

A Tenderness Toward Being Worldmaking and Somatic Potentials at Any Age

For Mary Lynn, Christine, Frank, Jim, Judy, Robert,
and all my senior students in somatic practices

Introduction

What's in a word?

Words often appear to me in images, sometimes geometric ones. *Tendency* comes to me as a line on a slant, a steep or gentle mountain incline, or a dancer leaning off-center. Tendency is a movement word without resolution. When a tendency becomes bothersome, it moves vaguely but might not catch itself in trouble and keep moving on askance. A dancer might fall, or move toward the center to balance or stabilize. Tendency is not far off-center to begin with. After all, it is a tender word.

One can also define tendency through human inclination: for example, a tendency toward somatic characteristics like speed, languor, and fear or behavioral tendencies of kindness, anger, or worry. If I examine my tendencies, I would say I have elevated worry to an art form, but the chance to breathe deeply and find a sense of bodily ease and wellness gives me hope. Neurobiologist Antonio Damasio refers to states of wellness as *homeostasis*, a state of balance and embodied kind of homecoming, ensuring that life is regulated within a range compatible with survival and conducive to flourishing (2018, 47; 2021, 74).

I try to avoid being in a confining tendency for too long or getting stuck there. Motility is vital to wellness, and settling in with nothing to do is also necessary. I notice that moving off-center and back feels good and resolves tensions. The rub is that the home base of homeostasis might become dull after a while. The thrill of being off-center can be exhilarating, but most people catch themselves before falling, while some fall on purpose, as in a dance.

Somatic potentials and tendencies

In this study, I am interested in psychophysical tendencies as embodied aspects of worldmaking, particularly the underlying biases that influence mundane acts of everyday life in the making. These would be somatic sensitivities as ingrained tendencies that shape world senses, or we could call this the somatic slant of intentional acts. Over a lifetime, tendencies can become ever more pervasive; or they might wax and wane. Then there are those inclinations we recognize in ourselves and address as potentials on the verge or as limitations to deal with. Change is not easy; thus, somatic practice goes directly to the body. Movement repatterning, intuitive dance, and silent meditation are the primary means I discuss here. The last section on *entwinement*

develops adaptable practices with subtle challenges and includes a storyboard of somatic teaching and learning that applies to people of all ages, regardless of physical capabilities.

As a central theme, this essay connects historically to Edmund Husserl's development of *somatology*, which studies the body as a kinetic-sensing organism and is at the root of today's somatic practices. To support my perspectives, I reference the existential phenomenology of Martin Heidegger, Merleau-Ponty, Simone de Beauvoir, and Jean-Paul Sartre, as well as the neuroscience research of Antonio Damasio. As a matter of style, the essay interjects the making and doing of *poiesis* in nonlinear jumps of new meaning.

Change and wellness

As a somatics teacher and practitioner, I notice how tendency manifests in movement and how working with what we see impacts change and wellness at any age. I have experience teaching people of all ages but particularly enjoy working with seniors. For 14 years, I have taught somatic yoga to 40 seniors twice weekly through a continuing education community program. The group changes over time with new students joining and others moving on. They range in age from 45 to 86, and several students have been with the class since the beginning. The unlikely 40s and 50s include themselves as seniors, and the mix works well.

This essay is inspired by my teaching of seniors who are lifelong learners, inquisitive, intelligent, and highly motivated. In this light, the text develops a narrative relationship between theory and practice and explores the potential for somatic practices to promote positive change through movement. Here we explore some valuable somatic approaches to movement and change through intuitive dance, neutral breathing, stepping back, slowing down, and tapping the power of connectivity in nature. Readers may notice the easy access of these choices. Somatic change is more a matter of practice, detection, orientation of awareness, and attention to feeling than the perfection of complex techniques.

Should we have feelings?

Feelings are what we are not supposed to have (or bodies, for that matter), but contrary to mind/body bifurcations of thinking and feeling and the privilege of mind, Husserl's somatology studied the significance of feelings. Husserl, born in 1859 and died in 1938, founded *phenomenology* as the study of consciousness. Relative to this, he identified *somatology* as the experiential study of movement—“kinetic” and “genetic” at once in “unity of a constitutive flow” (1980, 116-117). His work shows how movement generates identity and is consequential in its phenomenal creative features of making and doing. Somatology draws the phenomena of movement forward; more expansively, it investigates movement relative to sense perception, with kinesthesia and feeling as interwoven materials of mind and psychophysical reality.

Movement and feeling are experienced as part of each other in other in Husserl's unity philosophy, as we will take up. In its evanescent dissolve, movement has never been an easy study. In seeming unreal, movement can appear sheerly in flutters and die into nothing. Where does it go? Movement needs a body to serve it and a perceiver to sense its presence. Dancers move, and oceans move. Our minds move. Life moves as one of its defining attributes. And

movements have feelings, or rather, we have feelings: *movements are lived and felt*. In perceptual experience, movement is a somatic phenomenon with *felt valences*. Human and more-than-human movement configure fluid worlds that manifest in material and dissolve in perceptual fades. Movement does not stand still. When it stops, stasis begins.

We experience the kinetic qualitative movement of feelings—their somatic tendencies—whether lethargic or joyful, for example, painful or soothing. For the most part, we take our feelings for granted, but sometimes we name them. Movement reveals brain-body partnerships, time-space patterns, intuitions, and myriad somatic tendencies in physical and emotional orientations. Through unities of sense perception, movement appears in *complete images or gestalts* greater than the sum of their parts. According to Damasio's neurological study of movement and mind, the psychophysical path to consciousness begins with the firing of a single neuron (2021, 55-57).

Husserl and Damasio both emphasize the central significance of *feeling* in performing and perceiving movement. Husserl initiated a kinetic study of perception and feeling through what he called "the somatic stratum" in *Ideas III*, (1980, 1-7, 14-16). This book began with a penciled manuscript as part of his larger work on *Ideas* in 1912 and was published posthumously. It was translated into English in 1980. Thus, Husserl conceived a unique branch of phenomenology constituted by somatic experience. More than a hundred years later, in *Feeling & Knowing*, Damasio created a neurobiological and storied picture, explaining feelings as *interactive perceptions* that "tape the whole show" (2021, 76). The word "feeling" appears in the titles of four of Damasio's books (1999, 2003, 2018, 2021). Husserl gives *somatic phenomena of feeling* a central significance in somatology. We visit this from several vantage points in this essay.

Part 1. A Tenderness Toward Being

Worldmaking

By now, you might wonder what my concern with movement, feeling, and tendency has to do with tenderness and worldmaking. Worldmaking, as such, was first developed conceptually in *Ways of Worldmaking* (1987) by Nelson Goodman, a philosopher of aesthetics and language. He was interested in how the world is expressed in symbolic systems of labels and names, gestures, emotions, words, music, dancing, and visual arts. Husserl's term "enworlding" (*verweltlichung*) is similar but more philosophically expansive. It refers to the ongoing emergence of an inclusive world as explored in phenomenology since the early 1900s and continuing, as we take up in the second part of this essay.

Why does the concept of worldmaking matter? From a participatory standpoint, it underscores that we are not outside the world looking in, nor passive recipients of a separate world. In our mundane activities and expert performances, we ourselves are worldmakers: moving, perceiving, making, doing, and understanding. Goodman describes worldmaking as a unifying process involving everyday and specialized creativity, where "comprehension and creation go on together" (1978, 22). Goodman's view of worldmaking is like that of phenomenology, though different in style.

Originating in the philosophy of Husserl and his students, phenomenology teaches that what we call "the world" comes into being and passes away through our aptitudes, intentions, and actions. We are not innocent bystanders; instead, *we are making the world we come to know and are responsible for it*. Husserl refers to the ongoing processes that shape the world and our human involvement in constituting *the kinetic flow* of the world. Through his work, phenomenology rejects the notion of a stable, objective reality. Husserl describes a material world of nature and culture entwined and in constant perceptual flow (1980, 117). He begins *Ideas III* by speaking of the "interwoven" coherence of material reality as constituted and perceived.

Husserl's phenomenology further defines the genetic emergence of identity as it arises and moves in unity of a constitutive *flow*. This unity is "kinetic," "genetic," and a "genesis of identity" further realized through movement. Husserl distinguishes phenomenology from ontology's fixed position, which is grounded in theories of being and categorical concepts (Ibid., 117-118). From its inception, phenomenology has developed a philosophy of movement concerned with the unpredictable flow of lived experiences and evolving identities. At the same time, Husserl finds a conceptual place for ontology within the self-renewing existential flow of phenomenology.

Husserl's leading student Martin Heidegger developed "worlding" as a creative performative term for *becoming*. His ontological phenomenology uses worlding as a gerund and shifts to the centrality of experience and movement in contexts of worldmaking. Heidegger conceives a *Fourfold Gathering Dance* as the world attains shape, duration, and meaning (1971, 163-86). In his textual performance, *the world worlds*: it doubles, folds, and becomes more of itself in a symbolic dance of Earth and Heaven, Mortality and Divinity. Worlding is a resonant word in existential thought, both an experiential and material matter of embodying the world as beings-in-the-world.

Worlding can also refer to acts of care in attending to the world. To remain with Heidegger on the topic of care: in *Being and Time*, he elaborates care uncharacteristically through an existential process of "the movement of falling." Falling discloses "temptation," "tranquility" (addiction), and "alienation." This flow of tendencies creates the foundation for an ethic of care ([1927] 1962, 224). Care develops after the fall and shapes *the wholeness of being*, which is the focus of Chapter Six (225-273).

Let us pause to consider whether the world recognizes our attention; thus, we might see that it thrives on attention and needs care. The kinetic juncture of *cultivation* at the nexus of material nature and the cultural world applies to both. *Culture* is concerned with creativity and ways of living effectively and ethically in society, and *cultivation* is the active process of culture—most profoundly, to dig into the Earth—to *nurture and grow as nature can and does*. Concerning the connection of nature and culture, Husserl writes that "the one lifts and intensifies the other" (Husserl 1980, 117). This integrative meaning explains the world inclusively and appreciates that we are part of, not better than, the natural-cultural world we cultivate and comprehend. The internal consistency of this geography unites us as humans and more, but unity is not sameness. Differences are real; they make the world fascinating and challenging, as does the diversity of nature.

Phenomenology ensued from Husserl's inquiry into perception and his related critique of subject/object dichotomies of nature/culture, body/mind, body/self, body/world, and body/nature. He did not view the self as a subject in an objective world of inner and outer essences. Instead, he refers to interrelated phenomena of "lifeworlds," which include darkness and light, distinct and indistinct images, flowing life, and the near and far in perception (Husserl [1932] 1995, xiv, 49). *Lifeworlds* are experienced with complexity and revealed in convergence with the psychophysical body.

Through Husserl's *Ideas II*—part of the penciled manuscript begun in 1912 and translated into English in 1989—phenomenology references the lifeworld (*lebenswelt*) as the encompassing world of which humans are a part. Lifeworld includes experiences of everyday communication, the personal world, the normalized world, the natural environment, the intuitive world, and the affective world of sense and culture Husserl (1989, 383-390). The envining world of nature includes Earth as elemental and the world as foundational. Human subjectivity grasps nature intuitively, according to Husserl [...], "but alters nothing of the unity of nature as core in its own ontological form" ([1932] 1995, 189). This tells me that nature is not a residual effect of subjectivity; there is such a thing as nature, and I am part of this reality.

Lifeworld horizons are spheres of action and understanding that divide contextually, typically as cultural, social, scientific, creative, and historical, all intersecting the envining (moving) world of nature. Through Husserl's conceptual groundwork, phenomenology eventually developed an ecological stance that understands humans as participants in an emergent lifeworld and not privileged above other lifeforms. Through the current phenomenology of Edward Casey and others, phenomenology develops themes of *ecological empathy*, as Shannon Rose Riley and I explore in a recent book (Fraleigh and Riley eds. 2024).

A philosophy of experience and potential

Existentialism extended phenomenology through the work of Heidegger, Merleau-Ponty, Simone de Beauvoir, and others. In existential phenomenology, the word "world" takes on meaning in context; its enormity extends to everything we experience and live. The world includes the physical reality of Earth and its convergent embodiments, the impact of individual actions, and paths of human decisions on a global scale. Our world is suffered and celebrated, often divided, yet shared through the very air we breathe, and while we may not control everything that happens, our choices matter. The world worlds with *possibilities*, which Heidegger places above actuality: "Higher than actuality stands *possibility*" (Heidegger [1927] 1962, 63, original emphasis). Our possible-selves and choices move the world into being and temper its meanings. Coming after Husserl, existential phenomenologists such as Heidegger, Sartre, Merleau-Ponty, and Casey argue that we derive meaning from our ongoing interactions and experiences in the world and with each other.

As a philosophy of experience, existentialism teaches that the world can be wild and harsh, often uncertain and in transition. In a transitory world, we tend toward stability as a homeostatic corrective. Yet, stability, however comfortable, can become amoral if we are willing to do anything to hold onto it. Political stability is fragile in democracies and hard-fought in dictatorial autocracies. Autocratic rule might seem an easy solution to the burdens of freedom and personal

responsibility. Sartre's existential ontology, *Being and Nothingness* ([1943] 1965), accepts the challenges of transitory existence and expounds on the struggles of freedom and bodily depth. Beauvoir develops an *ethics of ambiguity* ([1947] 1994), and Merleau-Ponty understands existential uncertainty this way: "Ambiguity is of the essence of human existence, and everything we live or think has always several meanings" ([1945] 2002, 196).

Morphic flow and trust

Acceptance of bodily lived complexity and experiential flow is significant in working with tendencies in somatic practice. Through somatic movement patterning and bodywork, we learn to follow and move in harmony with embodied tendencies instead of going against their grain. Following and guiding, rather than leading, helps us establish trust with the body and better understand habitual patterns of mind and emotion in movement. By acknowledging the physical-psychological complexity of our body, we can begin a process of change—starting where we are, not seeking perfection or trying to "fix" anything, but recognizing and trusting bodily tendencies and capacities for healing.

Human and other kinds of bodies are not stable. Through time and age, they alter in physical form and affect. Trauma, accidents, and surgery are commonplace. I am reminded that all animals experience change, and many have had surgery; my puppy has had two surgeries this year. Shortly after my knee replacement surgery, Annabella developed a limp from a ruptured ligament in her knee. (Perhaps in sympathy with me, she bounded into a pothole.) Her surgery was considered significant for a small dog, but fortunately, she recovered well, and I felt so much in common with her.

All bodies are caught in seasonal cycles. Indeed, to be embodied is to move and change. Yet, to be "a body" is also to be whole and unified; this is why we call it "a body." Concepts of the *lifeworld*, the *lived body*, and *lived experience* have animated theories of being in phenomenology since its Husserlian beginning, creating entire languages of movement that explain the body and its confluence with the world in both harmony and contradiction. In practice, somatic processes allow for imperfection and affective change. Both metaphysically whole and existentially incomplete, durational and disappearing, movement is an invisible unifying glue in healing. All creatures are held in life's *flow*.

After Spinoza's unity philosophy and study of emotion in *Ethics* ([1677] 2005), Husserl, Heidegger, Merleau-Ponty, and Damasio emphasized the inseparable unity of body, mind, and emotion in shaping the lived world.¹ Merleau-Ponty reflects on body and world unification this way: "Our own body is in the world as the heart is in the organism" ([1945] 2020, 235). Damasio's neuroscientific research extends these views—bridging culture, world, and body while illuminating the role of feelings and emotions in cultural expressions (2018). The existential phenomenology of Merleau-Ponty had already shifted toward psychology by recognizing the significance of feelings and emotions in cultural creativity ([1945] 2020).

How, then, do experiences make or compose a world? Are they not simply aspects of subjective life held within? Or do experiences surface and manifest somehow? Don't experiences just happen to people? Or do they play out daily in performances of doing, risking, and making? Are

experiences shared? Might experiences build interactively? Existential phenomenology would answer that the world is not simply outside and surrounding us; it is everywhere and permeates everything we do. *The world is an experience of being-in-the-world.* The world becomes real in experience, and our attitudes toward the world mitigate who we are, how we live and act, and what we become. Existentialism is not pessimistic; even in its darker modes, it is a philosophy of movement, change, and possibility.

Dialogical worldmaking

Attitudes to the world are consequential, whether tender or violent; attitudes transmit intention and direct bodily lived energy. Further still, this energy is preserved and moving. It cycles the force and care of our choices back to us. Worldmaking generates dialogue, constantly evolving through reciprocity and creating possibilities for healing. By this, I mean that *the world we create creates us*. Such mutuality might sound obtuse, but it has practical somatic implications. Consider my tendency to worry, for instance. As someone who trusts the transformative potential of experience, I can use my worries productively in dialogue. I don't need to be caught up in anxiety.

If I trust worry and lean in—

give worry a face and try to understand
what bothers me,
then I can do something about it.

If I don't,
I'm in for a lot of pain.

When I relate to my tendencies and let them school me,
I converse with their sloping inclines, attune to others,
and heed the world's weight with geometers.
Life's council moves me.

Dances of becoming

I know them well
when I dance in gathering mists.
They play through me in milliseconds,
pounding drums and fluting ornaments.

Tenderness sways in clouds of aqua wonder,
intent on every lushly worlding scene
carrying me on its back.



Figure 1. Sondra and Alycia move Meredith through a wave pattern and water dance rebirth. Photograph by Pam Wunderlich, 2008.

Folding the pages

I fold the book entire, cry, and chart the Gods
on pages strewn with good intentions,
while the world with its puzzles,
its ancient story and tendencies,
sits at my bed.

What of intentionality, awareness, and change?

Are human tendencies intractable? Or could they become catalysts for positive change? This is my hope and my work (in Figure 1, for example). We gain insight from our bodies by focusing on breath, bodily sensations, and tendencies. The good news is that we can become aware of and work with restrictive/reactive tendencies. Somatic practices focus awareness on bodily sensations and psychophysical responses—closely perceived through happenings of movement and stillness on land and in water.² Practices that quiet the mind can encourage equanimity and reverse the stressful momentum of controlling instincts.

One cannot command change; somatic practitioners listen for intrinsic capacities in the flexible space of transformation and responsiveness. Change entails listening to the body and looking for subtle clues of what could be missing or gently probing novel movements while listening for ingrained capabilities and tendencies. Embodied listening is a tender receptive process. Clues toward change come not in verbal assessments but through noticing subtle body characteristics

and movement orientations. Seemingly small actions informed by myriad feelings, intentions, and embodied tendencies are at play. Awareness through listening is a receptive way intention can be oriented. Thus, in somatic studies, *we add awareness through listening as the receptive, sensory matter of perception*. Receptive awareness in the present moment is vital to bodily perception and psychophysical change.

Because Husserl's conception of somatology is constructed through perceptual activity and a kinetic method, it misses the importance of *receptive awareness* in the somatic stratum. This is a phase of perception that listens and waits; it rests, restores, and heals. Becoming awake to the present and aware is a practice that guides somatic processes in movement and stillness, often tacitly, and should inform somatic theory more explicitly. Feldenkrais *Awareness Through Movement* is an example of a somatic method that brings forward the importance of being present or holding present-time consciousness for itself and without a plan. Thus, it focuses on the critical element of spontaneity in somatic consciousness.

Awareness can be taught or singled out in various ways. Meditation is one of these ways, as we explore later. One can also cultivate awareness as a material matter. I do this in *Teaching Through Touch* in somatic bodywork, recognizing that touch is not necessarily literal, but it can also be done off the body. We ordinarily touch each other through proximity, gestures, demeanor, and voice, for instance. I understand *somatic awareness* as a conscious process and an intentional use of receptivity. Husserl comes close to explaining the receptive phenomenon of awareness in his section on the kinesthetic flow, or “fee flow,” of sensation—moving sensation freely without the intention of doing anything (*Ideas III*, 106-107). It seems silly to intend awareness of sensation freely for itself, but it is a crucial somatic move.

Intentionality, or how we direct intention, appears in movement and is a guiding concept in phenomenology, somatics, and worldmaking. Husserl sees intentionality as a formative constant process *flowing in the actual moment* of our experience, interweaving and synthesizing a world in progress, starting at first wholly in the dark (Husserl [1932] 1995, 49). He speaks of synthesizing a world through how we orient our intentions, and of *habits and memory as sedimented* in the body through experience (49-50).

Habits and tendencies have a lot in common; I understand habits as embedded behaviors, less available to consciousness than tendencies, and more inflexible. Their evasion and stubbornness are part of why we call them habits. Good intentions matter, or we could say they have the potential to materialize thoughtfully and creatively and to unsettle unwanted habits and tendencies. It is we who give flesh to human movement in material experiential embodiment. Versions of worldmaking are not simply verbal and scientific, as crucial as these are. They also include nonverbal intentionality: the perceptual, pictorial, felt, sounded, and danced (Goodman 1978, 102-107).

Part 2. Enworlding, and Somatology

Are we here yet?

Are we? I envision tendencies spatially as unfinished paintings and temporally as unpredictable choreographies moving on.

Here and Now

In flow and staggering upstage,
the dancers face the back wall,
dotting the space with falling motions
to no end, as the overhead lights dim to dark.

Humans build upon individual and collective senses of the world, and this constitutive process is unfinished. According to Husserl, we *enworld* (his interactive word for becoming) as a "being-tendency" ([1932] 1995, 21). If he is correct, we may only partially arrive in the light of being. In becoming, we are not here yet and not fully present. Consciousness navigates creative reciprocity, which is ever emerging and in flow. Husserl's phenomenology describes present-time consciousness in view of construction, interaction, and "flow" ([1932] 1995, 54-62). This flowing world constitution and construction is creative (Ibid., xiv, li). It accumulates like music and dance or architecture in the making.

In its flow and struggle, life can be slippery. Husserl sees all beings as tendencies in process, and Sartre sees us reaching for self-knowing but unable to achieve it. We cannot know ourselves in our subjectivity because the attempt turns the self from a subject to an object. Sartre's ontological phenomenology, *Being and Nothingness*, holds that subjectivity is *lived and not known* ([1943] 1965, 300, 327). Yet, somatic processes seek to uncover this same unknowable subject through introspection and, more generally, self-perception. This somatic orientation toward self-knowing is intriguing, insular in attention, and impossible if certainty is the goal.

Self-reflexivity is vital to me as a phenomenologist and somatic practitioner. Yet, I look less toward self-knowing and more toward connective tendencies of affection: vulnerability, incompleteness, darkness, and not knowing. I want to know myself, but I want to surpass and surprise myself even more. Phenomenology is a generous philosophy in its tendencies. More widely, it resonates with Zen perspectives that promote curiosity toward life's difficulties and seek freedom from worldly attachments. This is a freedom we may never have, however. We are entangled with the world and play our parts in making a world we only suppose is separate from us. We cannot see what is ahead of time, but we can pay attention to the book of the world in process and mind the pages we write.

In scripts and carvings

Passages
and points of equilibrium
keep shifting
as the world worlds.

Stumbling
in wobbly gears,

we fall off-center,
hitting the hard pavement
in a wild drop.

Scratched
at the outset,
we break while still arriving.

Somatology, eco, and the somatic stratum

As the progenitor of phenomenology, Husserl rooted today's somatic fields of endeavor that he identified as *somatology*. Depending on his analytical perspective and naming of a "phenomenological-kinetic methodology," Husserl articulates somatology as a study of the *perception of physical things* relative to *material things* (1980, 1). He includes *sensitivities of the animate organism* and *the somatic stratum of feeling* founding the psyche (Ibid., 12-14). These are the profound threads (phenomena) of somatic study that he draws forward from his more extensive study of consciousness in several works. His presentation of somatology in *Ideas III* (1980) is technically detailed, and it also constructs an integrated philosophy of movement in the weave of the world. "Weaving" is a warm word he uses for making and doing in the world—and feeling *in* and *of* the world.

As for somatic distinctness, Husserl separates the *somatic* from the *psychological* and sees the somatic as more fundamental, even as he recognizes that the two are interwoven. In Husserlian terminology, somatology studies the body as a psychological and physical kinetic unity. In *Ideas III*, somatic sensitivities of the human psyche relate to psychology but can be distinguished from it (1980, 12-14). Somatics is basic because *intellectual and emotional life depend on the physical organization of the body* (Ibid., 14). The body's physical reality is key in somatics, while the psyche is considered crucial in psychology.

Through Husserl's groundwork on sensory life, we see the difficulty of separating the somatic and the psychological and the need to do so. The distinction defines two entire fields of understanding and practice, with *somatic psychology* at the boundary. The association of psyche and soma remains important in somatics, because the body and its movement are affective by nature. *Psychesoma* expresses the unified embodied whole in somatic perspectives. *Psyche* (emotional, affective life) is accessed through physical means in somatic therapies. At the same time, psychological therapies depend more on verbal means, except for Reichian Breathwork in Wilhelm Reich's depth psychology, and Holotropic Breathwork (controlled hyperventilation) in Alexander Groff's psychiatry.

Today's movement-based somatic practices investigate sense perception, including kinesthesia and movement as regions of reality as Husserl initially did through somatology. If we cannot hold movement as an object in our hands, it is nevertheless real in experience. Proprioception, the often-forgotten sense of movement, imbues us with immediate knowledge of where we are in space, even with our eyes closed, how limbs are configured, or the duration and arc of any movement. Proprioception lets us know the shape, time, energetic flow, halt, or feeling of any

movement we make. Movement registers as real in conscious experience through proprioceptive, exteroceptive, and interoceptive faculties.

The reality of sensory life is mapped through brain-body (neurobiological) *mental events* that Damasio names and explains further as *images*. These images are not static; as a function of time and mind, they make movies: "The mapped patterns are sketched on the fly" (2021, 56). Movement is integrated and interpreted more expansively in somatic experience—in experiences of body image, perceptual tendencies, and worldmaking. In dance, they can be understood as "movement images" and "dance images," as I explicate in *Dance and the Lived Body* (1987, Chapter 12, 209-252). When Husserl first explored somatology as a field of study and research, he brought creativity into the picture by linking somatic strata of tendencies and worldmaking. We have seen that in Husserl's phenomenology, we world (or enworld) as *tendencies*, a reminder that we manifest our being in dancelike flows of becoming, and this means we can learn and change.

Ecosomatics is a recent field exploring change at the nexus of skin and world.³ It signals a merger of the outside and inside, interoception and exteroception. Melding the world and embodiment through touch and all the senses, ecosomatics gives new meaning to the entanglements of being-in-the-world articulated by Heidegger ([1927] 1962). "Lifeworld," Husserl's inclusive term, is particularly relevant to the "more-than-human" in ecosomatics. He explains somatic qualities as interrelated strands of "the animate organism." This concept points to the wholeness of the human body through movement in the lifeworld and relates our body to other organisms and the world's body. The current prefix, *eco*, introduces an ethic of planetary care relating to animate organisms and worldmaking.

Although Husserl didn't use ecology as a term, his work points clearly in this direction. Early in the last century, Husserl's texts conceived a convergence of the world and the body intersecting what he called: "the world as nature [...], a construct of sense, a synthetic unity in the infinity of environing natural cores." ([1932] 1995, 189). Environing is a moving, integrative process in his thought, as he optimistically envisions the creation of "a new environing human world" (192). I wonder what he might think of the world of our present making, even as his own life as a German Jew crossed over World War I and Hitler's entire build toward World War II. Husserl died in 1938, just before Hitler invaded Poland in 1939. Antisemitism was rampant in Europe and not much better in America. Husserl was stripped of his academic rank, and several of his books had to be published posthumously. They passed through so many hands and textual additions from Husserl and his assistants that the original dates are difficult to trace, although his translators do their best.

Perceptual change—pleasure and pain

Damasio's scientific studies of soma complement Husserl's, mainly as they were both concerned with body and mind as parallel aspects of the same living substance,⁴ and they both studied body image and perception. In Husserl's phenomenology, *mind and body* build upon and create each other in unity. This remains fundamental to the work of phenomenologists moving forward. Damasio's views on the co-creation of mind and body are similar, as is clear in his book, *Looking for Spinoza* (2003).

In his neurobiology, Damasio identifies organic somatosensory regions from the brain stem to the cerebral cortex that contribute to bodily feelings and styles of mental processing (2003, 85, 97). "The quietly hidden insula may be the most important of all," he says (97). Damasio connects bodily sensations and body image to somatosensory brain maps, explaining how specific body images trigger pain or pleasure (124). His research concludes that *feelings are perceptions* that consistently involve some variation of pleasure or pain (85).

It is significant to practices of somatology that obscure somatic perceptions can be altered in several ways. Damasio says that perceptual patterns and body images depicted in the brain's body maps can be altered through drugs and certain forms of meditation (2003, 124). Yet, change is not easy, and perhaps attempts to exhume bodily depth fail for a reason. Of all the "horizons" of being that Husserl explains as belonging to social and natural "flowtime," he also speaks of a *concealed* "inner horizon" belonging to transcendental life and not apparent in the natural attitude of our normalized perceptions ([1932] 1995, 50). This is not some other spiritual life he envisions but rather a heightened experience, *a transcendental experience of the world* in the actual moment of perception (50-51).

Try as we may

We cannot bring depth layers
of somatic consciousness to lucid awareness.
In truth, there seems to be wisdom in this masking.

If we had the power
to will pleasurable feelings and be happy all the time,
would we choose to? What would it be like
if life could never surprise us?

Our deepest inclinations and feelings arise from somatosensory experiences and likely have a foundation in the womb. Damasio writes that the opaque *soma*, a somatic biological layer of life at the core of our existence, requires further investigation (1999, 149, 172). Like Husserl, Damasio emphasizes the importance of feelings in extending consciousness and creativity. Feeling is integral to life and survival. Feelings are world-makers, not bad actors; they illuminate and pull us in their formative wake, warning of danger and motivating conscience. In Damasio's neurobiological perspective, feelings serve as guides for shaping cultures and the future (2018).

Feelings are generative. Pleasure and pain in all variations are crucial in recognizing somatic tendencies, limitations, and possibilities as avenues toward renewing psychophysical life. This is the practical value of somatic practice and somatology as an educational and therapeutic field. Somatic practices uncover and identify embodied tendencies—tender and insistent—pleasurable or painful—and neither good nor bad. In escaping judgment, tendencies toward well-being can find their way home without getting stuck in worry, fear, or pain.



Figure 2. At the finish of a somatic bodywork session, Sondra and Joan match. Photograph by Jeanne Schul 2009.

Repatterning: Matching not mastery

Nothing can be forced in somatic approaches to movement. Psychophysical repatterning takes patience in self-moving and moving with another person in somatic dance processes and bodywork. Practitioners seek ease of movement. I approach this as a matter of *matching, not mastery*—a major theme of *Dancing Identity: Metaphysics in Motion* (2004). It is possible to recognize existing movement patterns through matching them in shape and tempo, reliving them in hands-on bodywork, or dancing and painting their felt contours. Matching can facilitate change by identifying deep-seated somatic tendencies in play with movement potentials. This is detective work at best in gentle listening through touch, movement, and dance.

Psychophysical patterns in bodily tendencies can be read in several ways; I consider them unnoticed biases influencing conscious actions. As such, they are naturalized in movement styles and cultural behavior. These often-hidden tendencies shape movement habits, embodying ingrained patterns of mind, culture, and feeling. In hands-on somatics, attitudes to touch need to be respected. This also applies to group work like Contact Improvisation and Contact Unwinding where moving together involves touch. If someone is uncomfortable with touch for any reason, there is always the option to learn through witnessing. I like to invite this for everyone and provide time and trust for witnessing in group work.



Figure 3. Sondra assists a senior student in finding a neutral horizon while walking. Together, they match their pace and upright posture, transferring weight forward by rolling the foot from heel to toe, the functional pattern of a forward walk. Photograph courtesy of Sondra Fraleigh.

Somatic mastery suggests self-overcoming, or the body's struggle to overcome itself through manipulating blocked energies or unacknowledged guilt and pain. How does matching differ in approach? In matching, one listens for *movement tendencies* that could also be called *brain-body patterns and attunements*. One can listen to the body through movement and in silence, but verbal communication also aids somatic listening, since people often need to express movement preferences and attitudes to touch. It is also possible to match and repattern simply through movement affinity and without touch. This is a beneficial option.

Matching is performed through awareness of self-moving or movement in partnering processes (as in Figures 2 and 3). Indeed, matching applies to bodywork in specific ways. Being a guide in somatic bodywork involves detecting tendencies, patterns, and attunements in another person's movement—then waiting with and matching them in one's own way. This doubling of movement and touch creates curiosity and opens a path toward renewal. Matching listens to the body, one's own and that of another, then moves with, not against, tendencies until they reveal themselves and change—if and when they are ready. Mastery puts up a fight.

Intuitive change—dance without thinking

Somatic practices emphasize states of being and wellness by concentrating on embodied and developmental patterns and the potential for change. Painful patterns of movement and sense seek tender resolutions.

Geometry anyone?

Gentle explorations of felt geometry
assist movers in finding center.
Off-center dimensions can also be navigated toward
a sense of rightness in righting dances of reflex,
porous bone, and soft skin.

Likewise, but from a different vantage,
techniques of highly structured dance engage
the geometry of tendencies.
Classical ballet offers airy examples
of tenuous balance in pointillistic homeostasis.

Righting as restoration can come easily and immediately through *intuitive dancing*, a simple multidimensional somatic method for uncovering ignored feelings. Spontaneous dancing tends to restore emotional balance because people don't have time to think. They move intuitively, dancing or breathing in the rhythms of silence or to music (as in Figure 4). The trick is that the thinking mind is surpassed by a stream of feelings arising quickly and without edits. In dancing or moving intuitively, we can explore the moving, biased, and unfinished self in relation to worldmaking and belonging. We have a way into and out of our bodily tendencies, a way into and out of what bothers or troubles us, a way into and out of pain. Reciprocity allows us a way to appreciate the moment and take pleasure in coming home to ourselves. When the nervous system regains homeostasis, somatic life can regain presence and attunement. This is important at any age. Hearing and trusting bodily sensations can be practiced in moving and dancing freely – without a plan.



Figure 4. Nathalie and Joan dance together at a community event in Santa Barbara, California. Photograph by Sondra Fraleigh, 2009.

Part 3. Entwining and Restoring

In completing the cycle of being as Merleau-Ponty sees it, we experience a cycle that moves *in, out, and back in*. He explores this as a theme of entwinement in his last work, *The Visible and the Invisible* ([1964] 1968). This is also the rhythm of breath and restoration. Entwinement has a reciprocal geometry through the in-breath, out-breath, and the breath rushing back in. These three layers of bodily movement and being are essentially connective and wordless, though we might find words to capture our experience. The somatic cycle of entwinement has no beginning or end. One can enter and leave it anywhere. Entwinement reflects worldmaking creativity: what we create creates us in return. Below, we explore a practice of *neutrality* in restorative breathwork, slowing down to feel more, stillness as restoration of wellness, and the power of connectivity in bodily convergence with nature.

A way in

Neutral breathing practice

Neutrality is a matter of coming home to ourselves and relaxing into restoration. To begin a somatic practice of neutrality, first, take a conscious in-breath. Then, let your breath settle into an easy rhythm. Just watch and listen to the symmetry of your breath. Stay with it and cycle without trying.

Breathe easily without expectation

Neither cold nor warm,
wait for a while.
Let go of hope or excitement and wait.
If you breathe without expectation,
something at hand will arrive.

Imagine you don't need to act upon the world's givenness.
Instead, let it come to you. Treat the world like a great book,
and let it open itself on today's page and your place.

Hold the present serenely
as your breath evens and balances,
expanding in and letting go.
Not asking for or seeking anything.

Wait.

This is the neutral breath I ask for in teaching as being present to myself and others. It reminds me to give up the need to be liked or loved, even as I trust positive relationships. In staying

present with topics and learning in the moment, a kind generosity will spring up as the breath of the group relaxes and draws us together. In time, I trust the mysteries of shared breath and settle into this comfort. We each have our own breath and thoughts, but as we breathe and think together at the same time and place, we might rest our drives and tendencies.

A way out

Slowing down and stepping back

In slowing down and stepping back, we might recognize that our collective world is vulnerable, and we must take care of it and each other. All life matters and makes a difference at any age. Husserlian *enworlding* (*verweltlichung*) indicates the ongoing and unfinished emergence of the world we constitute and come to know; our being and becoming arises not before or apart from creative origins, but [...] "simply and solely *in the process*" ([1932] 1995, li-iii, original emphasis). Every kind of life and being takes part in the genesis of worldmaking and becoming.

In slowing down and stepping back, we can feel the flow of the world, the Earth, and the ether we breathe. Dancing in nature with others, we recognize the somatic weaving of humans with the world, other life, and more-than-human nature. But such generosity of awareness can be challenging in the study of dance as performance. It is difficult to break through the reified habits that bind dance phenomena to cultures of the proscenium stage and separate the lived body from environing nature. I follow phenomenology because it offers open space for mending separations. Despite Husserl's universalizing tendencies, he initiated a philosophy of the human body as inextricable from nature—in which culture resonates, and agentic life is embedded and moving.

Return to well-being

Stilling

Somatology initiated a field of somatic studies focused on renewed bodily sensibility and experiential insight. Movement somatics draws upon direct experiences of body and world—in how we *move*, *feel*, and *do*, and how we *rest*, *restore*, and *relate*. Listening to the smoothness of breath in silent meditation can enliven soma, creating a deep and relaxed sense of embodied attunement with the world and restoration of well-being. Our tendencies combine inherited and learned behaviors. In the neutrality of meditation, we can match and observe these to better understand wellness for ourselves and others. For me, movement is essential in promoting change, but I remember that rest and restoration are also necessary.

Entwining nature

Bodily Convergence

The ecological component of somatology is especially relevant to aging and relies on the powers of connectivity we discover in bodily convergence with nature. Like the human brain's plastic regenerative aspect, nature is many things: its teeming organic tendency is originative. As much as anything, humans are part of nature's dance of potential. Nature moves; it lives in time-space and character, and we enter its creative arc in ecosomatic practice. Through emergent affective

life, we participate in nature's multi-expressive essence. Husserl describes the emergent kinetics of "the flowing live present" in *bodily convergence* with the environing world ([1932] 1995, xiv).

If he is right, and I think he is, we are not separate from each other or alone. Moreover, we are *woven with the world*. His thought intrigues and baffles me. Its open, empty effect makes me fearful because I tend to seek conclusions and happy endings. When I wait long enough to suspend this tendency and extend my imagination, I let myself settle into the open space of present time to enjoy a deep breath. Still more, the flowing life of nature draws out my curious mind. Then, I see what moves beyond my doings and let myself be carried and supported.

There is something truly awe-inspiring about being among geological formations in the vastness of nature. In Zion National Park, known as *Mukuntuweap* by the Paiute, I enter a zone of magical cliffs and canyon gorges that hold and sustain me. Every other year, students of our somatic work gather in the canyon as a community. A few are in their thirties, most are at least fifty, and several are in their seventies and eighties; I am the oldest. Our dancing attunes to the might and glow of the canyon, and we feel our belonging to nature. We weave together world and body, returning wellness in the lace. On a good day, this is our tendency (See Figure 5).

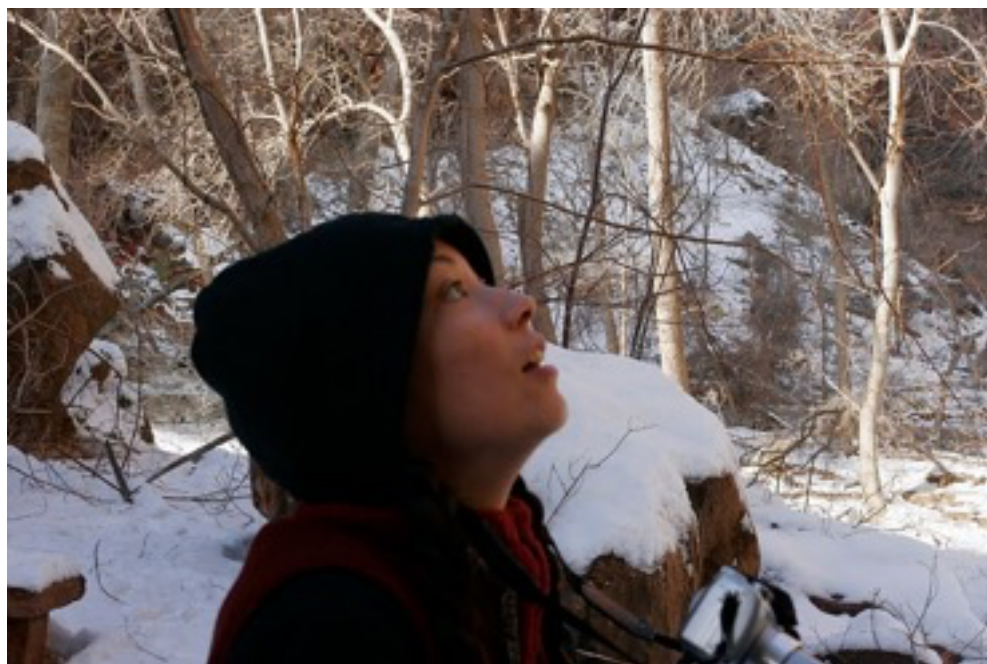


Figure 5. Michelle Akane Sugimoto Story looks toward the towering cliffs of *Mukuntuweap* and the story in her name. Photograph by Ashley Meeder, 2011.

Rest and Reset Storyboard

We spin our world in common through the ingrained tendencies of education. In the best sense, education leads out the talents and life-giving powers of the person. At its worst, it stifles life, instilling rote repetition and unexamined prejudice. This storyboard emphasizes the overlooked matter of *rest* and *reset* in somatic pedagogy and education. I frame it for teachers and include an invitation to silent meditation that anyone can do.

Somatics is a noun, a "what," and a process rendering of "how"—how to do something—or how to perform. Movement-based somatic methods simplify movement components to make them doable in community or solo. I introduce the prompts below for teaching somatically with attention to feeling and sensation. Like any subject, movement can be taught with curiosity toward unknown outcomes rather than directives. Learning and changing through movement should be easy—full of laughter and open to discovery.

For Teachers

Teach through questions.
Remember Socrates.
Insert questions wherever you can
and allow open-ended answers.
Wait for answers.

Some Questions and Provisional Answers

Is there a right and wrong way to do the movement?

There are no mistakes in somatic explorations,
but movement can improve
through practice and patience.

Is higher and tighter better?

Only in some cases.
Listen to your body.

Are we trying to stretch?

Can you aim for ease and enjoyment instead?
Remember that stretch is in love with breath.
Remember to breathe.
Lift the corners of your mouth
for an inexpensive facelift.

What is possible for you now?
Can you adapt to the doable?
What does your body say?

In Teaching a Group

Consider that somatic practices aim toward transformation through trust.
Think how the movement each person makes swells the chorus.
Promote gentle breathing to bring people together.

Teach movement through listening to the group.
 Attend to the capabilities and limits of the whole.
 Wait for answers.
 Practice breath and silence.

Learn from your students.
 Look to your students for movement innovations
 and incorporate them when you can.

Avoid criticism.
 There is already enough to go around.

Breathe easily as you teach, and channel your best teacher.
 Trust the appearance of this teacher.

Include everyone.
 Learn to see the value of individual responses.
 Provide time for students to talk about their experiences in pairs or trios.
 People enjoy "buddying-up" to "check-in."

About Restoration and Resilience

Allow plenty of time for silent rest in between movement episodes.
 Encourage active receptivity in rest positions.

The floor can be used as a place of rest.
 Invite rest and reset in back-lying, side-lying, and belly-to-earth.
 Invite curling up in embryo to restore innocence.

Keep somatic practices simple.
 Introduce subtle challenges.
 Avoid individual praise and blame.
 Support the whole.
 Cultivate a sense of well-being.
 Take time to breathe and enjoy yourself.

Teach from affordances of standing,
 all-fours, kneeling, sitting, front-lying,
 back-lying, side-lying, walking, and dancing.
 Practice using a chair for those who need it.

(Figure 6 shows rest and reset from back-lying,
 and how to release the lumbar spine.)



Figure 6. Students rest in back-lying with the knees apart and feet planted, allowing the low back to release and ground. This is a restorative position for the spine. Photograph by Ashley Meeder, 2014.

Silent Practice at Any Age

Preparation

Sit in comfort on the floor or the Earth and face the East.
Fold your legs—and see if you need to extend one leg.
If you need to lie down, please do.

Sit in a chair with a firm seat if you cannot find comfort.
Slide forward with your back away from the back of the chair.

When you are comfortable wherever you are,
think of extending your back long
and floating your head like a balloon.
Part your teeth gently with your lips lightly touching.
Relax and close your eyes in softness.

Meditation

Breathe consciously in silence
because tendencies pop up in the quiet,
and silence is a great teacher.

Let thoughts be as they come and go.
Thoughts are just thoughts passing by.

Meditate to let go of forward momentum
as thoughts pass by unremarked.
If brainwaves of planning and regret arise,

let them be.
 Observe your thoughts
 by not getting entangled in them.

Return (so)

to the well,
 to the worldhood of the world,
 and dance awry, lest time
 furrow the night.

Anon (soon)

Walk home.
 Walk to be, and
 gain a path to imperfection,
 matching the world as it turns
 its quiet tales of tenderness and magic.
 Walk *anon*, 'til time escapes you, soon.

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End Notes

¹ See also my research on Spinoza and Damasio in “Mind Matters: Mind as Portal and Precarity in Somatic Experience,” Chapter 3, 37-58. *Somatics in Dance, Ecology, and Ethics* (Fraleigh 2023).

² See my guidebook for ecosomatic yoga: *Land to Water Yoga* (Fraleigh 2006).

³ For more on this topic, see Alison East’s chapter, “Skinbody and the Skin of the Earth,” in *Geographies of Us*. Edited by Fraleigh and Riley (2004).

⁴ Mind enters Husserl's discussion after he establishes the psychophysical groundwork of somatology. In the first decades of the twentieth century, he builds his *ontology of mind* from the foundation of the psycho-physical material body in parallel with its animate features (1980, 18-22).