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CLEARING THE WAY TOWARDS SOULFUL SCHOLARSHIP¹

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Abstract

Have you ever had an inexplicable experience that was so tangible and real that it challenged everything you have been taught, or could rationally comprehend? Have you ever tried to write about it academically? This chapter describes my search for understanding why it is so challenging to include intangible and often mysterious encounters into our work, and what might be necessary to create a soulful scholarship where this is not only welcome but seen as a fertile research strategy. It discusses other ways of knowing beyond but inclusive of rationality in a multidisciplinary ‘alchemy of the soul.’

To write down the soul, then, is to attend to its ‘greening,’ to its motion and its movement, to its elusive quality, which resists our efforts to enunciate it.²

Introduction

Between 2005-2015, I followed three distinct yet intertwined, and ongoing paths of learning: my shamanic training with the Scandinavian Center for Shamanic Studies; my dance training with the School of Movement Medicine; and my academic PhD training at the University of Roehampton. In each of these rigorous apprenticeships, I had profound encounters with soul and spirit that could not easily, if at all, be understood through traditional western methods of scholarship. During my PhD I grappled with the methodological challenges of including such experiences in my scholarly work. In that process, academia appeared to me a one-legged and lopsided creature that overemphasised tangible and measurable outcomes, and had few tools to include spiritual or soulful dimensions of life. I wondered if academia could become stronger, richer, and, perhaps paradoxically, more trustworthy when we include the “more subtle realms of being” and knowing³ alongside our rational abilities? Rather than dismissing experiences that do not fit prevailing academic canons, I am curious to develop a soulful scholarship that recognises parts of our existence as immeasurable and mysterious, and seeks possibilities to include those dimensions within existing academic parameters.

This chapter emerges from my belief that, when science moved away from religion during the European Age of Enlightenment, we lost skills that are essential to, and can strengthen both knowledge domains. My aim is not to devalue the significance of positivist methodologies in understanding parts of reality, but rather to give credence to additional epistemologies. Such other ways of knowing (through meditation or intuition for example), exist unacknowledged in the margins of western scholarship, but have potential to support and inform research processes. I believe that including these other ways of knowing can broaden the academic endeavour, as well as increase our mental and emotional wellbeing as researchers, and potentially create healthier and more sustainable scholarly communities.

Attempting 'scholarly writing' on a 'belief' creates two interesting challenges. First, is the difficulty of communicating soulful experiences through writing. As I notice in everyday encounters with many academic colleagues, even *using* the word 'soul' or 'soulfulness' in a conversation or paper is controversial. And how can we begin to define the subject? What I mean by 'soulful' includes stirring, (com)passionate feeling qualities of the heart, with a commitment to searching for deep meaning, and an awareness of being connected to something beyond ourselves. It acknowledges our being part of an (invisible) energetic matrix or 'web of life,' which, through applying specific tools and practices, can add interesting dimensions to our knowing. Whatever we call this 'soulful' quality or substance, it is part of our "core human reality."⁴ Therefore, it is not essential to subscribe to a spiritual outlook on life in order to engage with soul as a source of inspiration, strength and creativity.⁵ Synonyms for soul could be life force, vitality, original nature, inner compass or intuition.⁶ These words imply motion in metaphoric and literal sense, and therefore it seems more accurate to describe soul as a fluid process, rather than as static or fixed object. Soul then becomes a movement of reflecting, deepening, and re-balancing, an activity of embracing paradoxes that melts boundaries between spirit and matter.⁷ It could be seen as the seed of individuation within the human blueprint that drives us to wholeness from within.⁸ This seed is always present and always responds to the relationship between self and surroundings.

The second challenge concerns the very foundations of positivist scholarship: replicability, objectivity, empiric data, distance, known variables, validity and reliability. These seem the antithesis of values that encourage the soul, such as beauty, depth, openness, vulnerability, ambiguity, equality, interconnection and inclusion. There are few publications that write about soul within academia. Some focus on soulful pedagogy as teaching strategy within education;⁹ others on the downsides of a mechanistic worldview influencing science, making a call for a return to the sacredness of life within scientific undertakings.¹⁰ Todres¹¹ and Romanyshyn¹² write about the role of the soul within research from a psychoanalytical perspective. All these authors emphasise the significance of lived experience, relationality, heart and compassion, immersion, participation and the importance of action. They underline self-reflexivity

within research and the possibilities, or indeed, requirements of conscious personal transformation: a return to wholeness. There is a mystical quality to their work that embraces the paradox of opposites, not-knowing and the innate unfinishedness of everything we do, and this type of writing challenges, by its very nature, the foundations of positivist scholarship mentioned above. The question needs to be asked, can soul be integrated in academia at all, or is 'soulful scholarship' a contradiction in terms? Can we 'immerse' ourselves in a soulful practice while maintaining critical distance? Can we represent metaphysical experiences through a written medium?

I do not know the answers to those questions. In this chapter I unpack my observation that certain encounters in my life, including those represented by my PhD data, could not be included in my academic work. Why was that the case, and what would need to change to make their inclusion possible and valuable? This piece is informed by my movement and shamanic practices, as well as by my scholarly training in anthropology. Part 1 briefly outlines our current scientific landscape and how we got here. I explain why and how I think our horizons need widening again. Part 2 concentrates on some initial qualities that I believe are necessary to create a space for the soul within academia. Finally, part 3 explores the potential benefits of integrating body, heart, mind and soul in academia, and I suggest modifications to research spaces and the institutional environment that are necessary for a soulful change.

Part 1: On current academic landscape and horizons

Science and religion were originally closely interwoven, as God was thought to show engagement with humanity through nature. Indeed, many scientists were deeply religious, and tried to understand creation through their work. The disciplines were not seen as competitors, but rather as derived from the same source.¹³ During the Enlightenment however, knowledge became secularised. Scientists started to "base their knowledge on fact not faith" and also avoid offending the church by zooming in on physical matter and avoiding the metaphysical.¹⁴ Indeed, religious institutions excommunicated or even killed scientists for their theories.¹⁵ This historical development created a separation: science would look at

matter and practical aspects of reality, while theology concentrated on the intangible, mysterious and more spiritual dimensions of life. Over time the split, underlined by René Descartes, has become more pronounced. Nowadays the various ways of understanding phenomena no longer communicate with each other. Figure 1 shows four different ways of knowing and perceiving the world. The bottom two rows represent academia as we know it today, while the top two rows show the more elusive knowledge domains:



Figure 1: Different ways of knowing or 'what we know,' 'how we know' and 'who knows'¹⁶

Academia is based on matter and mind, while the other dimensions are largely absent. Religious and Consciousness studies form two somewhat uncomfortable exceptions – their ontologies focus on soul and spirit, while their epistemologies are still founded in reason and the senses. Dualism was, for a time, necessary to balance and protect the mystique, and also give science a chance to establish itself more firmly. Although understandable and historically necessary, the distinction between matter and spirit is now harder to maintain, especially with advancing discoveries in quantum physics such as entanglement, superposition and non-locality principles.¹⁷

How could we bring matter and spirit together again? The first step is to acknowledge that something has been lost during this split, through the severing of something that was once connected. This might be different for every individual, whether it be qualities such as 'wholeness,' 'innocence,' 'faith,' 'trust' or 'inner peace.' In shamanic terms, we could speak of soul

loss.¹⁸ The 'loss' is like an injury, and can lead to illness. We lose our power to discern, creating both a sense of righteous justification as well as helplessness, two attributes I often observe within academia. There are many ways to find and retrieve what was lost, but all require willingness and commitment. Psychoanalyst and traditional 'curandera' (healer/storyteller), Clarissa Pinkola Estés,¹⁹ offers means to reclaim our 'wild soul' through working with archetypes in folk tales from all over the world. She underlines that such a return needs to happen gradually and with consideration. This process will also never be finished, and will always require ongoing attention and re-visiting.²⁰ We need to keep our senses open, examine what we experience, and not take things for granted just because they are the way they are. Pinkola Estés invites us to "look into everything, see what you can see."²¹

Seeing being one of our senses, Professor of Music Education Peter Gouzouasis²² unpacks Gadamer's notion of 'horizon.' A horizon indicates how far our vision stretches, what we are able to see from where we stand. We need to find "the right horizon of enquiry"²³ for meaningful engagement with our questions. Can we see beyond that which is near us? Is it possible to see beyond the horizon? Whose horizons are we talking about? Recognising the gaps created by the separation of science and religion is particularly difficult from any 'reasonable' paradigm, which simply does not provide credence to the non-tangible as it has no methods to observe it. Can we fuse different horizons of, for example, writer/researcher/reader or artist/researcher/teacher to come to a more holistic understanding? To bridge interdisciplinary ways of writing and talking about (metaphysical) phenomena, we need to be patient with different vocabularies, explain jargon, and pay attention to the process of interpretation of texts, artworks, contexts and situations.²⁴

However, we also need to look at conditions for recreating a soulful space in academia in the first place, conditions that include cognition but also value additional qualities such as intuition, creativity, mystique, beauty and the intangible essence of being and presence. The following part outlines three specific qualities that could serve as starting points for creating soulful spaces.

Part 2: Conditions for (re-)creating a soulful space

Gapping the mind: moving beyond rationalism

To include soul within our scholarship, we first need to mind the gap of its absence, but more difficult is to gap the mind as well. With this, I mean creating the willingness to go beyond mind (see Figure 1), while simultaneously using its assets to analyse and integrate experiences. This can be a challenge, as cognitive processes inspire most (if not the only) confidence in academia.

Many cultures recognise a continuum between matter-mind-soul-spirit.²⁵ In the west, we generally consider evolution as a process developing from matter to mind (Figure 2). Shamans however, acknowledge that the reverse also happens, a process that is considered equally important and influential: spirit influences the soul; soul in turn influences the mind, which affects matter (Figure 3). They recognise that a culture's survival depends on the abilities and skills to connect with less tangible levels. When our connection to this 'reverse' knowing from spirit to soul to mind thins, or is lost altogether, it creates an imbalance.



Figure 2: Evolution²⁶



Figure 3: Involution²⁷

Imbalance is of course a subjective concept. Klaas van Egmond,²⁸ emeritus professor in environmental sciences and sustainable development, uses the image of a circle with two intersecting lines to represent a balanced and sustainable community. Vertical polarities include heaven and earth, material and immaterial domains, religious and profane. He compares this to the *axis mundi*. The opposites of 'I' and 'Other' are illustrated horizontally, addressing unity and diversity, individual and collective orientations, and represent the *anima mundi* or World Soul.

There needs to be *movement* (!) between these polarities, otherwise life will become lopsided, stagnant or in extreme cases even fundamentalist. In this representation, western science in the past 300 years has focused on matter and uniformity, for reasons outlined in part 1.

More recently however, a variety of fields, including physics and medicine, are beginning to explore the relationship between matter and energy.²⁹ Understanding our capacity for different ways of gathering knowledge becomes more important. In my shamanic practice I learned concrete tools to access an altered state of consciousness (see below) in order to fluidly move between different ways of knowing and integrate insights from soul and spirit realms back into the 'matter' of daily life. Shamanic, nature-based practices generally aim to support the health and wellbeing of individuals and communities. They are based in a close relationship with the natural world, which is recognised as alive and attributed with meaning and intentionality. Animism, pantheism, panentheism and panspsychism are worldviews that recognise nature as imbued with spirit in varying degrees.³⁰ Animism sees nature and inanimate objects as suffused with life, life force or soul. Pantheism considers the divine present within all beings (immanence), while panentheism sees the divine as being both immanent as well as transcendent. Finally, panspsychism underlines "that everything in the universe has some form of consciousness or mind."³¹ Here we stumble upon one of the first challenges to integrate shamanic techniques into scientific paradigms, which generally oppose the idea that souls or spirits "inhabit the world outside human minds."³² For a long time, fuelled by Sir Edward Tylor's influential ethnography *Primitive Culture*,³³ animism was considered as a rudimentary way of looking at life, which western societies supposedly left behind after the Enlightenment. However, anthropologist Michael Winkelman argues that animism can be seen as a normal human tendency that helps us to adapt to social context, make sense of the world and other people's behaviour, and aide personal development and social integration. Spirits are central to our "symbolic relationship to the environment" and "key aspects of the human search for meaning."³⁴ Indeed, we can recognise animist (anthropomorphic) elements in all major religions; in the way we consider teddy bears, pets, or even towns to have a soul; and in speaking of the earth as a living entity as in some contemporary ecologies.³⁵

In order to interact with and learn from spirit essence, the ritual specialist induces an altered state of consciousness (ASC). Dancing, or other intensive physical (repetitive) movement, is one of the widely recognised tools to access such states of consciousness.³⁶ ASCs can also be reached through music, food and sleep deprivation, isolation, exposure to extreme weather conditions, physical pain, or the use of hallucinogenic plants or fungi.³⁷ However, such severe measures are context dependent, and most people can simply access ASCs through, for example, listening to rhythmic drumming. In ASCs the practitioner can gather information and insights from a different perspective in time or space that can inform learning and decision-making. Tools to induce ASCs can easily be adapted to and implemented within a research context. The challenge for academics is to temporarily switch off our analytical abilities and suspend disbelief and criticism in order for different levels of awareness to inform learning and create space for new discoveries, while simultaneously endorsing the value of the mind.

It seems dualistic to acknowledge and yet go “beyond rational arguments and logical analysis, and be open to alternative ‘shafts of wisdom.’”³⁸ Insights gained through meditation or shamanic practice are perhaps extra-rational and beyond reason, but not irrational. We simply need other ways of recognising their value. We can apply a rigorous and systematic approach (POR) to any topic of inquiry: if we follow a specific recipe (Procedure), we create a data set (Observation) that can be communicated and shared (Report).³⁹ Using this “core essence of the scientific method, we can begin to bridge the perennial gap between science and spirituality,” and “open science to a much vaster realm of knowledge beyond merely human consciousness.”⁴⁰ From my personal dance practice, my PhD data, as well as my teaching practice in Movement Medicine, I can share many examples of the ‘Procedure’ and ‘Observation,’ while the difficulty of ‘Reporting’ is what I am addressing in this chapter. This anecdotic evidence shows that the Procedure of inviting body, heart, mind and soul to become present and focused in each and every movement, while dancing with a specific question, or indeed with an ‘other-than-human-person’ such as the ocean or a grasshopper, can lead to very concrete Observations, insights or answers to that question. Again, the challenge is to articulate those insights because there are so many levels on which a translation

needs to be made: how can we ‘dance’ with something in many ways abstract to our human experience, a dance partner who may not have cognition, agency or means of expressing that we are commonly used to, or who might appear to exist in an entirely different time or place?

Attending to heart: the space between

Objectivity in academic scholarship creates abstracted research representations, in which subjectivity, vulnerability and the personal voice are concealed. In an effort to clear our results of messy, untidy and loose ends, we hardly notice that we underplay or ignore polarities between objectivity/subjectivity, group/individual, researcher/researched, tangible/intangible, between different groups represented in our data, in short between any and all polarities that are present within our research. Post-modern questions of truth and representation, the search for appropriate criteria to measure the quality of qualitative research and insights from quantum physics show that we are always implicated in our research. Unbiased observations are indeed an illusion. Our responsibility is not to produce ‘unbiased’ research, but to be clear and transparent about our stance, where we come from, and what might influence our observations.⁴¹ Also, knowledge production is always a process of co-creation. The concept of ‘intersubjectivity’ recognises exchange between people and cultures, between researchers and research informants, between researchers and the communities in which we disseminate our work. Intersubjectivity is present throughout the entire research process, including observations, interviews, transcription of data, analysis, writing, peer review and presentations.⁴² By embracing intersubjectivity as inherent and constructive, we can systematically draw meaning from shared subjectivity emerging in wider cultural contexts.

However, even while acknowledging intersubjectivity, it is impossible to capture the intricacy and complexity of people, behaviour and culture. What it means to be human is hard to articulate, and often evaporates in the process of analysing and representing our ‘data.’ Apart from phenomena that we cannot describe fully (or at all), the boundaries of any study will be determined by our position as researchers, our framework for analysis; the discourse that that framework is based on; and the places where results are shared and discussed.⁴³ In other words, experience is

always larger or richer than any possible summary or representation. This challenges assumptions of predictability, as well as the limits of analysis and articulation.

To actively and boldly consider uncertainty as a potentially fertile research strategy requires including our heart and vulnerability as researchers. Clinical psychologist Les Todres developed the concept of a soulful space, or a “clearing,” that offers possibilities to embrace ambiguity, openness and vulnerability in intimate participation and relationship.⁴⁴ Not only do we need to let go of what we think we know, we also need to risk letting in the new, the unknown, the other. If we assume that we can grasp wholeness, we discard an essential source of freedom that

gives room to perceptions and meanings. It is a kind of freedom that both reveals and conceals, and which co-participates in the event of being. Living on the edge of time I occur as a gathering and am the ‘there’ for the coming together of possibilities and relationships that can be carried forward into the aliveness of something new.⁴⁵

When we dare to go to this place brimming with creative potential, ‘doing research’ becomes life-giving, enhancing and nourishing. Our emergent understandings become participatory, pre-personal and transpersonal. The Taoists referred to this “paradoxical form of knowing (...) as ‘no-knowledge.’”⁴⁶ The heart is the place where such (not-)knowing can be cultivated. Attending to the heart as a place between mind and body, between subjects and between sites, is part of an ever-ongoing exchange of thoughts, emotions and sensations. It can be a scary step into uncharted territory, to include the vulnerabilities of our hearts within our research. Our bodies can provide an anchor, a familiar place for departure and return, if we choose to journey beyond what we are used to and what we think we know.

Conscious, improvised movement and the antennas of the body

Whatever research we do, in effect our bodies are the primary research site: it is through the agency and filter of our researchers’ bodies that questions are asked and data are collected. How can we consciously apply our body as research tool and site of knowing and what role can movement

play to increase this? I use the term 'conscious, improvised movement' (or simply 'movement'), to describe a way of meditating in motion. The body becomes an instrument for awareness and communicating with self and surroundings. No specific training is required, as it can concern everyday movements and gestures, such as walking, stretching, turning, rolling, when done with full attention. This type of movement does not aim for aesthetics or 'bringing a message across' to an audience. It is rather a means for personal exploration in a different way.

The body is a living archive of sensorial, kinaesthetic, proprioceptive information; it is also a vehicle for sending and receiving information. Physical, emotional, mental and spiritual experiences are interlinked, if not inseparable, and movement permeates and connects them all. If one level is addressed, the other levels are simultaneously affected.⁴⁷ Conscious, improvised movement enables an awakening and realigning of these various aspects within ourselves, and it always takes into account our surroundings, including "the embodied presence of others."⁴⁸ Furthermore, such movement can draw our attention to the fact that we are continuously oscillating between and finding our way through "political, personal, social and cosmological realms."⁴⁹ These characteristics not only imply movement, but also make conscious movement a potent medium for discovery and connection.

The skills of conscious, improvised movement can help us to:

solve problems that our limited mind in its habitual patterns cannot; (...) can bring our larger mind to the surface and make it available to consciousness. This can happen when we quiet the will and relax the mind in somatically focused bodywork and dance improvisations.⁵⁰

Through movement we can access a larger 'relational,' 'sacred' or 'universal' mind,⁵¹ which "touches, awakens, and deepens our connection with one another and brings us inside the mind of nature."⁵² This links with the shamanic ways of knowing described earlier. It starts, perhaps, with an acknowledgement of various layers of 'reality.' Dancing with the natural world and spirits, or 'other-than-human-persons,'⁵³ whether they be rocks, rivers, mountains, trees or ancestors, is common in many cultures around the world.⁵⁴ When I dance, I realise I am part of an immense energy matrix

around me. My body becomes both a sender and a receiver, apparently able to cross time and space. By simply paying attention, a relationship of inter-being starts to emerge. This is a two-way experience. First I ask for permission to be in that place, or dance with that specific being. Even though there might not be a 'verbal' response, my body experiences a physical answer that I have learned to interpret. This is different for everyone, and a matter of 'fine-tuning' the unique instruments that we are. In my case, I interpret a sense of opening/warming/soft tingling as a "yes please, be welcome," while I take a feeling of closing/cooling/prickling as an answer of "no, thank you, not now." Sometimes it literally feels as if a drawbridge comes down, or barbed wire appears. If that is the case, of course I honour that and leave with respect. If there is an invitation to continue, it depends on my intention for the specific dance. It might simply be to be present together, it might be a time for appreciation and gratitude, I might offer my dancer's body to the rainforest or an endangered species for a time to express something they want us human-beings to know, or it might be to ask for help and insight regarding a specific issue or question. Whatever the intention, something always happens, whether I feel refreshed by spending some time in the liminal zone between land and sea, experience a playful exchange of joyous co-existence, receive a poignant call to action, or find comfort, solace, encouragement or specific answers to a question. After dancing, I give thanks and ask what I can do in return, and surprisingly often the answer is "come dance with us again."⁵⁵ Just as with any relationship, there is a moment for goodbye and perhaps a "see you next time!"

Returning from this danced shamanic excursion to our academic endeavour, even if such approach would not generate the latest 'data' in itself (although it might!), it allows us to draw much more consciously on our resources of embodied imagination, spatial awareness and bodily intelligence,⁵⁶ informing our research in additional ways. Each of the four experiential layers of body, heart, mind and soul offer different, and yet inseparable routes into understanding. Our personal experience does not stand isolated and alone, but includes, transcends, bridges and mutually interacts with all life on earth, including human and non-human communities. When we dare to let go of compartmentalisation, and apply, for example, shamanic techniques, it becomes clear that realities of other

non-cerebral, non-cognitive forms of knowing permeate all areas of life. However, as our culture favours and emphasises one cognitive modality, we seem to have lost our capacity to fluidly move between other layers of experience. Movement is an ideal medium to re-create a multi-levelled literacy, to (re)discover, deepen understanding and strengthen connections. The body-in-movement provides an essential addition to our mental faculties, one that merits equal respect and training. With its embodied, relational, imaginative and intuitive qualities, movement can support the academic challenge to embrace research that is big enough to acknowledge vulnerability and hold the tension between complexity and unfinished-ness.

Part 3: Alchemy of the soul: towards a new epistemology

To develop an effective approach that deepens our understanding of the continuum between body, heart, mind and soul in a fruitful way, we need to draw on various fields including (but not limited to) anthropology, psychology, philosophy, consciousness and religious studies, environmental sustainability studies, agriculture and neuroscience, as well as dance and shamanism. I propose ‘alchemy of the soul’ as a poetic term to honour the old alchemists who, in their laboratories, combined insights of various fields to work on the integration, synthesis and transmutation of elements.

We are now addressing the implications of soul for epistemology, not just as “a way of knowing the object, [but as] a way of knowing knowledge itself.”⁵⁷ It is essential that we consider the limits to our understanding and can contribute to widening our comprehension. I have discussed three initial steps to include the soul into our epistemic thinking: gapping the mind, acknowledging the paradoxes of the heart and giving space for the body-in-movement within research. We need to attend poetically “to the images in the ideas, the fantasies in the facts, the dreams in the reasons, the myths in the meanings, the archetypes in the arguments, and the complexes in the concepts.”⁵⁸ In order to achieve this, “the researcher has to ‘die’ to the work so that the work can speak through him or her.”⁵⁹ The soul’s way of knowing is a mystical process:

knowing is a backward glance, a way of moving forward with regard for what has fallen in the gap, for what has been left behind, *disregarded*, neglected, otherwise forgotten. (...) As such, research is re-search, a searching again for what was once known and is making a claim upon us to re-turn with re-gard for the sake of re-membering.⁶⁰

The sense of “dying to the work” also includes a (partial) dying to, or a transcending of, specific epistemologies that we may have previously considered as the only truth. This requires letting go of the cognitive as the only infallible source of knowing, and includes a process of mourning its loss.⁶¹

Rather than adding a separate methodology to research, soulful scholarship might inform existing paradigms. It would consider personal experiences, imagery and artistic expressions, and respect subjective, non-rational, intuitive knowing as a source of relevant information. This would infuse existing research approaches, including ‘pure science,’ with additional sources of knowing, leading to a quality of wisdom that does not generally emerge from hard data.

Approaching research in this manner requires fluidity of awareness and attention, openness, courage, and perhaps a childlike curiosity. We need to move with and through denial, resistance, disbelief, ridicule, discomfort and fear of the unknown. As soulful scholars we are not only cognitively literate, but literate on multiple levels. Physically, we engage with research situations, data and written texts in a present and embodied way. We know how to navigate emotions, deal spaciously with uncertainty and failure, and accept that making mistakes is okay. Mentally, we have a strong relationship to imagination and intuition, and realise that we are on an ongoing journey of integration and change. We are equipped to deal with the challenges that that may create. And finally, we realise that we exist in a matrix of information and energy that not only surrounds us, but also informs our research work.

In addition, soulful scholarship requires certain pre-requisites from the academic environment. It will not necessarily offer a safe recipe with guaranteed results. How can we create space for relatively open-ended explorations? There needs to be a general willingness to transcend

dichotomies of self/other, subjective/objective, scientific/shamanic, and move beyond epistemologies that were previously considered to be the only truth. This requires different criteria for validating quality, including a shift from objectivity, via subjectivity to intersubjectivity. A deepening of interdisciplinary collaborations will strengthen a shared search and vocabulary for such 'other' experiences.

This paper has been gestating for years, and even as I re-edit it, it keeps changing. It almost seems to evade structure and scaffolding, and despite my passion for the subject, I have been very close to giving up on it many times. Yes, the soul is a slippery shape-shifter, hard to grasp and impossible to pin down, but isn't that its strength? I try to apply Rabindranath Tagore's spacious invitation to "let [my] life lightly dance on the edges of time like dew on the tip of a leaf," as an adage in life in general, but perhaps *especially* in my research work. Yes, research is serious business, *and* it needs to be airy, spacious and full of wonder as well for the soul to be present. Light a candle on your desk or in the studio, and please join me in dancing an alchemy of the soul. I would love to hear how you get on and how we can collectively strengthen soulful spaces within academia. See you there!

Notes

- ¹ Soulful thanks to Simon Ellis, Vero Benei, Rosemary Cisneros, Henk Kieft, Kerri Cripps, Anne Mette Thøgersen, Maria Hovi, Ya'Acov and Susannah Darling Khan, Iain Lang, Jerome Lewis, Chris Lüttichau, and Charlotte Waelde for fruitful dialogues regarding the topic and/or feedback on earlier drafts of this text. I would also like to thank Christian de Quincey, Jonathan Horwitz, and Stephan Harding who co-facilitated a workshop called 'Soul in Nature.' This life-changing experience at Schumacher College, Devon, returned me to direct and immediate experience of spirit and the mysteries of time, space and the unseen.
- ² Romanyshyn, *The Wounded Researcher*, 6.
- ³ Christian de Quincey, *Radical Knowing*, 136.
- ⁴ Palmer, "Teaching with Heart and Soul," 377.
www.couragerenewal.org/parker/writings/heart-and-soul.

- ⁵ See also O'Malley, "Conceptualizing a Critical Pedagogy of Human Soul."
- ⁶ Kieft, "Soul Loss and Retrieval."
- ⁷ See also Williamson, "Falling in love with Language."
- ⁸ Villoldo, *Mending the Past and Healing the Future with Soul Retrieval*, 28.
- ⁹ Lauzon, "In search of a future;" O'Malley, "Conceptualizing a Critical Pedagogy of Human Soul;" Palmer, "Teaching with Heart and Soul." www.couragerenewal.org/parker/writings/heart-and-soul.
- ¹⁰ Reason, "Reflections on Sacred Experience and Sacred Science." bobdick.com.au/whyar/Reason3.pdf; Wendell Berry, *Life is a miracle*.
- ¹¹ Todres, *Embodied Enquiry*.
- ¹² Romanyshyn, *The Wounded Researcher*.
- ¹³ Landsman, *Requiem voor Newton*.
- ¹⁴ Simpson, *The Healing Energies of Earth*, 10.
- ¹⁵ Bertrand Russell, *Religion and Science*. Famous examples are Galileo Galilei, Giordano Bruno and Baruch Spinoza, even though some scholars state that the opposition came more from their academic colleagues than from the church (such as for example Bergman, "The Great Galileo Myth," users.adam.com.au/bstett/ReligGalileoMyth95.htm; "Giordano Bruno: The First Martyr of Science or the Last of the Magicians?").
- ¹⁶ Adapted from de Quincey, *Radical Knowing*, 240.
- ¹⁷ Capra, *The Tao of Physics*; Zukav, *Dancing Wu Li Masters*; Zohar, *The Quantum Self*.
- ¹⁸ Morris, *Religion and anthropology*, zodml.org/sites/default/files/%5BMorris%5D_Religion_and_Anthropology_0.pdf; Harner, *The Way of the Shaman*; Horwitz, "Coming Home," www.shamanism.dk/soulretrievalarticle.htm; Ingerman, *Soul Retrieval*.
- ¹⁹ Pinkola Estés, *Women Who Run With The Wolves*.
- ²⁰ Ibid., 242-54.
- ²¹ Ibid., 254.
- ²² Gouzouasis, "The metaphor of tonality in artography."
- ²³ Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 302.
- ²⁴ Gouzouasis, "The metaphor of tonality in artography," 11-2.
- ²⁵ de Quincey, *Radical Knowing*, 136-7.

- ²⁶ After de Quincey, *Radical Knowing*, 136-7.
- ²⁷ Ibid.
- ²⁸ van Egmond, *Sustainable Civilization*.
- ²⁹ Umpleby, *Physical Relationships among Matter, Energy and Information*.
- ³⁰ For a useful discussion and critique of the word 'spirits' and his alternative term 'other-than-human-persons' to address the diversity of beings and appearances in shamanic cosmologies, please see Harvey, "General Introduction."
- ³¹ Larson, "Pantheism."
- ³² Bailey, "Animism," 74.
- ³³ Tylor, *Primitive culture*.
- ³⁴ Winkelman, "Shamanism and the Evolutionary Origins of Spirituality and Healing," 62.
www.neuroquantology.com/index.php/journal/article/download/390/379.
- ³⁵ Lee Bailey, "Animism."
- ³⁶ Hume, *Portals*, 1; Lange, *The Nature of Dance*, 66.
- ³⁷ Morris, *Religion and anthropology*, 20.
- ³⁸ de Quincey, *Radical Knowing*, 124.
- ³⁹ Ibid., 138-140.
- ⁴⁰ Ibid., 140.
- ⁴¹ Alvesson and Sköldbberg, *Reflexive Methodology*, 211; Musante, "Participant Observation," 272.
- ⁴² Vysma and Tankink, "Introduction," 6.
www.medanthrotheory.org/read/7118/introduction.
- ⁴³ See for example, Marcus, "What Comes (Just) After 'Post'?" 391.
- ⁴⁴ Todres, *Embodied Enquiry*, 111-2.
- ⁴⁵ Ibid., 113.
- ⁴⁶ de Quincey, *Radical Knowing*, 143.
- ⁴⁷ See for example Halprin, *The Expressive Body in Life, Art and Therapy*.
- ⁴⁸ Csordas, "Somatic Modes of Attention," 138. voidnetwork.gr/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/Somatic-Modes-of-Attention-by-Thomas-J.-Csordas.pdf.
- ⁴⁹ Henry, Magowan and Murray, "Introduction," 256.
- ⁵⁰ Fraleigh, "Consciousness Matters," 57.

- ⁵¹ Keeney, *Bushman Shaman*, 39; Halprin, *The Expressive Body in Life, Art and Therapy*, 105.
- ⁵² Keeney, *Bushman Shaman*, 39.
- ⁵³ Harvey, “General Introduction.”
- ⁵⁴ Other-than-human-persons tend to appear in ways that we can recognise according to our cultural frames of reference, as is argued for example by Young, “*Visitors in the Night*”; and Moss, *Conscious Dreaming*, 246. Similarly, ‘communication’ happens in different ways. It might be understood as language and words in our minds, or appear as images, symbols, colours, sounds or abstract figures – depending on our receptivity. Again, this is a matter of fine-tuning our instrument. There are many studies of worldwide ritual dance practices that engage with the natural world, see for example Sohei, “The deity and the mountain” (nirc.nanzan-u.ac.jp/nfile/886); Ikuta, “Embodied Knowledge, Relations with the Environment, and Political Negotiation.”
- ⁵⁵ For a long time, I thought that “please come dance with us again” was a personal response to my question of what I could offer to spirit in return, simply because I happen to love dancing so much. To my surprise however, shamanic teachers Horwitz and Waldeback reflected in an interview that many of their students receive this request (unpublished interview: “Dancing with the Spirits”).
- ⁵⁶ See also Grau, “On the notion of bodily intelligence.”
- ⁵⁷ Hillman, *Re-Visioning Psychology*, 131.
- ⁵⁸ Romanyshyn, *The Wounded Researcher*, 12.
- ⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 14.
- ⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 13-4, italics and hyphens in original.
- ⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 14.

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Biography

Eline Kieft combines her passion for anthropology, qualitative research methodologies, shamanic paradigms, experiential pedagogies, movement as a way of knowing and her intimate knowledge of the dancer's body. She is Associate Editor of Dance, Movement and Spiritualities as well as a qualified Movement Medicine teacher.

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