

Reflective Essay

Module 3 DAN 4760, December 2023

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30 years ago, when I was studying towards my BA in performance at the European Dance Development Center in Arnhem/ Netherlands, Steve Paxton gave written assessments to all students after a six week intensive workshop. He wrote to me: 'You have a strong physicality, and you have a strong mind. But are they married?'. And although I don't like marriage as an institution, I think his analysis was quite right.

My whole adult learning career was a pendulum between body and mind or attempts to connect them.

So looking back and reflecting on my study for MAPP in Somatic Studies I can say that it was another chapter in my lifelong approach to investigate body and mind and their connection and mutual inspiration and dependency. It is therefore also quite understandable, that my research project in this study turned out to be two researches, firstly a theoretical inquiry and secondly a somatic research. No wonder also that the experienced highlight of my study was the moment when these two inquiries merged and connected.

One positive impact this study had on me personally was that it did raise my self-esteem, which is one basic mental need, a fact that I also learned during this study. It might seem very unconventional what I do in the place where I am right now, but I found a lot of confirmation for the high value of my work.

Another personal effect of this study was that it enabled me to work not only from intuition and experience but also now from a conscious knowing, which helps to calm the questioning mind.

A difficult impact that this study had was the amount of the workload, because it became quite difficult to keep a good balance between health and sickness, also being 55 years of age allows me much less access to daily energy than being 25 years old.

One thing that I did realise in this study again was that I am a very passionate learner who likes to find out things even when I do not have an actual use for it at the moment. But in the academic world there is a niche for every little 'unnecessary' knowledge. To be able to navigate and be part of the academic world it is first of all important to have good reading and writing skills, so this was one aim that I had when I started this study, and both, reading and writing in the foreign language English, feels much easier for me now.

I think I really got the first time in my life the experience of how it is to really work and rework a text, and I saw the advantages and disadvantages of text. This made me realise how my usual knowledge production is and how it differs from academic knowledge production. I usually search data very chaotically, throw it away and let it compost unconsciously as an analysis. It was very interesting now to try to do a more structured way of research, and I still don't know which style I like better. Also, until now I used for the distribution of knowledge talking, teaching and podcasts and not writing, and it seems to be my task for the future to find out how I could integrate my old with my new skills.

Reflecting on the process of this study it showed me that I am also a very passionate creator. Not only do I want to find out new things, I also want to connect and create new things on my own. And I really do appreciate that this study is structured in a way that does allow and even stimulate you to design and do your own thing in your own style. In the end it was then a little unpleasant to find the hard borders of the rules of the academic world again, but it gave me a sense of where I stand.

As a byproduct of the research that I conducted in this study I developed my own methodology by adapting the somatic dialogue as a research tool. I found the structure of the somatic research circle and my method of theoretical data collection for my method PME. Most importantly I found directly through my research somatic stretch and somatic isometric strengthening both on an exercise level and a deep somatic cellular level.

Looking at all these created creatures I am asking myself: 'What shall I do now with all these created creatures'? Shall I forget and compost them, shall I use and exploit them, or shall I listen to them because they themselves know best what they want?

We will see.

First of all I need to recover from the impact of the workload of this study. Not only am I physically and mentally very exhausted, the amount of time and energy that I had to put into my study was missing at my professional practice, which meant less clients, less students and less money.

But there are already ideas and plans for the time when I have filled up my resources again:

Through doing the performative artifact, I am reconnecting to my artistic career, which I threw very deep into the compost. I bought the book 'Performance as Research' and I am pregnant with the Idea to write a PhD about "choreographing the mind".

I am also thinking of doing some further education in Susan Aposhyan's method 'Body-Mind Psychotherapy', as I could sense a strong resonance, when I found her and her work through my research.

Last words....

Two more feelings that I see as a result of this 3 semester intense study, I want to share at the end of this reflection. Firstly I feel a little disconnected to the world, because the (self-)reflection mode in my mind always puts me one step back and above the normal scene, which is not a desired feeling for me.

And secondly I can experience a feeling of uplifting proudness, because finding the patterns for mental health is like finding the key for life.

Let's see what life has in store for me....