for all participants to express themselves, accepting each others boundaries, using the right words and listening to each others paths.

During this process I learned to never again underestimate the fact that this kind of work is created by a group rather than by oneself. By creating a common exchange based on trust, knowledge emerges from the actual platform during and after the experience, way more than by the 'thing' one proposes. Knowledge is something that is moving, evolving and growing like a seed.

Our body sessions during the summer academy followed Ewa Majewska's morning classes and we found a trajectory for how to go from *theory - bodies in space - protest to bodies* - environment - action - thinking - REST*

How do those influence and affect each other? Following Ewa, we wanted to shake our thoughts on Spinoza's Tractatus from the brain cells down into the fingertips, open the senses and hearts, stretching the limbs away from the desk and chairs and having a look around in space:

Did you realize that your lower jaw was tense the whole morning? *Where* are we? *Who* is here today? *How* are we moving? How is my breath going?

What can my body do right now? Will I still remember what I learned this morning, will I remember differently and if not, was it that important?

I brought companions to support us on this journey. Using theory, written knowledge and text in my sense does not necessarily mean to unfold them completely, but to invite another perspective into space, let it resonate with the dance we just had and queer up the idea of linear knowledge formation. My companions were (and still are):

Joyful Militancy. Building Thriving Resistance in Toxic Times — Clara Bergmann and nick montgomery (AK Press, 2017)

Staying with the Trouble. Making Kin in the Chthulucene — Donna Haraway (Duke University Press, 2016)

Sonic Meditations — Pauline Oliveros (Deep Listening Publications, 2015)

And for the purpose of this RE-text (and for all kinds of purposes) two books by Adrienne Maree Brown:

Emergent Strategy: Shaping Change, Changing World (AK Press 2017) & *Pleasure Activism: The Politics of Feeling Good* (AK Press 2019),

'Joyful Militancy' was with me long before I started to think about the Summer School, brought to my attention by my friend Shanti Suki Osman, an inspiring musician, artist, activist and pedagogue: 'We need to read this together.' The book unfolds on what it needs for changing perspectives within a collective and society. A work that is often hard to put words on, living and acting within white patriarchal capitalist systems, that do not allow for time to reflect, time to discuss, time to fail and start again, because one needs to be productive and 'right'. And even now, where people have been forced to slow down, quarantine and isolate, the questions prevail, as for who really had the privilege to do so? 'Joyful Militancy', in a similar way to Sarah Ahmed's idea of a movement requiring us to be moved, wants us to listen to what our bodies tell us, wants us to be joyful in the activism and learning from one another (though never dismissing the importance of non-joyful militancy), not because joy makes it easier, but because joy often is what sparks exchange.

Connecting the multiple sparkles from within 'Joyful Militancy' and our *Embodied Thinking* research, one common thread is the sharing of knowledge, the sharing of experiences that we discover as a collective hive, taking the body as a model that surpasses the consciousness. Another value within this collectivity is the dismantling of boundaries between body and mind and therefore the dismantling of belief-systems through another understanding and through

challenging normative ideas of the body and of bodies*, of joy, of embodiment, of relations, of activity and non-activity, of resistance and of passion. Finding a playful in-between of reflection inside and around us.

To help us understand the journey within our shared laboratory of passionate action, the participants in The Hague were asked to draw a 'body map' after each session, of our collective as well as individual body. The aim was to tune in with oneself and with each other, tune into our collective trouble – in terms of tapping into the maybe unpredictable or frightening unknown of a group of people that never met and maybe never will again – and pointing towards the importance of future (in Donna Haraway's words) sympoietic, relational and consequential systems, in contrast to autopoietic ones, aka the Capitalocene and the Anthropocene we live in:

1) autopoietic systems have self-defined boundaries, sympoietic systems do not; 2) autopoietic systems are self-produced, sympoietic systems are collectively-produced; and, 3) autopoietic systems are organizationally closed, sympoietic systems are organizationally ajar. — Donna Haraway



PLACE YOUR BODY WITHIN
THE VISIBLE, AUDITIVE AND
SENSUAL ENVIRONMENT
THAT SURROUNDS YOU.

PICTURE © DANA LAMONDA

On being each others (extra-linguistic) resources

Notes from January 2019:

everything is process all the time

let's repeat something every day again and again

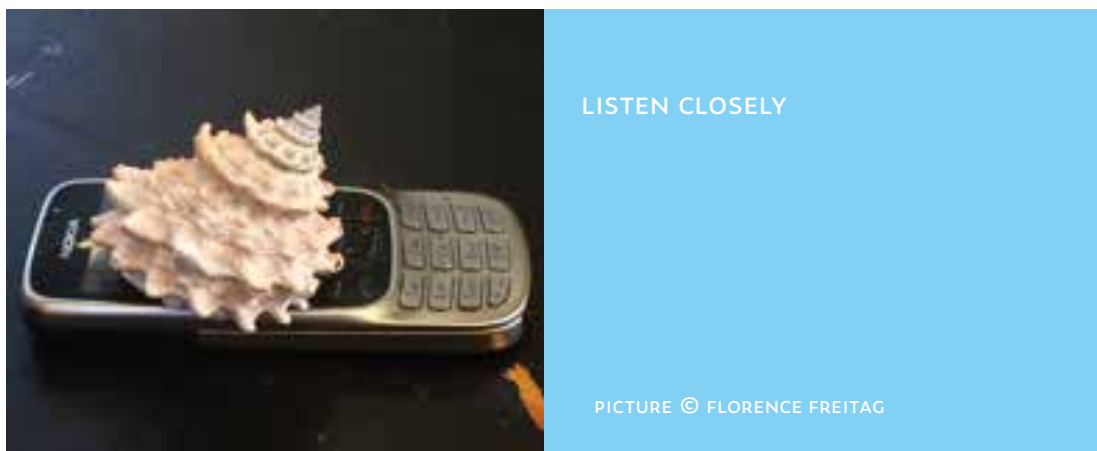
it's different every day

everything

What does it mean, to bring someone 'back into their bodies?'. That's more or less what I've been asked to do. Did we ever leave it? Did we ever understand that we have one and what defines that understanding? Glen Coulthard, Professor in First Nations and Indigenous Studies and one of the activists interviewed in 'Joyful Militancy' puts it this way: 'doing things, shapes how you

see things. And depending on what that practice is, it can double back and shape how you do things'. This especially comes into play when talking about weak-resistance strategies, non-normative bodies and public interventions of these. So, what did we do? We REpeated things, every day.

On the one hand we started each session with the same physical warm-up (inside & outside, shifting perspectives and attentions) and ended each of them with a Listening exercise inspired by the Sonic Meditations of Pauline Oliveros. The interest was in creating environmental experiences, meaning, in a Donna Haraway sense, making kin with everything that surrounds us, heightening awareness, giving other voices, sounds, bodies*, critters space and time and understanding listening as a means for social and political action.



Within the Spinoza current, friendship is being evaluated: not as a bond between individuals but as an ethical relation that remakes us, together, in an ongoing process of becoming otherwise. Similarly, feminist philosopher Donna Haraway has argued that 'making kin' across divides of species, nation, gender, and other borders is perhaps the most urgent task today. Through friendship or kinship we undo ourselves and become new, in potentially radical and dangerous ways. — Joyful Militancy, p. 92

Through repeating a structure that we agreed upon (every day consciously) our momentary, chosen collective created its own little ritual of connectivity. While composting and repeating our different strategies — moving, reflecting, exchanging, listening, sounding and resting — new layers and new actions appeared or would be developed, creating new and merging bodies, textures, tools, relationships, feelings, gestures, his-/herstories ...

We two-legged are inter-connected with each other and with other life on the planet — indeed, even to the planet itself and beyond. What we think, say, and do impacts, directly and indirectly, everything and everyone else, which also

affect us. We are further impacted by ancestors and will impact generations to come. Some of us even believe the reverse; that we can impact our ancestors and that our descendants impact us. In any case, we are clearly 'in relationship' whether we acknowledge, fully understand and respect the concept or not. — Joyful Militancy, p.110

On bridging with joy - How to

REST (\approx 10-15minutes)

- Lay down on the floor. What are the reverbs that you feel from having been moving your body here for 4 days ? What has changed since the first day, if something did.
- Let your body be carried by the ground. Sink into it, maybe think into it if you like. You are carried.
- Take a tour inside your body. Relax your tongue, your eyebrows.
- How is your breath going? Is it quick, is it slow or regular?
- Do you feel any tension?
- Do you feel any release?

How has your body been bridging this week, bridging between thoughts, between bodies*, spaces and sounds?

Bridging is the work opening the gate to the stranger, within and without. To step across the threshold is to be stripped of the illusion of safety because it moves us into unfamiliar territory and does not grant safe passage. To bridge is to attempt community, and for that we must risk being open to personal, political, and spiritual intimacy, to risk being wounded. — Gloria Anzaldúa in Joyful Militancy, p. 150

Where do you place yourself in this environment that we've been exploring? What would your body, or your bodies* (as we're made of a collective of many) look like as a counterpublic?

And you, dear pandemic reader of this publication, how is your body doing? How does this resonate in you? Can you go and take a nap now?

Two Sonic Meditations taken from the book by Pauline Oliveros that might reflect the Spinoza Summer School experience and that you can try on your own:

Teach Yourself to Fly — I

Any number of persons sit in a circle facing the center. Illuminate the space with dim blue light. Begin by simply observing your own breathing. Always be an observer. Gradually allow your breathing to become audible. Then gradually introduce your voice. Allow your vocal cords to vibrate in any mode which

occurs naturally. Allow the intensity to increase very slowly. Continue as long as possible naturally, and until all others are quiet, always observing your own breath cycle.

Environmental Dialogue — VIII

Each person finds a place to be, either near to or distant from the others, either indoors- or out-of-doors. Begin the meditation by observing your own breathing. As you become aware of sounds from the environment, gradually begin to reinforce the pitch of the sound source. Reinforce either vocally, mentally or with an instrument. If you lose touch with the source, wait quietly for another. Reinforce means to strengthen or sustain. If the pitch of the sound source is out of your range, then reinforce it mentally.

West

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