

Dancing in multiple bodyminds  
Making sense of experience, mind, body and the self through strategies of embodiment  
in contemporary dance

Master's Thesis  
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## Abstract

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### **Abstract:**

This thesis focuses on the understandings of the body among contemporary dancers in the western post-modern scene. In doing so, it aims to describe the ways contemporary dancers experience thinking, mind language and agency in their bodies. Further, the aim of this thesis is to understand how this affects experiences of self and being. Examining ethnographical examples and the discussions on the body-mind relations, this thesis endeavours to further the understanding of experienced relationships between body, mind and thinking in the West. Additionally it looks at the ways through which embodied knowledge is produced, shared, and evaluated among contemporary dancers. As such, it takes a critical stance towards dualistic notions of mind and body; rational and sensed; culture and nature.

In this thesis, contemporary dancers are approached as a professional category. The ethnographic data was gathered during a two and a half month fieldwork period in Berlin in the summer 2021. The fieldwork comprised of participant observation in rehearsals, festivals, workshops and weekly professional dance classes, supplemented by seven semi-structured interviews with contemporary dance artists. The field notes and interviews were accompanied by auto-ethnographic description. Further, importance for the author's own bodily experience and understanding was granted in building analytical understanding

The theoretical framework of this thesis draws from phenomenology, discussions of body and mind, and theories of personhood. Phenomenological discussions and theories of bodily practice and sensorial anthropology are used to examine how information is embodied in dance practices, and how the idea of embodied knowledge is constructed and shared. The ethnographical evidence suggests that contemporary dancers use strategies of embodiment to articulate, transmit, and integrate meaning and language. In the second part of the analysis, the focus lies on the experiences and conceptualizations of body, mind, thinking and their relations. The experiential concept of "observing while doing" is described and discussed. Finally, this thesis considers what kinds of

notions of self, personhood and agency are attained in the experience of dancing. Here, theories on dividual subjects are used to examine ethnographical findings.

The analysis and ethnographical evidence in this thesis suggest that the experience of a dancing body is multiple and can be altered using strategies of embodiment. The multiplicity of the body, as well as the multiplicities of thinking and mind, are sensed through somatic modes of attention. Further, the expansion of experiential understandings of the body has led to conceptual multiplicity of the body and mind. Finally, this thesis argues that the dancing subjects are dividual in the way that their experiences and expressions are constituted by distinct embodied knowledges from their training, education, dance work, and other environments. The findings of this thesis call for reflection of the body-mind relation and notions of thinking in the West, utilizing knowledge produced by contemporary dancers attending specific perceptual awareness and notions of bodily knowledge and thinking in their work.

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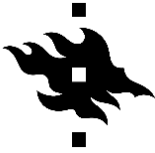
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### Tiivistelmä:

Tässä tutkielmassa käsitellään tanssijoiden käsityksiä ja kokemuksia kehosta länsimaisen post-modernin nykytanssin kentällä. Tutkielman tavoitteena on tarkastella sitä, miten nykytanssijat kokevat ajattelun, mielen ja toimijuuden suhteessa kehoon ja toisaalta kehossaan. Tavoitteena on tutkia tämän lisäksi sitä, minkälaisia käsityksiä itsestä ja olemisesta nämä kokemukset synnyttävät. Etnografisia esimerkkejä sekä keho-mieli -keskustelun keskeisiä näkökulmia tarkastellen tutkielma pyrkii lisäämään ymmärrystä erilaisista kehon, mielen ja ajattelun keskinäisten suhteiden kokemuksista länsimaisissa yhteiskunnissa ja instituutioissa. Tutkielma tutkii kehollisen tiedon tuotantoa, jakamista ja arviointia nykytanssijoiden keskuudessa, tarkastellen näiden kautta kriittisesti dualistisia käsityksiä kehosta ja mielestä, rationaalisesta ja aistitusta sekä kulttuurista ja luonnosta.

Nykytanssijat käsitetään tässä tutkielmassa ammatillisena kategoriana. Tutkielman etnografista aineistoa kerättiin kahden ja puolen kuukauden ajan Berliinissä kesällä 2021. Kenttätyö koostui osallistuvasta havainnoinnista harjoituksissa, festivaaleilla, työpajoissa sekä viikoittaisilla ammattilaisten tanssitunneilla. Tutkielmaa varten toteutettiin myös seitsemän puolistrukturoitua haastattelua. Kenttätyön metodeihin kuului lisäksi autoetnografinen havainnointi ja kuvaus. Painoarvoa kirjoittajan omille kokemuksille annettiin myös analyttisen ymmärryksen rakentamisessa.

Tutkielman teoreettinen viitekehys rakentuu suhteessa fenomenologiaan, kehon antropologiaan sekä teorioihin henkilöydestä. Tutkielman analyysin ensimmäisessä osassa tiedon kehollistamista tanssin praktiikoissa sekä kehollisen tiedon käsitettä tarkastellaan fenomenologian sekä kehollisen praktiikan ja aistien antropologian teorioiden kautta. Tutkielman etnografisen aineisto viittaa kehollistamisen strategioihin, joita nykytanssijat käyttävät artikuloidakseen, jakaakseen sekä integroidakseen merkityksiä ja kieltä. Toisessa osassa keskitytään käsityksiin ja kokemuksiin kehosta, mielestä, ajattelusta sekä näiden suhteista toisiinsa. Lisäksi “tekemisen tarkkailun” (“observing while doing”) käsite asetetaan tarkastelun keskiöön. Viimeisenä tutkielmassa tarkastellaan sitä, minkälaisia käsityksiä itseystestä, henkilöydestä ja toimijuudesta liittyy tanssin kokemukseen. Etnografisen aineiston analyysissä nojaututaan dividaalin subjektuuden teorioihin.



Tutkielman aineisto ja analyysi piirtävät kuvan tanssivan kehon kokemuksesta moninaisena sekä kehollistamisen strategioiden kautta muokattavana. Kehon, mielen ja ajattelun kokemuksen moninaisuus ja monimuotoisuus voidaan tutkielman mukaan käsittää somaattisten huomointitapojen avulla. Lisäksi kokemusten moninaisuus on johtanut moninaisuuteen myös käsitteistössä. Lopuksi, moninaisuuden kokemuksiin pohjaten, tutkielma esittää, että tanssijat ovat dividuaaleja subjekteja, sillä heidän kokemuksensa sekä ilmaisunsa ovat rakentuneet erillisistä kehollistetuista tiedoista, koulutuksista, työkokemuksista ja muista tekijöistä. Tutkielman esittelemän johtopäätökset peräänkuuluttavat kriittistä keskustelua keho-mieli –kahtiajaosta sekä ajattelun käsitteestä länsimaisessa keskustelussa, käyttäen hyväkseen nykytanssijoiden työssään luomaa kokemuksellista tietoa tietoisuudesta, havainnoinnista ja kehollisen tiedon käsitteellistämistä.

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## 1. Introduction

*When dancing changed from being a hobby to being my main profession and field of expertise, it became the lens through which I experience the world (physically, professionally, politically). My personhood and identity are tied to a way of being and moving, which includes a sense of heightened awareness of movement and posture. The entanglement of awareness, sensation and action (dancing) were at the core of my education, which created a sense of personhood that challenges the mind-body split. It is invigorating and quite clear to me that the mind-body distinction is a construct that has infinite varieties, [see Pitarch 2012, 110]. On the other hand, it is clear that my sense of personhood, body and self are formed in an education and profession specific canon of knowledge and bodily practices, thus discursively constructed [see Butler, 1993]. The experience that I have assimilated during and after becoming a contemporary dancer is: I have a specific education and an archive of relational embodied knowledge, that I use in my profession through my body. In all this, my personhood is bound not to my body nor mind alone but to a bodymind.*

Autoethnographic note, Berlin, June 2022.

The excerpt above crystallizes some of the thoughts that occupy me the most when considering my professional identity. In the middle of my anthropology studies, I took on another education and studied for a BA in dance performance, mainly contemporary dance. Since then, I have worked as a dancer, performer, and dance maker, indulging in academical and professional discussions about what dance is and can be. Noticing and being introduced to multiple ways of intellectualizing the dancers work in and with the body, I grew an interest to make an anthropological analysis out of bodily discourses and the concept of embodied knowledge. By embodied knowledge, the dance practitioners and scholars generally refer to knowledge of the body as well as knowledge produced through the body (Oriol, 2019). This concept seemed to refer to something pragmatic and experiential, rather than eccentric. As I began to cultivate the interest of approaching the contemporary dance practices and the dancing body as an

anthropologist, and ultimately after conducting a three-month field work, particular ways of talking and thinking about the bodily and embodied began to emerge.

The research question of this thesis is divided into two interrelated parts:

1. How are contemporary dancers situating meaning, thinking, language and agency in their bodies?
2. What kinds of experiences and conceptualizations of body, mind and self, and their relations, are created through the above?

The interest of this MA thesis is to see how contemporary dancers situate thinking, mind language and agency in their bodies, and what does that do to their sense of being. Throughout this thesis, I am interested in considering the strategies that are built and used collectively in the process of situating. I argue that to situate, in this context, means to map, identify, experience and sense, and to do so, dancers use different strategies of embodiment. These strategies are used in training, creation and are shaped by discourses around *physical intelligence*, or *bodily knowledge*. At the same time, they generate and establish particular ways of conceptualizing thinking, self and agency. Additionally, they require a specific training of awareness, which I analyze through the concept of “somatic modes of attention” (Csordas, 1993).

My aim is to contemplate what is the collection of subjective or inter-subjective understandings of the body among contemporary dancers in the western post-modern scene. How does the relationship with body and mind complexify, when the method, instrument and platform for work is the same body that one senses and experiences their existence in? Throughout this thesis, I aim to follow the expansions of understanding how bodies can be seen as containers or platforms of knowledge and its production. First, my questions will require a brief description of some key concepts and conditions for my research. I will start by defining the contemporary dancer as a professional category in the context of my research. I, as well as my informants, engage with dance professionally through training, making and presenting artistic work and engaging with the professional community. Most of us have a university level degree in dance, choreography or performing arts, some have entered the professional field from another background. The topic of professionalism is an item of discussion and reflection in the field of contemporary dance, and there are structures and institutions that play a big role



in defining professionalism. For example, unions, training centers, arts grants institutions etc. have varying and actively criticized requirements for what a “professional dancer” should have written in their curriculum vitae. Since the aim of this specific research is not to take part in cultural politics or discussions of gatekeeping, I have decided to include in the professional category all people who actively engage in the professional field and through that identify and/or are identified as professional dancers.

It is important to then narrow down my research field to the dancers in the field of western contemporary dance and performance. In this research, I use the term ‘contemporary dance’ to refer to the western tradition of dance that has, since the mid 20’s, developed with influence from ballet, modern and post-modern dance. The contemporary dance educations (located, in the context of my research, in Europe) include contemporary dance, ballet, performance practice, somatic techniques, modern dance, jazz dance and more in their curriculums. Many academic programs also include theoretical education, such as art philosophy, history and dance theory. Western contemporary dance includes many sub-scenes, communities and branches. It consists of training, researching, creating, discussing, and performing. As a field, it contains histories of critical discussions and reflections on, for example, technique, the dancing body, dance history, institutionalization of dance, and the dance itself as a form of art.

Next, I want to shed light to the concept of *practice*. It is a concept that frequently appears in the theory, field data and analysis of this thesis. In anthropology, practice theory has appeared to describe the dynamics between people’s realities and structures which have the risk of, in theory, creating an illusion of timelessness. Practice theories by Marcel Mauss, Michel Foucault, and Pierre Bourdieu, among others, claim that structures are created by people’s practices and vice versa (see Mauss 1973 [1934]; Foucault 1972; Bourdieu 1977). Among contemporary dancers, practice is a commonly used word, and the joke of it meaning everything and nothing at once is well known. Dance practice or artistic practice usually refers to a routine of activities a dance artist does for maintaining and developing their skills, artistic ideas or other work. Routine, in this case, can mean a reoccurring activity or training, a reoccurring theme or, for example, a reoccurring place where the artistic work is done. Dance or artistic practice can be, for example, reading poems while dancing, or a sequence of exercises devoted to exploring one’s digestive system. Some practices lead to choreographic dance works,

others are taught in workshops. Some of them serve just to sustain individual artistic work. In short, practice means something that is maintained and defined enough to be called a practice of its own.

Lastly, I will need to acknowledge the word *bodymind*, first introduced in the opening of this thesis and used repeatedly throughout the text. During my field work, the word was commonly used by dancers and artists when referred to their experience as a whole. In other words, there seemed to be occasions, where the words body, mind, “me” or self were not deemed as accurate. In this thesis, the word *bodymind* is used, in addition to direct quotes, in contexts where it has been apparent in the data and in those analytical articulations where the mere word body would not account for the whole of the bodily experience. The word *bodymind*, then, bridges together words body and mind. The two are many times seen connected via embodiment (Csordas 1990; Bourdieu 1977; Merley-Ponty 1962).

The analysis of this thesis research consists of three consecutive parts. First, ethnographical examples are used to understand how information, images, and imaginaries are embodied in dance practices, and how the idea of embodied knowledge is constructed and shared. The ways of talking about embodiment, embodied knowledge and the body-mind functions are observed. From the practices of embodiment, the focus moves to how the relationships between the body and the mind are deconstructed and rethought through and in these practices. This thesis proposes that the practices of embodiment and the discursive practices within the European contemporary dance scene are at the core of what constitutes a professional dancing body. Additionally, they serve as evidence of rethinking the bodymind and creating other ways of experiencing with and through the body. Finally, I approach these reconstructed ideas of the bodymind with the theories of agency and personhood. I look into how agency is, or agencies are distributed in the professional dancing body and how the idea of personhood is informed by the notion of embodied knowledge and the rethought bodymind.

This thesis is structured in the following way. After introducing the research questions and the central concepts of this research, I will briefly go through some of the relevant research in anthropology of dance and dance research. In chapter two, I describe my

fieldwork in Berlin in the summer 2021. I present the conditions of my research and my key research environments. Next, I go through my methods of gathering data and describe my method of analysis. Chapter three presents the main theoretical discussions in anthropology and phenomenology that support my research and analysis. Next, in chapter four, I apply the presented theories and arguments to my research and interlocutors' accounts. I present my analysis which contributes to the body-mind debate, theories of bodily practices, and to the branch of sensorial anthropology. In chapter five, I sum up the main arguments of my analysis and reflect on the research process and the possible openings for new inquiries.

### The dancing body – anthropology of dance

Dance in the context of ritual and ceremony has been an established object of study in anthropology since 1920's (see e.g., Evans-Pritchard on beer dance among the Azande, 1928). However, despite the entry of the body into anthropologists' field of interest, the research on the moving body has been marginal (Reed 1998). The approach to dance has been connected to its definition, function and meaning in social order and religion. Dance anthropologist Helena Wulff discusses the three categories of anthropological research of dance: the one drawing from functionalist theories; the one concentrated of the choreographic forms; and the one combining the two. (Wulff 2015, 666-667). Interestingly, these approaches to anthropological dance research seem to neglect the agency of the dancing subject, the dancer (Kaeppeler 2000). Later, and perhaps in response, the moving body has been considered in relation to feminist and gender theories since the 1980's which has offered a turn towards observing the moving body in relation to social power and discourse. Dance anthropologist Cynthia Novack, with her study on meaning making in contact improvisation in the United States, proposed a critique towards the dominant conceptualizations of the body within anthropology. (Reed 1998, 520.) Anthropologist Greg Downey has researched the training of Capoeira in Brazil, observing its influence on the bodily perception (2005). Focusing on the traditional Japanese dance, *nihon buyo*, Tomie Hahn (2007) has contributed to the discussion of dance in relation to senses. (Wulff 2015, 668.) It seems appropriate to situate my research in this discussion of dancing as a more experiential activity or practice. Whereas dance in anthropology has traditionally been a category of ritual or performance, I want to propose to look at it as a context for phenomenological

knowledge and information to emerge from. In other words, I want to approach the field of contemporary dance in Berlin (Western Europe) as a context of knowledge making.

The interest in bodily knowledge produced by dancers has been more present among art researchers and dance educators. For example, Leena Rouhiainen has explored how bodily experiences are treated as knowledge, mostly in an educational context. Again, the concept of embodied knowledge, and the discursive importance of it, is brought up, as Rouhiainen articulates the aims of their research: “--[to] substantiate the paradigm shift towards a holistic notion of knowledge and to affirm the body as integral to the process of knowing” (Rouhiainen 2007, 5). In her research, Rouhiainen observed the relationships of mind, body, consciousness and thinking in practices and reflections by a group of Finnish dancers. In the data she presents, the participants of the research are reflecting how they observe thinking taking place in different parts of their bodies (ibid., 89). Relating the interests of this MA research close to Rouhiainen’s, I wish to contribute to discussions of experiential bodily knowledge and bodily thinking both in anthropology and in the field of dance research.

## 2. Methodology

### 2.1 Fieldwork

The fieldwork for this thesis took place in Berlin, where I spent approximately two and a half months in the summer 2021. My time in Berlin was initially structured around two contemporary dance and performance art festivals, Sommartanz and B12, both with a different profile and focus point. In the end, I attended all together five different festivals or events that gathered contemporary dance performers and other body based artists. The festivals were focused on performances from artists based in Berlin or more generally from western Europe. Sometimes a few workshops were included on the festival program (extreme example being B12, which was solely based on workshops of different lengths).

I settled upon Berlin as the site of my fieldwork for two main reasons. First, as the Covid 19-pandemic was still affecting travelling and engaging with local activities, I needed to find a place/city, where dance work could be practiced and visitors would be allowed, at least to some extent. The Berlin-Brandenburg region proved to be a safe place to live in, as the measures against the pandemic were efficient and the number of cases stayed stable during my stay.

Second, the dance scene in Berlin offers a fruitful and versatile ground for research as it is scattered and continuously changing, yet still gathering artists from all over the world. According to Tanzbüro Berlin, an institution mediating between the dance scene and cultural administration, there are approximately 2400 dance artists working in the 30 dance venues of Berlin (Tanzraum Berlin, 23.8.2021). These estimations do not, however, include the big number of contemporary dance artists travelling in and out of the city due to work or training. My own experience as a professional dancer is that the dance scene(s) in Berlin offer a great platform to visit to gain new knowledge or skills, to work or to network and to participate important contemporary dance events. According to some discussions I had during my time in Berlin, the dance scene is, however, fragmented. On that account, I tried to follow the activities of multiple institutions and individuals, mainly through websites, social media and word of mouth.

As my topic is centered around contemporary dance, I excluded many venues and communities from my research. Some of my informants were, however, also active in other dance and art scenes.

During the many festivals, I saw multiple performances and demo performances and followed many moderated as well as organic and spontaneous discussions. I participated in two workshops led by Berlin/Europe based artists. In the beginning of July 2021, I spent four days with a multidisciplinary artist, dancer, and choreographer. The workshop was arranged in the context of Sommertanz 2021 festival. Together with approximately 20 other attendees, I studied the methods of working and the artistic practices of this artist. The days consisted of an almost hour-long movement meditation done with closed eyes, followed by intense physical work, dancing and composing choreography. We worked individually and in group constellations, creating a space of shared experience.

The second workshop I attended took place in b12, a workshop festival extending over July and August every summer. The 4-day workshop was named to portray an interest in conscious and unconscious, and led by a choreographer, dancer and director based in England. There were approximately 20 participants in total, most of them from the U.S.A, enjoying a trip full of dance training in Berlin. The sessions consisted of dance and choreography exercises, improvisation and discussions, where participants shared their reflections and experiences that arose during the sessions. We worked individually and in groups.

In addition to these more specific events, I built a routine of taking weekly morning classes at Tanzfabrik, located in Kreuzberg. 'Morning class' is a common structure for training. In many places (in my hometown Helsinki and likewise in Berlin) these classes are called professional training or morning classes with a lower set price for professionals. Professional, in this context, usually means a dancer with a qualifying education and/or a dancer who works in the field. In Berlin, there are several places or organizations that offer training in the morning/daytime, usually between 10 to 14. I attended morning classes at Tanzfabrik Berlin, which is a production house, training complex and offers a one year intensive, which many dancers attend before applying to a dance education in a university. Morning classes are led by dancers, performers and

choreographers and are marketed with artist bios and class descriptions. Even though the leader of the class is a peer or even a close colleague of the participants, there seems to be a temporal hierarchical structure, where the leader decides the exercises and conceptual entry points for the collective training. For example, on one morning class, the leader made a generalizing statement, moving their arms in a specific, recognizable (to people with a western contemporary dance education) way:

*“--our training has maybe made us like this.”*

Setting the temporary conditions of that specific class, they then continued:

*“That’s equally good, but now we try to do the opposite.”*

The social dynamics of the workshops were more established, being special events and clearly arranged around specific artists. In both workshops I attended, some participants had travelled to Berlin specifically for that workshop. Every day attendance was also expected, whereas the morning classes were open for anyone to join any day of the week.

During different events, I met always new as well as reoccurring faces, and managed to build an understanding of different artistic circles, scenes, institutions and the movements between them. During the festivals, performance events, dance classes and workshops, I did participant observation. I was following and taking notes of the setting of each event, the substance of artistic practices presented as well as the discussions and comments made by participants. Throughout the summer, I was also carrying out participant observation in performance rehearsals of two different groups of artists. During these visits, I was focusing on how the group was talking about their doings and practicing together.

My field notes and observations were accompanied by auto-ethnographic description. As I work as a dancer and a performer, and maintain my own artistic practice, I was comfortable enough to add my own experiences in the data. I was doing auto-ethnography mainly during the morning classes and workshops, where I was observing my experience and my ideas about the body and mind. As the themes of my research were inevitably affecting how I perceived the situations, I decided to aim for as thick description as possible as a method to avoid pre-filtering data. Given the quality of my research questions and topic, I found “thick sensory description” (see Hockey and

Allen-Collinson 2009, 231) a useful approach to my observatory and autoethnographic notes. This meant paying attention to the situations and events, as well as sensory and emotional affect. In both participatory observation and in autoethnographic reflections, I have granted importance (due to my topic and my “insider” position in the field) to my own bodily understanding and knowledge in establishing interaction and building analytical understanding (see Aromaa & Tiili 2018; Oakley 1994). This approach, described as “thick participation” (Samudra, 2008), allowed me to further my understanding of the observed kinesthetic and somatic actions.

I conducted seven semi-structured interviews of one to two hours. About a half of the interviewees were people I had heard of or met before in dance and performance context, the other half were people I encountered while being on the field. They were of different ages and genders, and with different backgrounds within contemporary dance (most having a university degree on dance, performance or choreography). I prepared a set of open questions and topics, going through the interviewees’ relationship to dancing, moving to their thoughts on their body and the body as a concept. I asked them what their experience of the dancing body was and what did they think about thinking. I paid attention to how they used words like ‘self’, ‘agency’, ‘awareness’ or ‘attention’, and how they related body, mind and experience to each other. Alongside the semi-structured interviews, I was constantly engaging in discussions with dancers and artists, some of these talks resulting to be recorded and transcribed. These discussions were a helpful way to gain more insight and information about topics that arose from the semi-structured interviews or during participatory observation.

My research was notably contextualized and affected by the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic. During my first two weeks in Berlin, the city opened after the tight restrictions and a lock down of the second Covid spring. This also meant the opening of theaters and other cultural venues as well as dance studios and training centers. Many of my first weeks’ notes include discussions and utterances about how wonderful it was to see and touch people and dance and move with them after a long time spent in virtual spaces.



## 2.2 Method of analysis

The data gathered during the field work consists mainly of the seven transcribed interviews and two thick descriptions written during the workshops I attended. These are accompanied by descriptions of three rehearsal situations. Additionally, the field data includes more scattered notes from different events and encounters as well as recordings and transcriptions of informal discussions with two more artists I met during my stay in Berlin.

In this thesis, the method of grounded theory has been used to sketch out the topics and themes that arise from the data. The theoretical approach and the research questions of this thesis are consequently informed and shaped by the field work data. After transcribing all data, I started to read through the semi-structured interviews, comparing them and focusing on reoccurring themes, topics and narratives. Through this stage of analysis, I arrived at 12 themes. Those themes are grouped further into three categories: embodied knowledge, language and imagery; experience and the practices of the dancing body; agency and personhood. The themes and categories are, of course, intertwined and sometimes merged, but serve as a useful structure for further analysis. After establishing the thematic structure, other data and notes were situated in the thematic groups and categories, allowing both amplifications of ideas and contrasting observations to appear.

Since my analysis is at some points based on discursive practices connected to the body, mind and actions, I found it fruitful to conduct a further analysis using tools of discourse analysis and language content analysis. Here, I focused specifically on the language shared by my informants and possible conflicting uses of wordings.

### 2.3 Ethical considerations

The ethical considerations in this thesis research are grounded on the Ethics Statement formulated by American Anthropological Association (AAA, 2012). All my interviewees, the partakers in workshops and the dancers leading dance classes or workshops were aware of my additional role as an anthropologist. I was open to discussing the aims and preliminary focuses of my research, and I made sure all informants appearing in this research were aware of my method and how their anonymity would be secured. In this thesis, the names of informants have been changed to gender neutral pseudonyms. I am aware of how my inquiries on bodily experience and expression are closely intertwined with experiences of identity, gender, race, abilities and disabilities. I have decided, however, to limit the scope of this thesis to an analysis of contemporary dancers as a professional category, acknowledging it as a heterogenous and permeated by other societal structures of power.

In my analysis, notes from the field and transcriptions from interviews are brought together in a way that helps to sketch out tendencies and commonly applied conceptualizations, rather than individual stories. Some contexts of previous training and work history have been left in the open in cases where they support or enhance the analysis. My transcribed field notes and interviews are titled according to dates and pseudonyms and are stored on a separate hard drive. Both the hard drive and the analogue field notebooks can be either destroyed or archived.

As my research focuses on contemporary dancers' bodies, feelings and perhaps shifting ways of articulating dancing and bodily experience, I must bring forth some central ethical concerns and my proposals for dealing with them. First, my position as both a dancer and a researcher has proved both fruitful and challenging. The pros of being an active component of my own field have been evident. From the start of my field research and planning, I have had a network of possible informants and established relationships inside the professional field of contemporary dance, in Berlin and elsewhere. This has increased the accessibility of events, gatherings, work situations and spontaneous interactions. I have also had a deepened bodily access to the described experiences through my own history with dance work. For this reason, I have decided to complement my observatory ethnography with autoethnographic notes. My ability to

empathize with my interlocutors' experiences and descriptions leads to a multilayered analysis (see e.g., Marttila 2018). Additionally, the "inside" knowledge or position has allowed me to speak the particular professional language of my field, deepen my focus and gather a rich perspective. However, it is worth reflecting, that the familiarity of the field creates a challenge to recognize "the ordinary" and to make the information accessible and understandable for a wider audience (Marttila 2018, 382; Coghlan 2003).

The autoethnographic method has been discussed and debated widely. On one hand, it has evolved from the development of more reflexive qualitative research, in which the position of the researcher and the effects of their interpretations are openly articulated. On the other hand, autoethnography has been criticized for centering emotional reactivity, facilitating unnecessary self-indulgence, and restricting the scope of academic research. Additionally, the ways of evaluating autoethnographic data have been discussed, with a concern for theoretically weak or sensationalist conclusions. (Lapadat 2017.) To reflect and justify the use of complementing autoethnographic material in this research, I follow Leon Anderson's methodological approach for "analytic autoethnography" (Anderson, 2006). This approach includes the CMR status (the researcher is part of the group under study), analytic reflexivity (active reflection of one's position), visible researcher in the text, dialogue with informant beyond the self (here, my interlocutors), and commitment to an analytic agenda towards the autoethnographic description (ibid.).

### 3. Theoretical background and context

In this thesis, I aim to map the discussions and debates about the body as active and sensing. I look critically into the arguments based on the Cartesian body-mind split and use my research data to sketch critical understandings of the relationship of the two. I begin contextualizing my theoretical approach by focusing on the development of the study of bodily practice in anthropology.

#### 3.1. Phenomenology, practice, and sensorial anthropology

The curiosity for the relationship between body and the mind penetrates anthropological debates of personhood, agency, power and being in the world. In my analysis, I use Tim Ingold's and Michael Jackson's accounts to approach the sensorial experience and knowledge of the (moving) body. Ingold follows an ecological psychologist James Gibson (1979) to challenge the idea of the mind and body as separate and the former being the active organ to process the bodily information and act upon it. Rather, both argue people being organisms, moving wholes overlapping mind and body. (Ingold 2000, 3.) In the analysis of the experience of the dancing body, I use Thomas Csordas' concept of 'somatic modes of attention' to examine the ways dancers use to attend and be with their bodies (Csordas 1993). I focus on discourse theories by Trevor Marchand and Judith Butler, arguing that the sensuous knowledge and bodily awareness articulated by the dance practitioners in this research, are learnt and continuously collectively constructed (Marchand, 2010; Butler, 1993). Further, I compare the accounts of my informants to the discussions to Michael Lambek's twofold approach to body-mind debate (Lambek 2006).

As mentioned earlier, the topic of embodied knowledge and the concepts of thinking body and physical intelligence in relation to dance have been more present among art scholars (see, for example Rouhiainen 2007; Anttila, 2018; Elo & Luoto, 2014).

### 3.1.1 Theory of bodily practice

Tim Ingold offers an account on anthropological debates on perception and cognition, finally arriving to 'practice theory' (Ingold 2000, 157). Similarly, Jackson critically reviews earlier discussions on the body, arguing for 'bodily praxis' as a non-reducible object of study (Jackson 2006 [1983], 330). In earlier anthropological theories of perception, sensorial and physical are separated and even opposed with the cognitive, knowledge, representation and concepts. Through the latter, collective meaning and therefore social and societal realities are constructed. (Ingold 2000, 159). The distinction between the physical body and the thinking mind is thus made clear.

The body was established as an anthropological object of study during the late 1970's. As seen from above, before the idea of relativity of bodily experiences, the body was considered as a somewhat physiological universal (Lambek 1998,). In the theories of the body, the body is, however, still seen as a plain canvas onto which social structure, discourse and meaning is projected. Even though Mauss (1973 [1934]), Foucault (1972), Bourdieu (1977) et.al. made the bodies visible in anthropological research, they still regarded the body as passive, static and detached from the mind (Jackson 2006, 322). In this way, these theories of the body reaffirm the Cartesian division with the mind, language, and semiotics being superior to the moving body. Jackson proposes that the body should be treated as the subject, which would consequently mean that human realities are grounded in bodily practices. That is, movement, habitual patterns, bodily functions, and sensations. (Jackson, 2006, 324). In anthropological theory and analysis, this means treating bodily practices as holders of meaning rather than mere signifiers or representative tools. In other words, formulating a theory of practice.

### 3.1.2 Phenomenology and anthropology

Since the body has been seen as a more active part of meaning making, bodily experience and perception became more centered in anthropological research. Drawing from the theory of embodiment by Bourdieu (1977), anthropologist Thomas Csordas proposes that the process of embodiment and the analysis of perception as a paradigm for cultural analysis (Csordas 1990). Further, he argues that this phenomenological approach allows the research of how people attend, objectify and formulate their own bodies. He uses the term *somatic modes of attention* to describe the culturally produced

and elaborated ways people attend, observe, and experience their bodies and sensations, through which they act in their surroundings. (Csordas 1993.) Bringing the surroundings, the environment, into the theoretical discussion destabilizes the Cartesian division. James Gibson proposes that the mind and the body are actually a whole being which acts in its environment. More interestingly for this thesis research, for Gibson (as for Merleau-Ponty [1962]), the sensations become perceptions of the environment only through movement (through which the visual sensory apparatus can get a more extensive ‘look’ on things). (Gibson 1979.) In relation to Gibson’s arguments, Ingold notes a common distinction between the ‘real’ environment, *etic*, and the ‘perceived’ environment, *emic*. According to Ingold, the differentiation is commonly done between matter (the real environment) and mind (the perceived environment). He, however, criticizes this view on separation between metaphysical and abstract, and argues there being no separation between the mind and the matter. Rather the two are intertwined in the process of dwelling, that is becoming and being with and through the environment. (Ingold 1993, 154.) In my analysis of the experiences of the body, I will approach the interlacing and interdependence of mind and body with this holistic criticism of *emic* and *etic*.

Phenomenological inquiries were formed through focus on the active, sensing and perceiving individual. Martin Heidegger and Maurice Merleau-Ponty both challenge and criticize Cartesian ideas of rational subject (mind) making sense of the occurrentness of things. Instead, they see things becoming sensible through practice, through being available and used and lived with by people. This is also what constitutes what Merleau-Ponty describes a sensing subject (Merleau-Ponty 1962). In other words, things and the environment are perceived by an active perceiver, who makes sense of them through perception. (Ingold 2000, 169.) For Merleau-Ponty, it is first the aware and ‘pre-conscious’ body that is immersed in the environment. This pre-objective experience is, according to him, the very condition for objective thought or sense of self to appear. As Ingold notes, here the body becomes the subject of perception. (*ibid.*)

Trevor Marchand has focused on the importance of the body and bodily practices when constructing discourses and producing collective knowledge. As Ingold and Gibson, he argues that knowledge is ultimately a process that takes place *between* people, that is both minds and bodies, and the environment. Marchand discusses shared movement

practice and performance and the “understanding from the body” in the context of teaching and learning the craft of carpentry. (Marchand 2010.) Interestingly, he brings up the potential of learning a craft or sharing a physical practice in ethnographic research of knowledge: “Learning about practice and practically doing nurtures truly ‘embodied’ discoveries about the temporal, social and physical processes that are inseparable from acts of learning and communicating knowledge” (ibid. 7).

### 3.1.3 Language and discourse

The worlds and bodies constructed and reproduced by linguistic practices are at the core of the arguments for language’s performativity. This approach has been furthered by e.g., Judith Butler, who argues for language’s power to create subjects. For Butler performativity is one way that power is exercised through language or linguistic practices. In contrast to Merleau-Ponty’s primary sensing subject, Butler argues that the subject never precedes discourse. (Butler 1993, 174-175.) To put that into the context of this research, the western discourse around bodies and the body-mind relation is constantly reproduced in the language people, including the dancers, use in their everyday lives. Phrases such as “I can’t get my head around it”, or “gut feeling” reflect the ways we situate rational thinking or intuition in our bodies. The head, that is the rational mind, needs to get around things to understand them; the inexplicable sense of intuition is located inside the body. In other words, the way we speak about bodies makes the bodies that we experience the world through. Further, dancers I followed during my field work seemed to navigate between the western institutionalized linguistic practices and language more grounded in dancing practices. As I will later describe in the analysis chapters, they use language to articulate complexities of bodymind experiences, yet are sometimes restricted by the strong discursive power of the separate words *body* and *mind*.

Butlers accounts are examples of theorizing collective linguistic power over individuals. Although these accounts perhaps oppose the phenomenological take, in the context of this research, this theoretical approach is fruitful for two reasons. First, I argue that the canons of bodily knowledge, aesthetics and perceptions of body in contemporary dance are embedded in the individual practices. Though perhaps considered critically, or

merged with other structures of knowledge, there is an undeniably institutionalized body of language and knowledge surrounding contemporary dance. In my data, this fact presents itself through shared references (casual mid-sentence namedropping or in-depth reflections), and assumptions that one, as a contemporary dancer, shares some core experiences and knowledge with others alike.

Second and perhaps more intriguing reason is the manner of critical deconstructing of language around body and bodily perceptions. Many of my interlocutors articulated an urge to deconstruct the language around body, self and mind. They used words such as “bodymind”, “what-I-call-the-body”, “my different bodies” to create variations of the wordings that are proposed by common language, western medicine, and social theory. These self-generated variations of wordings were used to close the gap between sensations and thinking through language. It seemed, that in many instances, the words “mind” and “body” were not sufficient as such to match my interlocutors’ perception. I will look with more depth into giving language to experience later in the analysis part of this thesis.

### 3.2. Self, personhood and the body

The Cartesian split between body and mind can be thought of as an opposition between nature and culture, between instinct and social or cultural (see e.g. Lock 1993; Ingold 1993). The latter entails the rational, thinking person. This argument has led to a noticeable hierarchical structure between the mind and the body. In our society, there is a further hierarchical structure between rational mind and the sensorial body. The hierarchy is shown in, for example, the tendency to analyze, rationalize and systemize bodily materials and functions into categories in the rational mind (in other words, the mind is observing the body). Another example is found in the context of health care or hospice. The bodily functions can be supported with technology, but once the brain is dead, the person is, according to the Finnish law, dead. The legislation therefore enforces the assumption of the mind or even the person residing in the brain. Thus, even though the classic idea of Cartesian body-mind split is widely and perpetually contested (e.g. Jackson 2006; Farnell 2000), it seems to still create the ground for how the Western knowledge of the body-mind is created.



The sense of self or the person that ultimately resides in the thinking brain enforces also the idea of the person as an individual. That is, an individual thinking subject inside an individual body structure. During my field work, I, however, observed people articulating more complex experiences in terms of situating the self in the body. First, it was common to refer to one's professional background and influence, when describing their way of dancing, or working with dance. Second, the dancers themselves were using dance practices, techniques and profession-specific knowledge to observe sense of agency or subjectivity in various parts of their bodies, and sometimes in-between bodies. In my analysis of becoming subjects (chapter 4.3), I will introduce examples from my field work among the dancers and compare these situations, utterances and practices to theories that challenge the individual thinking person residing in the mind. I will look into the concepts of dividual, porous, partial and permeable personhood, when the personhood includes both the mind and the body. All concepts above refer to a more fluid, even multiple sense of self, body and mind, and I will, in this thesis, use them to support my argument of the multiplicity and dividuality of the dancing bodymind.

In her comparative analysis of gender and body in South India and Melanesia, Cecilia Busby describes two dividual conceptions of bodies and persons. The South Indian gendered body is, according to Busby, "internally whole" meaning that the gender is bound to categorical bodily differences. The gender is actualized in the ability to procreate, and the bounded gendered body is fluid and permeable in its boundaries, allowing gendered substances to flow between bodies. (Busby 1997, 275.) In contrast to this, Melanesian gendered bodies are constructed from dividable gendered parts, and the individual gender is performatively actualized in actions and social relations (ibid. 272). In my analysis of the dancing body, in chapter 4.3, I will compare these examples of dividual bodies to my field work findings and consider how information, bodily knowledge and bodily experiences create whole dancing bodies. In the analysis, I focus on how bodily practices and experiences are embodied, stored, creating dividual bodies of information. Further, I will describe, how me and my interlocutors experience sharing the bodily practices between bodies. In this I will concentrate on Busby's permeable body as well as Karl Smith's notions of porous and buffered selves (Smith 2012). Arguing that persons are always dividual rather than individual, Smith describes how this dividuality and relationality is negotiated through buffered and porous

qualities of a person. Whereas being buffered means to experience a clear boundary between inside and outside of an individual self, the sense of porousness refers to the way people are permeated by their social environment. (Smith 2012, 59-60.)

As I later describe in my analysis, the dividuality of the dancing body refers to how different embodied ideas, techniques, skills, aesthetics and somatic knowledge assemble themselves in peoples' bodyminds. In the chapter 4.3 I will further analyze, how my contemporary dancer interlocutors described some these parts of their dividual selves having agencies of their own.

### 3.3. Further contextualization

There are a few additional contextualizing remarks to be made before the analysis. First relates the topic of this research to anthropological discussion on modern and tradition. As Busby states, discussing the "standard" of western bounded individual, the idea of dividual personhood has been connected to the realm of tradition, rather than to the modern fields of ethnographic research (Busby 1997, 53). Jackson makes a claim that the exclusion of the bodily practice as an anthropological object of study has led, in addition to the body's passivity, to it being "dismembered so that the symbolic value of its various parts in indigenous discourse can be enumerated" (Jackson 2006, 324).

Whereas Busby's remark points to the apparent hegemony of the Cartesian individual in the west, Jackson points out, that the body of this individual is not researched in the same way as its "non-western" categorical opponent.

Most of the comparative ethnographies used in this thesis are dealing with body practices in the non-West. However, the main object of my analysis is a dance practice completely saturated with West-European concepts of aesthetics, art or high culture, professionalism, academic tradition and rationalizations of the body-mind relation. This connects to the second additional remark before my analysis. Many participants and upholders of the field of western contemporary dance and even my interlocutors in Berlin, are actively producing knowledge of their practices and analyses themselves. There is an established academic community supported by universities, as well as other individuals and organizations that publish research made about and within artistic work and dance practice. This thesis is, thus, an attempt to bridge together anthropological research and interest with "local", already existing, reflective knowledge and analysis.

## 4. Analysis

### 4.1 Embodied knowledge, language and imagery

*“All you have to do is to listen and connect with what I’m saying. Keep your eyes closed!” She starts to tell a meditative story of how our body is lying in a black void and meets different versions of our self and how we are filled with a neon green and turquoise light. “And it’s moving through your body, I don’t know how, you will tell me later” Then the light of the story fills the space and she tells that it’s not possible to know what is the boundary between the space and the body. Slowly she guides us to start moving with all this imagery in our heads, still eyes closed.*

*“Keep your eyes closed, your skin is your eyes and you wanna see everything” I start sweeping the floor as if my whole skin would be filled with eyes. I’m not pretending, but actually sensing my skin being filled with eyes. She guides us with practical instructions (“articulate your joints”) and imagery (“you are in water and you are splashing it around”). We transform into characters and animals and move through the room as them, still eyes closed.*

*-- “This meditation was to open up the imageries!”*

The above describes the beginning of each day in a workshop I participated during Sommartanz festival. The aim of the workshops (in addition to gaining professional experience, or the leader getting paid) was to create a common understanding of the workshop leaders work, methods and dancing. The communal understanding and experience were facilitated by being and moving in a shared space, relating to each other’s and the leader’s movements and bodies. The knowledge and information was transmitted from the leader to the participants through moving together, which is a clear differentiating point between sharing dance practices and, let’s say, sharing knowledge on a university lecture. In addition to shared experience of movements, language was used to give instructions and to describe images or abstract guidelines for the participants to think about (see, for example, “*you are in water*” above).

Embodiment, embodied knowledge and bodily knowledge are concepts theoretically central to this research, as well as frequently appearing in the field notes and transcriptions. Embodiment was described, by my informants, to be a process; some sort of absorption and integration of information. Rene mentioned comments from dance teachers they had embodied as habitual movement patterns; Sky gave examples of culturally embodied ways of moving or acting, such as instinctively knowing how to dodge a bike on a busy road. In anthropology, the concept of embodiment has been developed by Marcel Mauss (1973 [1934]) and later Pierre Bourdieu, who states it to be the process where socially constructed knowledge is integrated into the being and habitus of an individual (Bourdieu 1977, 78). Similar to embodied knowledge, bodily knowledge is grounded in the sensorial and bodily experience. Bodily knowledge for contemporary dancers is, however, knowledge or information created and processed *by* the body. One of my informants, Alex, reflects on the position of bodily knowledge:

*“the body itself it’s something that is, I think historically in the west, regarded as less trustworthy or... I mean, there is a hierarchy between body and the umm... reason.*

*Which is so problematic and weird and then, yeah, seeing how intelligent the body can be.”*

Tim Ingold offers a similar note on the historical position of the body as a source of intellect. According to Ingold, the “head over heels” account on thought and knowledge is connected to the historically institutionalized assumption of social and cultural being above nature. (Ingold 2004, 3.) During my field work, many discussions showed that contemporary dancers were deliberately critically examining the prevailing hierarchy between mind and body in terms of knowledge production. Throughout my research, I gathered arguments and notes of the intelligence of the body. It became apparent, that bodily knowledge produced in dancing was something that the dancers were continuously trying to seek and formulate, yet not fix with permanent names or concepts. Additionally, it seemed to be common to have ready formulated arguments to defend the value of bodily knowledge. The bodymind (as I encountered people naming it) approach was, thus, known and felt to be radical, critical as well as criticized. The bodily knowledge and experience seemed to be in the core of what dancers thought made their method of art unique. The bodily knowledge was being researched, described and shared with other bodies. *“Connect the bodily knowledge to your*

*consciousness*”, a workshop leader said, implying the bodily knowledge being something that is always existing, whether one is conscious of it or not. In this first part of my analysis, I look into how bodily knowledge is experienced and made visible or shared through strategies of embodiment.

#### 4.1.1 Strategies of embodiment

In both workshops that I attended during my fieldwork, images, imaginary environments and events were used as motors for movement and creation. In the meditation exercise described above, I felt my body starting to move in different way and having a different (an imaginary animal’s) motivations. This transformation created also an emotional response, amplified by the music and the workshop teachers’ voice. A similar phenomenon took place in the second workshop, where, during a collective warm up, the teacher used images such as “you have bubbles in the chest” or “the floor is hot”. In moments like this, the proposed image was not only visual, but a sensorial trigger. The imaginative idea of having bubbles in my chest created a very actual and physical tingling sense and a bouncy movement along my chest bone.

The images were, however, not only fantasy like pictures imposed on the bodies. During both workshops and in several morning classes, an instruction would be articulated in a form of describing a three-dimensional somatic image. We would be asked to imagine how the space in the hip joint rotates in its socket, or how the shoulder blades slide, giving more length to the arms. The most evident so-called transmission of image during the workshops and classes, was the showing of a kinesthetic or postural forms that the participants are expected to copy. In other words, the leader of the workshop would demonstrate a shape, form or a movement, and the class participants would try to match their bodily forms with it, using visual cues to orientate parts of their bodies (left hand is higher than the right, right knee moves right, etc.). This kind of learning of movement is perhaps familiar to anyone who has attended a dance class, and it serves as a good ground for understanding how the transmission of image can be then complexified with additional information (for example, noticing the weight shift around ones sit bone when lifting a leg).

Embodying images, concepts and ideas seems to be one of the strategies of embodiment in dancing or dance based artistic work. The images, ideas and instructions are used to create sensations and experiences or to direct the dancers' attention to a specific place or quality in their bodies. Many times, I noted an explicitly stated urgency to "find a new way of moving", "become more aware" or "break out of movement habits". Disassembling the concept of habitus in the context of Kuranko initiation, Jackson describes how the habitual relations between ideas and bodily experiences can be broken to enforce new experiences. Environment changes can disrupt the habitual patterns of thinking and sensing, creating changes in bodily and mental disposition (Jackson 2006, 327.) In the workshops, morning classes and during artistic work, I observed how the environment of the dancers would be altered through imagination ("*you are in water*"; "*the floor is hot*"). This would in turn alter the bodily disposition. More somatically or conceptually, the bodily environment of the dancers could be altered. This included the imaginaries of different kind of bodies (*being an animal; being light or heavy; being an energetic field*) or enforcing a specific bodily awareness or sensitivity ("*feel your fingertips move in space*"; "*move from the connection of head and tail*").

Using imagery or the imaginary as a basis of embodied experience has, thus, some sort of a transforming capacity. Jackson describes how the bodily patterns and practices are transformed from domain to domain. Jackson's ethnography focuses on how Kuranko initiation ritual transports individuals from domain to domain (from male to female, youth to adulthood, bush to village). The bodily dispositions of each domain are played out in a mimetic way, which, according to Jackson, results in individuals gaining multiplicity of bodily, social and experiential information. This information is not objective nor necessarily verbal or conceptual. Rather, it is experiential, bodily and embodied. (Jackson 2006, 328.) Similar process takes place in the events of dancing. As the partakers or classes or creation processes temporally submit to the domain of information proposed by the leader (or, in some cases, the artistic interest), they might mimic movement and embody instructions, ideas or images from another dance practitioner. In this moment, their own habitual patterns (formed by training background, education and preferences) are disrupted, complexified and further multiplied. Figuratively, imagery serves as an inspiration or a reminder of an experience: imagine that you are in your favorite place. How does it feel? Can you

remember how you move in that place? In practice, embodied imagery actually alters the physical experience itself. The images and imaginary situations are used to make the body respond and therefore move in a way that would not perhaps be attained with other strategies of creating movement.

The knowledge and experience produced when dancing, is thus a collage of individual sensorial events and an environment of information that can be altered by introducing imagery, instructions or imaginary event, places or milieus. As Trevor Marchand notes, in his research on apprenticeships, creating certain knowledge is always happening through experience and in relation to others and the environment (Marchand 2010, 11). In this way, knowledge is a “situated and inter-subjective practice” (ibid, 7). Marchand discusses “knowledge beyond language” among different craftspeople, and describes how learning, sharing and making knowledge is grounded in the bodily practice. Without practical or bodily engagement, the apprentice or other partaker is left with a mere representation of a knowledge or a skill. Moving together (for example in dancing) will instead create a ground of shared knowledge from between subjects into an individual sensing perceptions (ibid, 12). In other words, the skill and knowledge is created, learned and crafted together through collective bodily practice.

In the field work situations described in this chapter, the bodily practice approach to learning and creating new knowledge is inevitably clear. During the workshops, it would have not been enough for me or other partakers to listen to the leader’s meditations and artistic proposals while sitting still. Nor would it have been fruitful to watch them work on their own dance practice, or imagine how it might feel to move or dance in water. Rather, to create knowledge, shared and individual, we had to embody the proposals and work through the environment of information with our bodies dancing, gaining new bodily responses to be stored in our bodymind. Later, in the chapter 4.3, I will discuss in more depth the ways dancers store these bodily responses.

Although the bodily knowledge has been conceptually separated (e.g., by Marchand) from language based cognition, language is still central in the strategies of sharing embodied knowledge. In the morning classes and other situations of collective practicing, language and articulations of movements and experiences were used to share, and perhaps teach those to other people. In the workshops, text, language and

writing were used to make notes, reflect and to create more dance material. In all cases, language was used to articulate experience as precisely as possible. After one morning class at Tanzfabrik, I followed two dancers discuss a teacher the other had taken classes with. The dancer told how the specific wording of things would make them learn technical skills in a new way. New applied language is again an example of transformation of the information environment where the individual is making sense of their bodily practice. As in Jackson's examples of Kuranko initiation, new ways of explaining a movement create a new bodily response, leading to new ways of understanding (Jackson 2006, 327). Similar phenomena would take place in morning classes, where teachers would apply new wordings or articulations to explain a sense of movement to different people. During our discussion about teaching and sharing dance, Alex noted:

*“So it’s also very, it becomes also kind of social practice in a way, like how can you open ideas to other so that they can connect and contribute to that.”*

There were, however, different ways to articulate instructions or sensations in language. The instructions could be based on imagery, as seen above, or consist of quite pragmatic and detailed sensorial descriptions, such as:

*“-- ‘do the thing when you shake and you feel that kind of weird fractal kind of vibration that could look like a fluid crystal ripple around your chest’*  
(Sky)

Giving language to experience was also a defined tool of its own to create and develop artistic work. In many interviews, my informants discussed how they would use writing alongside their body based artistic practices. This would mean writing about a session they had had, or writing an instruction (a “score”) to be then explored through dancing. Being precise with language is a subjective aim in this practice, since it is their own experience and sensations, that the artists are giving language to.

The tool of articulating dancing and experience is also used in a clearly collective manner. In the more explicit teaching situations language is used to share a specific experience or as instruction for exploration. In these instances, many wordings are clearly connected to institutionalized canons of knowledge within contemporary dance. In practice, this means using common names of moves or shapes, thought to everyone during their education or other training. Common, well known references were also



used; for example, famous quotes by artists and choreographers. This, again, would create a certain environment of information that, according to Marchand (2010, 11), would influence the knowledge that would be produced or developed in the class or during session.

In the rehearsals I followed, language and articulations were formed, refined and critically considered in a more collective manner. In a group rehearsal with three dancers and a choreographer, this kind of collective articulation seemed to be in the core of creating a common understanding of the artwork. The group of dancers rehearsed for a 30-min session and then sat down to share their experiences, troubles and reflections. The discussion would follow always the same pattern: one of the dancers would verbalize a thought, and the others would then re-articulate the thought over and over again, until everyone in the room had their own articulation of the original thought. In this manner, they would all arrive in a similar bodily understanding of an experience, just with different words. After a while, they would agree on doing another session “*with these thought in their body*” and giving attention to the ideas they had discussed. One of the dancers had joined the process later than the others, and complained: “*I don’t have it in me yet, and I try to think about it with my head*”, as if the information would be more trustworthy after it had been fully embodied.

This valuation of information could be analyzed going back to Merleau-Ponty’s sensing subject and Marchand’s idea of representation. The dancer in question was analytically thinking about the instruction that they had been given while dancing, probably to remember it better, since they were new to the process. Before fully embodying the instruction and giving space for the sensing subject inside the task, they were performing a representation, which, in this case, was of lesser value. This moment was particularly interesting for my fieldwork and this thesis, since it captured the inability of the body-mind separation to account for the experience me and my interlocutors have when dancing. However, it made clear how attached dancers are to the linguistic models when describing these experiences: the thoughts were to be put into their body, and not to be thought about with the head (mind). Consequently, it seems that the body-mind separation exists, at least linguistically, and it corresponds to a separation of bodily knowledge from a critical or analytical mind, which I will describe later in the chapter 4.2.2

#### 4.1.2 Dialogue of body and mind

The strategies of embodiment such as copying movements, embodying articulations, or observing one's body in an imaginatively altered state or environment seem to be based on assumptions of a close relation between body and mind. My interlocutors Jess, Alex, Asa and Rene all talked about a dialogue they have with their bodies or a dialogue they experience between mind and the body. Jess, for example, described taking their body for a walk and discussing with them as a way to understand and articulate experiences. Dialogue as a word proposes a two-way communication, which, I argue, is crucial for understanding the experiences of embodiment and bodily knowledge among contemporary dancers. The strategies of embodiment, described above, seem to be processes where the mental, verbal, imaginary and conceptual inputs are used to alter physical and sensorial experience. On the other hand, the new experiences and sensations provoke new information, language and ideas, which are then talked about or written down as part of an artistic practice or learning situation. Asa described the relation between information and body:

*“I experience language and, you know, I was talking about these language thoughts that happen... and I those kind of effect on all these different parts of my body, what I'm thinking has an effect, and also I've experienced words or language arising from different parts of my body and not just from my head, like from all different parts.”*

As seen from the quote, the relation between language, thinking (mind) and the body is reciprocal. In some discussions, people stated that the reciprocal relation is dependent on consciousness. The concept of consciousness is, of course, a vast and debated one, but for my informants, it seemed to refer to the ability to sense and observe. The consciousness was discussed in the workshop at b12 festival, where we were performing short solos for each other.

*“did you get feedback from the eye contact?”*, the workshop leader asked a participant, after they had performed a partly improvised solo in front of the others. At one point during the solo, the participant focused their gaze directly towards audience members. *“yeah it grounded the thing and made it more concrete”*, they responded.

In this context, the consciousness connecting body and mind in a dialogical relation, meant the ability to make an active choice of gaze during a short performance. A conscious change in the circumstance of performing (having direct eye contact instead of a more habitual softer gaze) changed, in Jackson's term, the environment of the bodily practice, which then raised a new experience of concreteness. The dialogical and reciprocal approach to the relation between body and mind seems to underline the importance of sensation (such as experiencing direct eye contact), for it is the sensations that generate new ideas and concepts. "*My access to consciousness is through sensation, it's not, again, it's not a thought pattern*", Sky once described, affirming this observation. Though body and mind are affecting each other mutually, it is the bodily patterns that are in the focus of strategies of embodiment. They are actively observed, transformed, shared and given language to in doing so.

Jackson argues, building on Merleau-Ponty's idea of pre-objective bodily experience (Merleau-Ponty 1962), that bodily experiences and actions should be looked at as experimental truths, that cannot maybe be put in words (since words are semantic, pre-determined and therefore never truly accurate), but are nonetheless very real. Interestingly, in the case of contemporary dancers, these experimental truths are also shared through words and language. However, the main condition for sharing ideas is to use language to facilitate shared experience in a shared space. "[B]odily practices are always open to interpretation; they are not in themselves interpretations of anything", Jackson notes (Jackson 2006, 255) Observing the practices and work of contemporary dancers, it seems that the strategies of embodiment help dancers to engage with each other's' experiences, and to create a common sense of bodily knowledge. It is not enough for a workshop leader to describe their experience of dancing or moving, but they try, by articulating and re-articulating instructions, trigger a similar experience in the other body. The instructions, for their part, are a product of conscious sensing, writing practices and giving language to one's own experience. In other words, the bodily knowledge is made perceivable and shareable for others

The idea of dialogical relationship between body and (thinking) mind ties together phenomenological approach and embodied discourse theory. Neither is, however, placed as superior to the other. Rather, as I have described above, both approaches

describe different parts of the continuous formulation of bodily knowledge. Jackson's phenomenological take on experiential truths relate to how my interlocutors describe getting feedback from their sensed body. On the other hand, the power of language in creating sensations and experiences is recognized and utilized. In this way, the individuals are subjected to language and wordings to provoke new experiences, bodily qualities or ways of dancing. In one way, the performativity of language is not transforming a social structure (Butler 1993, 171), but a structure of modalities that create the sensorial truth of an individual, or a collective, if shared. This happens both consciously, as in many of the practices I followed during my field work, and in more implicit ways that reproduce canonical knowledge of dancing bodies through assumptions, technique and aesthetics.

The same applies in practice. The strategies of embodiment and the notion of bodily knowledge serve as both the evidence and the tools for deconstructing and rethinking the body, mind and their relation in the dancing body. The dialogical idea of the relation between body and mind challenges the idea of one of the two being more important in the dancers' experience. Rather, the experience of the dancing body seems to be a more holistic one, with intersections of embodiment, thinking and sensing.

## 4.2. Experience of the dancing body

In this subchapter, I look into how the practices of embodiment are intertwined with the sense of body, mind, thinking and self. I will consider how the body and its dialogical relationship to the mind are experienced and described, among my informants. Further, I look into how thinking is situated into and between these two. With examples from my field data, I will demonstrate how the Cartesian hierarchy between the mind and the body is contested and complexified through dancing and dance related practices (e.g., choreography, performance). It is, however, important to first consider the complexities of the dancing body itself.

### 4.2.1 “What is then the body, for you?”

Looking at the different ways of talking about the body, presented in my data, one can see at least two conceptually distinct ideas of the body. On one hand, the body is a container, a shaped, biological thing that stores, holds and supports organs and other bodily matter, as well as non-material aspects of people. During my fieldwork and interviews, I was deliberately asking the question: “What is then the body, for you?” During conversations and interviews, I brought the question up after first discussing dancing, and experiences of embodiment. The word *body* had always been present in articulations connected to these topics, and it seemed to refer to multiple things or meanings. After describing the need to work against separation of mind and body, and articulating different needs and motives of different body parts (heart desires, nose smells), Shae, a dancer with a long career working with choreographers and teaching, answered my question:

*“It [the body] is a place that we are living inside this life, it’s a physical container, for me... that my soul can get expressed by/through it.. hm... yeah. It’s a house”*

Similar to Shae, a few of the other interlocutors described the body as a container, that stores the self and accumulated experiences of the self. Asa, for example described the body to be “*all this, this, this matter that is made of cells that I [Asa] kind of locate my sense of self within*”. It is, however clear that the more than having clear, concrete or impermeable walls, this container is experienced to be, in addition to a vessel, a field of

contact into the other-than-self. The container body seems to not only encase, but also determine how the world is experience through and with it. This idea is further supported by my notes from the morning classes and workshops, when physical exercises were described or instructions given. An additional remark “—*what ever that is in your body*” was uttered so habitually, that it could be seen as an established expression for acknowledging different bodies, backgrounds or interests the participants had.

My interlocutors’ accounts and field notes indicate that though maybe seen as a physical container, the body is unquestionably active, a subject. Rather than being a canvas that is molded by outside forces, techniques or aesthetics, like the Maussian and Bourdieusian (Mauss 1973 [1934]; Bourdeau 1977) habitus-theories would suggest, the body is sensed to be actively facilitating its own being and doing. This aligns with the choice made in this thesis to apply Jacksons arguments for the theoretical approach of treating the body as the subject of realities and actions (Jackson 2006). According to Jackson, human realities are grounded in the bodily practices, which is also apparent in the research data. As seen above, the body is named to be something the world is lived, experienced and perceived through. Further, the reality of the body itself is reflected through bodily practices, such as moving or sensing its “own” activities. Jess, a dancer and a choreographer, reflects when discussing why the body is many times, according to their experience, treated as a passive structure, and argues: “[*It*] is not passive cause it’s actually working, they are working by themselves, like the digestive system”, The functions of the digestive system are, here, treated as activities of their own, in other words, independent of other doings or activities present in the body.

On the other hand, this kind of physical, although active, body seems to be only one side of the experience. The informants consistently refer to the body as a sensing whole that is to be explored not only in the realm of physicality. “-- *I do have this feeling that there are other aspects of body that are not matter*”, Asa thought further short after they described the matter-made-of-cells aspect of the body in the quote above. During my interview with Alex, a choreographer who engaged with dance practices after completing their first university degree, described that they experienced their body as something they can be close or less close to, and as something they can make discoveries in. I asked about their relationship to the body, they said it is multiple:

*“—on one hand, it’s like aa... yeah... coming closer to a kind of an energetic body that umm ... that is starting to do and creates its own kind of intelligence.”*

The concept of an energetic body came up in other interviews. Additionally, Asa mentioned a sense of “*social body*”, and Sky listed five different “*evolutionary bodies*”, all of them apparently representing a specific sensation or an experience of a body. Though the five bodies were an outcome of and specific to their own practice, artistry and method of teaching, similar remarks of, for example, the “*feeling body*” or “*the energetic body*” were mentioned in other contexts during my field work. During the first of the workshops I attended, the leader described an “*available body*”, which seemed to refer to a specific state where new kinds of movement or performance qualities could come up. During the workshop, we used meditation, dance exercises and writing to come closer to this *available body*. It was not, however a matter of transforming our body into another kind of body. Rather, the leader of the workshop guided us to find the available body under and among the other bodies we were experiencing the world through. They spoke about taking away layers to find the available body, sometimes stepping back and watching us dance, shouting: “*this is the available body.*” As a dancer, I experienced the available body as not identical to but rather connected to my physical body. It was, again, a state or an energetic body to experience the world through, alongside the other body structures.

Through education and professional experience, dancers gain high kinesthetic sensitivity, which is, in this case, turned inwards in order to perceive the reality and existence of the body. This sensitivity towards the physical and other named or explored realms seems to create a sense of the bodily experience as multiple. There was no explicit sense of contradiction when my interlocutors talked about the body as a physical structure and later described other, for example, “*mind bodies*” or more than physical bodies. Thus, it is perhaps safe to assume that the concept of body is (for the field me and my interlocutors represent) expanded, manifold. In other words, body is multiple at once. The multiplicity is described in various ways. As seen above, Sky talked about five evolutionary bodies, some others talked about different layers in the body, some about physically sensed and the non-sensed aspects of the body.

The expansion of the body (from one to multiple), and especially the differentiation between physically sensed and non-sensed, can be considered in relation to Gibson's and Ingold's critique on *emic* and *etic*. The *etic*, "real" environment, in this distinction, refers here to metaphysical realities where humans be and act in, in other words: matter. The *emic*, perceived environment refers to the perceived reality, that is, in Ingold's argument, the mind. (Ingold 1993, 154). In the last chapter I described how the informants spoke about the dialogue between body and the mind, which could imply the two being ultimately distinct, as the *emic-etic* arguments suggest. The informants' articulations led me to consider the construction of the body as separate of the mind. It is, however, apparent that the dialogical relation described is very much a connecting phenomenon, rather proving that the two are equal and intertwined parts of a whole. This is suggested also in the way my interlocutors described the different bodies they experience, sense or believe in. To build this argument, I will start by, again, looking at the Cartesian body-mind split. The body-mind split is built on the idea of the *emic* physical body (nature) and the *emic*, non-physical, abstract mind (rational, culture) which creates meaning out of perception. Now, if the idea and the sense of the body is expanded to include more abstract, intelligent and active aspects, the duality does not hold. The body is not made of mere passive matter, but is even thought to have aspects more than matter (as Asa notes above). Similarly, it is the different bodies that can create meaning, knowledge and reactions in dance.

To provide ethnographic examples, during one morning class in July 2021, we were practicing a piece of choreography. The teacher was looking at us who tried to understand a set of steps after an off-balance lean. "*Just fall, and the body will figure it out*", they said repeatedly. In other words, it would be the body that was perceiving, analyzing and making decisions in that moment, through movement. Another day, during a session in a dance studio with a colleague of mine, we agreed to "*just see what the body desires to do*". According to my field notes and observations, it seems that dancers are not treating their body as *etic*, a biophysical environment they live in, nor an *emic*, an inner field of meaning or abstraction. Rather, the two aspects intertwine, and the body (or multiple bodies) is something to live and work through. The body is perceiving and moving according to the dance space and the possible instructions. Ingold describes a similar process of perceptual knowledge of the body in walking.



He describes how the feet are continuously tuning their movements in relation to the ground:

*“Indeed it could be said that walking is a highly intelligent activity. This intelligence, however, is not located exclusively in the head but is distributed throughout the entire field of relations comprised by the presence of the human being in the inhabited world.”* (Ingold 2004, 18.)

As I have described throughout this chapter, dancers seem to recognize the intelligence of the body in a similar way than Ingold’s theory, acknowledging reactivity, the body’s ability to uphold vital functions, as well as its “own” desires. Further, the variety of intelligence and sensations seems to create a sense of multiple bodies.

The analysis in this chapter and the inability to ultimately break the distinction, renders clear the all-encompassing influence of language. Throughout my fieldwork and throughout this analysis chapter the words body and mind remain distinct. Exceptions were formed, in the field, when a person wanted to underline the holistic experience of the two, or the problematics of the distinction. In those instances, words like, “bodymind” or “my whole being” would be used. It was, however, most common to use the words “body” or “my body” and “mind” or “head” separately, even with an added anecdote of the two being connected in a dialogical relation. It is, consequently, worthwhile to look at some theoretical discussions on the linguistic formation of bodies.

In her analysis on constructing gender and gendered bodies through embodiment, Butler points to the discursive power that dictates the language around bodies. Further, the historically reproduced discourses are in the core of performatively constructing bodies and realities. (Butler 1993.) However, whereas Foucault argues that the discursive power is what constitutes the subject (Foucault 1977), Butler describes, developing Austin’s concept of performative utterances (Austin 1955), how linguistic practices and the historical canons they produce, create conditions *for* the subject (Butler 1993, 8). In other words, the materiality of the body cannot, according to Butler, be reduced to power or discourse. Rather, the linguistic practices and discourses are imposed on, used and embodied by subjects (as one can see in the descriptions of embodying language in chapter 4.1.1), but there is perhaps room for conflicting bodily experiences, acts, linguistic truths and resistance (ibid.184-185). Accordingly, the perhaps restraining

language that my interlocutors used might be reproducing the discourse on the body-mind split, but it is not necessarily constituting the experiential realities of the bodies. The language acts as a mediator of experience (Vasterling 2003, 207), but has its limits of expression, which were repeatedly referred to in discussions during my fieldwork. For example, Sky expressed their frustration towards the incapability of language to, sometimes, capture what is happening in the dancing. After a while, they came to describe their desire to articulate experiences:

*“I’m really dedicated to that actually, and even if people stumble on trying to articulate, I always say ok use sign language or, let’s try to articulate that so that the things we put in the text -- that we actually find the language.”*

It seems, then, that it is the very incapability of the common (English) language to perfectly account for bodily experience, which proves the complexity and intelligence of the body. This complexity, intelligence and even sensation of multiplicity are articulated in experiential knowledge. As Rene noted after one morning class, where we would keep on repeating physically challenging moves in order to understand them:

*“I was impatient to talk about things or to understand, I wanted to experience, I prefer to climb on the tree and fall instead of thinking how to do it (laugh).-- we have so much technique and muscle and knowledge, if you fall you can continue moving.”*

It is possible, then, to look at the used wordings as examples of negotiating between hegemonic discourses and more locally or experientially formulated knowledge or language. The dancers are not restricted by the “normative” language in their experiences during dancing, which leads to new formulations, such as “the bodymind” or “the energetic body”, or to collective decisions to “not talk about it and just do” (a common phrase during both workshops, perhaps to save time, or perhaps to give emphasis on experiential knowledge). Sometimes, the dancer might feel the ability to relate to the body and mind being, at least, conceptually distinct, and use the separate words “mind” and “body”, with a critical anecdote or not.

When the distinction is not actively contested through language, it is, however, clear that the hierarchy between the thinking body and the thinking mind is balanced into an equal relationship. In the next chapter, I will focus on one aspect of this equal

relationship that clearly stood out from my field notes. The “observing while doing” seems to be a profound example of dancers’ trained awareness that bridges body and mind and upholds the equal dialogue.

#### 4.2.2 Observing while doing

Thus far I have described how the contemporary dancers I followed during my time in Berlin utilize strategies of embodiment to create and get in touch with a sense of embodied knowledge. Further, I have touched upon the experienced interconnectedness and experiential proximity of body and mind. In chapter 4.2.1 above, I focused on the experiences and conceptualizations of the body among my interlocutors and other dancers I met in Berlin. As I concluded, both the concept and the experience of the body seem to be multiple and context dependent. Additionally, language is used both to articulate the multiplicity and complexity of the body, and to alter the experience of it (see chapter 4.1.1). Next, given the body as multiple, the goal is to further analyze the relationships between mind, multiple body and thinking. In this chapter, I aim to describe the different thinkings contemporary dancers situate in their bodymind, making a difference what they would call the rational mind and the mind of the body or bodily thinking. I will then consider Michael Lambek’s take on multiplicity of body and mind and attempt a comparative analysis with his accounts on Malagasy spirit possession and my field research.

During my field work, I gathered accounts and descriptions on how they perceive the various aspects of their bodymind. Additionally, I took somewhat regular autoethnographic notes on how I, as a dancer and, for example, partaker in a morning class, would experience perceiving my bodymind. Soon I came to realize that both my own notes and my interlocutors’ accounts pointed towards a specific kind of awareness that will, in this thesis, be called *observing while doing*. Observing while doing is clearly distinct from observing what has happened. For example, Val described this awareness as being very conscious of what they were doing at each moment, gaining physical memories of experience. Observing while doing, then, refers to a simultaneity of actions, and as Alex describes their feeling when dancing: “*you will encounter where you are right now*”. Further, as I will demonstrate, observing and doing are affecting each other in dancing. Observing, here, does not mean merely putting words to or

analyzing actions, but rather having an awareness and an ability to react through bodily thinking. The doing, for its part, stands here for both internal and somatic sensations and movements, and movements in space. I will now describe and analyze two different ways of observing while doing that appeared from the field work data.

In almost all interviews, the informant spoke about an outside gaze or an out of the body experience that would take place when dancing or performing. This would mean a sense of observing oneself while doing things. The observant perception seems to be able to create clear visual and experiential memories of dancing and performing and to make live decisions while in a middle of doing. Some informants describe the outside experience as a very concrete sense of seeing oneself from outside. Alex and Rene described the following experiences:

*“--having like this double experience of experiencing my own body when moving and then also seeing the body--”* Alex, on dancing in the studio.

*“--like I’m watching myself from a satellite mode, that I literally see everything that happens on stage and with myself, -- sometimes I can go above myself like bird view”* Rene, during a discussion of their performance career and experience.

One interviewee, Shae, named this experience to be something that they have practiced and worked on as an artist. As we were sitting down, having a discussion, they stated that they are experiencing this outside view *“absolutely all the time. -- I see our situation, I see that we speak from up, really.”* They then repeated that this skill was something completely dependent on practicing it.

The observing while doing through an outside gaze seemed to be crucial also in group rehearsals, in choreographic work and when improvising. One afternoon, I joined a group in their rehearsal for a performance that was going to have its premiere in one of the dance festivals I was going to attend. The working group consisted, on that day, of three people: the choreographer, another artist, and a choreographic assistant. Both the choreographer and the other artist worked as performers in the coming piece, which meant that the choreographer was evaluating and making decisions about the art work

as well as being in it themselves. They would practice through their material for them both to remember it and for the choreographer to be able to perceive it with the outside gaze. Only after working for a good while relying on the sense of seeing the space and the composition from this perspective, the group decided to film the material, to have a precise sense of how it looked. An autoethnographic note from the second workshop I attended portrays a similar active utilization of this method of observing while doing. During the second day of the workshop, we had a task of performing a solo based on a story that another person told us. With only some minutes to prepare, most of the solos were improvised on the spot. During performing my solo, I made decisions move in a diagonal line through the space, and experienced a bird eye view perception of myself. The bird eye view, or the outside gaze, made it possible to me comprehend how I was positioned in relation to other things in space: the walls, the audience, the door, the curtains.

It seems, however, that in addition to these visual, outside gaze based modes of perception, the observing of doing happens also in a haptic and/or somatic level. This kind of observing while doing seems to be at the very core of the experience of dancing:

*“if I would define dance it’s probably being aware of movement in time and also the inner processes you go through“*, Val said when I asked what dancing was to them.

In other words, the ability of observing while doing is something that differentiates dancing and dance practices from other, more mundane ways of moving. Other informants also described, in different wordings, the ways they would observe physical sensations continuously while moving. One would feel the movement from inside their thigh, another one was talking about feeling the cognitive effect of other people’s gazes on their body. This awareness seems to thus be happening simultaneously in the body and the mind, proposing that their complete distinction is, again, perhaps too rough a thought.

It is important to note, that the awareness described here is, again, seen as something to be attained through training, education and continuous practicing of dance. Similar to what Shae noted above (the double experience being a result and output of practice), Asa described how they think their dance education was a key factor in creating the

complexified awareness. As they had been trained to look at things choreographically and see movement in less obvious places, they had also been trained to deepen that awareness towards their experience.

The concept of observing while doing is comparable to Thomas Csordas's theory of somatic modes of attention. These modes, according to Csordas, refer to the ways people understand their bodies and bodily experiences, and to the ways they attend their inner bodily experiences. Additionally, the somatic modes of attention are also central in the way people situate themselves, through and with their bodies, in relation to others. Csordas connects this with the ability to understand and embody others' experiences. (Csordas 1993, 138-139.) In his ethnographic analysis on healing practices of charismatic Christianity in North America, Csordas describes how the somatic modes of attention are linked to culturally defined "kinesthetic images", "somatic images" or "embodied imageries". For example, sudden loud screaming is linked to the imagery of an evil spirit in North America, so the somatic understanding of that bodily response and experience is consequently that of being possessed. (Csordas 1990, 17;20;23.) Understandings and conceptualizations of bodily experiences are thus learned, and culturally continuously constructed. In other words, the training of awareness of dancers is shaping the observations as well as the understandings of certain sensations. It seems that what is trained, practiced and cultivated in dancing, is precisely a set of tools to consciously utilize somatic modes of attention.

The mode of observing while doing creates a simultaneous and constant activity between sensing, thinking and doing. This triad activity could then be analyzed through its relation to the body-mind split. Two of the triad, sensing and doing, are rooted in the physical action and experience of the body, whereas thinking would, in the Cartesian approach, belong to the mind. In this research, however, it becomes apparent that thinking as an action is not only located in the mind among contemporary dancers and body based artists. This reaffirms Ingold's arguments on intelligence of the body (Ingold 2004). Additionally, thinking is seen to contain various cognitive processes, with different operative plains. When discussing the strategies of embodiment and the conceptualization of the body in the earlier chapters, I arrived at a conclusion that the body-mind separation exists, at least linguistically. I argue that this separation corresponds to separation of bodily knowledge from a critical or analytical mind. Many

interviewees bring up the difference between ‘rational’ or ‘analytic’ thinking and thinking that is closer to sensing and understanding from and within the body. Sky, a dancer, choreographer and a cranio-sacral therapy practitioner, told that they would separate these two into thinking (analytical, critical) and consciousness (awareness):

*“So, is what we commonly say thinking a frontal lobe analysis of information or is it a parietal lobe sensory level, extra-sensory psychic/interconnected... like skin disappears and it’s just you and I and our nerve bodies.”*

It seems, however, that even though thinking is further categorized into different kinds of actions, these separations do not match a dualistic body-mind separation. Rather, different ways of thinking are taking place in different parts of a person. Asa, one of my main informants, describes how they perceive thinking:

*“--then thought in my body like, you know what’s the way and which thought filters in and it seems to have kind of a relationship to the brain and then also the brain is so intimately connected to my nervous system... and that the nervous system really goes through the whole body --But also I remember, like I think towards the end of my training becoming a professional, I would have these experiences of really feeling the movement as thought—“.*

Thinking is then, treated as a phenomenon arising from and through the bodymind. Asa notes how the brain (considered as the locus of mind) is actually interconnected with the rest of the physical body. On the other hand, bodily sensations, such as movement, can be perceived as thinking (usually considered as the activity of the brain).

So, thinking is not only seen as an activity of a mind separate from the body. Rather, there are multiple different ways of thinking, responding to different goals (analysis, imagination, empathy, social orientation etc.), and situating in or originating from different parts of the body. This could also be seen as parallel to multiple somatic modes of attention (Csordas 1993), that is multiple ways of understanding and conceptualizing the bodily experience. The relationship between body and thinking can be further analyzed in relation to Michael Lambek’s critical contribution (2006 [1998]) to the body-mind debate. Arguing for universality of body-mind or body-person split, Lambek states, with a somewhat relativist approach, that these differentiations are taking widespread forms, some profoundly different from the Cartesian split. Presenting

ethnographical research on taboos among Malagasy speakers, Lambek displays how the conceptual distinction between mind and body is apparent in the linguistic formulations of “*rohu*” (soul, person) and “*nengin*” (body) (Lambek 1992, 255). Again, he argues that while this distinction is not directly proportional with the western Cartesian dualism, it is reasonable, however, to assume that dual or multiple categorizations of such human experiences are common (or even necessary) (Lambek 2006, 426). In the context of this thesis, I will use the help of Lambek’s theorization and arguments to articulate precisely the apparent multiplicity of the body-mind or body-thinking categorization among contemporary dancers.

To facilitate comparative analysis, Lambek addresses the body-mind problem with two theoretical approaches: body and mind in mind, and body and mind in body. These approaches correspond to the concepts of imagination and embodiment, which have been elaborated in the chapter 4.1. (Lambek 2006, 425.) I will first consider the idea of body and mind in mind in relation to the ethnographical analysis presented in this chapter. This idea or approach seems to refer to how the distinction of body and mind are conceptualized. Lambek argues that the distinction of body and mind (in mind) is grounded on the fact that the two concepts are incommensurable in their potential to describe human experience. In other words, they might be parts of a whole, but are not opposites since they presuppose each other. As Lambek puts it: “Mind is not simply the absence of body, nor body the absence of mind—”. (ibid. 428.) The conceptualization of mind and body, or the relationship between them are not, therefore, definite. Further, Lambek suggests two different rationalizations of the “mind-body problem”. On one hand, it can be possible that the human experience is dualistic in its essence, which results in a universal (yet varying) conceptual differentiation. On the other hand, it is equally possible, that the terrain of body-mind experience is filled with multiple conceptualizations, categorizations and inter-relations according to their historical context. Exemplary evidence of the latter would be body being opposed to mind, soul, spirit, ego or other concepts depending on the context, as well as the very multiplicity of different terms used to refer to bodily or mind related things. (ibid. 429).

As I have demonstrated before, the body-mind split seems to be present in the language the contemporary dancers use. However, different terms such as “bodymind” or “spiritual body”, or concepts such as “movement as thought” are used. Following



Lambek's arguments, this can be seen as an evidence for the multiplicity of experiences regarding body, mind, thinking and their relations. Different thinkings are categorized as, for example, "analytical", "rational" or "kinesthetic". Different sensed bodies are categorized as described in the chapter 4.2.1. The self or the observant consciousness is situated both in the somatic realm, as well as to the outside of the body (bird's-eye view). Given the idea of differentiated concepts being incommensurable, again, the multiplicity of the dancing body becomes evident.

I will now consider the second of Lambek's approaches, that is body and mind in body. For Lambek, embodiment and practice are the central concepts and phenomena of this approach. In other words, it is in the bodily ways, we see the embodied sociality that is actively maintained and mediated, and it is also the bodily ways that create the conditions for perceiving the world. (Lambek 2006, 430.) Through his ethnographic description of spirit possession in Sakalava, Madagascar, Lambek constructs an analysis of how the possession of a Sailor's spirit creates a mimetic performance of altered bodily habitus, allowing the possessed person (here, a medium) to attend a different kind of being, talking and relating socially. The state of possession is not definite, but the appearing habitus and way of thinking of the possessed depends on the spirit in question. (ibid. 431-433.) In other words, different spirits create different embodied dispositions, that is, altered states of perception, bodily experience and ways of knowing. In the context of this research, similar process is achieved in artistic work through strategies of embodiment. As I have described in the chapter 4.1, different information is embodied to alter the bodily disposition, leading to altered experiential knowledge (Jackson 2006, 328). Lambek goes to argue, that the ability to reach altered bodily and mental dispositions due to the particularities of the relationship between body and mind allows individual and societal self-reflection (Lambek 2006, 434).

Now, to go back to the experience of observing while doing, it seems that the contemporary dancers I followed, including myself, train towards and cultivate specific techniques to attend and reflect on the altered dispositions. The constant simultaneous activity of sensing, moving and thinking, that is observing while doing, allows experiential knowledge and reflection, and further constant bodily thinking and decision-making. To demonstrate this idea further, I will next share a part of my ethnographic notes from a rehearsal session, followed by an autoethnographic

description from the first workshop I attended during my fieldwork. The first displays observing while doing as a set of professional techniques to create movement and reflect on it at the same time. The second is an experiential example on the altered dispositions.

[Rehearsals of a contemporary performance]

After discussing the first session, the three dancers and the choreographer decided to do another round. I was, again, asked to move around as an audience member. This time following the session was different, since I now had a glimpse of knowledge on the choreographical proposals and the dancers' tasks. They were moving around the space, keeping track of each other's positions in space, sometimes following a shared momentum that led to moving together through the space. Sometimes I saw a dancer withdraw to a more somatic attention, maybe to perceive a sensation inside their body. They were shifting the way they were gazing at me, each other and the space, sometimes looking at me, sometimes seeing me as another concrete pillar on a wall. I could follow thoughts, ideas and movements move through the three of them, not being able to describe the shape of those. Rather, I saw a swing of arm there, followed by a reactional turn there, and a change of direction there. The session went on for 30 minutes.

[Workshop I]

We create two characters each, and then choose one to work with  
So, I imagine myself being the flying Doberman stuck in a pile of wooden planks because there was an earthquake in the hardwood store. And that makes me take the shape and the pose of the character and makes me move like I was trying to break the planks around me. I feel constrained and I sense my body tonus increase to push back the wooden material. "*Don't lose you character!*" she [the workshop leader] shouts.

Then we add emotional layer to the work. Each has to choose in which environment and which emotional state their character is in and then we meet each other in duos or trios. I choose desperation, and I feel my weight pulling to the floor. My face shapes into a grieving expression, and I recognize and actual sad emotion in my body. The work is to keep working on the qualities

of the character and the environment, and working to express and transmit and feel the feeling, while meeting others. -- I'm affected by the presence of the two other people I'm working with in this task. I react to them but from the place of the qualities, and that creates the movements.

To conclude this chapter of analyzing the experience of the dancing body, I would like to bring back a curiosity, which derived from my research questions, and which I first brought up in the introduction of this thesis: How does the relationship with body and mind complexify, when the method, instrument and platform for work is the same body that one senses and experiences their existence in? In this chapter, I have described the articulations of my interlocutors as well as other interpretations of how mind, body and thinking are situated in the experience of dancing. The notion of body seems to be expanded, which deconstructs the western, Cartesian based and post-Cartesian ideas of the mind and body as distinct and definite. The expansion of experiential understandings (body and mind in the body) of the body has led to conceptual multiplicity of the body (body and mind in the mind). The multiplicity of the body, as well as the multiplicities of thinking and mind, are sensed through somatic modes of attention, as well as created conceptually. Further, as my interlocutors have emphasized, both the sensing and the conceptual wordings and ways of thinking are grounded in training and canons of knowledge. It seems, then, that the sense of bodily experience and experiential knowledge of contemporary dancers is profoundly shaped by their professional environment and the understanding of dancing as awareness. The strategies of embodiment and observing while doing are at the core of dance practices and artistic work and, at the same time, seem to provoke the ability to reflect body-mind relations through the medium of altered dispositions. In the next chapter, I will briefly consider, what kinds of notions of self, personhood and agency are attained in the experience of dancing.

### 4.3 Becoming dancing subjects

*“And I have been sometimes like asking myself: what is this sense of self like this sense of I that separates itself from arms, legs, organs, nervous system... and when I feel it though, like it’s not somewhere else, it really is in the body and it tends to be more in the head but actually if I really track it, it’s not in the head. It’s like somewhere in the heart, -- it kind of moves and it floats between head and heart sometimes, it never really, I never find that it stays on the throat but it’s kind of between there but I almost feel like that the root is somewhere in the base of the heart like in this some kind of point and that the center of my sense of self is there... But... and it’s happiest when it distributes into all of my body”*, Asa told me after explaining their thoughts on different perceptions of mind they had encountered and considered during their dance and dance related practices. We ended up discussing an example a dancer, researcher and a dance educator had given some years ago, during my dance bachelor studies. They had described an exercise, in which they had asked a group of dancers to touch the floor. They then noted, that the dancers, despite having been barefoot, had lowered their hands to touch the studio floor with their palm and fingers. Asa and I wondered, if the “I” that could touch the floor resided only in the hands and not in the feet that were already touching the floor.

The somatic and conceptual multiplicity of the bodymind brings forth the necessity to consider the sense of personhood, self and agency among dancers and in the dancing body. In this chapter, I will first look into how the experience of self is organized around the expanded and intertwined notions of body, mind and thinking. Second, I will consider what kinds of ideas and experiences of agency are described by my interlocutors. The aim is to reflect, if the deconstruction of the body-mind-thinking-sensing relations results in a deconstructed or altered sense of agency of an individual.

#### 4.3.1 Situating the sense of self

To, again, start from the beginning, the existence of the Cartesian subject is based on its ability to think. Given the idea of the thinking mind as separate from the body, the

mind-body split supposes a ‘self’ located in the mind. In the previous chapters I have shown how my interlocutors have been deconstructing the Cartesian mind-body split both conceptually and through critical physical and somatic practices. The split is contested through trained awareness, the idea of bodily thinking and the sense of different bodies or different ways of thinking. Language is used to describe the experiences, yet the varying relationship between wordings and sensations is acknowledged and explored.

As Asa describes in the quote above, their sense of self is, at the same time, separate from body parts and grounded in the sensing or sensed body. It is felt and it can be tracked with sensorial awareness. This, I argue, differs from the idea of the body as a passive container for a higher thinking self. One informant situates the sense of self to a model of midline (borrowed from cranio-sacral practice, but cultivated in multiple contemporary dance techniques). For this informant, the self is constructed through aligning around a midline, which is developed already in the embryonic development. Hence, the midline and the self are profoundly physical and “actual” bodily characteristics. Similar references to embryonic phase are common in, for example, Body-Mind Centering (a trademarked approach) and other somatic techniques that were commonly known, trained and researched among contemporary dancers in Berlin. In the work of these techniques, the consciousness of the cells is an important factor in the construction of the self as a sensing, perceiving subject.

The midline is inside a subject, and the difference between oneself and the other is that they have a midline of their own. Similarly, some of my other interlocutors situate self to be potentially distributed in the body, yet differentiated from the “outside” or “the other”. Alex once pointed out that: “--*the experience of self, whatever it is, is always in relation to this outside,-- outside of your own body*”. In the dancing body, the self seems to have boundaries that somewhat follow the boundaries of somatic or relational perception. In other words, there is an inside and the outside of the sensed self. Or, there is perception of another, whether it is another body or another surface. These notes align with Ingold’s theory of the perceptive subject. (Ingold 2000, 169.)

Now, I will go back to the idea of the multiplicity of the bodymind. In the earlier chapters I have described how the contemporary dancers I followed had multiple

conceptualizations for different experiences of a body. The different conceptualizations, names and wordings are perhaps developed to articulate more referents for human experience (Lambek 2006, 426). If one takes Alex' idea of the boundary of the self being the boundary of your body or bodily perception (Ingold 2000), it is consequently relevant to ask, what are the boundaries of different bodies. The boundaries of the energetic body might extend further. For example, the concepts of an "energetic body" or a "relational body" seem to respond to a slightly different bodily experience than the haptic, skin wrapped body. During an afternoon in a garden of theirs, Sky and I talked about the magic of dancing with someone. We sat in chairs opposite each other.

*"So I believe that the mind of the body or the mind body is beyond my skin..."*

They noted, then adding that this beyond skin experience was orienting towards the "midline" as well. We started to discuss relationality, and impulses. The word "impulse" is used, in contemporary dance context to refer to a sense of urgency or an observed reaction before analyzing. Sky started to talk about "reading my impulse", wondering if it has to do with something "extra-sensory". "*--like skin disappears and it's just you and I and our nerve bodies like responding to the wind or the pull of music or your intention or your invitation or...*". We both laughed a bit, noticing that we had started to tilt our heads towards the ground, following each other. Neither of us had initiated the movement, yet we both thought we were following.

Given the ethnographic examples in this chapter, the experience of the self, and especially the situating of it, seems to have a quality of multiplicity or fluidity. It is possible to distribute the experience of self inside ones body, or in inter-body relations. The self is, even when dividual, however, constructed in relation to others. It is perhaps not fruitful to examine if the expansion of the bodymind is the cause for the expansion of the self. Rather, I argue that both are a part of a set of, again, experiential truths that arise in the contemporary dancers' environment of practices, language and experiential knowledge. What is worth noticing, however, is that the expansion of the experience of self proposes a reconsideration of the self-mind connection. Rather than being the "I, the observant" in the process of observing while doing, the self seems to be experientially produced and sensed, in relation to other bodies, surfaces, or perceived energies.

#### 4.3.2 Situating agency

I will now focus more closely on how agency is perceived and situated in the dancing body. For Bourdieu, the body is the base for agency, since it contains the ways of being learned and internalized in the process of embodying knowledge, leaving the conscious mind second (Bourdieu 1995, 68). According to my analysis thus far, the body and conscious mind cannot, however, be considered as definite, distinctive opposites. Therefore, one must keep in mind the expanded notion of a body and thinking when continuing with the analysis of agency. In this chapter, I am focusing on my informants' own articulations of agency, as well as my own reflections that came up during the field work. I will look at the personhood and agency in the dancing bodies in relation to the concepts of dividual and porous personhood. It seems that dividual and porous dancing persons are formed both somatically and relationally. The somatic dividuality of the sensed self was accompanied by a collage of information and agencies that my informants sensed and experienced in their dancing bodyminds.

It was common for my informants, during discussions or interviews, to touch upon their histories with different dance teachers, projects and people or phenomena from the dance field. They would sometimes use their histories with dance to explain their identity as a dancer, their views on training, or their personal movement language. During interviews, some informants used expressions such as: "the body stores a lot of things" or "we carry so many things in our bodies". In the workshops and classes, it was common to refer to these things that the dancers carried or had in their bodies. For example, during the first workshop, we were introduced to an exercise in which one had to walk from one side of the studio to another, turn, and then, in the moment of turning, transform themselves into a creature with a specific shape and demeanor. One instruction was to "*step out of the way*" so that different things arising from the body could be seen. In a more subtle level, things, styles, qualities or movements gained from one's history were discussed in relation to improvisation or improvisation-based work. Alex, for example described how they would discover things inside the sensing body during improvisational dancing. Some people in the workshops, including myself, noticed certain movement patterns, qualities or movements reappearing during improvisational tasks. For myself, those were, for example, patterns that I knew would take me from standing to the ground safely, or physical instructions that I could trace

back to a specific teacher (for example, the way to “use the weight of the head to counterbalance”, as a university lecturer told me throughout my three-year dance education). The phenomenon was and is familiar to me. Some experiences were echoes of specific movement research or a set of conceptual principles that I had encountered many years ago, but were applicable to the dancing situation I was in now. I shared this experience with some of my interlocutors, and they usually answered much like Alex: *“--of course we carry experiences with us and also movement language in a way,--It affects you and it will leave a trace in you .”*

When talking about agency, contemporary dancers in my field were talking about power, ownership, or choice (see Kockelman et.al., 2007). As brought up throughout this thesis, the bodily knowledge and habitus of contemporary dancers are not independent of canons of knowledge and aesthetic principles based on tradition. The institutionalized power inside the dance field (educational institutions, tradition of western art and aesthetics) affects the becoming of the dancing subject. The traces and embodied qualities are physically defining and shaping the dancing body. Asa, for example, described how training in certain technique physically shaped their body *“literally because the body creates more cells in certain places to accommodate that work “*. Another dancer was talking about gaining agency over their artistic work by observing and making sense of what the dancing had brought up. For them, it was the “making sense” that made them feel ownership over their work, even though the work was saturated with the histories of training and artistic encounters.

The traces and traits in bodies and their dancing seem to be not only perceivable for the people themselves, but also apparent from the outside. During my interview with Jess, we got into a discussion about how we could recognize specific techniques or trained principles in other peoples’ dancing. These qualities were distinguishable, even when obviously interpreted slightly differently by each dancer. In other words, rather than developing a habitus or bodily expression influenced by different histories of dancing, the dancers seem to be able to use their trained awareness to temporally embody and integrate experiential knowledge, “things”, other dancers and techniques. My informants made a difference between memory and the effects of the embodied qualities and knowledge they had gained throughout their education and professional life. The



catalogue of “things” seemed to, thus be more of an experiential one, rather than a set of representations in a form of abstract memories.

For example: “--but maybe it’s not so much a memory,-- Like these things also, we add to them each time we do them. Or like, even you know, a real folder, it would age. Like it becomes different. --Yeah I think it does have a life of its own, and then, you know, that practice has a life of its own within the collective body but within my body and within the time line of my body”, Asa described how they experienced their history with dancing.

The experience of containing a collage of information, techniques, things and even people can be analyzed in relation to Cecilia Busby’s and Karl Smith’s takes on dividual personhood. Similar to the ethnographic description of Melanesian gendered bodies, which are constructed of partible inherited parts (Busby 2013, 272), my ethnographic material suggests that the professional dancing bodymind is perhaps constructed of partible learnt, integrated and embodied parts of information and knowledge. The division between partible and permeable bodyminds is, however, not this sharp. Busby’s permeability (ibid. 275) is applicable to the experience of porous and fluid boundaries of the self or some of the experienced bodies. The permeability of the bodymind seems to be presupposed when my interlocutors describe strategies of embodiment, where information is flowing from bodies to others, sometimes through different mediums (see chapter 4.1.1). However, this process can be considered more adequately with Smiths division of porous and buffered selves. Smith describes how this dividuality and relationality is negotiated through buffered and porous qualities. The sense of porousness refers to the way people are permeated by their social environment, and in the context of this research, to the way contemporary dancers are influenced and affected by their peers, teachers and artistic processes. (Smith 2012.) The embodied traces and knowledges are not necessarily taking place in distinctive parts of the physical body but are partible in the way that their individual histories, developments and reference points can be read by dancers themselves and by outside observers.

In Busby’s ethnography in Melanesia, similarly, the potentials of gendered partible bodies are actualized in performative actions (Busby 2013, 272). In Lambek’s accounts on spirit possession in Mayotte, the specific embodied habitus, that is a set of bodily practices, performance and mode of thought, allows an altered way of reflection and

perception (Lambek 2006, 433). As mentioned above, contemporary dancers enhance and apply different embodied dancing habitus, that is, different parts of their dividual self, to navigate in different dancing situations. In other words, the dividuality of their bodymind allows for negotiating bodily knowledge according to situations, aims and instructions during dance work. This interpretation falls not far from Mauss notions of culturally produced techniques of the body (Mauss 1973), and aligns even tighter with Foucault's late work on "technologies of the self", which are used by the self-subject for self-constitution (Foucault 1986; Mitcheson 2014, 59). Interestingly, the professional context-dependent self-constitution of contemporary dancers seems to happen in the realm of perception of the observing while doing. From inside the experience of dancing, as well as from the outside, dancers can distinguish people, canons of knowledge and tradition, techniques and aesthetics. These traces are sometimes experienced as constraining and unescapable, even making the body not one's own. On other hand, the traces were sometimes seen as potential for altered dispositions, as Alex describes: "*there's this specific agency that I can dive into and it takes me away, but I'm part of that --But at the same time I can direct it so it's not... yeah it becomes a part of my agency as well... --But it's somehow, yeah, but it's somehow not originated in me in a way*". What is clear, however, that the dancers I followed seemed to intentionally negotiate between multiple agencies and powers related to their bodies, experiences and dancing. Interestingly, and perhaps particularly, this intentional and conscious negotiation was situated in the core of professional habitus, that is the dancing bodymind. My fellow participants in the workshops and morning classes, as well as many of my interviewees displayed a high awareness and urgency of reflection towards the multiple embodied agencies. Traces and habits were discussed, and dance practices were used to give agency to specific things "stored". This leads to a possible experience of dividual agency, rather than contained individual.

One of the most interesting descriptions of negotiating agency was provided by a dancer and choreographer, who led a week of morning classes at Tanzfabrik studios. After a morning class, we were discussing their method of making work. They told me how they work through improvisation, and I asked them to describe their experience and feeling in it.

*"And I think for me improvisation, it's the tool to gain freedom -- . Like when I'm improvising, I'm never able to repeat things what I did or I cannot tell you*

*wow when I did this and that... I'm so relaxed and I can maybe plan few things but I don't plan them they happen and then I ride on the wave... but I think... I mean this really free place in improvisation... so to tell you what it is it's freedom. To detail it, I can't. We can take a video and then we can look at it and than maybe ahh maybe here I was doing that but I can't really tell you oh I was researching that and I was trying... I didn't do anything... I didn't try to research I don't try to play... I mean, I'm letting everything happen and then I think, it's for me the sense of freedom. -- , but it's a negotiation like who takes the wheel, you know the brain, the head, the body, you?". I asked about their articulations of the brain and the body as separate, and they pointed out that they experience different entities with agencies in their body all the time. "like my own library, like how do I want to approach things from that position from that position... ". Now, it seemed that during improvisation, it was the "things" in this library that were given and taking agency in the movement and expression during dancing.*

As described above, it is evident that these traits, knowledges, experiences that the dancers have embodied have a history and a development of their own. In other words, they could be described having agency. Additionally, there is a possibility to exclude the agency of "I" and let the collage of traits of the body gain expression. Thus, dance practices allow some parts of the self to become mere observers. This points to a sense of multiple gathered, cultivated and practiced elements that make up the experience of dancing bodymind through temporal negotiations of agency.

## 5. Conclusions

To conclude my work on discussing the dancing bodymind, I will revisit the two intertwined research questions I posed at the beginning of this thesis. First, the aim was to consider the ways contemporary dancers were situating meaning, thinking, language and agency in their bodies. As I have described in chapter 4.1, my interlocutors use strategies of embodiment to articulate, transmit, and integrate meaning and language. The dancers would use imaginary environments, images, or imaginary bodies to embody new and transforming information. These reference materials could be described as stories, meditations, scores, or other language information. The transforming potential of this embodied information is grounded in the way they create altered mental and bodily dispositions, which disrupt the habitual ways of thinking or perceiving (Jackson 2006, 327). According to my experiences and observations in the field, the particular ways of embodying new and altering information were used *strategically*. In other words, they were considered tools for developing artistic work, sharing dance practices and working with other dancers' materials. The production of altered embodied experiences through dance practices results in individuals gaining multiplicity of bodily, social and experiential information (ibid. 328). The specific images and imaginary situations, or wordings of exercises are used to create bodily responses, expressions and meaning that would not perhaps be attained with other strategies of creating movement.

Observing the strategies of embodiment brings forth the particularities in the notions of knowledge and thinking. The knowledge produced in dancing seems to consist of multiple individual sensorial events and an environment of information that can be altered using strategies of embodiment. It is thus grounded in experience and sensorial realities and formed in relation to others in the dancing community (Marchand 2010, 11). The situating of experiential knowledge and thinking is replete with multiplicity. Some informants spoke about muscle memory, some about the bodies' ability to store things. Interestingly, considering the western hierarchy between the thinking mind and the body, experiential knowledge and thinking were treated as crucial in dance work and practices (see ethnographic description of a rehearsal session, p. 29), and the knowledge situated in the body (that is, embodied through practice) could be even

treated superior or more trustworthy and freer to develop. The intelligence is many times explicitly situated in the body, acknowledging reactivity, body's "own" desires, its ability to "figure it out" or, on the other hand, uphold vital functions (see Ingold 2004).

The second research question is formulated as follows: What kinds of experiences and conceptualizations of body, mind and self, and their relations, are created through the above? Throughout chapters 4.1.2 and 4.2, I describe how the contemporary dancers in my field were experiencing and conceptualizing body as multiple. The different conceptualizations, names and wordings are perhaps developed to articulate more referents for experiences arising during dancing (Lambek 2006, 426). The variety of intelligence, knowledge and sensations observed in the whole bodymind seems to create a sense of multiple bodies, responding to different contexts. Additionally, a dialogical and equal relationship is described to exist between mind and body. This dialogical relationship between what are considered the realms of mind and body is reciprocal and constant. On one hand, mental, verbal, imaginary and conceptual inputs are used to alter physical and sensorial experience. On the other hand, the new experiences and sensations provoke new information, language, and ideas.

Further, conceptualizations of thinking seem to match the idea of multiple experiential knowledges. I observed contemporary dancers situate different thinkings in their bodymind, making a difference what they would call the rational mind and the mind of the body or bodily thinking. In the ethnographic accounts concerning this, the idea of observing while doing emerged, both in experiences and interviewees' own descriptions. Observing while doing referred, for my informants, to experiences of simultaneous sensing, moving, and thinking. As through somatic modes of attention (Csordas 1993), through observing while doing, people understand their bodies and bodily experiences, attend their inner bodily experiences. Additionally, simultaneous activity of sensing, moving, and thinking allows experiential knowledge and reflection, and further constant bodily thinking and decision-making.

The notions of body, mind, and self were further analyzed in the framework of theories on personhood (see chapter 4.3). In the dancing body, the self seems to have boundaries that somewhat follow the boundaries of somatic or relational perception. In other words,

there is an inside and the outside of the sensed self or the perceptive subject (Ingold 2000, 169). Moreover, the notion of self seems to be experientially produced and sensed. This analysis opens a further discussion beyond the scope of this thesis, and links my ethnographic interpretations to, for example, anthropological or socio-political discussions of identity and construction of self. In this thesis, I focused more specifically on the experiences of the bodymind in relations to concepts of dividual, partible, and relational bodies (Busby, 2013; Smith 2012). I argue that the dancing bodyminds, given their quality of multiplicity, are dividual in the way that their experiences and expressions are constituted by distinct embodied knowledges (what I call traces and traits) from their training, education, dance work, and other environments. The parts of dividual bodyminds are perceivable both for the people themselves, and for observing peers, as described in chapter 4.3.2. For example, specific techniques or trained principles would be observable in people's dancing. Further, I analyzed the ways dancers I followed negotiated between multiple agencies and powers related to their bodies in the form of embodied traces, knowledges, techniques, and aesthetics. In a more extensive research, I would further observe and analyze, what kinds of established agencies are assigned for specific canons of knowledge, specific artists or techniques. This kind of analysis would consider wider discursive negotiations and power relation present in the field of contemporary dance.

When defining contemporary dancers as a professional category, I posed an additional question about how the body-mind debate and conceptualizations of bodily knowledge complexify when the bodymind functions as a platform and the environment for work. My ethnographic description and analysis make clear that the strategies of embodiment, as well as the practice of observing while doing are intertwined with professional expertise, work, and training. These skills or phenomena are, however, transforming and affecting the perceptions and experiences of the dancing bodymind, and further creating a specific perceiving subject and notions of body, mind, and self. In other words, the training of awareness of dancers is shaping the observations as well as the understandings of certain sensations. It was not the aim of this thesis, however, to argue that these skills or phenomena are typical exclusively for dancers. Rather, through their training and professional practices, contemporary dancers embrace a high awareness of these phenomena. Consequently, my interlocutors seemed to cultivate an ability to utilize them and work professionally through them.

Finally, I want to conclude with a quote from Jess, one of the first dancers I conducted an interview with: *“So difficult, also to explain to people who are not actively using their body, but more passively -- I would say I’m talking about my body, but my body is also talking about it as itself”*, Jess noted, in the very beginning of our interview. Their expression of frustration captivates some of the biggest challenges I faced during this research. First, the impossibility to translate or put into language the delicacies of bodily experience during dancing. Second, the exclusion of practice based bodily thinking while still analyzing it in the form of academic writing.

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