

Suspension

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Abstract: *The article is a report from the final stages of the artistic research project Movement Material and articulates an overview of the project through the lens of a term that came to be a key term in the project: suspension. The article describes the problems from which the research questions emerged, the theoretical underpinnings of those questions, the practical research proceedings, and some of the documentation that the practical research produced.*

Keywords: *choreography, dance, suspension, intra-action, materialism, artistic research.*

Starting note

Movement Material is the title of an on-going research project in dance and choreography that I conduct at the Danish National School of Performing Arts, in Copenhagen.¹ The project continues until autumn 2018, and this article unpacks what has come to be a key element of the research: **suspension**. The term was initially present in the work understood as the resilient feature of matter. However, during the research, the term gained importance and expanded its meaning to describe an immaterial quality of (running the risk of sounding presumptuous) a state of mind and/or a form of thinking seen as an attunement of two poles of a dichotomy. The article describes the terminological reformulation of the term suspension as an example of the entanglement of theory and practice, the thinking in doing (the dance), and the doing in thinking. It does so by describing how the correlation of word and experience has played out in the research project.

I want to emphasize that *Movement Material* is an artistic research project and that its purpose is to further the art form of dance and choreography. This means two things: (1) The purpose of the dancing is as a laboratory for the research questions and not as the means of producing a dance performance. Therefore, the research is not done in relation to an audience. (2) The theories that I engage with are used as tools for the artistic investigation. This somehow un-academic (although it takes place in academia) method differs from more scientific methods in the sense that I'm not claiming to properly understand philosophical concepts and represent them artistically. The contextualization of the concepts I use may therefore seem brief, because I focus instead on how the concepts have furthered my thinking through – and articulation of – the dance practice.

¹ The research project is funded by the Danish Ministry of Culture

The field of research – Materialism in Dance and Choreography

Just as artistic practices can provide working material for philosophical practices, philosophy can provide articulation for artistic work. In this case, the theoretical influence appeared through the increasing importance of New Materialism in the field of dance and choreography. This development is seen inside what has been called the Expanded Field of Choreography, which began approximately 10 years ago and is closely related to Object-Oriented Ontology, Speculative Realism, and Post-humanism. The term expanded choreography echoes Rosalind Krauss' 1979 essay "Sculpture in the Expanded Field," and testifies to a desire to detach choreography from its traditional connection to dance.² For the 2012 conference "Expanded Choreography. Situations, Movements, Objects ...," the term was referred to as follows:³

In the last few years the term "choreography" has been used in an ever-expanding sense, becoming synonymous with specific structures and strategies disconnected from subjectivist bodily expression, style and representation. Accordingly, the meaning of choreography has transformed from referring to a set of protocols or tools used in order to produce something predetermined, i.e. a dance, to an open cluster of tools that can be used in a generic capacity for both analysis and production.

Another, more recent, appearance of the term is from the title of the PhD publication by Danish choreographer Mette Ingvarstsen (2016): *EXPANDED CHOREOGRAPHY: Shifting the Agency of Movement in The Artificial Nature Project and 69 Positions*.⁴ Ingvarstsen does not explicate the origin of the term "expanded choreography," but describes her interest in distancing her work from the dancing human subject as "a reconsideration of how movements could be formed beyond the human body in its intersection with materials, machines, imaginations, affects and sensations."⁵ Ingvarstsen sees this as "a way of proposing a non-anthropocentric notion of dance and the body, by including the expressions of non-human elements."⁶ Expanded choreography refers to the use of choreography outside its more traditional relation to dance. This article, and the research project it refers to, shares the desire to broaden the horizon of what choreography can mean, but differs from the abovementioned desire to distance itself from dancing. My interests instead concern how such an expansion can take place from within choreography's relation to dance. Such an expansion "from within" is a questioning of choreography that does not look for an application outside dance, or outside the body, but instead questions the supposedly evident relationship between dance and choreography. Movement Material also proposes a different take on what could be understood as a non-human element. A materialist approach to the body can be seen as less anthropocentric, as it considers how the material body choreographs the human subject just as much as vice versa.

2 Swedish choreographer Mårten Spångberg makes a claim of the term in an online interview: "After International Festival, I introduced a term we stole from Rosalind Krauss: choreography as expanded practice. This was all a matter of saying that choreography could be other than a dance. It's a mode of production." <https://contemporaryperformance.com/2016/07/04/interview-marten-spangberg/> (accessed 07.11.2017)

3 An event organized by the University College of Dance and Circus in Stockholm, the Museu d'Art Contemporani de Barcelona (MACBA), the Fundació Antoni Tàpies, and the Mercat de les Flors, with the support of the Swedish Research Council and the Swedish Arts Grants Committee, on the occasion of the exhibition *Retrospective* by Xavier Le Roy at the Fundació Antoni Tàpies. Devised by Mårten Spångberg. <http://www.macba.cat/en/expanded-choreography-situations> (accessed 07.11.2017)

4 Mette Ingvarstsen, *EXPANDED CHOREOGRAPHY, Shifting the agency of movement in The Artificial Nature Project and 69 positions*. Diss., 2016. Available at: <http://urn.kb.se/resolve?urn=urn:nbn:se:uniarts:diva-177>

5 Ingvarstsen, 2016, p. 9

6 Ibid.

Symbolic and material

Through years of choreographic practice in the form of art work, research, and teaching, I ended up, sometime around 2013, grappling with the materiality of movement. Although dance clearly identifies itself with the body, dance often gets stuck in representations of bodily ideals (a classic critique of dance) and psychological and/or conceptual narratives. It should be said though that the times they are a-changin', and the development in the European scene of the recent decade with its exploration of somatic techniques and interest in post-humanism has presented other bodily representations. Such representations are not immune to bodily idealization, but may at least serve as alternatives that broaden the spectrum of possible representations. My incentive to engage in the materialist approach is to contribute to the manifoldness of possible bodily representation. Emphasizing the material agency in the body is an effort to counter a symbolic dominance that I experience within the history of Western staged dance.

My first attempts to articulate my critique in words moved through the dichotomy of symbolic and material. I borrowed the two terms from French philosopher Catherine Malabou, who in turn gives two references for them: the French anthropologist Claude Levi-Strauss and the Polish historian Ernst H. Kantorowicz.⁷ Levi-Strauss introduced the separation of symbolic and material by looking at the importance of gifts between tribes and defined the symbolic as that which is not material. Kantorowicz has written on the subject in his book *The King's Two Bodies*.⁸ There are two common sayings that illustrate well the examples of both the gift and the king: "It is the thought that counts" and "The King is dead – long live the King." In the first case, the object is imbued with the non-material value of intention. Yet, intention is not enough; it demands to be materialized. In the second case, the symbolic royal body shifts from one material body to another, as if it were a demon or spirit of some sort. Both examples demonstrate an uncanny feature of matter, as they point to an immaterial presence within matter. These two examples are related to social organization, but we can also find examples in physics, such as gravity and magnetism. Both the gravitational pull and the magnetic force reside in the matter, but extend beyond its surface. In reference to the human body, we find this complex relationship between the material and immaterial in the body/mind problem or the body–mind split. The use of the term *mind* in contemporary Western discourse mostly relates more to conscious thought than to soul or spirit, which could be seen as other immaterial properties of the human matter. The body–mind split has been under attack for quite some time, but the misconception prevails, as it somehow lends itself well to human intuition. It makes sense of the world in a seductive way. Similar to the experience of self, the body–mind split can be quite easily deconstructed in abstraction, but is much more difficult to change in actual and immediate experience. I might be able to understand the argument that there is no self, but still perceive that understanding from the standpoint of my (non-existent) self. In the same way, I can acknowledge the futility of the body–mind split argument, yet still experience the existence of a gap between me and my body. The sheer fact that we have such a linguistic separation between "me" and "my body" reveals the existence of such a gap. The experience of this gap easily leads to an understanding of the body as a tool of the mind. Dancing from that standpoint reflects the symbolic dominance in dance that I want to counter by emphasizing the material body.

I have developed a technique to work on this that I have come to call Body-Self Attunement.

7 Malabou refers to them in a course entitled Plasticity of Life vs. Biopower, at the European Graduate School in Saas-Fee, Switzerland. The course was published on-line at www.egs.edu

8 Kantorowicz, Ernst Hartwig, *The King's two bodies: a study in mediaeval political theology*, 7. pr., Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1997[1957]

It is a *qi-gong* movement that I picked up approximately 15 years ago and then used extensively in my teaching. The movement is simple and so is the principle of it. Quite instinctively, when saying “I” or “me,” the person uttering the word points towards the chest: a specific place on the body where the experience of self seems situated. Body-Self Attunement works on constructing bodily kinesthetic experience around centers other than this self-center pointed to on the chest. Rather than explaining it only through text, I would like to invite you to look at that movement and hear my articulation of it through this link (and feel free to try it out with me).

Body-Self Attunement
<https://vimeo.com/242752813>

Attunement and intra-action

As shown, Body-Self Attunement is a movement practice that emphasizes material agency in the human body. The goal is for the practitioner to develop a sensitivity to the material body through experience, but also to notice the potential differences in ways that a movement can be experienced. The use of the body–self dichotomy can be a bit deceiving, as it may seem as an either/or logic, either symbolic or material. This is why attunement is an important term. Attunement suggests a tension between the two poles of a dichotomy. When tuning a string instrument, you negotiate the tension between the two points of attachment of the string. The actual playing does not happen in the extremities, in the points of attachment, but between them. However, no sound can occur without the tension between those points. This suggests a relation to dichotomies that is not based on either/or, but as creating a space for play by setting up a tension between two points. Body-Self Attunement can thus be seen as a proposed configuration between those two points – a different tune. We can extend this metaphor to a form of thinking. Nowadays, the term binary, when related to as a form of thinking, has a pejorative connotation. Supposedly, binary thinking is limited, lacking nuance, and provides little help in approaching complex problems. However, the binary remains a element crucial to thought (not least in computer programming and coding through which we conduct our everyday digital lives). I would go so far as to say that the binary is inescapable. Paradoxically, even the term non-binary is based on the binary assumption that you are either binary or non-binary. To continue the articulation of what attunement can mean in terms of thinking, I turn to *intra-action*, a term that Karen Barad coined to describe a relational mode of thinking that “signifies the mutual constitution of entangled agencies.”⁹ In contrast to the neighboring term “interaction,” which presupposes the existence of determined and separate agencies that, once constituted, interact with each other, Barad proposes intra-action that “recognizes that distinct agencies do not precede, but rather emerge through their intra-action.”¹⁰ As such, intra-action does not deny the existence of binaries, but looks beyond them, before they were formed. Approaching binaries through intra-action is not an effort to undo or collapse the binary, but a way to engage with the space between two poles. It is with this in mind that I approach the binaries that appear throughout this text (all of them, in one way or another, echoing the body/mind binary): material/symbolic, doing/thinking, practice/theory, dance/choreography, and sensorial/cognitive. What intra-action can add to what I call attunement is the mutual constitution of entangled agencies. In that sense,

⁹ Karen Barad. *Meeting the Universe Halfway. Quantum Physics and the Entanglement of Matter and Meaning*. (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2007) p.33

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 33

the playing and the tuning are mutually constituted. The dichotomy does not exist before the negotiation between opposites. Its constitution is entangled in negotiation.

Movement and matter

In the introduction, I mentioned how the term suspension was first understood as the resilient feature of matter. There is a linguistic genealogy of translations behind that understanding, and I want to give an account of this genealogy to report on how the term suspension appeared in the research in the first place.

In the Swedish edition of the French philosopher Gilles Deleuze's book *The Fold- Leibniz and the baroque* I found an intriguing statement: "... *materiens mekanism är fjädringen*."¹¹ My own translation would be "... the mechanism of matter is springiness." To find a more precise English phrase, however, I went to Tom Conley's 1993 translation and found a version very different than my own: "... motivating spirit as a mechanism."¹² In my opinion, there is no exact English translation of the Swedish word *fjädring*, but one of the uses of the term in English is suspension, as in the suspension of a car, which is how the term suspension ended up in this research project. The suspension system of a car allows it to run smoothly on uneven surfaces; you can observe it in action by pushing down a car's hood and then watching it bounce back when you release the pressure. Let me trace back the process of translations and show how it revealed new perspectives to me. In his original French version, Deleuze uses the term *ressort*, which commonly translates to *spring* or *coil* in English.¹³ *Ressort* is consistently translated to *fjädring* in the Swedish edition, whereas in Conley's translation, in addition to the previously mentioned, it reads "a spirit in matter" (7:2006), and "the motive force" (14:2006). Curious about his choice of translation, I emailed Professor Conley, and he very kindly responded. In our brief email exchange, he explained that the rationale for this translation was to avoid reference to the metal coil to maintain a sense of the abstraction that prevails. He also mentioned other possible translations, such as resilience, elasticity, or springiness. Although at first, I had trouble with Conley's translation, because I could not understand why he introduced such abstraction and immaterial notion of matter, I'm now very sympathetic with his concern regarding the abstraction that might get lost by referring to an actual piece of matter. In Swedish, coil/spring reads *fjäder* meaning that *fjädring* is not the actual spring, but the mechanism that the spring has, its springiness or, as in the example of the car, suspension. The linguistic differentiation between spring and springiness (in Swedish: *fjäder* and *fjädring*) reveals a separation between the thing and its mechanism, similar to what I described above in relation to a magnet and its magnetism and to the separation between me and my body. By using the term *spirit*, Conley points to an immaterial feature of matter. Spirit is not understood here as something beyond matter, but as an animate force and mechanism within matter itself. There is not just matter that can be moved, but there is movement in matter. The Latin word for spirit is *anima*, which also reveals the entangled understanding we have between movement (animated), being alive (animate), and spirit (*anima*).

Relating to Conley's less material translation of the French *ressort*, I will turn to Jane Bennet, who addresses the tension between the mechanistic and the spiritual in the chapter "Neither Vitalism nor Mechanism" in her book *Vibrant Matter: a political ecology of things*. Bennet tells

11 Gilles Deleuze, *Vecket: Leibniz & barocken* (Glänta, Göteborg, 2004) Translation and foreword by Sven-Olov Wallenstein. p.38

12 Gilles Deleuze, *The Fold: Leibniz and the baroque*, (Univ. of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 2006 [1993])

13 Gilles Deleuze, *Le Pli: Leibniz et le Baroque* (Editions de Minuit, Paris, 1988)

the reader that she is “looking for a materialism in which matter is figured as a vitality at work both inside and outside of selves, and is a force to be reckoned with without being purposive in any strong sense.”¹⁴ She continues by noting how “the association of matter with passivity still haunts us today, I think, weakening our discernment of the force of things.”¹⁵ In the chapter, Bennet draws on three different concepts: Hans Driesch’s *entelechy*, Henri Bergson’s *élan vital*, and Immanuel Kant’s *Bildungstrieb*. The three thinkers are summoned to question the idea of an immaterial force acting on matter and, instead, propose the presence of an immaterial force within matter. It is important to emphasize that this non-material and non-spatial force still resides only within matter (just as the immaterial self is still pointed to on the body). It is not a spirit added to matter, just like gravitation is not added to mass, but is intrinsic to it. Driesch proposes that entelechy resides in the gaps within matter or what he describes as the “only partly spatial portion” of nature.¹⁶ We can understand, at least metaphorically, how the space within matter allows for the mechanism of springiness, or resilience. In order to have some springiness, there needs to be emptiness. It is not the aim of this article to unfold in depth the three concepts that Bennet uses, but I want to report on how Bennet’s articulation of Bergson and Driesch furthered my thinking about suspension.

Addressing Bergson’s *élan vital*, Bennet describes how the concept proposes matter as a “tendency toward spatialization.”¹⁷ It should be noted that she does not say that matter *has* this tendency, but that it *is* this tendency. Just as mass is gravity, the spring is springiness. Bennet gives one more example of the spatial relationship to matter’s immaterial force as she quotes Driesch, explaining morphogenesis as where “manifoldness in space is produced where no manifoldness was.”¹⁸ A similar articulation can be found in *The Fold*, where Deleuze (referring to Heinrich Wölfflin) notes how “matter tends to spill over in space,” or as my own translation from the Swedish version would have it: “matter’s tendency to inundate space.”¹⁹

To conclude, three characteristic properties of matter have been articulated: (1) its resilient capacity (*fjädring/springiness*), (2) its tendency to extend into space, and (3) the presence of an immaterial feature in matter. We can quite easily acknowledge the presence of these features in the human body: the resilience of the bodily tissues, the morphologic extension into space (from embryogenesis and on), and the experience of an immaterial existence in the material body. I will now continue to demonstrate how I have been working with these aspects and their implications for bodily movement inside the practical research.

14 Jane Bennett, *Vibrant matter: a political ecology of things*, (Duke University Press, Durham, NC, 2010) p. 7

15 Ibid., p. 65

16 Ibid., p. 65

17 Ibid., p. 77

18 Ibid., p. 70

19 Deleuze, 2006, p. 4

Dance and Choreography – Sensorial and Cognitive

Traditionally, the relationship between dance and choreography has been understood as being embodied by the choreographer, who is the one with the original idea and the mental capacity to structure it into a coherent expression, and the dancer, who remains merely the medium: the doer who does not need to know why s/he is doing something, provided that s/he can do it. I'm aware that I'm simplifying when saying this. There are other practices, both historical and contemporary, but I see enough examples of the opposite – on stage, in the studio, and in media – that I feel confident making this generalization. A similar hierarchy exists between knowing and feeling, which is what I express as cognitive and sensorial. Cognition is a vast concept, and my use of it requires some delineation. Here, cognitive capacities should be understood as the process of knowing, related to the mind's faculty to plan and make conscious decisions. In terms of choreographic work, I understand this capacity in two ways: first, the conscious choice of a certain theme of the dance that could be practically anything, such as spatial coordinates, aesthetic ideals, belief systems, and so on. This is about knowing what the dance is about. Second, I relate it to compositional choices made in relation to an overall structure. This is about knowing what is going to happen and constructing a sense-making structure. What I refer to as the sensorial capacity points to a less planned activity that feels its way through the direct kinesthetic experience, as opposed to planning toward a specific goal, meaning, or result. It does not worry about meaning and does not plan ahead. Such an approach to dance and choreography is not new, and it has taken various artistic expressions throughout the history (such as Contact Improvisation and Authentic Movement, to mention just two). I will continue by articulating more specifically the outcomes it has produced in this research project.

The practical research phase was done by *Svärmen* (The Swarm) a research group that I formed during the PhD research "From Model to Module: A Move Towards Generative Choreography."²⁰ The purpose of involving this collective was to set up a structure for critique and develop the research questions. Because we have collaborated since 2013 and the research questions in *Movement Material* resonate with some of the concerns of the PhD research, these people have the most profound practical embodied experience of the questions at stake. The name, *Svärmen*, came out of discussions around what collective working and thinking can mean. To form a swarm meant to create a group mind that could produce forms of knowledge different from the individual. In the same way, I wanted to make use of this group apparatus to be able to harvest more thoughts, reflections, ideas, and insights than I thought I could do on my own. To accomplish this, I set up a protocol, or score, for a two-hour practice session, which could be done either together with the others or alone in the studio. The greater part of the session was based on documenting and reflecting on one's practice. These reflections were posted on an online platform so that we could keep track of each other's work, even when working individually. For the purpose of this paper, I will focus on the movement part: a 30-minute session that was scored as follows:

Practice dance and choreography through materialization of movement with the following ideas:

- *Follow the movement.*

20 Rasmus, Ölme. *From model to module: a move towards generative choreography*. (Diss.) (Stockholm: Kungliga Tekniska högskolan, 2014) Available on www.diva-portal.org/smash/get/diva2:929122/FULLTEXT02.pdf

Current participants of Svärmen are Linda Adami, Dan Johansson, Tilman O'Donnell, Ellen Söderhult and Rasmus Ölme

- *Springiness as the basic mechanism.*
- *Matter's tendency toward spatialization / to spill over in space.*
- *Track your mind in the attunement of sensory and cognitive capacities.*

I have already introduced the origins of most of the terminology in the score: springiness (*fjädring*) as a material feature, matter's extension beyond its surfaces (spatialization/spilling over), and attunement between sensory and cognitive. However, the first instruction – Follow the movement – is new and needs more explanation.

Follow the movement

While working with *Svärmen* during the PhD research, we developed a practice we called *Inside Touch*. It is based on the idea of kinesthetic experience as tactile. Sensing movement in the body is likened to the tactile sensation of surfaces sliding on each other, for example, a hand sliding along a fabric. Instead of defining movements to ourselves through spatial coordinates, such as “lift your left hand diagonally to the right,” we wanted to define them through experience and actual physical sensation. For example, the kinesthetic experience of the above-described movement is felt more in the shoulder than in the hand and the direction of that sensation is neither necessarily “diagonally” nor on “the right”. Surfaces within the body are sliding on each other, and you can feel the movement passing through your body. Following that sensation is following the movement. It is as if you, eyes closed, feel your way through a room, letting your body's surfaces slide along the surfaces of that space, except in this case that space is your body and the surfaces are inside instead of outside your body.

To speak of following may sound like there is something already present that I just need to get in touch with and then follow, but following is more active than that. In André Lepecki's words: “dancing demonstrates before our eyes that there is much more to the work of the follower than to submissively shut up and walk behind in passive, or servile, or obedient participation.”²¹ Lepecki takes this as an example of what he calls “Followingleading,” which he describes as “... leading by following, and of following by taking initiative”²² He, in turn, refers to Canadian theorist Erin Manning, who has written on the subject of leading and following movement. Manning write:

*We walk. I am leading. But that does not mean I am deciding. Leading is more like initiating an opening, entering the gap, then following her response. How I follow, with what intensity we create the space, will influence how our bodies move together. I am not moving her, nor is she simply responding to me: we are beginning to move relationally, creating an interval that we move together. The more we connect to this becoming- movement, the more palpable the interval becomes. We begin to feel the relation.*²³

Manning describes how one has to follow while leading when dancing with a partner. In the example of *Follow the Movement*, it is movement itself that is the partner, but still arrives at

21 André Lepecki, “From Partaking to Initiating: Leadingfollowing as Dance's (a-personal) Political Singularity”, International Symposium “Dance, Politics & Co-Immunity” in *Dance, politics & co-immunity*. (1st ed.) (Zürich: Diaphanes. Edited by Gerald Siegmund und Stefan Hölscher. 2013) p. 33

22 Ibid., p. 34

23 Erin Manning, *Relationscapes: movement, art, philosophy*. (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press. 2009) p. 30

the same conclusion of following, as not being a passive action. There is still one more reason to underline the leading aspect in following. If following were a purely passive act, the follower would be devoid of responsibility and liability in relation to the produced movement. Such understanding of the follower/dancer as an immaculate, frictionless medium will lead to an essentialist understanding of movement as true or natural. This needs emphasis. Different bodies will follow in different ways, and each body's way of following is in itself an expression of the conditioning that this specific body has been formed within. There is not one natural body, so there is not one natural way of following and not one natural movement to follow. Again, we need to be reminded of intra-action. There is not first movement and then the following, but an entangled relation between the follower and the followed, as Lepecki's term "Followingleading" suggests. It is exactly in this entangled relation between supposed binaries that *Following the Movement* takes place: in the attunement of moving and being moved. While moving through the physical research practice called Follow the Movement, I'm playing in the space between the sensorial and the cognitive, between dancing and choreographing.

Just as Body-Self Attunement emphasized the material in the material/symbolic binary, *Follow the Movement* privileges the sensorial before the cognitive as an effort to find a different attunement of the two. Therefore, while practicing *Follow the Movement*, I do my best to avoid planning and composing. I try to not have any good ideas about what I should be doing and, if I get any, I do my best to ignore them. Thinking something about what I'm doing tends to make me lose contact with the immediate sensation of movement. I cannot stop myself from thinking, but I can work on the attunement of the sensorial and cognitive faculties available to me, and propose a different setting for those parameters. While practicing *Following the Movement*, I have experienced that I do not need to choreograph for choreography to appear. Choreography will emerge anyway. In that sense, one could say that it is possible to take the dance out of choreography (as the Expanded Field of Choreography has worked on), but one cannot take the choreography out of dance. Paradoxically then, the skill of allowing choreography to appear lays in the suspension of voluntary conscious choreographing as a planning cognitive faculty. This is where suspension is re-formulated from its initial inspiration as material property to refer instead to a state of mind.

Immaterial Suspension

As the immaterial properties of matter were not described as separate from matter in my previous examples (*élan vital*, *entelechy*, gravitation, magnetism), so the immaterial suspension should not be understood as separate from matter's suspension in the form of resilience. There are three features that I associate with suspension in its immaterial form: something hanging (sus-pended), a temporary break in an activity (suspended from school), and the excitement felt in front of an unpredictable future (suspense). A body in suspension defies gravity, free-floating, ready and waiting for an as yet undefined event. The term "undefined" is important here and should be understood as a suspension of definition that relates to the faculty of mind that I have described as cognitive. I cannot stop myself from knowing (and why would I want to!?), but I can work on suspending knowing. This leads to a negative definition of suspension. Instead of being an action in itself, the suspension is the suspension of an action. But suspending is not the same as stopping. Being suspended from school is not the same thing as being expelled. It presupposes that there will be a re-integration, a return. In the same sense, when I suspend a movement, I do not stop moving. When a movement is suspended, the movement is still there, but not active. The force that generated the movement is still active, but it is balanced through

suspension, hovering in thin air. When an activity is suspended, it is still active, but not acting. Just above, I wrote “the movement is still there.” The double meaning of “still” suggests that there is no movement – it is still – but also that movement remains present – still there. If movement is always present, always still there, one could consider movement as the default mode of all things. There is no inert matter; no stillness to which movement needs to be added. Instead, it is a question of releasing the suspension and allowing movement to move on. This definition proposes a quite radical argument against a more common understanding of movement as ephemeral. Movement is never gone, it is only suspended. Movement then becomes ineradicable. Unstoppable like time. Omnipresent like space. Movement is then no longer done, but allowed to happen; to move on. There are similar articulations of suspension and movement as a default mode in the texts already mentioned. Bennett explains how Driesch describes the immaterial force of *entelechy* in negative terms as it “relaxes its suspensory power.”²⁴ The movement appears because suspension is relaxed. As for Deleuze, he describes how movement as default mode can be detected as “cause for movement already present within the body, only awaiting the suppression of an obstacle from outside.”²⁵

Suspension. A word that has revealed a world to me. But also in reverse, there was a world, or maybe an ecology of practices, which led me to that term. The entire translation dilemma that led me to the expanded understanding of the term suspension was based on a physical understanding of a word: the physical sensation of something that the word could not exactly encompass when translated between different languages and/or different translators. A physical sensation of meaning and a physical sensation of mismatch between the signifier and the signified. Dance is often described as a wordless art form that expresses what words cannot. Often, this is then referred to as emotions and considered in opposition to thinking, again echoing the body/mind problem. It is to be hoped that this article can contribute to a more complex understanding of the relation between sensation (instead of emotion) and word. The importance of grappling with language and terminology is obvious, yet the insufficiency of language remains. Just as I previously described how the tension created between two opposites formed a space for reflection and play, this experienced discrepancy between a sensation and its semantic definition can be understood as a productive, creative, and playful space. A space to hover in, rather than to minimize; a gap to be maintained rather than closed. But when experiencing the discrepancy between a sensation and its expression in language (we all know the feeling of looking for the right word for something we feel), it is as if the signifier becomes matter. One can think of a word as a symbol for what it represents. Without the signified, the signifier can seem empty, but the experienced mismatch reveals a more intricate relation between the two. Not only do our words matter, but they seem to have material qualities balancing on the onomatopoeic. I have had to move through different languages known to me (which remain in the occidental branch of the Indo-European language family) to try to name something that none of the words by themselves express. An in-between-words that gets circled in by those words, indicating a domain or field rather than an exact semantic definition, a bit like a tag-cloud that encircles the phenomenon of a property of matter. A tag cloud that would look something like this:

24 Bennet, 2010, p. 72

25 Deleuze, 2006, p. 14



Ending note

I want to end this article by describing the mentioned creative and playful space between word and sensation by presenting some documentations by *Svärmen*. As much of the documentation is poetic, scattered in keywords or notes not meant to be published, I have edited them (and sometimes translated from Swedish) to make more sense in relation to this article. The *italics* are the actual quotes, followed by my comments, which try to contextualize the quote in relation to this text. As I have already presented the complexity of translation, here I will leave the Swedish term *fjädring* untranslated and consider it as a signifier that represents the tag cloud above.

Notes on Fjädring: I first found it elusive, but then I began to acknowledge it not so much as an activity but as a state – psychophysical, spatial, organizational, relational, etc. I felt I needed an English word and I chose buoyancy. A mind can be buoyant and likewise a room or an organism. Buoyancy here, then, is a thinking defined by allowance, tempered by curiosity about the circumstances as they are. Buoyancy as a state of mind, not just as a physical feature. Then the two instructions of “Following the movement” and “matter’s tendency toward spatialization” fall into each other.

This quote reveals the difficulty of translating *fjädring* to English. I relate the term *buoyancy* to suspension through the floating, as I described the suspended body as free-floating.

The mechanics of the breath as metaphor for fjädring. The air you breathe comes into the body, gets processed, and exhaled. Notice the air outside and inside the body; their directions and their movements. The sphere of one’s own breath includes both outside and inside. It includes the space in the body, the space around the body, and a border where the exhalation turns back to the body again and gets inhaled. I don’t refer to the exact same air, but to that sphere as a form of fjädring.

Here the breath is related to *fjädring*, as air bouncing in and out of the body. Anyone who has tried floating on water or scuba diving, also knows how the breath relates to buoyancy. Breathing out changes one’s density and one sinks. Inhaling lifts you up, suspends you, makes you float. But the note above also describes another body, a body of air. The surface delineation of the body is no longer the skin, or the silhouette, but in that place outside your body where the air gets inhaled from. Similarly, space is no longer defined as that outside and around the body, as it also exists within the body.

I noticed how fjädring can have different strengths or degrees. Like the difference of a hard and a soft bed. I noticed how I would push down in order to reach up and to make myself more suspended. I noticed how I could use my body as a slingshot and catapult myself away. There is fjädring in rotation, in momentum and in the twist. In the lever, the catapult and the bounce. Then I got curious about the smaller scale and the fjädring that is on-going and active also when the body is still. I noticed how the sensation of fjädring increases when different body parts met other bodily surfaces. There is fjädring in the lungs, the skin, and the fat. When am I bouncing against something, that is springy, and when am I the springy thing?

Here we find variations of *fjädring*. There is the intentional engagement of turning it up or down. As with the metaphor of tuning a string instrument, the researcher varies the tension of the string. How hard can I tense it before it snaps, and how loose can I make it, but still be able to play on it? Then there is scale. From full body bounce to molecular bounce. There are qualities of *fjädring* through different functions: catapult, twist, and so on. Finally, once again the body dissolves with its surrounding as the researcher questions where *fjädring* is located and finds it both in the bodily matter and in the material that the body bounces against. The material experience of one's own body cannot be separated from the material sensation of something that the body touches.

Instantly I sense that fjädring forms spirals. I sense the body as a spiral and visualize a wringed towel and a Twister ice cream. The spiral expands both within the body and in space and becomes never ending. It travels in space like a lost fly. Where did it go? Sometimes I have to look for it. Like going through all your pockets to find something you think you have lost. It travels fast to other places in my body and sometimes becomes superficial. Could that be an alternative? What is profound and what is superficial fjädring?

I give time, attention and affection to the event and space is created in me. Body becomes porous.

I visualize myself as a lazy old rubber band that lost its elasticity. Profound fjädring. I AM a rubber band – I AM the fjädring instead of adding fjädring to what I am. The bounces are tiny but the sensation is wide and extended. Through simply sitting and sensing the fjädring that lives in the action of sitting but to which I've never paid attention. I learn.

There is a lot inside this document. It reveals a relation between *fjädring* and spirals and how those spirals, once again, blur the body in space, as they are felt both on the body and into the space. That sensation is then clearly expressed by saying that the body becomes porous.

The researcher moves on to describing how *fjädring* can get lost, or rather how one can lose contact with it, as the researcher then notes how *fjädring* is “something that lives in the action ... but to which I never paid attention.” I find that is a great description of *Following the Movement*. The embodied kinesthetic experience is always there, but keeps falling into the background. Even the most overwhelming physical insight will eventually become a part of the default bodily experience. It takes intentional engagement to re-animate it, which can also be seen as an example of how one has to lead in order to be able to follow. Finally, the document reports on an experience similar to what I emphasized above about Bergson's *élan vital*. A piece

of matter does not have its properties, it is its properties. Here the body is experienced as being *ffädring*.

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