"A Cautionary Note or Two, Amid the Pleasures and Pains of Participation in Performance-making as Research"

#### **1.** Expertise – *so to speak*

Expertise is a rather difficult term to use... (Eraut M., 2000)

...smooth <u>un</u>reflective mastery...the <u>un</u>reflective execution of intricate skilled performance (Claxton G., 2000)

... an intuitive grasp of a situation and a non-analytic and non-deliberative sense of the appropriate response... (Lazarus E., 2000) (my emphases)

I propose to start with the observation that however readily we might use the word 'expertise' in everyday contexts, 'we' have not yet really grasped what 'expertise' means, at least in research terms, nor how it might (or might not) be acquired in the creative and performing arts. Who do I include in my use of the pronoun 'we' and on what bases? Plainly I am referring to academic colleagues in Performance Studies, but I am prepared, foolishly perhaps, to include writing by professional Philosophers: the latter have demonstrated a surprising level of difficulty with the question of practice itself, let alone expert or professional practices, for as long as there have been philosophers. What follows are a few simple questions which mark out the sort of territory we enter when the notion of expertise is entertained in the registers of writing and other practices specific to the research degrees and set-ups in HE in this country: the first seems simple enough: what do we understand expertise in the creative and performing arts to mean, not least when we are widely required to write in academic registers?

2. Who can get expertise, how, and how do we know that he or she has got it, when our research concern is an expert performance-making that tends not only to involve collaboration, but to involve differences in experience and research interest in those participating? Can the participative researcher 'get expertise' through her or his participation in a professional project?

3. How can we recognise expertise and (how) can it be verified, if researchers are conventionally required to substantiate their findings?

4. Where do we keep it?

5. What does expertise in performance-making *cost* and *what is it worth* (along the lines of Bourdieu's notion of "symbolic capital")?

6. How long does expertise in the creative and performing arts last, and does it need progressively to be renewed? Is there in-service training for expert-practitioners in the performing arts, and might an expert practitioner study for – for example - a professional doctorate in acting or in dance? If so, where, and if not, why not?
7. what is the "knowledge status" of expertise, as distinct from, for example, the knowledge status of critical-theoretical writing in the doctoral context? Why is it that some of us seem to *know* expertise in practice *when we see it*, while remaining incapable of capturing it discursively?

8. What is the epistemic status – that is, the "knowledge-status" – of expert creativedecision-making processes in performance production in the context of and the setups particular to advanced research, and to what extent might we be confident in declaring that in terms of knowledge-status, expert creative decision-making processes in performance production, as research, can be judged to be 'equivalent to' those research practices and processes that we might expect to find in a doctoral degree in philosophy? A subsidiary question: how is it that the expert practices of practitioners whose names tend to figure in Performance Studies discourses - Robert Wilson, Ariane Mnouchkine, Rosemary Butcher, Tim Etchells, Goat Island, and so on – are widely approached as though their practices were idiosyncratic rather than

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expert in terms of the disciplinary mastery of making processes on which their work actually depends?

9. Question eight concerns disciplinary specificity as such, and asks whether we might not need to make the specificity of disciplinary identity explicit, when it comes to expertise in performance-making. My question is once again driven in part by the politics of knowledge in the university and it responds in part to the later 20thC aspiration to an interdisciplinarity that could supposedly be taught in the university, as distinct from a disciplinary mastery, a singular mode of invention, that frequently could not.

#### 2. Nominalisation and process words

Widespread, ontologising uses of the noun "expertise" suggest that what we are interested in when the matter of expert practices is raised, is a highly-specific and recognisable "knowledge category", yet even practice-theoretical writers concede that as knowledge-category expert practices are resistant to verbal definition (Schatzki et al 2000). I have myself consistently written about what I have called the *expert* practitioner, over the past decade, but I would concede that I have done so in the first instance for knowledge-political reasons, that relate in part to the widespread erasure of the term and of the notion of expertise – let alone the professional - from mainstream Performance Studies discourses. Symptomatic of that highly problematic erasure has been the growing and apparently marketable focus in the past decade or more, on something called "the body" and "embodiment", both generalising and anonymising nouns whose uses fail to take into account the differences between – for example – my body and that of the highly trained and expert bodywork of a named performer. The dancer Wendy Huston's bodywork, or that of Darcey Bussell, in other words, is expert, professionally trained, highly disciplined, but also singular, and as my invoking their names suggests, signature-bearing.

It is plain to me that some of the 'knowledge complexities' specific to that expertise in the "knowledge–centred practices" that expert performance-making entails, have not been adequately taken onboard in writing within the disciplines involved, in part because of the knowledge-problematic they bring with them. As I have already indicated, expertise can be recognised in its practices, and attributed on that basis to its practitioners, without those who recognise it being able to articulate discursively, in detail, what constitutes it. Is it, on this basis, un-speakable, or have we simply *not yet* determined how to speak and write it?

One key aspect of expertise in performance-*making* disciplines which seems to me to exemplify the difficulties and point to some of the reasons for caution when we engage in talking about this field of research is what I call *discipline-specific expert-intuitive process*. I have identified expert-intuitive processes as constitutive to expert performance-making, yet those expert-intuitive processes are rarely individually-owned, in collaborative practice. Nor are they performed in isolation, in the making, because the outcome of expert-intuitive processing, in the making, is systematically subjected to, and modulated by, the logics of expert performance-production - on which basis, if we are still concerned with the knowledge-status of expert making, constitutive expert-intuitive processes are non-identical with themselves. Similarly, these vital expert-intuitive processes, constitutive to performance-making, have their own time/s, on which basis they can be identified as equally unavailable *as such* to the

times and places of spectating: spectators tend only to see the results of expertintuitive processes, often qualitatively-transformed, through collaboration and the application of the production processes equally constitutive to the discipline. Such constitutive processes specific to expert making need, therefore to be studied *in their own time*, and not at all in the times and spaces of the performance event. Even from the perspectives of an *expert* spectating, these constitutive making processes can only be speculated about, can only be inferred from the quite specific perspective of their (modulated) outcome. Students of expert spectating, nonetheless, are widely encouraged to guess at those unavailable causes, on the basis of their engagement with results.

### 3. Feeling, looking-like and the "knowledge object"

What does expertise in the making *feel like*, and what does it *look like*? Where is it held, and who can hold it? These further questions are less naïve than they may at first appear. Feeling-like and looking-like involve quite different perceptual experiences, the one practitioner-centred, the other not necessarily so; having expertise in the making can apparently only be confirmed through its practices, yet I have already argued that these tend to remain unavailable as such to spectating. I propose to identify practices entailed in 'feeling like' and 'looking like', in expert or professional set-ups, as "knowledge-centred, epistemic practices", along the lines set out by the practice-theoretical writer, Karin Knorr Cetina in her "Objectual Practice" (2000). "[M]any occupations and organisations", she argues, "have a significant knowledge base" that its practitoners *practise*, leading to the expectation that "practitioners ... have to keep learning" and that "the specialists who develop the

knowledge base" need "to continually reinvent their own practices of acquiring knowledge".

Knorr Cetina is interested in research practices more generally, and argues that in many instances research practices are likely to be constructive and creative, rather than routine or habitual, and as such they tend to exasperate many writing on practice from the perspectives of social theory. These constructive and creative practices are, in her terms, not only complex and internally differentiated, but they are also - as she puts it - affectively undergirded. (In terms of the research meta-discourse, the metaphor she uses is both troubling and par for the course, revealing as it does a 'knowledge difficulty' on the part of the writer and, perhaps, her field.) She is interested in and researches what she calls "knowledge-centred and knowledge-based practices", which tend to involve "knowledge objects" and the relationships that these entail. "Knowledge objects", she argues, are not necessarily objects in the everyday sense of the term: one such "knowledge object" worthy of practitioner-centred research might be affect and its role in creative practice. Such knowledge objects, she observes, are defined "by their lack of completeness of being" – performance affect, after all, is inseparable from the performance within which it finds its place - and they are defined by their "non-identity with themselves". The constitutive 'expertintuitive' processes I introduced above, then, are "knowledge objects"; they are relational, characterised by "their lack of completeness" and "their non-identity with" themselves. As such, these "knowledge objects", constitutive to practitioner-centred research, are both heretic and aporetic: when they are viewed from a Performance Studies that is actually a Spectator Studies in disguise, these objects trouble - and might disrupt - the happy discourses of spectating, and they are full of holes. They

are equally affectively invested, as we can see in a video clip that I have frequently played elsewhere but propose to do so again here. I propose that we look at it here as though our concern were not with personality and idiosyncrasy, but rather with expertise in a collaborative and participative framework – even if we might perhaps not recommend these sorts of interactions to a work tribunal:

Play DVD (see file: excerpted from *Au Soleil même la nuit, Scènes d'Accouchment*, Rehearsals for Ariane Mnouchkine's *Tartuffe* by Molière, for the Théâtre du Soleil, Paris 1996; rudimentary subtitles.)

What we have seen here, if we can look beyond the apparent clash of personalities, is a clash of knowledge-centred practices, performed by expert practitioners caught up in the affectively-invested making of new work; we can equally infer - provided we 'hold' the expertise necessary to discern it - the difference at work here between felt-experience (in an actor) and how it looks, to a professional director and expert audience; we can equally see that a qualitatively-transformed expert practice will be relational: it can only emerge in the dynamic interplay between inventive, but in this case differently-experienced, singular performers, under the directorial gaze. It absolutely cannot therefore be formulated prior to its emergence. As such, then, the actor's own work is incomplete, as research object as well as creative practice; and to the extent that it can neither be extracted from that relational set, nor known in advance of it, it is similarly non-identical with itself: the actor's invention is part only of what emerges, even though that part is constitutive; and the experienced performer's work, similarly, will gain from its interplay with the other actor. It is likely, if we think of affective investment, that the experienced actor will be

particularly attentive to the need to allow her fellow actor to retrieve his situation, which means that her own work, in this precise situation, will be in part different from her other professional experiences. All present are likely, given this highly complex scenario, to operate under the heightened stresses that the video clip reveals, and to recognise qualitative transformation of performance material when it emerges. This complex scene, in other words, allows us to perceive the "differentiation [between subject[ifying] and object[ifying practices]" in the sphere of expertise, but also "the possibility of a nexus between differentiated entities which provides for ...a form of being-in-the-world...". That is, a "form of being-in-relation [that] also defines a form of ...epistemic practice" (181).

4. Disciplinary expertise as complex system and individual elaboration

The actor's apparent struggle seems, if one is aware of acting as a complex system, to be a matter of the knowledge-differences between practices emerging in isolation from an already-thought-through knowledge and practices that are as-yet-to-appear because they are relational and participative. The actor, already expert, learns *in the doing*. His mastery of expert practice will, in the terms brought to practice theory by Charles Spinosa, be acquired *through relational practice*. Its acquisition will be *elaborative*, learned progressively *in* relational practices, rather than through reflection. Elaborative practices, according to Charles Spinosa's reading of Heidegger, are articulative, rather than deconstructive in terms of the criticaltheoretical tradition of the later decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> C.

The distinction between the articulative and the deconstructive in the development of expertise in the arts is an important one: articulative practices elaborate expertise in

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creative contexts and set-ups, and in some senses we might argue that elaborative expert practices *practise the performer*, as much as vice versa. They pre-exist every identifiable instance/experience of performance-making, and thereby have certain implications for new aesthetic choices: practitioners seek qualitative transformation in order to own or inhabit these acquired disciplinary schemata. But *where* do these established practices that contribute to disciplinary expertise pre-exist? Some might argue that they have been progressively internalised, by expert practitioners, and passed on through practice, but that metaphor seems to me to beg more questions than it provides answers. In practice, they are obtained through training, elaborated, subjected to individual and relational judgement, and thereafter observable through the models of intelligibility – or ways of understanding and sense-making – that collocate with those elaborative practices themselves; one such model of intelligibility - and here is the rub - is often articulated, by performers at least, as 'it feels right', suggesting that expertise might be practised and felt, rather than known discursively. To return to Knorr Cetina, her notion is that practices that are creative and constructive are affectively undergirded, hence not only *felt* but likely to be strongly felt and contradictory. In terms of expert knowledge, they are likely to be experienced to be incomplete in themselves, never fully realisable, hence retained as a possibility for making new work that feels right, as a tactic. Thus, Spinosa argues, whereas expert "practices ... have a kind of telos", yet "this telos is only a tendency... that can be constrained by all sorts of contingent circumstances" (209).

## 5. Epistemics and uncertain knowledge practices

In the uncertain light of these sorts of expert practices, that include research practices, I need to make a distinction between epistemics, concerned with knowledge-centred *practices* and epistemology, which can be identified reductively as the science of knowledge. When I use a term like the performance disciplines, I am talking about certain clusters of knowledge-centred practices that are organised such that they embody not just widely recognised cultural schemata, but the incompleteness, at any given moment, of the same. I am attempting to reflect on what exactly I mean when I refer to a notion like the 'performance disciplines', or 'performance-making expertise': I seem to be concerned to identify certain 'cultural schemata', which preexist and are virtual, and which seem to organise certain sorts of clusters of practices; they ratify them, but because these schemata are in fact both widely recognisable *and* dynamic, they are equally ratified by their ongoing enactment.

According to the sociologist Sewell, cultural schemata are empowered and regenerated by the accumulation of resources "that their enactment engenders" (Sewell, 1992, 13, cited in Swidler, 2001). *Enacting* such cultural schemas or sets of schemata, tends to generate arrays of resources that accumulate around them, and revalidate them. One such "array of resources", if we are concerned with the performance disciplines, are those brought into play in any professional performance-making context – in the case of the choreographer Kim Brandstrup, one such organised array of resources is made available when the Royal Ballet commissions a new piece of work from him, and makes available, amongst the array of resources, for a particular period of time. Equally included amongst that array of resources, however – and this might well be where some of the "knowledge status" difficulties that I am concerned with come into play – is the Royal Ballet's expectation, encoded in commissioning itself, that Brandstrup has the capacity to engender performance

practices that are both expert in terms of disciplinary norms, and 'new', 'original', 'insightful', and Brandstrup's own expectation that what he brings into being will be qualitative transformed, in ways that are simultaneously beyond what he currently knows, within his capacity to engender, *and* likely to surprise him.

Given the knowledge basis that the Royal Ballet represents, and despite some critical writers' accusation that the Royal Ballet is necessarily conservative, it remains the case that in the terms I have set out, the Royal Ballet is a dynamic open knowledge system, driven largely by the desire for qualitative transformation. Any number of critical-theoretical histories of the Royal Ballet, in other words, are inadequate to it. Brandstrup's work for it, like that of Wayne McGregor, brings together the expert-intuitive, the elaborative, and the logics of performance production, yet it systematically renders these invisible, as far as audiences are concerned.

#### 6. The momentary instantiation of expert-intuitive processes

I have identified expert-intuitive processes as constitutive of expert making, but resistant to discursive accounting, particularly from the perspectives of expert spectating. It is important at this stage that we equally understand that they present particular problems for the single researcher working collaboratively: when *it works*, in the Mnouchkine *Tartuffe* from whose rehearsals we saw the clip earlier, that qualitatively transformed 'work' is the property of neither one nor the other actor – it emerges relationally - and it is no more the property of a single actor-researcher within the group; nor is rehearsal work the property of the director, since the times of the making are non-identical with the time of the event. Any attempt to seem to extract 'my work' from that relational set necessarily transforms it; it emerges as

partial, a momentary instantiation of a research object, necessarily non-identical with the performance 'thing' itself. While a researcher-collaborator might seek to document the processes involved, her or his perspective is partial, limited, at odds with the processes of making that are specific to the discipline and to the work of the practitioners involved.

# 7. Process, expertise, discipline-specific invention

I want to return briefly to the issue of expert-intuitive processing as constitutive but highly problematic, in order to insist here on the noun 'processes' and on the hyphenated qualifiers 'expert-intuitive', in place of the widely used and abused noun form 'intuition', which has largely been erased from the dominant discourses of Performance Studies. Some writing in Philosophy has indeed concerned itself with 'intuition', whether in Kant, or in Henri Bergson's so-called intuitive method; but many contemporary writers, even sympathetic to PaR, continue to *mis*-take 'intuition' before proceeding to fail to consider how expert-intuitive process engages with the discipline-specific logics of production:

Some contributors to the debate on the specificity of research in the arts entertain the belief that art comes into being *purely on the basis of intuition*, *on irrational grounds and via non-cognitive routes*, and that this makes it inaccessible for investigation from within.

This misconception arises when the non-conceptual content of artistic facts becomes confused with their presumed non-cognitive form, and when the non-discursive manner in which that content is presented to us is presumed to betray its irrationality. Yet the phenomena at work in the artistic domain are decidedly cognitive and rational, even if we cannot always directly access them via language and concepts. Borgdorff, *The Debate on Research in the Arts*, 2006 (my emphasis)

According to the American pragmatist, Rosenthal, writing in the 1980s, however, the intuitive is far from absent from the groundings or procedures of Philosophy, and the

assumption that it might be the "non-conceptual" opposite of the rational is unhelpful: "any philosophic system emerges from basic intuitions", Rosenthal argues, "and can be persuasive for another only in terms of intuitions that are not justified by rigorous argument". Intuition, she goes on, using a number of rather unhelpful but typically spatialising metaphors, "underlies, overflows, and is incorporated within the perceptions of common sense" (203). Let's simply argue, here, that expert-intuitivity "is incorporated within the perceptions of [the expert performance-maker]" such that the two together inform expertise and invention.

Nonetheless, terms like 'expert' and 'expertise', or indeed 'professional', do not figure in Rosenthal's writing, and may well not figure or have figured widely in the writing of other philosophers. Yet I am prepared to argue that in the case of all such writers, my hyphenated "expert-intuitive" processing plays a constitutive role in their own professional practices, whether these are educative or concerned with writing for publication. In the case of performance-making, constitutive expert-intuitive processes occur within and are already modulated, as they emerge, in terms of discipline-specific parameters. They play between the orders of the perceptual real and what might be called, metaphorically and tentatively, a 'higher plane' where expert knowledges are organised and organise. A professional choreographer 'stores', schematically, not simply the 'tools of her trade', but equally the specifics of her own signature. Stored schematically, they serve as a major compositional tool, linking this higher plane to those of the making, in the sense that they provide sets of parameters. multi-dimensional diagrammatic models and schemata, and whatever it is that determines a sense of measure and discernment in the individual practitioner; it is in these terms that options within systems of possible actions seem to 'come to mind',

already realising a ghostly interface zone between the material real, the perceptual intuitive and the work that needs to be made and signed. They have the potential at least to take their place. They can seem to emerge like lightning, and – curiously enough - we often seem to experience them as 'coming from nowhere', yet they tend 'to work'.

Such apparent 'flashes' of insight allow for a quite particular sense of the possible, that differs across the spectrum of practitioners involved in performance-making; they allow for the apparently artful conjuring forth of sensible and felt knowledges, and for the recuperation of these, in terms of and within the logics of production that apply both to the discipline or sub-discipline, and t the practitioner's signature; they allow the practitioner to anticipate what might work, to calculate its possible application, and to test it out. We need to suppose, on this basis, that they take up expert experience and something that I want to call professional sensibility; but rather than replicate the already-experienced, they offer new insights in a field whose orientation is to the not-yet made. These new insights include those derived from hyperbolic intuition – the Aha! moment - which are recognised often with a powerful feeling of certainty, when something seems suddenly to work - and, working, to look back at the practitioner.

### 8. Experience, experimentation and expertise

When they emerge, as a momentary instantiation of signature practice, and in their capacity to bring into conjunction in a single instant, professional insight, echoes of the past, memory and possibilities for the future, we can begin to recognise the

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pertinency of the morphological link between "experience", "experimentation" and

"expertise":

expert

late 14c., from L. expertus, pp. of experiri "to try, test" (see <u>experience</u>). The n. sense of "person wise through experience" existed 15c., reappeared 1825.

#### experience

late 14c., from O.Fr. experience, from L. experientia "knowledge gained by repeated trials," from experientem (nom. experiens), prp. of experiri "to try, test," from ex- "out of" + peritus "experienced, tested." The v. (1530s) first meant "to test, try;" sense of "feel, undergo" first recorded 1580s. Related: Experienced ; experiences ; experiencing.

#### experiment

mid-14c., from O.Fr. experiment, from L. experimentum "a trial, test," from experiri "to test, try" (see <u>experience</u>). The verb is attested from late 15c., from the noun. Related: Experimented; experimenting.

These morphological links are significant. Certainly, expertise seems to be elaborated, progressively, not simply through experience and experimentation, but through experience and experimentation that are ratified relationally, and informed progressively by that feedback loop that develops when work is made public. This brings me to the first of my final observations today, which is that experience itself, however difficult it might be to characterise it discursively, to quantify or to qualify it, and however undertheorised it might be, is a vital and constitutive component in expert creative practice. I have no interest however in a general theory of experience. characterised by ever-increasing dematerialization from the "perceptual and intuitive" world (Innis, R. 1999), even if one might be developed, for the far from simple reason that the expert practitioner's experience is likely to be singular as well as expert, within a regime that valorises both singularity and the new. The singular experience of the expert practitioner, focused on an invention to come, provides one of the grounds out of which expert-intuitive processing emerges and it is in terms of experience – and its complex relationship to anticipation and implementation – that intuitivity is coloured and modulated. In epistemic terms, specific to knowledge and

the ways we evaluate and validate it, at least in art-making set-ups, it seems to me that I am likely to attribute at the very least validity – dare I say, 'truth' – to the as-yet unseen work of a number of expert practitioners, on the basis of my alreadyestablished estimation of the singularity of those practitioners' experience, and of their ability to articulate it in complex practice. To speak of 'truth' or integrity, in this sense, signals recourse to models of intelligibility relating to and widely used in terms of the evaluation of expert invention, and as such these notions are far from oldfashioned or outdated, as some critical-theoretical writers might once have claimed. In expert performance-making 'integrity' is likely to be understood technically – as something to be done – rather than metaphysically, at least in the first instance.

## 9. Perception and anteception

Rosenthal describes "experience" itself, in general, as "wider than perception", and, indeed, "as the context within which perception emerges" (68); experience is foundational to the emergence of a world of percepts, but in order to avoid use of terms like "feeling", "sensation" or "primary experience", to characterise it – such terms fail to allow us to distinguish between the everyday and the expert - she suggests that we draw on the Peircian notion of anteception, which is a level of experience that is constituted by the "continuity, over time, of rudimentary experimental activity that is constitutive of our interaction with our environment" – not just our everyday environment, but more importantly as far as this presentation is concerned, our professional environment. Anteception, she adds, is an indefinably rich matrix within which the processes of perceptual awareness and cognition are rooted, and from which they emerge, and its character thereby enters into their structure and content, modulates and colours it. I want, on this basis, to characterise

expertise as belonging to the anteceptive field, wherein it is grounded, but to account for it as elaborated in practice and retained as a set of multi-dimensional schemata, that are curious in that they bear the impress of a singular perspective and a capacity both for ongoing invention and for qualitative transformation.

The anteceptive field, as contrasted with everyday feeling or sensation, signals a different epistemic level or order, upon which practitioners interact, both intuitively and systematically, with what is available to them in the array of resources I mentioned earlier, and with invention in the present and future in mind. I am indeed arguing that when an expert practitioner has a feeling or sensation within the context of the expert invention of – for example, dance - her professional experience provides a different epistemic level within which that feeling or sensation is recuperable as material available to be utilised in the process of invention of new work: it is this possibility of recuperation, which does not overtake but might well sharpen the feeling or sensation, that suggests to me that processing plays its role between orders of experience. She experiences this in-between activity as potentially operative, potentially articulative in the invention at hand. Its interplay brings into productive interplay memories of work already made, either singularly hers or those of other practitioners - which also means that these are affectively charged memories; a challenging technical engagement with the present moment, and an anticipation of what might be made, in a context where something must and will be made from the array of available resources that I mentioned earlier.

As Rosenthal's work allows me to suggest, when something emerging expertintuitively seems, then, to "feel right", what the practitioner is calling a feeling is Borgdorff, H., The Debate on Research in the Arts, 2006 - see

neither, in fact, a psychological nor a subjective experience, even though it is experienced by a subject; instead what she calls a feeling involves an experience, linked to a perception, on a "knowledge level" – an epistemic level – that is quite specific to a particular moment in professional making processes. She lives the experience twice or three times over, on a number of planes, rich in qualitative diversity and directional activity, and to a number of quite specifically different integrative ends. The qualitative diversity and directional activity is so rich that no pattern or order is possible without discrimination; and it is this capacity for discrimination that some of us might want to call, switching registers, professional judgement. Yet in my experience, such integrative complexity tends to remain invisible to many practitioners, at the very moment of their immersion in it, whence the note of caution with which I began.

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