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8 Somaesthetic Practice and the Question of Norms

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Philosophy as Embodied Practice

Philosophy is a complex and *contested* concept with a long rich history that not only includes a variety of practices involving an impressive range of literary genres, but also some practices that are distinctively somatic. My practice of philosophy combines discursive theory with embodied practice. Of course, the practices of reading, writing, and discussing philosophical theory involve using one's body (as does everything we do), but my understanding of embodied philosophy goes further. I believe that one should express one's philosophical vision not only in discursive theory but should also give it body in the practice of the philosopher's life, exemplifying and conveying one's teaching through one's somatic appearance, comportment, performance, and action.

The Confucian tradition shares this view by affirming that somatic self-cultivation for improved demeanor and comportment are crucial to one's philosophical teaching. Confucius indeed once informed his disciples that he could cease speaking and simply teach as heaven or nature (*tian*) does by embodying instruction through exemplary behavior. We can likewise see Socrates as advocating philosophy as an art of living since he composed no texts but established philosophy through his exemplary life and death in the pursuit of wisdom of how one should live. Ancient Greek and Roman thinkers frequently advocated this ideal by contrasting true philosophers who lived their philosophy to those who merely wrote philosophy and thus were denigrated as mere "grammarians."[1] Philosophical theorizing remains important as a justification and spur for certain practices of life that included bodily disciplines which in turn could enrich the theories with practical perspectives and meanings and perhaps even inspire certain theoretical insights, much as practices of meditation or yoga have done for Asian philosophy.

In the American tradition in which my philosophical practice is situated, Henry David Thoreau famously recalls this idea of philosophy as a distinctly embodied art of living. "There are nowadays professors of philosophy, but not philosophers. Yet it is admirable to profess because it was once admirable to live," he writes in Walden. "To be a philosopher is not merely

to have subtle thoughts nor even to found a school but so to love wisdom as to live according to its dictates. . . . It is to solve some of the problems of life, not only theoretically but practically." He later elaborates the somatic dimension of this art of living.

> Every man is the builder of a temple, called his body, to the god he worships, after a style purely his own, nor can he get off by hammering marble instead. We are all sculptors and painters, and our material is our own flesh and blood and bones.
>
> (Thoreau 2000, 14, 209)

In *Practicing Philosophy* and other books, I explore the possibilities of reviving this ancient and practical idea of philosophy as an art of living or life practice that embraces both theory and somatic cultivation (Shusterman 1997; 2000a; 2000b). Although drawing on a variety of Asian and Western sources (both ancient and modern), I have linked my project most closely to the general framework of contemporary pragmatist philosophy and to a new interdisciplinary field of study that emerged from pragmatist aesthetics—the field of somaesthetics. In this essay, I examine the field of somaesthetics as both theory and practical somatic discipline, paying particular attention to the question of norms that govern its practice.

What Is Somaesthetics?

The concept of norm is ambiguous, sometimes having a merely descriptive sense as denoting what is common or average, but often instead implying values, with standards and judgments of better or worse. My concern here is with this evaluative dimension. However, before dealing with the question of norms and values, I should begin by addressing the question of what is somaesthetics, a term that may still be unfamiliar to many scholars in social theory and the philosophy of practice. Somaesthetics is an interdisciplinary field of research originally emerging from pragmatist philosophy in the late 1990s but not extensively articulated and developed until the 21st century. Briefly defined, somaesthetics is devoted to the critical study and meliorative cultivation of the use of one's body as the site of sensory appreciation (aesthesis) and creative self-fashioning. By heightening our skills of somatic perception, somaesthetics aims to improve our capacities for cognition, performance, and enriched experience as well as our self-expression and sensitivity to others, whom we perceive through a variety of somatic perceptions and interactions.[2]

Reflecting its pragmatist origins, somaesthetics emphasizes the importance of practice both in guiding the formation of theoretical ideas and in testing them in actual experience. Many of the theoretical insights that inform the arguments of somaesthetics derive from experiences gained in the practice of somatic therapies, somatically centered arts, and a variety

of other somatic disciplines. Similarly, an important part of the teaching or transmission of somaesthetics involves practical workshops that include physical exercises in somatic focusing and movement to heighten one's skills of body consciousness. This, in turn, can help us transform our habits of perception and action in ways that enable us to function better and to alleviate various somatic disturbances (such as pains, stress, and problems of balance).

The field of somaesthetics contains three interrelated branches and three somewhat overlapping dimensions. The branch of *analytic somaesthetics* concerns the basic character and functioning of our bodily perceptions and bodily practices in our knowledge and action in the world. This theoretical branch involves not only traditional ontological and epistemological issues of embodiment but also includes the sort of historical and sociopolitical studies of embodiment made famous by Michel Foucault and Pierre Bourdieu. It concerns such issues as how bodies are both shaped by power and employed as instruments to sustain such power; and how bodily norms of health, skill, beauty, and gender are constructed to reflect and reinforce social structures of power. Although focused on analyzing the body norms of a given society, such sociohistorical studies are more fundamentally descriptive than prescriptively normative in character or purpose. They aim to disclose and explain the norms in place rather than advocating or rejecting them. To ascertain through historical study, for example, that female beauty norms of a particular culture favored portly, fleshy women is not in itself to recommend or condemn such norms.

The second branch, *pragmatic somaesthetics*, is more distinctly normative or prescriptive. It involves the proposing of specific methods for somatic improvement and engaging in their comparative critique. Because the viability of any proposed meliorative method will depend on certain alleged facts about the body (whether ontological, physiological, or social), this pragmatic branch always presupposes facts from the analytic branch, while also trying to improve certain facts or conditions about particular bodies through pragmatic disciplines of somatic enhancement. Since ancient times, a wide variety of pragmatic disciplines have been recommended to improve our somatic experience and performance: diverse forms of dieting, martial arts, cosmetics, dance, yoga, varieties of exercise, athletics, bodybuilding, massage, somatic-centered meditation, and psychosomatic therapies. These disciplines or methods are typically given detailed linguistic formulation that describe the particular somatic techniques or regimens and explain or justify their efficacy in effecting a given improvement. Debates in pragmatic somaesthetics concern not only whether a given discipline is truly effective in achieving its aim of improvement; for example, does a particular diet really enable one to lose weight quickly; does a particular form of tanning give one a quicker and deeper tan; does a particular form of surgery give one fuller, more shapely breasts? There is also debate about whether the discipline's aims of alleged improvement are indeed worthwhile and whether

the methods to achieve those aims do not involve ethical, social, or health-related problems that would override the method's alleged benefits. Such debates about values demonstrate the deeply normative character of pragmatic somaesthetics.

The third branch of somaesthetics, distinct from but obviously closely related to pragmatic somaesthetics, is *practical somaesthetics*. Rather than a matter of reading or even writing texts concerned with methods of somatic care and improvement, it is all about actually pursuing such meliorative care through intelligent, disciplined concrete physical practice of pragmatic somaesthetic methods. Practical somaesthetics is concerned more with doing than saying, with bodily movements more than with discourse, although discourse will inevitably form part of the teaching practice of practical somaesthetics. We distinguish this *practical* branch from *pragmatic* somaesthetics in order to insist on the importance of actual somatic practice in the field of somaesthetics. It is one thing to read or write a book about yoga; but doing yoga is something else. While we can learn many things about yoga or meditation through reading, there are important insights (and somatic benefits) that one can acquire only through the experiences of actually performing their somatic practices.

One way to classify the very diverse disciplines of pragmatic somaesthetics that one can practice in practical somaesthetics is in terms of their purposive focus. Here it is useful to introduce the three dimensions of somaesthetics: the representational, the experiential, and the performative. Representational somaesthetics focuses on the soma's external appearance, while experiential disciplines concentrate more on the quality of the soma's inner experience. Such experiential methods aim to make us "feel better" in both senses of this ambiguous phrase: to make the quality of our somatic experience more satisfying, but also to make our awareness of it more acute and perceptive. If cosmetic practices such as make-up and tanning exemplify the representational dimension of somaesthetics, meditative disciplines such as yoga, *zazen*, and Feldenkrais Method's Awareness through Movement are paradigmatic of the experiential focus on heightened experiential quality and perceptual awareness.

The experiential/representational distinction is crucial in defending somaesthetics from the common charge that any sustained focus on the body harmfully reinforces our culture's unhappy obsession with superficial stereotypes of external bodily beauty that advertising imposes on us as oppressive representational norms. The realm of inner somatic experience offers an alternative range of options for realizing beauty and pleasure. One should note, however, that the experiential/representational distinction is neither exclusive nor exhaustive. Certain somatic disciplines are concerned with both representational and experiential dimensions, because there is often a strong complementarity of inner and outer. How we feel influences how we look, and vice versa. Disciplines such as dieting or bodybuilding, though usually first pursued for representational ends of looking better, often come

to be appreciated for the special inner feelings of health or power that they provide. A third, distinguishable but overlapping dimension of somaesthetics is the performative. Here the focus is not so much on how one (representationally) looks or (experientially) feels, but rather on how well one performs certain somatic skills or tasks: varieties of athletics and performing arts are paradigmatic of this dimension (although in some of these sports and arts representational factors also serve as criteria for successful performance).

Diversity of Somaesthetic Disciplines and Norms

This brief outline should suffice to introduce the field of somaesthetics and indicate its essential normative aspect. As a critical meliorative project, somaesthetics aims at the improvement of our somatic consciousness and experience. But the notion of improvement surely implies some notion of norms or evaluative standards concerning what is better or worse, even if these norms or values are typically vague, implicit, or taken for granted. What are those norms and values, where do they come from, and how are they justified or revised? Somaesthetic research has thus far not theorized these normative matters in a systematic and detailed way, partly because of the enormous complexity of the task. Somatic norms and values are expressed throughout the vast range of meliorative disciplines and seem to go in so many different directions. These very numerous and diverse pragmatic disciplines improvement are essentially defined by norms of somatic action that are formulated as explicit methods or techniques to serve different aims of somatic improvement that in turn reflect different values and purposes: strength, beauty, health, sexual prowess, various motor skills, service to God, and so on.

Moreover, as these meliorative somatic disciplines always develop in a sociohistorical context and must fit that context in some way to get sufficient traction. This is true even if they oppose some of the context's existing values. Consequently, the norms and values of the environing society inevitably shape the norms and methods of these somatic disciplines both in terms of the aims of somatic improvement and the acceptable methods for achieving such improvement. As societies change over time, somaesthetic practice norms will also tend to change, adapting themselves to the new environing social norms. Yoga practice in contemporary Western societies is very different from that of ancient India. The definitive founding text of yoga as a somatic practice, the *Hatha Yoga Pradipika* (composed by Svatmarama in the 15th century), determines in its chapter on "Prerequisites" for successful practice that the yoga practice space "should be laid daily with cow dung" (Svatmarama 1992, 17). This is obviously not the normative ideal for yoga studios in Paris, Santa Monica, or Boca Raton.

Such diversity of disciplines with their different norms and values can lead to misunderstandings about somaesthetics. Rather than a unified doctrine advocating a specific set of bodily disciplines to improve the soma

and society, somaesthetics is a field of inquiry embracing the study of many different somatic practices whose methods and underlying values are often mutually inconsistent. To affirm somaesthetics as a field of inquiry or to study some of its pragmatic disciplines does not therefore mean that one is necessarily endorsing the norms and values of the particular disciplines one chooses to analyze. One can study (and for that purpose even practice for an experimental period) somatic disciplines whose norms seem to be problematic. This distinction between inquiry and normative endorsement can be seen also in other fields of inquiry. To study philosophy with dedication and passion does not mean endorsing all or even any of the philosophies one studies; similarly, scholars of theology need not believe in god or in the truth of any religion.

Because there are so many different somaesthetic disciplines serving different and sometimes conflicting human purposes, which often change with changing circumstances and contexts, it is impossible to formulate a determinate and fixed set of norms for somaesthetics. Moreover, even with respect to a particular discipline in a specific society and given time, there can be divergent norms or values governing the methods of practice. I learned, for example, that within the Soto school of Zen in contemporary Japan, some teachers insisted on the representational norms of proper posture in the full lotus position for zazen meditation, but other equally distinguished teachers cared little about these postural norms, regarding them as merely instrumental external. Instead these masters focused on experiential norms of full mental alertness and concentration. Furthermore, as different people have different kinds of bodies (not only with respect to age and sex, but also with respect to size, shape, strength, metabolism, general heath, and so on); and as these different people may, moreover, be in very different social situations, their particular somatic needs and aims will inevitably vary. Consequently, so should the specific norms governing the somatic methods they practice to meet those different needs and aims.

Determining a fixed set of norms for somaesthetic practice is also impossible for another reason. Rooted in pragmatist philosophy (with its respect for change and fallibility), somaesthetics is a transactional field of inquiry—by which I mean an inquiry that can develop new directions, norms, methods, aims, and standards through the dynamic experiences acquired in the course of the inquiry's pursuit. The practice of a somaesthetic discipline can, for example, lead to transformative experiences that challenge the existing norms that govern one's behavior, including some of the norms of the very somaesthetic discipline that engendered the transformative experience. One of the key motivations of early somaesthetic inquiry and its intensified focus on the value of experiential somaesthetics through the beauty and pleasures of inner somatic feelings was to challenge and displace our society's oppressive obsession with external body norms of idealized stereotypes of youthful beauty and strength. Because inner somatic experience is usually assumed to be personal and subjective, it has not been so heavily dominated by social

norms, and thus can provide a realm of greater freedom for realizing forms of somatic beauty and pleasures. But this inward experiential turn, though enormously therapeutic, does not entirely free us from the pressure of social norms. For even in the realm of inner feelings of harmony, energy, pleasure, and mood, we inevitably find judgments or standards of better and worse that are often socially prescribed as norms that we are expected (and even urged to) realize. In the sexual domain, for example, orgasm is the socially authorized norm of pleasure—and it may be an oppressive and debilitating norm for many people.

General Norms of Meliorative Somaesthetic Practice

Having noted the overwhelming difficulties of providing a comprehensive, internally consistent or uniform and fixed set of norms that govern the very diverse and sociohistorically varying somaesthetic disciplines of meliorative practice, I would like to make my study of somaesthetic norms of practice more concrete. I will do this by focusing on a very particular practice that I perform in teaching somaesthetics in the two-day or three-day practical workshops I am usually asked to give. Most of the publics that organize and participate in these workshops (notably artists, musicians, technology designers, dancers, and theater people) have never raised the issue of the norms of my own somaesthetic teaching practice. However, the question persistently emerged in the concluding discussions at a two-day workshop organized by a group of critical sociologists and anthropologists at the Max Weber Center of the University of Lyon in March 2012. I had nothing very useful to respond at that time, because I had never given the matter any serious thought. Relying on the confidently informed and unquestioning practical sense that characterizes most effective practice, I simply assumed not only that I knew what I was doing but also that I knew why and how it should be done. Yet that implicit normative knowledge proved too difficult to formulate in a satisfactory way at that 2012 event, and for long thereafter. While I immediately took some practical steps to monitor certain implicit norms of practice (by formulating, for my next workshop, a questionnaire designed to assess what norms or values were successfully maintained in the workshop), I did not attempt to address the issue of workshop norms in a serious theoretical way until this present essay.

I realize, however, that in concentrating on the particularities of my workshop practice, I am flouting the traditional and still prevailing philosophical norm that demands from the theorist large and impersonal generalizations if not universalized assertions. To mitigate this departure from convention, I will preface my study of workshop norms and values by suggesting a useful way to classify and analyze more generally the many and diverse norms of meliorative somaesthetic disciplines of practice. I propose doing this in terms of the three distinct but related dimensions of experiential, representational, and performative somaesthetics and their corresponding norms or values.

Among the prominent goals of experiential somaesthetics is improved cognition; hence many of the norms governing the experientially centered disciplines are cognitive, aiming to promote enhanced awareness and more precisely accurate perception of our somatic state, feelings, and movements. Most of us are generally not aware of our quality of breathing, posture, or movement, or of the level of our muscular tension, or of other somatic feelings that form the background of our focus of attention but that remain unnoticed although felt. If not merely implicitly felt, but explicitly noticed, these feelings can alert us to conditions of stress (physical or emotional) or problematic habits of posture or movement that may eventually be damaging to us but that could be remedied or mitigated once they are noticed and thus can come under our conscious control.

If acquiring the ability to become more explicitly, accurately, and critically aware of these normally unnoticed somatic states, feelings, or movements is the key cognitive norm or goal for disciplines of experiential somaesthetics, then they also have another central set of aims relating to pleasure. Besides seeking to make us more aware and hence more appreciative of the inner experiential satisfactions our bodies provide us, the meliorative idea is to use our enhanced powers of experiential awareness to adjust our somatic behavior in order to render the experience of our somatic postures, feelings, and movements more satisfying and enjoyable by giving them greater grace, ease, or other attractive aesthetic qualities. By enhancing our awareness of our breathing we can not only render it more richly balanced and pleasurable but we can also more deeply savor the pleasure by more explicitly and sensitively attending to it. As Montaigne long ago remarked, through enhanced experiential awareness, we can enjoy our pleasures "twice as much as others, for the measure of enjoyment depends on the greater or lesser attention we pay to it" (Montaigne 1965, 853).

One could add a third normative aim of experiential somaesthetics that while fundamentally cognitive in nature also has a further ethical dimension: the aim of achieving greater sensitivity in our own experience to the experience of others and hence gaining greater empathetic awareness of their needs or difficulties and how we could help them. Although many thinkers have assumed that focusing on one's somatic experience confines one selfishly to one's own consciousness and body, a person's somatic experience is always transactional and essentially involves the environment both physical and social. One cannot properly feel one's body without feeling its environmental context; and by becoming more sensitive to one's somatic experience and how it is affected by the presence and energies of other individuals, one can also become more empathetically sensitive to what those other individuals are feeling. This higher level of other-directed empathetic affect is one of the surprising byproducts of experiential disciplines aimed at heightening somatic self-awareness.

The representational norms or values that shape somaesthetic disciplines of meliorative practice are largely focused on matters of beauty or

attractiveness, in the many different and sometimes conflicting forms that these aesthetic notions have been interpreted and through the different sensory modalities in which we experience the somatically attractive and the unattractive. These include not only the visual appearance of our bodies, but their auditory, tactile, olfactory, and perhaps even gustatory qualities and effects. Other representational values, however, are less concerned with aesthetic appeal per se but more with strengthening one's identity with respect to a given group: having the proper clothes, hairstyle, tattoos, gait, body build, and forms of eating and exercise that affirm one's group identity and assert one's acceptable status in the group by fulfilling its representational body norms.

As representational somatic norms are far more prominent than experiential ones in shaping social reality, so performative somatic norms seem similarly dominant in our culture, which is increasingly a culture of performance and accountability. Somatic performative standards, which vary with the varying aims and practices of the different disciplines, often relate to the speed, power, or success of performance. These properties or levels of performance are typically measured and ranked in terms of more or less (faster, farther, longer, higher, deeper, etc.) or even more precisely quantified and ranked in terms of numerical values, such measures and rankings determining better and worse. Most obvious in sports, this normative logic is evident even in forms of dieting, a somaesthetic discipline usually pursued more for representational than performative aims. Some diets quantify their success in terms of how much and how fast one loses weight and how long it stays lost; some even quantify daily performance in terms of counting how few calories are absorbed, while exercise regimes correspondingly count how many calories are expended. Often when stipulating a particular range of numerical values as a recommended norm or acceptable standard for performance, adjustments will be introduced for different ages, genders, or other somatic variations. In some fields of somatic performance, representational features such as beauty, grace, or elegance of movement form part of what is considered successful performance and thus are integrated into performative norms. Although experiential values of felt ease and felt energy often contribute causally into performance success, they are not integrated into norms of performance in the same way as representational values and standards often are. Much more could be said about the general norms, values, and aims of somaesthetic disciplines of practice. However, I now turn to the question that initiated this essay of inquiry: what are norms or values that govern my practical somaesthetics workshops for improved body consciousness?

Norms of Practical Workshops on Body Consciousness

I have been giving these workshops since 2009, initially for dancers and choreographers, and subsequently for visual artists, musicians, actors, and

designers. The workshops (usually two or three days long, with six to eight hours a day of contact time, and limited to between 15 and 25 participants) have kept the same general style of instruction and many of the same exercises, though I have varied the precise format according to the professional field of the different publics. Since 2012, I have done a series of such workshops with four different groups of experts in human-computer interaction (HCI) technology, associated with HCI design labs at the Korean Advanced Institute of Science and Technology, the Royal Swedish Institute of Technology, the University of Sydney, and Aalborg University, Copenhagen. I focus my analysis on these workshops because they form a special group: not only because they involved the same professional public, took the same basic two-day/seven-hours-per-day format, and were also planned in relation to each other (with each subsequent workshop building on its predecessors), but also because they included a distinctive design research component.[3]

The workshops were designed to see the effect of the somaesthetic body consciousness training on the generation of design ideas. So, in addition to the body consciousness exercises and their analysis, there was also time during each of the two workshop days for the participants (who were divided into four design teams) to develop designs for interactive devices answering to a given problem set by the design professional whose lab hosted the workshop. Time was also set aside for presenting the proposed designs and then critiquing them, while also noting what, if any, relation those designs (and the collaborative creative process that generated them) had with the body consciousness exercises. After the workshop was over, a questionnaire was distributed to the participants as a further effort to assess the impact that the workshop's two-day body consciousness training had on their design process and more generally on their experience. The questionnaire was also intended to supply the organizers and myself with feedback on how to improve future workshops and to form part of the documentation for possible follow-up projects of empirically analyzing the significance of this kind of workshop for the field of design.

These projects of analysis would consider, for example, to what extent somaesthetic body consciousness training could benefit the design process (whether in the generation of design ideas or in improved communicative interaction among the design team or eventually in the creation of interesting somaesthetically informed product prototypes). One might also examine to what extent and in what manner could the workshop format be developed, formalized, and codified as a methodological tool in the field of design research. I should note that one Korean researcher processed the workshop and condensed its exercises into a digitalized audio product in which the exercise instructions (in Korean) were given by a computer-generated voice. I should also note that the Swedish lab developed two distinctive product prototypes of somaesthetic design reflecting lessons from the workshop and follow-up work in somaesthetics.[4] Although the workshops thus have a double focus or dual purpose—improving body consciousness and

generating design ideas—my analysis will focus only on the former, which is more specific to somaesthetics per se and pertains to all of my practical workshops. However, even the workshop's single task of improving body consciousness involves a double focus of norms and values: those that govern the practice of the participants in performing the body consciousness exercises and those that govern my instructional practice in delivering them. To examine the norms of both practices, we need to provide a minimal description of those exercises.

The workshop's main exercises in body consciousness are based on Feldenkrais Awareness through Movement lessons, which I am authorized to teach, as having received the requisite four-year professional training and subsequent certification as a Feldenkrais practitioner. These exercises are firmly focused on experiential aims and are performed mainly with participants in positions of lying on the floor, often with eyes closed to avoid external distractions. The exercises consist of two forms, both very gentle and requiring no vigorous physical effort. First, there are detailed body scans in which I guide the participants through extensive and continuously given oral instructions to examine, through proprioceptive and tactile perception, the position, muscle tonus, breathing, and other felt conditions of their body parts and the contact these different parts make with the floor. The participants perform these scans in a supine position with eyes closed; they lie motionless, except of course for the movements involved in their breathing and occasional minor postural adjustments for comfort.[5]

Second, there are gentle movement exercises involving various techniques of arm and leg lifting and of turning from a side-lying position. These techniques involve (and thus teach) ways of coordinating, through better proprioceptive perception, the movements of various body parts whose improved coordination makes the movements of lifting and turning much easier and smoother. Both the body scans and the movement exercises are done very slowly and systematically in order to maximize learning; the key idea being that slowness permits more time for attending carefully and critically to what one is experiencing and doing.

The primary aim and focus of these exercises is experiential and cognitive, improving the quality of the participants' body consciousness in terms of proprioceptive awareness of their bodily feelings and perceptual discrimination of their movements. For example, their ability to notice for example, in what part of the body and in what way they initiate a particular movement, and how does it feel when they initiate it with a different body part or coordinate the movement in a different way). From the outset, I inform participants that the dominant norm in performing the exercises is attentive awareness of one's somatic posture, feeling, and movement, and not how good or balanced or smooth those postures, feelings, or movements are. Such somatic attention, however, should not be random but must be guided by attentive understanding of the scanning and movement instructions orally given to them during the exercises; otherwise they will not be

led to the learning experiences the exercises are designed to give. Because the specific forms and sequences of movements are rather atypical and because the verbal instructions (involving different body parts and directions of movement that are differently defined in terms of the participant's postural positions on the floor) are not always easy to understand, the participant's careful attention to those instructions is essential. A certain tension thus can emerge between two key norms for the participant's success: attention to her own inner body perceptions and attention to, understanding of, and compliance with the instructor's instructions. Managing this multiple focus of attention is part of the workshop's cognitive training in awareness: how to attend closely to one's body without losing one's attention to the environing world, including its verbal messages that require intellectual decoding and subsequent physical execution in action.

The experiential aims of the somaesthetics exercises are not, however, confined to the merely cognitive. There are also affective values or norms. The movements and perceptions that these exercises seek to induce should provide participants with feelings whose ultimately dominant affect is pleasure, though this goal often requires passing through some unpleasant feelings of awkwardness, confusion, and frustration. Here we should highlight a negatively defined norm of the workshop exercises: the avoidance of pain. Participants are instructed that if they feel any pain in doing the exercises, they should immediately stop doing them and instead rest to restore their comfort and then continue by merely imagining in their minds *that* they are performing the movements and *how* they are performing them. (Research in cognitive science has shown that such mental rehearsals can provide significant learning of the given motor skills). If the norm of avoiding pain clearly serves somaesthetics' key aim of enhancing body consciousness to provide better self-monitoring for better self-care, it also derives from the cognitive aims of experiential learning. Pain overwhelms a person's attention, thus distracting consciousness from attending to the more subtle somatic feelings and movements that the exercises aim to reveal. A key principle of the workshop is that we can learn the subtleties of somatic experience better through pleasure than through pain; or, to put the point more modestly, it is simply better to learn through pleasure than through pain.

Some of the pleasures that the exercises seek to induce have significant cognitive dimensions. There is the surprising delight of suddenly getting proprioceptively acquainted with a body part that one never properly felt before (often one or more of the thoracic vertebrae in the middle back); the gratification of ultimately understanding and effortlessly performing a movement that at first was initially baffling and difficult. But besides such satisfactions of knowledge by acquaintance and of "knowing how," there are also the sensuously pleasurable delights of the coordinated movement itself—the harmonious flow of its felt smoothness, ease, and integration of body parts that gives an energizing glow of wholeness. Besides its intrinsic value as positive affect, this pleasurable feeling serves to reinforce somaesthetic attention for

further improved awareness, while also providing a confirmation that one has understood the movement and is performing it correctly.

This idea of correct performance implies, of course, the presence of performative norms, which are not satisfied if the instructions for the exercises are misunderstood or ignored. This failure to meet the norms is not easily detected in cases of the body scan, as the participants lie motionless and silent; although if one of them starts snoring it becomes easy to see that the norms of understanding and complying with the scanning instructions are not being fulfilled. With the movement exercises, however, it is far clearer when participants fail to understand the movement instructions and thus fail to do the designated movement with the prescribed combination of body parts. Because such failures of performance prevent the participant from achieving the experiential cognitive and affective benefits from the movement, the basic performative norm of doing the correct movement (and doing it correctly) is important for the workshop.

There are, of course, different levels of correct performance, depending on the participant's movement skills and depth of learning, and as the workshop progresses individual participants typically improve their skills and performance. Criteria for higher levels of performance involve attaining higher levels of coordinated smoothness, grace, and effortless control of the movements. One of the best indications of such control is the ability to stop the direction of movement at any time or any place and reverse it without detracting from its quality of graceful smoothness of flow. These criteria are clearly representational in character. But such representational standards for assessing the quality of performance (beyond the minimal norm of performing the correct movement) are not as important for the workshop's goals as the experiential values of focused, attentive, reflective awareness. Moreover, it is possible for one to perform a movement beautifully without properly perceiving, with explicit awareness of one's feelings and actions, how one is performing it; in other words, without gaining the cognitive benefits of the movement exercise.

VI Instructor's Norms

Thus far, I have confined my account of norms and values to the participant's experience and performance. But the instructor, who is obviously central to the workshop's success, is also directed by certain norms, aims, and values. What are they? We can again divide them in terms of experiential, representational, and performative dimensions. Perhaps the most important element in the instructor's experience that contributes to achieving a successful workshop is his empathetic awareness of the experience of others, while he himself is simultaneously thinking of the scanning and movement instructions as he continues to give them and adjust them as the lesson develops. In response to what he sees (and empathetically feels) through the expressive body posture and movements of the participants (even in the

minimal movement of breathing or a clenching of the jaw), the instructor will adapt his instructions. If he sees that they are not properly understood by some participants, he will—without interrupting the flow of the lesson and his instructional discourse, as such a break would result in a distracting disruption of participants' concentration—reformulate the movement instructions in a different way so as to make them clearer to those who haven't understood. Or, if the instructor sees that several participants are having a problem with the movement, he will reformulate his instructions so as to divide the problematic movement into simpler parts so that it can be better understood and mastered sequentially through such incremental learning.

Moreover, in response to perceptions of the participants' difficulty, straining, or fatigue, the instructor will slow down the pace of the lesson and remind participants to relax their efforts (and their breathing) and introduce more brief pauses of resting from movement in the lesson. These pauses enable participants to rest, in order to ensure that they can return to learning the movements with a fresh mind for a better understanding of the desired movements or for a clearer attention to a particular body part as it is felt in rest or in motion. This need to adapt instructions in response to the felt experience of the participants is why such workshops should be given in person and not by an impersonal recording of instructions. It is also why these workshops are so psychologically demanding and fatiguing for the instructor, as he must feel his way into the experience of the various participants and revise his teaching instructions in response to their perceived problems and needs, all this without calling attention to the specific individuals who are suffering from such difficulties. To single out those people as improperly performing the exercise lesson by explicitly correcting them risks embarrassing them in ways that can discourages learning by undermining their confidence or enthusiasm. This cognitive and other-directed affective norm of empathetic feeling thus has a distinct ethical dimension of care for others and respect for their feelings. Conversely, when the participants perform the movement with beauty, grace, and pleasure, the instructor derives a vicariously felt sense of this pleasure that is extremely gratifying and that one should distinguish from the mere pleasure of feeling one's power of giving pleasure to others, a pleasure that the successful instructor may also feel. There is, moreover, the representational pleasures of seeing those gracefully beautiful movements, especially when they are performed by beautifully shaped bodies. Although tempted to surrender oneself to such absorbed contemplation of beauty and pleasure, the instructor is morally bound to give more attention to participants who have problems with the movement.

As for the instructor's representational dimension of practice, its norms relate not so much to visual but rather to auditory presence. As participants' eyes are either closed or focused elsewhere during the essential exercises, their connection to the instructor is through the latter's voice and language.

The voice and delivery should be of a kind that inspires calm, concentration, and confidence in the participants so that they can follow the instructions in a relaxed but alert, focused, and agreeably encouraging way, without being distracted or annoyed by an irritating tone of voice or by mumbling, stuttering, faltering, or hesitant speech. If the speech is overly soothing, however, it can result in the participants' drifting into a sleepy or sluggishly hypnotic state rather than an attentively alert one.

The essential performative norms for the instructor include accuracy and clarity of the instructions, and reassuringly confident fluency in delivering them. This in turn implies understanding the logic of the exercises, so that if participants have problems in following the instructions or performing the movements, the instructor can reformulate the instructions by breaking the movement down into more manageable parts. If participants sense uncertainty or confusion in the instructor, their own confidence and ability to follow the instructions will be shaken, as will their focus on their somaesthetic perceptions. Good performance likewise requires an instructor's perceptual acuity in noticing the difficulties that participants encounter in executing the required movements and in knowing how to relieve them. Besides caring for specific difficulties, the instructor must meet more general norms of care in order to ensure a satisfactory performance. He must carefully respect the participants' needs to rest within the course of each lesson—not only so that they avoid pain, stress, and fatigue that would undermine their mental focus, but also simply to give them time to process what they are learning and enable them to reflect on their feelings and experience. Slowness has epistemological benefits, although going too slow risks losing participant focus through boredom. There is an art to finding the proper pace and rhythm in orally delivering the instructions and in timing the instructed pauses within the lesson.

The instructor should also provide a proper spacing of pauses between the lessons. These are useful not only for resting and for digesting the material, but also for reprocessing, interpreting, and comparing the experiences of the lessons through dialogue among the participants themselves and with the instructor. Although the feelings of somatic consciousness that the lessons aim to evoke are essentially nonverbal and personal to each participant, the verbalized sharing of these feelings often helps the participants to understand them better and then later to experience such feelings more clearly by providing linguistic hooks or prisms that help put them in better focus. The instructor should therefore leave time and privacy for the participants to do this sharing of feelings first in small clusters of four or fewer participants before then engaging in a general discussion of the lesson and its effects with the entire workshop group; and no individual participant should be compelled to verbalize her experiences. This practice of lesson discussion implies a double ethical norm of respect for participant personhood. Respect for the individual's personal privacy and right to be silent about what she feels

is coupled with respect for her right to express her own personal feelings to others in a public space and to have those feelings taken seriously by her peers and her instructor. Such discussion of the workshop's lessons empowers participants to go beyond the role of silent members, establishing them as dialogical partners and respected collaborators in the workshop's cognitive pursuits.

This point highlights a crucially fundamental ethical norm for proper instructor performance: perceptible, appreciable respect for the autonomy of the participants who have put themselves in a learning context where they provisionally cede their independence to follow the commands of the instructor, who is telling them what they should attend to and what and how they should move their bodies. This subordinated position of silently and docilely obeying someone else's orders about what to do and what to think, of surrendering body and mind, is somatically reinforced by the participants' posture of lying on the floor with closed eyes, and is perhaps still further magnified by the odd sort of personal body observations and movements they are told to do. Psychologically vulnerable people placed in such workshop situations of subservience risk suffering emotional interference that can severely impede their ability to learn and enjoy. Sometimes such individuals experience an emotional breakdown during a lesson; sometimes they simply resist the teacher's instructional directives in defiant demonstration of their own autonomy. Creating an atmosphere of respect and care is an essential norm of performance to ensure both learning and pleasure.

The dialogical dimension of the workshop—of actively enlisting and discussing participant feedback about their experience with the lessons—is not only an essential strategy for creating that atmosphere of respect and care. It also helps link the workshop practice back to the Socratic roots of philosophical practice as a dialogical inquiry aimed at self-knowledge and self-cultivation in the art of living a good life. Moreover, it highlights how the founding Socratic philosophical project of self-knowledge and self-care (*epimelia heatou*) is also very much concerned with the care of others. Finally, the workshop's dialogical dimension underlines an important feature about these somaesthetic body-consciousness workshops that is already implicit in my account of the teaching instructions: although the workshop aims to heighten awareness of nonlinguistic feelings, language is necessary for focusing attention to achieve that nonlinguistic awareness. Somaesthetics' somatic focus does not preclude a deep appreciation of the essential linguistic dimension of human experience and philosophical practice. Language and reflection are essential to somaesthetic theory and practice, even if dimensions of that practice are nonlinguistic and spontaneously unreflective. Moreover, somaesthetic practice, in my conception of it, forms only part of philosophical practice, which indeed involves cluster of different practices. If we take the critical, reflective art of living as a legitimate philosophical practice, then we need a plurality of tools in our philosophical

toolbox in order to meet the plurality of life's challenges. Somaesthetics, I maintain, is a useful addition to that toolbox.

Notes

1. For more on these points, see Shusterman (1997, 2004).
2. For detailed articulation of the field of somaesthetics, see Shusterman (2008, 2012).
3. A detailed account of the Korean workshop was published in Lee et al. 2014.
4. The Korean audio project formed a central tool for Lee's Ph.D. dissertation on *Cultivation of Somatic Awareness in Movement-Based Interactive Product Design Practice: The Use of Somaesthetic Reflection* (Daejeon: Korea Advanced Institute of Science and Technology, 2015). http://koasas.kaist.ac.kr/handle/10203/206146. Accessed 5/24/2018.

   The Swedish prototype products derive from the Mobile Life laboratory directed by Kristina Höök, Professor at the Royal Swedish Institute of Technology. One is a soma mat; the other is a breathing lamp. Both are discussed in Höök 2015. A video of the breathing lamp can be found at www.youtube.com/watch?v=uHTv_YqFjEk. Accessed 5/24/2018.
5. I explain the logic of the body scan and provide a teachable example of a seated (rather than supine) body scan, suitable for a standard academic classroom, in Shusterman, 2012. 112–122.

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