

# Introduction: Arts-Based-Philosophy

## Towards an Aesthetic Image of Thought

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*The problem...*

June, 2023. Again I am sitting at my computer and writing a research proposal for the Austrian Science Fund (FWF) in the framework of the program for arts-based research and development (PEEK), this time with the title “Art in Philosophy: Philosophy in the Arts. The Significance of the \*Heart\* in Artistic-Research (AR) and Performance Philosophy (PP).”<sup>1</sup> The relation of art and philosophy has kept fascinating me for many years. Tenaciously. Insistently. Still. Just *as-if* it was—freely paraphrasing Kafka—“made only for me”.<sup>2</sup>

Even though I found myself personally in the wake of this question, the problematic relation between art and philosophy simultaneously gave me a distinct feeling of having come across something that was of general, even historical interest. Because the formula art (and/or/versus) philosophy seemed to respond to a long intellectual history that *again* became highly problematic and questionable today—even

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- 1 The proposal has finally been approved by the Austrian Science Fund (FWF): Grant-DOI 10.55776/AR822. <https://www.mdw.ac.at/the.heart/> (last accessed: 12 June 2025). The word “again” refers to a second research proposal I wrote in 2012, in which I was overwhelmed by the same feeling. Namely, that the relationship between art and philosophy “has kept fascinating me for many years. Tenaciously. Insistently. Still. Just as if it were—freely paraphrasing Kafka—‘a research question, made for me.’” (Böhler 2019b, 240)
  - 2 “No one else could ever be admitted here, since this gate was *made only* for you.” (Kafka 2009, 152)

though not many people yet have accepted it as a top priority issue. Though it strikes us all, it hits us *in secret*, still; in a sublime manner operating below the threshold of our common public awareness; below the threshold of our shared public interests; below the threshold of our public everydayness. As-if it would not strike us at all.

Initially, aesthetic troubles of this sort probably always matter for ‘all and none,’ to indirectly quote the subtitle of Nietzsche’s book *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*. They shake us all, but almost nobody seems to register their sublime (*sūkṣma*) vibes (*vṛtti*),<sup>3</sup> precisely due to the subtleness of the matter at stake. This also seems to be the reason why the historical need of a new aesthetic image-of-thought<sup>4</sup> is still not broadly discussed. It seems better to not touch such vague grounds. Better to silence them. Better to let them vibrate unanswered in the depth of one’s soul—unheard, without anybody consciously recognizing them, taking care of them, imagining them.

For, from the viewpoint of a psychology built from anima what we are doing when deeply engaged in imagination is indeed aesthetic. Depth psychology is depth aesthetics, and the task of psychology from that date on would have been laying out the aesthetic modes of the deep imagination... (Hillman 1981, 36)

*Indeed, the matter is sublime and cryptic ...*

This book claims to exemplarily show that the relation of art and philosophy *currently* undergoes a sublime but crucial historical transformation. There are more than enough signs which indicate that the alteration of the historically handed down relatedness of art *and*

3 In Sanskrit, *sūkṣma* means energy-matter that vibrates (*vṛtti*) so smoothly that our sense organs are hardly able to register and grasp such subtle vibes.

4 According to Deleuze, an *image-of-thought* is a historical configuration of how thinking itself imagines the performance of thinking. Descartes’ “ego cogito”, for instance, did create a historical image of what thinking means in modern European times. Nietzsche, for instance, questioned this image-of-thought in *Beyond Good and Evil*, in an aphorism on “the superstitions of the logicians” by stating “that a thought comes when ‘it’ wants, not when ‘I’ want.” (Nietzsche 2002, 17)

philosophy is already in the making, at least at the margins of contemporary philosophy and contemporary arts.<sup>5</sup>

*First signs...*

First and foremost, I suggest to read Nietzsche's vision of a new species of philosophers, "whose taste and inclination are somehow the reverse of those we have seen so far" (Nietzsche 2002, 6) as a prelude to a philosophy of the future<sup>6</sup> in which a new way of doing philosophy in alliance with the arts has started to incubate. What distinguishes the day-break of these new artist-philosophers<sup>7</sup> from their ancestors is primarily their reversed sense of taste, says Nietzsche. They *feel* different from their ancestors. They *sense and taste* the world differently and even *think* qualitatively differently, due to the aesthetic image-of-thought they perform while thinking in strong opposition to the handed down tradition of the ascetic image-of-thought of their forefathers who regularly imagined the performance of thinking to be an action performed entirely separate from the rest of their body on an ideal, non-sensual plane-of-being. As a rule, their ancestors just seemed to want one thing only, says Nietzsche. Namely, "repose in all cellar regions" (Nietzsche 1989, 108). If a philosopher lacked this ascetic appetite in the souterrains of his or her body, one could be sure that s/he was called merely a *so-called* philosopher. "A philosopher in quotation marks who lacked decisive features to be called a genuine, true, serious philosopher ..." (Böhler 2014, 242)

To rescue the dominant meta-position of the mental performance of thinking in the life of one's lived-body, the performance of think-

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5 Philosophizing on the margins of philosophy is precisely the way of doing philosophy, once philosophy has started to accept its fictional character. (Derrida, 1982).

6 *Prelude of a Philosophy of The Future* is the subtitle of Nietzsche's book *Beyond Good and Evil*.

7 Nietzsche uses the term artist-philosopher (Künstlerphilosoph) in his late writings, in order to signify that the forthcoming generation of philosophers will be both, artists and philosophers, at once. (Böhler 2015). Mediathek PEEK-Project (FWF): AR 275-G21 <https://homepage.univie.ac.at/arno.boehler/php/?p=7913> (last accessed: 12 June 2025).

ing had to be imagined in classical times to be a kind of *disinterested* performance. That is to say, an action that is entirely grounded in itself (*cogito*). Autonomous thinking, not at all influenced by the souterrains of one's lived-body, this seemed to be their special matter. As-if one's thoughts would not at all be influenced by one's appetite, one's drives, instincts, feelings, aspirations, longings, inclinations, intuitions, as well as by the external atmosphere, circumstances and discursive contextuality in which a lived-body actually finds itself embedded in its being-in-the-world.

Nietzsche's assumption that consciousness is not "*opposed* to instincts in any decisive sense" actually raised a new level concerning the question "What is called thinking?" by assuming that "most of a philosopher's conscious thought is secretly directed and forced into determinate channels by the instincts" (Nietzsche 2002, 7). For classical philosophers, still today it is probably this assumption which is the most shocking aspect of Nietzsche's new aesthetic image-of-thought (Böhler 2017, 580).

*The ascetic versus the aesthetic image-of-thought...*

Imagining the act of thinking as it would take place entirely detached from the rest of one's body on an immaterial, ideal plane of being—disinterested and entirely separated from the 'lower' planes of one's lived-body—is the typical way of characterizing the performance of thinking trapped by the ascetic ideal (Nietzsche 1998, 97-163) and the ascetic image-of-thought that follows the ascetic ideal. In the course of such a view, the head (*caput*)<sup>8</sup> actually becomes the incorporated capitol and ruling regime of one's entire body.

Such an ascetic image-of-thought goes hand in hand with a contemplative interpretation of the arts, in which they are appointed the role of a sedative (Schopenhauer); or, at least, of a sort of 'disinterested intuition' (Kant). In both instances, the task of the arts lies either in silencing the restless forces operative in the cellar regions of one's lived-bodies (Schopenhauer) or, more modestly, in praising art as a

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8 On the relation of the head (*caput*) with the cape and capitalism see Derida 1992.

form of contemplation (Nietzsche 1989, 103-106) in which one's aesthetic judgment reflects the aesthetic value of things in a mindful, conceptual manner.

What such aesthetics-of-reception are missing, according to Nietzsche, is the very experience of the artist him- or herself. Namely the one who is producing and not just consuming art. Or more precisely, the one who is artistically *consuming the production of art* in a sort of self-affection that is stimulated by an artistic research process within the artists themselves. Ascetic aesthetics, the aesthetics of European classical times, actually ignored this fact that the arts are, in the first place, *a research process that stimulates artists while they create art*.

The classical ascetic image of the arts stands in a strong contrast to Nietzsche's own view on aesthetic matters. First of all because he, being himself an artist-philosopher, was intimately familiar with artistic research processes, due to the many styles of writing he was experimenting with while he was generating his philosophy-writing aphorisms, treatises, poems, epics, letters and even musical compositions which afterwards he himself played and interpreted on the piano.

Artistic experiences which Nietzsche, by the way, shared with his greatest antagonist Plato, who in the first place also was an artist before he met his teacher Socrates and started to become a Socratic philosopher. The tradition of philosophy even claimed that in a highly symbolic scene Socrates recommended his aristocratic master student Plato to burn his art work before entering the realm of philosophy and becoming a *serious* Socratic philosopher (Böhler 2019c). As-*if* for artists the gate was from then on be closed to enter the temple of Socratic philosophy and serious academic scholarship. From now on one had to choose, *either* to become a Socratic philosopher *or* an artist. To be or become both, to be and become a hybrid *philosopher-artist* and/or an *artist-philosopher* is considered to be contradictory in itself since then. And, honestly: It still appears to be contradictory today for most classical philosophers and classical artists, at least in Continental Europe and those non-European cultures which are academically trained by such a Socratic Episteme.

At least since Hellenistic times, when philosophers were starting to attack their ancestors' mythological style of doing philosophy by criticizing their way of doing 'philosophy' as a form of thinking based on arbitrary imaginations which did miss any reasonable argumentation, precisely since then the fusion of art *and* philosophies does not appear as a reasonable academic enterprise anymore for most academic scholars. Still today. Arts-based-Philosophy, Philosophy-based-Arts is actually nothing serious academic researchers would generally recommend their students to strive for.

But even though in the meantime the Socratic way of doing philosophy has become the standard model of what it means to do academic philosophy, even on a global scale, the situation seems to have changed since Nietzsche entered the stage of continental philosophy and started to challenge precisely the Hellenistic assumption that art and philosophy have per se to be considered antagonistic forces.

It is worth mentioning that the Socratic way of doing philosophy, which Socrates' master student Plato institutionalized for the first time in his Platonic Academy, probably would have never survived if Socrates' master student had not possessed such brilliant artistic writing skills. Socrates, who had not written any text, was obviously in need of the artist-philosopher Plato, who dramatized the oral teachings of his master in an artistic manner in such an elegant way that Socrates' teachings survived historically. Is this not Socratic irony? Plato's teacher advised him to burn his artworks in order to become a serious Socratic philosopher. But in the end the Socratic way of doing philosophy probably only survived due to the artistic skills of Socrates' aristocratic student who was trained in the arts and finally founded the first academia?

One has to have this entire primal scene in mind in order to understand the weight and depth of the following propositions by artist-philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche who was also an academically trained philologist of ancient Greek and Roman culture: "My Philosophy is reversed *Platonism*."<sup>9</sup> And more than 16 years later, in a letter

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9 "Meine Philosophie umgedrehter Platonismus: je weiter ab vom wahrhaft Seienden, um so reiner schöner besser ist es. Das Leben im Schein als Ziel." (Nietzsche 1967–1977, 7 [156])

to his friend Paul Deussen of November 16, 1887, he appends the following remark to this early posthumous fragment, “perhaps this old Plato is my actual great opponent? But how proud I am to have such an adversary!” (Nietzsche 2003, 200; Translation A. B.)

Nietzsche actually developed his own *aesthetic* image-of-thought in strong opposition to the other artist-philosopher, the divine and most esteemed Plato, who finally followed Socrates’ *ascetic* image-of-thought by banning the poets from his ideal state, arguing that they were just imitating reality and thus following an aesthetic rather than an idealistic form of imagination which was still trapped in sensual affections and not in the sober, non-sensual thinking of ideas. “The Socratic disregard of the instinctive ... The divine Plato, too, has fallen prey to Socratism in this instance ...” (ibid., 542)

Nietzsche’s reversal of Platonism historically *resists* this ascetic image-of-thought, by claiming that the performance of thinking is, in-itself, a sensual activity in resonance with all the other parts of one’s lived-body. Consequently, the function of philosophy cannot lie in the ascetic enterprise to leave the sensual realm of affections behind in order to enter an immaterial realm of pure ideas, freed from any affect. Sober thinking was precisely the kind of thinking Socrates was longing for. And the modern versions of the ascetic image-of-thinking, the so-called ‘objective’ sciences, still today follow this Socratic approach, according to Nietzsche. Think sober! This is just the modern mask of the old ascetic ideal (Nietzsche 1989, 146–154).

Nietzsche, on the contrary, reversed this ascetic image-of-thought by actually calling the arts “the greatest stimulus to life”.<sup>10</sup> The beauty of art consists in the “promise to happiness”,<sup>11</sup> as Stendhal

10 In his lecture course on Nietzsche during World War II, Martin Heidegger read this proposition as the very foundation of Nietzsche’s aesthetic position. Cf. Heidegger 1996.

11 In the third book *On the Genealogy of Morals*, Nietzsche takes Stendhal’s definition of beauty, “beauty is a promise of happiness”, as the counter position to Kant’s aesthetic of disinterestedness and Schopenhauer’s aesthetic quietism. “That is beautiful,” said Kant, which gives us pleasure *without interest*. Without interest! Compare with this definition one framed by a genuine ‘spectator’ and artist—Stendhal, who once

once said, in accordance with Nietzsche's own aesthetic view. Art not only promises happiness in a future to come, but also *awakens* passionate feelings (Derrida 2000, 26-29) here and now by virtue of *doing* art, *processing* art, *performing* artistic research. The arts *currently stimulate*. They are *activating* in particular the virtual planes of beings; not just those planes which have already been active and activated in a soul but also, and primarily, those planes of being which so far have not yet been animated in one's anima. Virtual planes, which until now were resting secretly in the background of somebody's psycho-mental awareness; hidden, cryptic, latent, calm, unanimated, occult, virtual. There they were waiting for their dawn to matter once by virtue of an artistic stimulation, capable of animating them. For Nietzsche, as for Stendhal, art seems to be precisely the force that is capable to *animate one's being-in-the-world* (zōē).

Nietzsche's overall mantra, "my Philosophy is reversed *Platonism*", signifies precisely the historic turning point in which the ascetic image-of-thinking will have been metonymically replaced by the aesthetic image-of-thought which is the reversal of the first. Art is no sedative, on the contrary, it is the stimulating force (zōē) that intrinsically characterizes the very meaning of life-itself (zōē). Being stimulated means being alive. In the course of this aesthetic revolution notions such as the lived-body, the notion of life as such (Agamben 1999), and in particular the animating force of life (zōē) will have to be reevaluated, reconceptualized and transformed as core issues at stake in the wake of an altered relation between philosophy and the arts.

*Zōē, the animating force of life...*

The force capable of stimulating one's anima, of activating and animating oneself, is the force which ancient Greek language called *Zōē*. Understanding artistic research as *Zōē*—which is an exemplary

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called the beautiful *une promesse de bonheur*. At any rate he *rejected* and repudiated that one point about the aesthetic condition which Kant had stressed: *le désintéressement*. Who is right, Kant or Stendhal?" (Nietzsche 1989, 104)

attempt of this book—not just considers the arts to be a kind of animistic or even beastly force of life. In ancient Greek times one can find *Zōē* in all forms of life, even in the life of the Gods, probably even in physical matter.<sup>12</sup> This becomes conceivable once one considers all forms of beings, from a genealogical perspective, as something which has been activated already by a force that gave birth to their appearance (natality). Insofar as every single being is considered to be already the result of a generative process of becoming, it can be said to be an offspring of a primordial ontological activity (*zōē*) which is secretly operative in letting something come into being. And as far as all forms of beings are brought into being, their mattering constitutively implies a virtual dimension in which they actually were not yet constituted but absent. Before they came into being, they were virtually real in the very sense in which Gilles Deleuze defined this term in his philosophy: “the virtual is opposed not to the real but to the actual. The virtual is fully real in so far as it is virtual.” (Deleuze 1994, 208) Every single being which comes into being is already an activation of the virtual plane of being. And the ontological performance of being-itself, its univocal verbal sense (*zōē*), consists precisely of the mattering of possibilities which so far have not yet mattered. Being’s *zōē*, the verbal performance of being-itself, is actually operative in activating, stimulating, animating and awakening the virtual planes which life, *Zōē*, finds in \*herself\*: dormant, sleeping, not yet alive, in a void, full of potentials, ready to matter once. Successively activating the *posse-esse* which was resting in \*her\* virtual plane from the very beginning, the *Zōē*, operative in the evolutionary wake of nature, actually unfolds, step by step, the possibilities which are about to matter and enter the realm of manifest (*vyakta*) nature once.

It is precisely the promise (Nietzsche 1989, 57; De Man 1979, 246-277) of such a *reversed sense of taste* that historically will have replaced the ascetic taste, which will pave the way toward the aesthetic revolution which Nietzsche envisaged in *Beyond Good and Evil*. A revolt in which one finally will be ready to sense the arts as life-ani-

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12 Leibniz, Nietzsche, but also contemporary research on animism, pansychism and new materialism claim that even particles are already modes of a physical form of life (*Zōē*).

mating forces (*zōē*), capable of activating virtual planes of existence which so far did rest in the background of one's psycho-mental awareness in hidden planes of nature. It is this *new taste* that will differentiate the new post-Socratic and post-Platonic species of philosophers from their forefathers, according to Nietzsche. The epochal revolution which he announced in *Beyond Good and Evil* was therefore thought to be, in the first place, an *aesthetic* one. A revolution of one's heart.

Whatever value might be attributed to truth, truthfulness, and selflessness, it could be possible that appearance, the will to deception, and craven self-interest should be accorded a higher and more fundamental value for all life.... But who is willing to take charge of such a dangerous Perhaps! For this we must await the arrival of a new breed of philosophers, ones whose taste and inclination are somehow the reverse of those we have seen so far – philosophers of the dangerous Perhaps in every sense. – And in all seriousness: I see these new philosophers approaching. (Nietzsche 2002, 6)

### *Experimental labs...*

But it was not only Nietzsche, the untimely artist-philosopher and philologist (cf. Hamacher 2015) of 19<sup>th</sup> century continental Europe, whose philosophy indicates a radical shift in the relation of art and philosophy. Contemporary formats such as performance-philosophy (cf. Cull and Lagaay 2020), philosophy-on-stage (Böhler and Granzer 2018; Böhler 2019b; Böhler and Granzer 2020; Böhler, Schäfer and Aigner 2017a), artistic research (cf. De Assis, Giudici 2017; De Assis, Giudici 2019; Badura, Dubach, Haarmann, Mersch, Rey, Schenker, Pérez 2014), arts-based-philosophy, the sense-lab,<sup>13</sup> and similar

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13 What Erin Manning and Briam Massumi called “Sense-Lab” is precisely such an experimental approach toward an aesthetic image-of-thought. Erin Manning 2004, SenseLab, <http://erinmovement.com/about-sense-lab> (last accessed: 12 June 2025).

initiatives<sup>14</sup> are clear signs indicating the altering of the classical handed down relation of art *and* philosophy. It is already a historical fact that their relatedness is *experimentally* under investigation today. Not just theoretically, but practically *and* theoretically. Insofar as all around the globe artistic researchers, philosopher-artists and artist-philosophers have started to experiment with *new possibilities to connect* philosophy and the arts in order to generate, as one might say, aesthetic images-of-thinking; thought-images in which the performance of thinking is no longer experienced *as-if* it would be a non-sensual performance but, on the contrary, as a sensitive activation of one's mind in alignment with the cellar regions of one's body which are allowed to speak up, utter their voice, tune our judgments, or instinctively channel our thoughts into certain directions in an associative manner. Even the philosopher's conscious thoughts are now taken to be "secretly directed and forced into determinate channels by the instincts," to recall Nietzsche again.

According to this post-Socratic species of philosophers, the thinking performance which takes place in a lived-body as a sublime body of thoughtful 'matterings' is never just tuned by interior bodily processes only. Because a body does never exist in-itself, separated from the relational affairs with the world it finds itself in. These relational affairs are not just external causes at a certain distance, because they affect a lived-body first hand—at its bodily-surface and even under its skin.

Every single body, and in particular every lived-body, is therefore never a wordless individual being that would exist entirely in-itself, separated from the relational affairs it inhabits. Not at all are lived-bodies isolated things-in-themselves.<sup>15</sup> They are rather centers (sensitive-agential-knowing beings) of an entity that finds itself exposed<sup>16</sup> into worldwide relations which co-constitute its *monadic*

14 Performance Philosophy is a global network of initiatives working in this research field: <https://www.performancephilosophy.org/> (last accessed: 12 June 2025).

15 Jean-Luc Nancy put this matter in a nutshell by claiming that "psyche is extended. It knows nothing of it" (Nancy 2008, 21).

16 On the concept of lived-bodies as worldwide expositions, cf. Nancy 2008.

being-in-the-world. Hence the corporeal *Da-sein* (being-there) of a lived-body, its local appearance, should be considered the feeling, acting and knowing *center of a monad* which constitutes its worldwide periphery. All the relational affairs the corporeal center of a lived-body actually inhabits are *co-extensive dimensions* of its corporeal being-in-the-world. Its environment is therefore not just an external area that surrounds it but an *intimate, constituting co-dimension* of its being-in-the-world. From the very beginning when a body comes into being, it will always already have been a relational affair, since it appears in a field of relations which has already been there before it appeared and which allowed it to appear as its sufficient reason.<sup>17</sup> This is true for a lived-body, but also for material particles, which always appear in relation to other particles and only show the attributes they actually possess in relation to others, which allow them to show up with these attributes.

This is also the reason why a body does never end at its three-dimensional surface but extends from there into worldwide relations which are an integral part of its own corporeal *Da-sein*; even though these relational affairs are external to the volume of its three-dimensional body.

A lived-body *intimately feels* the so-called external vibes of all the other bodies which touch the flesh of its own body. It *intimately tastes* them, tries to understand *their* significance and affordances from the very center of its local center within the relational affairs it is actually embedded in and in touch with in a worldwide manner.

To question the relational affair between philosophy and the arts *experimentally* in lab-situations therefore implies that artist-philosophers and philosopher-artists<sup>18</sup> who are engaged in artistic research processes are not just intellectually but also physically and

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17 In German, sufficient reason literally means “der zu-reichende Grund,” the ground of being that grants and allows you to exist by entering the relational field of a world, that welcomes you and lets you be and become.

18 The philosopher-artist and artistic researcher Nikolaus Gansterer, for instance, has developed the format of trans-lectures, by which in his paintings he responds artistically to written texts or live talks of philosophers, in order to realize the atmosphere of their talks by painting.

sensually engaged and stimulated in the research they explore within their concrete research field. The entire *apparatus*, to use a term from philosophy-physics,<sup>19</sup> which researchers inhabit during their research performance does actually *tune* their research in a sensual manner, so that everybody engaged in the research can actually sense the flavor of the atmosphere in which they are doing their research. The light-situation, the socio-political relational affairs among the researcher, the contemporary discourses circulating in their research fields etc. All of them are constituting factors of the experimental apparatus which can alter the output of one's research. Sometimes smoking a cheap cigar (Barad 2007, 161-168) can alter the outcome of an experimental apparatus. The attempt to alter the relation between artistic practices and the performance of thinking, which is contemporarily under investigation in such research labs, therefore has to consider their *intellectual*, but also their *vital*, *sensual* and *physical* relatedness toward the world which researchers inhabit during their research-performance (Böhler 2019a; Böhler, Schäfer and Aigner 2017b).

### *Sense-Lab...*

The heterogeneity of all these approaches which in actu do emerge at the margins of philosophy and the arts clearly exhibits the still instable character of this entire research field. The new intra-action among philosophy and the arts is apparently still in the making and therefore necessarily vague and experimental. The emergence of the conceptual persona of the artist-philosopher, the incubation of an aesthetic image-of-thought and the constitution of a new taste that opposes the ascetic ideal, these matters have not yet gained a stable form and definite sense so far, they have not yet *\*mattered\**. Their *\*worlding\** is still in the making, vague, experimental, associative-precise in their playful be-coming.

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Gansterer, Nikolaus, <https://www.gansterer.org/> (last accessed: 12 June 2025).

19 On the concept of the apparatus in the context of philosophy-physics see Barad 2007.

But even though the historical outcome of this emergent research field is in statu nascendi today, the offspring of formats as performance philosophy, philosophy on stage, artistic research, arts-based-philosophy, the sense-lab and similar approaches are clearly indicators as well as precursors of a crucial shift in the classical handed down relation between the arts and philosophy.

*Mnemosyne, the womb...*

Even though the attempt to matter a new connectedness among philosophy and the arts does not show one single but many faces today, it is worth remembering that in ancient Greek mythology philosophy and the nine muses were descendants of the same mother, *Mnemosynê* (Böhler 2016). She has been considered mythologically to be the one common root of philosophy and the arts. A *productive womb* from which a *generative* form of memory emerges which is operative in her children once they are actually in the vibrant state of *remembering a future to come*. In *Mnemosyne*, remembering emerges as a visionary form of imagination in which the arts and philosophy have started to imagine, envision and intuit a virtual state of being. Thereby her off-springs are actually operating in the wake of a “Memory of the Future” (cf. Derrida 1989; Böhler 1996; Aurobindo 1999, 312, 524). It draws her children toward the *virtual plane of possibilities* which are ready to dawn and matter. But the virtual cloud of possibilities, which constitutes an inherent zone of their mother’s womb, on the other hand actually needs the activities of philosophy and the arts to stimulate *her* potentials. It is up to her children to make the virtual cloud of her womb collapse, to use a terminology from quantum physics again. She feeds her children by rendering them her virtual matter which they are about to accept, affirm, taste, digest or refuse. Thereby she is able to provide the growth of her children as the nurse of *their* becoming.<sup>20</sup>

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20 In *Timaios*, Plato calls Khora the nurse of becoming (Böhler 2025).

*The South-Asian Perspective...*

Perceived from a cross-cultural South-Asian perspective, it seems *as-if (iva)*<sup>21</sup> a *tantric* approach toward philosophy would reappear again in the context of this research field, and in particular from the Nietzschean perspective concerning this matter.<sup>22</sup>

Tantrism, one of the main spiritual traditions in South-Asian thought, was precisely that *darśana*<sup>23</sup> in the history of South-Asian philosophies that historically shows the most intensive interest in matters of aesthetics. From this it comes with no surprise that Abhinavagupta (~950-1020 CE), the tantric mastermind of Kashmir Shaivism, delivered us one of the most refined interpretations of Indian aesthetics in the entire history of South-Asian thinking (Gnoli 1985; Deshpande 1989; Bäumer 1992; Dyczkowski 1992b; Lakshmanjoo 2015; Böhler 2019d).

Similar to the experimental labs we have mentioned above, the tantric laboratories of ancient Indian times too resisted the ascetic ideal of their times<sup>24</sup> by actually introducing a spirituality that was based on a conception of consciousness (*cit, puruṣa*), moved by blissful vibes (*spanda*) which successively unfold, step by step, the 36 principles (*tattvas*) of tantric philosophy in the evolutionary unfolding of time (*kāla*). (Lakshmanjoo 2015, 1-10, Dyczkowski 1992)

If one translates *tattva* with the Latin word principle, it is worth mentioning that *tattvas* can either be actively awake in nature (*vyakta*), or they can sleep and therefore be non-manifest (*avyakta*) in nature. If *tattvas* sleep, *as-if* dead, they are actually in the hold of grav-

21 On the fiction, that something is not there even though it is there, see Derrida (1995). On the Sanskrit term *iva* (*as-if*) see also Böhler, A., Granzer, S., Loughnane, A. and G. Parkes (2016).

22 Concerning this South-Asian Perspective on this historical move, see my article in this volume on “Poets of the Heart. Friedrich Nietzsche and Sri Aurobindo”.

23 *Darśana* is usually translated as philosophical view, philosophical intuition, philosophical vision. It derives from the root seeing, intuit, vision, envisioning and thus resonates with the Greek word *theoria*.

24 The main ascetic traditions, tantric philosophies were arguing against, were Vedanta and Buddhist philosophies (Lakshmanjoo 2015, 101-106).

ity (*tamas*), which keeps them trapped in a state of deep sleep in the lower ocean of the subconscious (cf. Aurobindo 1998, 106–108). Once the psychic-being awakes in nature, the cosmic heart, which until then has been sleeping wrapped in the lower ocean of the unconscious, erects from there as the life-force, operative in a lived-body. This ascent of the cosmic heart in the wake of a lived-body actually unfolds, step by step, until the life force has activated its full potential.<sup>25</sup> Each of these evolutionary steps marks the unfolding of a new center of the heart in which the cosmic heart successively activates all the capacities which were locked within root matter (*mūla prakṛti*) from the very beginning of creation. For instance, the activation of the lowest, the physical plane-of-being (*annamaya*), actually induces the mattering of physical particles in nature.<sup>26</sup> They are the first manifestations in the process of creation which come out of the root matter (*mūla prakṛti*). The activation of the vital plane-of-being (*prāṇamaya*) actually stimulates the bodily appearance of plants and animals which now show up in nature. The activation of the mental plane-of-being (*manomaya*) actually animates the evolutionary day-break of the human race; and the activation of the supra-mental (*unmanā*) planes-of-being, *viññānamaya*, *ānandamaya* and *sat-cit-ānanda* finally awaken supra-human beings, which now start to bodily appear in nature. In *sat-cit-ānanda*, the habitat of Śiva, finally all 36 principles will have been activated in the evolutionary course of time, according to most tantric philosophies. The lowest plane of being at the very beginning, the highest plane of being at the very

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25 “The emptiness (*vyoman*) of deep sleep is technically called the ‘Heart’ because it resides in the centre.” (Dyczkowski 1992, 42)

26 The doctrine of the five sheaths (*pañcakośa*) usually distinguishes between the physical (*annamayakośa*), the vital (*prāṇamayakośa*), the mental (*manomayakośa*) and the supra-mental sheaths (*viññānamayakośa*, *ānandamayakośa* and *sat-cit-ānanda*). It is said that the psycho-mental awareness of a fully awakened (Prabuddha) would move and live in the activation of all five sheaths which constitute the physical (*sthūla*) and the sublime (*sūkṣma*) body in a state of *sat-cit-ānanda* (Aurobindo 1999, 10–19).

end of the evolutionary ascent of matter that actually goes hand in hand with the descent of the spirit (*sat-cit-ānanda*) into matter.<sup>27</sup>

It is remarkable that in tantric contexts, as in Nietzsche, the arts are primarily considered as *animating forces* (*śaktis*). Tantric arts, which were conceived to be sacred at their times, finally aimed to induce the spiral upward movement of one's life-forces (*praṇa-kunḍalinī-śakti*) in order to successively unfold all the hidden stages of consciousness (*cit-śakti*) at once (Deshpande 1989). A journey in which one's psycho-mental awareness unfolds into higher and higher stages of self-awareness through the successive activation of the 36 principles-of-being. The stimulation of these principles will finally have activated the \*gnostic-heart\* (*vijñāna, kavi-hṛdi*) that, from the very beginning of our cosmic creation in the lower ocean of the subconscious, was resting in deep sleep at the very bottom of one's heart (Aurobindo 1998, 42-43; cf. Muller-Ortega 1989; Skora 2007). And since the activation of the \*gnostic-heart\* belongs to the supra-mental planes-of-beings (*unmanā*), most human beings so far felt *as-if* it would be out of their reach.

When Nietzsche defined the performance of art as the greatest stimulus to life in the wake of a blissful promise (*ānanda*), his Dionysian view of the arts as an elementary form of intoxication resonates so strongly with tantric aesthetics that without harm one could easily call him a tantric philosopher born in 19<sup>th</sup> century continental Europe.

It is core for such a Dionysian-Saivite perspective on the arts to understand that the intoxication that takes place in artistic research is not just a sensual stimulation by things which have been activated and are active already but a stimulation that derives from *virtual* planes of being in which all the possibilities of being reside in a virtual cloud of unformed matter, ready to matter. One has to go beyond heaven, into a realm higher than heaven, as the Ṛg-Veda beautifully

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27 The always active plane of *sat-cit-ānanda* shows striking similarities with Aristotle's concept of the *actus purus* (Aristotle 1989, *Metaphysik* XII 7, 1072b): a (substantial) form-of-being in which all 36 planes-of-being have already been activated from the very beginning, even before the genesis of things started.

says in poetic terms (cf. Aurobindo 1998, 150), when someone aims to touch the virtual plane-of-being in which precisely those possibilities reside which have not yet mattered but are about to matter. The critique which Socrates utters in Plato's ideal state, that the arts are just mimetically reproducing sensual images of an already given (sensual) reality, does not apply here because the sacred arts of ancient times were sensually attracted by the *virtual* plane-of-being which they experienced as a void, full of possibilities, ready to matter once. Artistic research, drawn toward the virtual plane-of-being, therefore does not just duplicate reality. On the contrary. It releases virtual possibilities which were resting in the dormant chambers of one's *gnostic-heart-mind* (gnostic intellect; *vijñāna*). They were there from the very beginning, but they were resting on a virtual plane of being in the unanimated background of our human intellect (mental mind): hidden, veiled, covered, dormant, cryptic, occult, not active and activated at all. By the performance of the tantric sacred arts, the deepest, most occult chambers of one's *buddhi* (intellect/reason)<sup>28</sup> are actually stimulated to awake.

According to the tantric master *Abhinavagupta*, the most hidden chambers of one's intellect harbor not just mental, but supra-mental (*unmanā*) capacities. As a rule, they are usually inactive in humans, but basically (in principle) they can awake in humans in the wake of intellectual capacities (*siddhis*, *vibhūtis*) which transgress the ordinary mental plane of mental judgements by the activation of an intuitive kind of reasoning (*pratibhā*), inspired by the dawn of possibilities, which have not yet dawned and mattered. The event of their realization makes one wonder (*camatkāra*). And even *Patañjali*, the author<sup>29</sup> of the *Yoga-Sūtra* (Desikachar 1995; Larson 2014; White 2014), one of the most orthodox schools of Yoga in the South-Asian tradition with strong ascetic tendencies, became the subject of a popular legend, *The legend of Sage Patañjali* (Jayaraman 2004), which holds that *Patañjali* received his enlightenment by virtue of watching

28 In South-East philosophies, the Sanskrit term *buddhi* means the intellect which can awake (*buddha*). In Buddha, the *buddhi* is awake (*buddha*) and active.

29 On the question of his authorship see White 2014.

a sacred performance of Śiva in the golden temple of Cidambaram. Not only the performer, but also the audience seems to be able to be stimulated in their highest yogic potentials, just by watching a sacred performance.

To think philosophically and do aesthetics within the emergent apparatus of such tantric labs did obviously not just mean to conceptually reflect matters of the arts in the modern European sense of aesthetics. Rather, it meant the step by step actualization, stimulation, animation and awakening of the physical, vital, mental and even the supra-mental planes-of-being *through artistic research*.

*Before the axis age...*

Once we open ourselves towards such archaic concepts of the (sacred) arts, we face a struggle which Europeans know from the study of ancient Greek history: The struggle between Mythos & Logos. This struggle was not limited to the ancient Greek culture. A similar struggle can also be found in the history of South-Asian cultures.

If one goes back to the oldest Veda, the Ṛg-Veda (probably 1500 BCE), the vision (*darśana*) of knowledge (*veda*) explored in this text was still presented in a poetic, mythological form. It narrates the cosmogenesis of our world in hymns which were explicitly written by poets (*Kavis*). The Vedic poems were studied by heart, but also chanted, to share them with the people in public (Gonda 1977).

Before the Axis Age (~800-200 BCE), to envision Vedic-knowledge (*darśana*) obviously meant to intuit it *artistically* among the people. As-if only artistic methods would be able to stimulate and awake the highest degrees of (gnostic) knowledge, accessible to human beings, engaged in doing and consuming the arts simultaneously in a commonly shared public field.<sup>30</sup> As-if only the artistic instrumentation of one's thoughts, feelings and behavior would be able to trigger the intuitive, supra-mental planes-of-being.

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30 On the question whether poetry is able to trigger a higher form of knowledge than argumentation and reasoning see article four by Soumyabrata Choudhury in this volume, 123-139.

In Vedic times, the poets (*Kavis*) were obviously considered artist-philosophers, not because they wanted to decorate their highest-planes-of-knowledge with an artistic make-up and beautiful cosmetics, but in order to awake and invoke the highest planes of being by virtue of artistic practices, which allow these higher realms to emerge and descend.

Later, when the so-called Axis Age approached and Vedānta entered the stage of our world-history (probably 7<sup>th</sup>-0<sup>th</sup> BCE), a transformation in the style of writing and doing philosophy took place, in which philosophy more and more assumed a philosophical style. With Debashish Banerji one might argue that

the comparison of Greek wisdom sources is interesting and instructive, since we may see similarities in language use between the Upaniṣads and pre-Socratic wisdom literature. The modern philosophical interest in this style of Greek expression may be found to begin with Nietzsche, later reopened by Martin Heidegger, a contemporary of Sri Aurobindo, and in times closer to ours own, by Gilles Deleuze. What these philosophers saw in pre-Socratic Greek wisdom literature was a proto-philosophy, a poetic or mystic use of logic at the service of ontological experience, and prior to its epistemological objectification. Sri Aurobindo's interest in and interpretation of the Upaniṣads follow similar lines, drawing attention to a language which works simultaneously at visionary, experiential, praxical and logical levels of awareness. (Banerji 2020, xxiii-xxiv)

The interest in pre-Socratic philosophy, which started with Nietzsche and his critique of the Socratic way of doing philosophy, seems to reanimate a proto-philosophy which was artistic in its methods, style and instrumentation. As-if the pre-Socratic wisdom-literature would awake anew, not just with Nietzsche in the European context but with Sri Aurobindo Ghose also in the South-Asian context.<sup>31</sup>

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31 Concerning this issue see the article *Poets of the Heart. Friedrich Nietzsche and Sri Aurobindo* in this volume, 32-68.

*Truth in Post-Truth times*

“The earliest matter I became serious about is the relation between art and truth: and even now I stand before this dichotomy with a sacred shiver of horror.” (English translation A. B.)<sup>32</sup>

I would like to repeat my claim that the issue Nietzsche broaches in this late, unpublished note from summer 1888 is in fact “a résumé of his entire path of thinking.”<sup>33</sup> What had shaken him to the core from the very beginning of his mature life was the dubious relation between art and truth. And even now, about 20 years later, in the fall of his life, this question still triggered a sacred shiver of horror (“heiliges Entsetzen”) in the heart of his soul. The relational affair between the arts and philosophy obviously occupied him throughout his entire life, from the very beginning until its very end. The seemingly antagonistic relation between truth and art, truth and philosophy, philosophy and art made him shiver and tremble. Sacredly, horribly, uncannily, seriously, ironically. For him, it apparently became the most serious matter which haunted him through his entire life and sometimes made him laugh.<sup>34</sup>

*We seem to share the same problem...*

While reading this unpublished note from 1888 it became clear to me that ‘my’ question concerning the relation of art *and* philosophy, art *in* philosophy, and philosophy *in* the arts articulated a problem that was not just ‘my’ personal problem but one that appears to be deeply rooted in the history of continental philosophy and its dubious relation to the arts in general. At least in secret. Although the question of what truth could mean in post-truth times has meanwhile become a matter of public concern. Is truth a fiction? A myth? Something

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32 German Original: “Über das Verhältniß der Kunst zur Wahrheit bin ich am frühesten ernst geworden: und noch jetzt stehe ich mit einem heiligen Entsetzen vor diesem Zwiespalt.” (Nietzsche 1967-77, 500)

33 See Böhler 2019, 242.

34 On the relation between seriousness, laughter and irony with regard to philosophy and the arts see the articles by Avital Ronell and Susanne Valerie Granzer in this volume.

one should no longer treat seriously today but rather in an ironic, skeptical manner? A matter of art? A Phantasma? A good example of historically inherited fake news?

Reflecting on these concerns, it became definitely clear to me that I was not just facing a private but a cultural-historical problem which all people seemed to share, privately and institutionally, who are actually subjected to the intellectual history of Europe. A historical epoch that can, as Whitehead noted in a well-known remark, be best characterized as a series of footnotes to Plato; “the safest general characterization of the European philosophical tradition is that it consists in a series of footnotes to Plato.” (Whitehead 1979, 91)

Due to Europe’s colonial history and the academic institution-ization of the Platonic Episteme almost all over the globe, the socialization of our global elites in the academic world has meanwhile become the standard model of doing philosophy around the globe. When Spivak, for instance, demands a revision of aesthetic education in the era of globalization (Spivak 2013) to undo the hegemony of such an Eurocentric episteme, I would recommend to follow Nietzsche’s deconstruction of the Platonic image-of-thought to fulfill this historical task.

### *Academic rituals... Plato is still haunting us from the past*

Already as a student, while I was studying philosophy at the Department of Philosophy at the University of Vienna almost 40 years ago, I experienced the academic formats in which philosophy was bodily performed and presented as a performative self-contradiction. I was passionately fascinated by the texts we discussed, but the unquestioned academic rituals by which they were usually presented and performed—in the course of academic lectures which often took place in sterile rooms with bright white light, where coffee and cookies were served in a highly ascetic manner; in discussion groups which had to follow a strict schedule according to fixed academic rituals; at conferences where people presented their ready-made talks, came, talked and left again, most of them unpaid etc., etc., etc. The format of these academic rituals, I was convinced, did strongly

contradict the content of the texts I was studying.<sup>35</sup> Mainly because they were missing the aesthetic awareness (taste) which would allow the texts to speak sensually; not just on an analytical, but also on an aesthetic level. As a rule, the light situation did not seem to matter, the voices were not tuned and trained, voice training seemed to be something for singers and actors but of no relevance for academic scholars. Frequently the talks did not address the audience, as actors and actresses would do, the dress-code seemed to be arbitrary and not relevant for the ideal content of their philosophical speech. Everything reminded me of a Protestant Church. non-sensible thinking, grounded in pure thinking without any lived-body.

Only after I had read Nietzsche it became convincingly clear for me that today's academic rituals are still haunted by the ascetic image-of-thought, without noticing. Socrates still shaped the way in which academic rituals are methodologically performed. Unquestioned, in secret. Even at Universities in Africa, in China, or in India. Even there... "This is the new antithesis: *the Dionysian and the Socratic*, and the work of art of Greek tragedy was destroyed by it."<sup>36</sup> (Translation A.B.)

The ascetic image of thinking still holds *our global academic culture* captive. In the very sense of Ludwig Wittgenstein's phrasing in his *Philosophical Investigations*: "An image held us captive. And we could not get out, for it lay in our language, and it only seemed to repeat it to us relentlessly." (Wittgenstein 2003, 82)

Could it be that Socrates was not only a spoiler of the youth but also of an arts-based concept of thought, in that he dissuaded the artist-philosopher Plato from conceiving philosophy as artistic research? Socrates accused the artists of thinking blindly, without reasoning. They seemed to be sensual, headless beings. Which is pre-

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35 Schelling, Nietzsche, Heidegger, (Hegel, Kant, Husserl), later Derrida, Deleuze, Nancy, Ronell, Butler, Barad etc. My studies were always accompanied by the study of classical Indian Philosophies, Patañjali, Abhinavagupta, Aurobindo, Desikachar etc.

36 "Diess ist der neue Gegensatz: das Dionysische und das Sokratische, und das Kunstwerk der griechischen Tragoedie ging an ihm zu Grunde." (Nietzsche 1971)

cisely the reason why his Socratic method of thinking appears prior to theirs.

The true creative ability of the poet is mostly just treated ironically by *Plato*, because it is not conscious insight into the nature of things and regarded similar to the talents of soothsayers and augurs. The poet was not able to versify before he had become exalted and senseless, and reason no longer dwelled in him. (Nietzsche 1967-77, 543, English Translation A. B.)

The historical problem I shared with Nietzsche thus seemed to be at least as old as Greek philosophy and the *antagonistic* turn of ancient Greek philosophers *against* the poetic way of doing philosophy in the mythological age which they actually still inhabited. Since then, ancient Greek philosophers artificially constructed a *binary opposition* between mythological ways of narrating the world and argumentative ways of reasoning. From then on, continental philosophies started to challenge, in a Socratic manner, the truth of handed down myths and the arts by questioning the truth-value of their epic ways of thinking.

Plato confronts these ‘unsagacious’ artists with the image of the true artist, the philosophical one, and in no unclear terms tells us that he himself is the only one who has reached that ideal and whose dialogues may be read in his ideal state. (Ibid., 543, Translation A. B.)

It therefore comes as no surprise that also Plato’s own master student Aristotle, at the beginning of his *Metaphysics*, quoted the common dictum of his times that poets are said to be liars.<sup>37</sup> It is this historically induced struggle between mythos and logos, between the tragic age of the pre-Socratic culture, when art and philosophy still went hand in hand, and the end of tragedy, which Nietzsche identified with the arts of Euripides and the philosophy of Socrates, when

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37 “poets tell many a lie” (Aristotle 1989, *Metaphysics*, 983a).

philosophy and the arts historically split apart, became rivals, opponents, if not even enemies, until today.

*The Genesis of Pre-Socratic, Socratic and Post-Socratic times*

I suggest reading each single contribution of this book as a unique response to this long intellectual history that *again* became questionable and problematic today. It seems *as-if* the pre-Socratic epoch and way of doing philosophy, an epoch which Karl Jaspers (1914) called the Axis Age (8<sup>th</sup>–3<sup>rd</sup> BCE), is haunting us again. The archaic recurrence of pre-Socratic wisdom thinking, which was centered around Dionysus as its secret center and the Chorus as his mouth-piece, once again questions the Socratic victory over the pre-Socratic ways of thinking which were artistic in their style. I therefore would like to argue that it is the deconstruction, re-signification and re-evaluation of the Socratic image-of-thought for the sake of a post-Socratic, aesthetic image of thinking which is finally at stake in formats such as performance philosophy, arts-based-philosophy, artistic research, philosophy on stage and similar approaches.

When we respond to the question of what the emergence of performance philosophy and artistic research means for us, I would like to suggest reading the following articles as responses to the need for such a post-Socratic form of doing philosophy, in new alliances with artistic practices in which different styles of writing, thinking, reading and doing philosophy are actually in the making.<sup>38</sup>

*Article by article synopsis...*

In the first article “Poets of the Heart. Friedrich Nietzsche and Sri Aurobindo Ghose on the Heart of Philosophy and the Heart of the Arts” Arno Böhler argues that the cross-over of art and philosophy is actually a matter of the heart, because one’s heart longs for a form of knowledge that goes hand in hand with one’s ‘bodily-felt-sense.’ Lou Andreas-Salomé in her description of Nietzsche’s works emphasized

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38 On different reading experiences of philosophers see the contribution by Veronika Reichl in this volume.

that Nietzsche was incapable of thinking concepts without, simultaneously, tasting their sensual coherence. For artist-philosophers like him, tasting relational affairs seems to be not just a secondary matter but an aesthetic judgment, triggered parallel to any performance of perception. Böhler's article argues that the demand to balance one's concepts, ideas and judgments in accordance with one's bodily-felt-taste actually forced philosophers such as Nietzsche or Aurobindo to become artist-philosophers (*sahṛdaya*) and to align philosophical practices with artistic practices in order create concepts, ideas and judgments which are not merely logically but also aesthetically coherent. To tune one's thoughts, concepts and ideas with the voice of one's heart is precisely the new aesthetic image of thought which such artist-philosophers are calling into being by their poetic ways of doing philosophy. The article thus attempts to clarify: (1) The concept of the artist-philosopher (*Kavi*) and why such a concept is needed at all? (2) What it means that artist-philosophers taste the sensual appropriateness versus inappropriateness of a relational affair in a bodily-felt sense? (3) What role artistic-research plays in the stimulation of one's life-forces, as a mode of intoxication of the hidden chambers of one's heart. (4) And finally the article will address the question of a philosophy of the heart in which one's bodily-felt-sense assembles with the discursive mind into an assemblage which the poet-philosopher Sri Aurobindo Ghose called the (gnostic) Heart-mind. A concept which ancient Vedic philosophies considered to be operative in the ancient sacred arts.

In the second article, Avital Ronell presents "A Melancholic's Survival Kit." The text suggests that philosophy can provide comfort and meaning in difficult times, even if not all philosophers are helpful or open-minded. To find the truly valuable ones, one must move past arrogant, rigid, or biased thinkers. The most significant philosophers engage with the arts—poetry, music, and literature—and accept the limits of human understanding. When philosophy is accompanied by imaginative, boundary-breaking forms of expression, it becomes a liberating and life-affirming force. Philosophy utters a call for artistic practice and its extreme insights. One thinks of Artaud's work on theater and the plague, where the staging of calamity—a social ab-

scess—is linked to contagion. Philosophy hitches a ride on the death-drive, uniquely licensed out by aesthetic practice.

In the third article, Violetta L. Waibel is connecting “Hölderlin’s ‘Celebration of Peace’ and Kant’s Treaty ‘Toward Perpetual Peace’”. Hölderlin’s song ‘Celebration of Peace’ (‘Friedensfeier’) was probably written on the occasion of the peace treaty of Lunéville of February 9<sup>th</sup>, 1801, during the author’s stay in Switzerland. Immanuel Kant wrote his text ‘Perpetual Peace. A Philosophical Sketch’ (‘Zum ewigen Frieden. Ein philosophischer Entwurf’) most probably on the occasion of the Basel peace treaty of April 5<sup>th</sup>, 1795, between post-revolutionary France and Prussia. Hölderlin, who studied the philosophy of his times carefully and regularly incorporated philosophical thoughts into his poetry and artistic thinking most likely incorporated his reading of Kant’s peace treaty in his song ‘Celebration of Peace’. Despite their obvious differences—one is a philosophical treatise and the other is a poem—both works share the same subject and respond in a performative, self-referential manner to socio-political struggles around the French Revolution in close chronological and spiritual proximity. It has long been acknowledged in research that the style of writing Kant performs in his peace treaty follows the juridical form and structure of such treaties typical for his time. It is also well known that Hölderlin’s peace celebration is not only a poem about peace but stages and celebrates peace itself by using a title without an article. It will be a major aim of Waibel’s article to analyze the relationship between the two texts in order to provide an example of a historical cross-over of philosophical and poetical ways of writing and thinking in the name of a peace to come.

In article four, Soumyabrata Choudhury provides us with a text with the title “Thinking, Evaluating, Enjoying: On the Aesthetic Materiality of Thought”. The article questions Heidegger’s strong and profound thesis that poetry arrives at and occupies a place thought cannot reach; the poem tells what cannot be said or thought propositionally. Choudhury will not deny Heidegger’s thesis but reorient it in the following way: He will accept that poetry, indeed, tells what is the arrival of the ‘unthinkable’ and in its saying opens up an experience inaccessible to a certain history of thought hitherto determining every subject-matter that can be thought. However, he will propose

that the historicity of this poetic experience is the eventual condition for new thought which breaks the history of thought into two, between the hitherto place of the unthinkable and the new (non)-place of a thought—whose only support and promise is the poetic ‘event’ from where it emerges. As support, the poetic point of rupture is not to be received merely as an intuitively exceptional moment of inspiration or grace; it is to be grasped ontologically, as an aesthetic breach in the history of being. The poetic moment and the aesthetic event are always an unforeseen arrival of a singular, anonymous and common ‘feeling’ or ‘experience’... an enjoyment hitherto blocked from any form of thought (or in Heidegger’s view, according to which enjoyment and all forms of thought are separated). As promised, the aesthetic event and its poetic historicity are what every new thought must ‘appreciate’ and be true to. This subjective life of thought as ‘evaluation’ and ‘enjoyment’ is, then, also the aesthetic touchstone of every post-eventual life-to-come, that is to say, every true life.

In article five, “The Balloon Universe”, Tanja Traxler & Reinhold A. Bertlmann test the relatedness of quantum-physics with the space of the arts. In their paper, conceptions of space will be investigated in a multidisciplinary perspective ranging from physics and philosophy to artistic research. In particular, the concept of the Balloon Universe will be examined as a model for the spatial expansion of the universe. As the paper is based on a lecture-performance by Tanja Traxler & Reinhold A. Bertlmann, this discussion of epistemological lessons of key phenomena in physics like black holes, gravitational waves and quantum vacuum will be completed by three written interventions in the tradition of a Platonic symposium. Additionally, a link to a video of the lecture-performance will be provided of which the authors hold the copyright. Space is a highly relevant research topic in contemporary physics, as it tackles the unification of general relativity and quantum theory.

In article six, “Nothing to Fix. Performative Strategies of Incompleteness and the Right to Bodily Integrity”, Sandra Noeth investigates the relation of lived-bodies in relation to their (legal) grounds. The global experience of the pandemic, as well as recent events in a long record of institutional, racialized violence, are but two examples that bring to the fore the question of which bodies are worth

protecting, and on which grounds. Incorporated in international humanitarian law and corresponding documents and action, the question of bodily integrity at stake here is even today closely tied to the idea of personhood: to the (notably western) idea of a subjectified, ableist, colonialist and bound body to be secured, saved and fixed. Against this backdrop, she argues that the unequal distribution of and access to legal and political protection and ethical recognition, however, is not only a matter of overarching and normative frameworks but also a matter of aesthetics: of how we imagine, represent, perceive, remember and perform bodies in the first place. In this essay she will examine strategies of incompleteness and repair that different artists develop in their performative work in an effort to counter universalist and individualist notions of the body and engage in an aesthetic economy of repair.

In article seven, “Along Each Other. On Shown and Told by Meg Stuart and Tim Etchells”, Krassimira Kruschkova examines the relation between performance and philosophy and the aesthetic image-of-thought that actually pops up in such relations. Danced and spoken thoughts contaminate and comment on each other in the performance “Shown and Told” (2016) by and featuring choreographer Meg Stuart and writer and performance artist Tim Etchells. He improvises poetic-philosophical text fragments based on her improvised movement fragments and vice-versa. “Then she talks, and he moves... a bit.” (ibid., 2016) They perform without either of them taking the lead, and we, the audience, cannot stop asking ourselves whether she is dancing what he is talking or whether he is talking what she is dancing. Meg Stuart’s shown thoughts and Tim Etchells’ told thoughts seem to escape showing as well as telling and thus become readable only in their mutual con-fusion. There is no easy going in this complex translation between accomplice languages, there is rather an uneasy going instead of anything goes. During this “structured improvisation” this “experiment in front of an audience“, as Stuart and Etchells call their work, we are again and again apart from this artistic research situation and only thereby become part of it. In this situation, Meg Stuart and Tim Etchells abstain from any “shared methodology,” as he says during an artistic talk (Decaesstecker 2016). “And thus: doing this performance together is a bit off territory with

elements of it that are still mysterious to us.” But where is this “a bit off territory” between showing and telling located, we might ask ourselves in order to think of artistic research as philosophy. “Are you there?” Etchells asks during the performance and Stuart replies: “Is that a serious or a philosophical question?” He says: “More of a political one.”

In article eight, “The Feeling of Thinking – Stories on artists reading theory”, Veronika Reichl is researching the reading experience of people who are reading philosophical texts. Reading is, for most people (and artists), the central activity of engaging with philosophy. For 4 years now Veronika Reichl has been working on a project in which she analyzed the experience of people who are reading philosophical texts. In the course of this project she developed (fictional) short stories based on confidential interviews with students, humanists, artists and other dedicated readers of philosophy. These interviews investigate the (emotionally charged) personal process of reading such texts and thereby explore the relationship between readers and texts/philosophers. Her article will propose a collection of 5 stories based on interviews with artists (fine arts) on their experience with readings of philosophy. The stories will deal with questions like: How can one relate to something so authoritarian as a magnum opus without approving of the authority? How does one’s life and artistic practice change while indulging in reading Heidegger for many hours every day over a month? How can an artist refer to philosophical books which are some of the most perfect objects humans have ever created? Three such stories already exist in German versions. Some stories on the reading of students and academics from the field of humanities can be found in Reichl (2019).

In the last article, “Gay Troublemakers. None but Fools”, Susanne Valerie [Granzer] reads Nietzsche’s *Gay Science* (*la gaya scienza*) as the eponym to come to terms with the playful figure of the fool. For Nietzsche, the fool is a free spirit, a non-conformist, and also a provocateur. The first chapter of her article “Under cover...” considers the long tradition of the figure of the fool. One encounters the fool in the satyr play of antiquity, at the sovereign’s court, by the jesters of the Middle Ages, at carnival, and again and again at the theater. Surprisingly, it can also be found in philosophy, e.g. in Diogenes in his barrel,

or when Nietzsche praises the fool in his Dithyrambs of Dionysus: “Suitor of truth – you?’ [...] Only fool! Only poet!” In the second part of her text Granzer will analyze the special kind of wisdom which is operative with fools. Fools are strongly associated with the conceptual persona of the sage. Nevertheless, they are also clearly distinct from one another, as the fool Touchstone in Shakespeare highlights: “The fool doth think he is wise, but the wise man knows himself to be a fool.” (Shakespeare [1862], *As You Like It*, Act 5, Scene 1) In the third chapter Granzer analyzes the fool Johnny as the alter ego of performer Barbara Kraus amidst the hurly-burly of contemporary performance art and performance philosophy. In improvised speech the ‘couple’ (Kraus and Johnny) discuss a foolish image of thinking. One that exemplifies a crossover of philosophical and artistic thoughts, giving back to philosophy the material conditions and driving forces of the body. Neither does this contemporary fool Johnny shy away from affects nor does s/he care about conventions. Even though the cross-over of art and philosophy seems to be a foolish endeavor for those who still defend the antagonistic relation between philosophy and the arts, the cross-over of both disciplines starts making sense for the new species of artist-philosophers that Nietzsche envisaged at the very beginning of his book *Beyond Good and Evil. Prelude to a Philosophy of the Future*.

Arno Böhler, Vienna, April 11, 2025.

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