Bundling Meaningfulness in a Felt-Bodily Manner
Structured Movement as Aisthetic Labor[1]

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Abstract: *For neo-phenomenologist Hermann Schmitz, creative processes are dancing movements. Drawing on the felt body's sensing its motion-laden environment, a motional motive grows into a Gestalt. This Gestalt takes form as it transitions from abstract inspiration into a palpable medium. This is why a piece of fine art is, for him, "dance having taken shape," and dancing is a motional phenomenon located in primary proximity to aisthetic comprehension. It is felt-bodily communion with the temporo-spaciousness surrounding us. Here, I reflect critically on this notion of dance, inquiring into the relationship between felt-bodily sensing and cultural qualification. Exploring the interfaces of felt-bodily sensing with performance conventions and of diffuse meaningfulness with cultural qualification, I explore dance as a practice of dwelling on the threshold. Inspired by dance practices in Micronesia, my chapter is conceptual in nature—approaching phenomenology through dance rather than vice versa.*

Introduction

Neo-phenomenologist Hermann Schmitz (1928–2021) considers any and all creative processes as intrinsically dancing movements, owing to the nature of what he terms "suggestions of motion" (*Bewegungssuggestionen*):

> The felt body, not the artist's mind, receives the inspiration: in the felt body's perception, a mentally or emotionally conceived motif grows from suggestions of motion to the *Gestalt* in which it can then, as it transitions into a visible, audible, or tactile medium, literally or metaphorically see the

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> light of the day. *Thus, an artwork is an objectified gesture inspired by felt-bodily sensing, a dance solidified into fixed form.*[2]

Where artistic creativity transforms from inspirational spark into manifestation, Schmitz argues, the felt body draws on its ability to sense its motion-laden environment. As the felt body—perhaps it is more instructive to refer to it as the feeling body[3] in this context—parses the complex stream of para-reflective sensory information, it finds itself incited by a motional motive which grows into a *Gestalt*. This *Gestalt* literally takes form as it transitions from abstract inspiration into a visible, audible, or palpable medium. The process by which a creative impetus becomes manifest—as a gesture, a music performance, or a piece of art—is, therefore, a motor practice at heart. As such, it is intimately tied to the felt body.[4] This is why, for Schmitz, a piece of art in essence consists of suggestions of motion which, sensed by the felt body, have manifested into an objectified *Gestalt*. This process, in which "human felt-bodilyness translates into the objective Gestalten of the fine arts," hinges on the unfolding of *Gestalten* (*Gestaltverlauf*[5]). Importantly, specific *Gestalten* tend to merge with specific types of suggestions of motion; otherwise a *Gestaltverlauf* would be arbitrary.

Bearing this in mind, Schmitz suggests that dancing is a motional phenomenon located in primary proximity to any aisthetic comprehension of the world in which we live. It is felt-bodily interaction with the temporo-spaciousness surrounding us and the holistic meaningfulness present in our felt-bodily surroundings. Schmitz's suggestions of motion are a type of kinetic atmospheric energy that feeds into the rhythm of a person's vital

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2 Hermann Schmitz, *System der Philosophie. II.2: Der Leib im Spiegel der Kunst* (Freiburg: Karl Alber, [1966] 2019), 77. In the original German: "Der Leib, nicht der Geist des Künstlers, empfängt die Inspiration: Ein gedanklich oder gefühlshaft konzipiertes Motiv wächst im eigenleiblichen Spüren von Bewegungssuggestionen zu der Gestalt hin, als die es dann, beim Übergang in ein sicht-, hör- oder tastbares Medium, buchstäblich oder gleichsam das Licht der Welt erblicken kann. Das Kunstwerk ist also eine objektivierte, vom leiblichen Befinden inspirierte Gebärde, ein in feste Form geronnener Tanz." All translations in this contribution are my own.

3 See Hermann Schmitz, Rudolf Owen Müllan, and Jan Slaby, "Emotions Outside the Box—The New Phenomenology of Feeling and Corporeality," in *Phenomenology and the Cognitive Sciences* 10 (2011): 241–59.

4 Schmitz, *System der Philosophie II.2*, 77.

5 Ibid. Riedel translates Schmitz's *Gestaltverlauf* as "gestalt-process;" Friedlind Riedel, "Atmospheric Relations. Theorising Music and Sound as Atmosphere," in *Music as Atmosphere. Collective Feelings and Affective Sounds*, ed. Friedlind Riedel and Juha Torvinen (London and New York: Routledge, 2020), 1–42, 22.

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drive, thus impacting them in their entire being. Schmitz positions these suggestions of motion as the heartbeat of vitality in a general sense; therefore, his philosophy should be intuitive to choreomusicologists and others exploring dance as a felt-bodily practice,[6] as it already has been to dance therapists in particular.[7] It resonates well with key ideas in the philosophy of dance around the turn of the twentieth century, ranging from Nietzsche[8] to von Laban.[9] And yet, like felt-bodily holisms, Schmitz's suggestions of motion fail to address an analytical category that is fundamental to any structured movement activity: the cultural distinctiveness of performance conventions, without which, paradoxically, a specific dance movement's meaningfulness will forever remain out of reach. Contemporary global dance studies, by contrast, tend to wrestle with the opposite problem: with much of its theoretical and conceptual underpinnings derived from postmodern and poststructuralist approaches to the body, here the moving body tends to be "seen as a technical tool with intentionality that enumerates political agendas, or a text on which various politics are inscribed or negotiated."[10] Contemporary global dance studies tend to fail to address the specifically motional affordances the felt-bodily negotiation of Chakravorty's "various politics"—via structured movement practices—draws on. To me, this somewhat paradoxical situation urges inquiry into the relationship between felt-bodily sensing and cultural qualification. In this chapter, I follow this invitation by making a foray into dance as a threshold practice that strategically links felt-bodily sensing with specific structured movement conventions, diffuse meaningfulness with cultural qualification, and allows us to conceptualize atmospheres together with the cultural frameworks within which they unfold their efficacy. I am not so much interested here in a choreomusical analysis of structured movement activity that seeks to analyze

6 E.g., Robert Gugutzer, *Verkörperung des Sozialen. Neophänomenologische Grundlagen und soziologische Analysen* (Bielefeld: transcript, 2012), 99–116.

7 Renate Schwarz, "Applied Embodiment und das Konzept der Leiblichkeit in Beratung, Supervision und Coaching," in *Resonanzen. E-Journal für biopsychosoziale Dialoge in Psychotherapie, Supervision und Beratung* 3, no. 1 (2015): 52–64, accessed 26 February 2021, http://www.resonanzen-journal.org; Elke Willke, *Tanztherapie: Theoretische Kontexte und Grundlagen der Intervention* (Wiesbaden: Reichert, 2020).

8 Friedrich Nietzsche, *Also sprach Zarathustra*, vol. 1 (Chemnitz: Ernst Schmeitzner, 1883), 54.

9 Rudolf von Laban, *Die Welt des Tänzers*, third edition (Stuttgart: W. Seifert, 1920), 14.

10 Pallabi Chakravorty, "Moved to Dance: Remix, *Rasa*, and a New India," in *Visual Anthropology* 22 (2009): 211–28, 214.

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choreographic structure alongside connotative semantic content.[11] Instead, following up on Schmitz's notion of the motor quality of all creative movement, I will inquire into structured movement systems as a distinctly kinesthetic type of aisthetic labor, in Schmitz's fellow neo-phenomenologist Gernot Böhme's sense.

To scholars studying Pacific Island performing arts, the insight that the movement dimension of activities or activity systems (often referred to as "dance" in a Northern Atlantic context) works systematically across several distinct layers—thus bringing each into conversation with one another on divergent levels of meaningfulness—is not new at all.[12] In her work on Hawaiian *hula*, Adrienne L. Kaeppler has emphasized the importance of the processuality behind the emergence of such complex meaningfulness in performance, underlining how "often, the process of performing is as important as the cultural form produced."[13] Scholars working in other areas of Oceania second this appraisal.[14] In keeping with Oceanic notions of deep meaning versus surface meaning—also relevant across the entire region[15]—she describes how movement motifs may depict specific animate beings (such as flowers or animals) or inanimate things (such as objects) but, at the same time, also refer to "veiled or hidden meanings, making reference to genealogical lines, chiefs, and their deeds, and thus enhancing the texts."[16] This leads her to distinguish between the "visible" (i.e., an actual performance), and the "invisible" (i.e., the "aesthetic system") by which specific movements are engendered with meaningfulness:

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11 Stephanie Jordan, "Structural Categories for Relating Music and Dance: Towards an Analytical Method," in *Die Beziehung von Musik und Choreographie im Ballett*, ed. Michael Malkiewicz and Jörg Rothkamm (Berlin: Vorwerk 8, 2007), 27–34, 29; see also Kendra Stepputat and Elina Seye, "Introduction: Choreo-musical Perspectives," in *The World of Music (new series)* 9, no. 1, special issue on *Choreomusicology* (2020): 7–24.

12 Adrienne Kaeppler, "Visible and Invisible in Hawaiian Dance," in *Human Action Signs in Cultural Context. The Visible and the Invisible in Movement and Dance*, ed. Branda Farnell (Metuchen and London: Scarecrow, 1995), 41.

13 Ibid., 32.

14 E.g., Karen L. Nero, "The Breadfruit Tree Story: Mythological Transformations in Palauan Politics," in *Pacific Studies* 15, no. 4 (1992): 235–60.

15 See e.g., Vicente M. Diaz, "Voyaging for Anti-colonial Recovery: Austronesian Seafaring, Archipelagic Rethinking, and the Re-mapping of Indigeneity," in *Pacific Asia Inquiry* 2, no. 1 (2011): 21–32.

16 Kaeppler, "Visible and Invisible," 33.

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> Only if one knows the social and cultural background will the visible and the invisible emerge in all their dimensions to reveal the political acumen of the creator or [...] the reinterpreter. The resulting products were passed from generation to generation to become chronicles of history and social relationships objectified in verbal and visual forms.[17]

A key to understanding *hula* is *kaona*, a deeply Kanaka Maoli (native Hawaiian) concept embracing the idea of the "hidden meaning" and significatory stratification inherent in both language and cultural practices. Only with a deep understanding of *kaona*, Kaeppler argues, does a performance's meaningfulness "become [...] visible as a product of human action and interaction in the context of a socially constructed movement system. The system itself is invisible, existing in the minds of people as movement motifs, specific choreographies, and meaningful imagery."[18] Kaeppler's interpretation is reminiscent of Schmitz's distinction between suggestions of motion as an invisible kinetic impetus and motional sensory energy bursting with meaningfulness, on the one hand, and their manifestation as physical movement or a piece of art as "dance having taken shape," on the other. In several ways, however, Kaeppler and Schmitz are coming from opposite directions. Kaeppler's interest is in the culturally specific manifestations in the structured movement of the "invisible system"; Schmitz's is in the holistic experientiality through which felt-bodily sensing affects human being-in-the-world.

My own interest is piqued by what one could refer to as the missing link between the two perspectives. By taking a step back and looking at the upstream qualities of aisthetic labor,[19] I extend the well-established viewpoint that the human body is a "moving agent in a spatially organized world of meanings,"[20] suggesting that to engage in structured movement activity is to go beyond dimensionally anchored meaning. I argue that to partake in structured movement is to take a plunge into the chaotic and messy intensity of what Schmitz calls surfaceless space—to navigate surfaceless space's complexity in order to then dwell on the threshold between the surfaceless space from which creative energy emerges, the directional space in which felt bodies incorporate creative energy along culturally qualified conventions, and the

17 Ibid., 39.

18 Ibid., 42.

19 Patrick Eisenlohr, "Sonic Privilege. The Holism of Religious Publics," blog entry for *The Immanent Frame. Secularism, religion, and the Public Sphere*, 2019, accessed 25 February 2021, https://tif.ssrc.org/2019/05/21/sonic-privilege/.

20 Brenda Farnell, ed., *Human Action Signs in Cultural Context: The Visible and the Invisible in Movement and Dance* (Metuchen and London: Scarecrow Press, 1995), 7.

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dimensional space in which the now-transduced energetic flow takes shape as kinetic movement. This is what I mean when I refer to structured movement activity as a threshold practice: a process that guides the felt body from surfaceless to directional to dimensional space, not in a linear fashion but as an energetic impetus fulfilling itself as body movement as it explores the fringes of the moving felt body's experiential spatialities. Framing structured movement activity as a threshold practice, I will explore it in the following as a specific type of aisthetic labor. The actual "labor" is for the felt body to manifest meaningfulness into visible structured movement. Regardless of its (in)visibility, however, the holistic meaningfulness energized by the flux of suggestions of motion intervenes into felt-bodily temporospatial economies and, as such, is engendered with cultural qualification. Cultural qualification enters the energetic flow of suggestions of motion in directional space, strategically oscillating in the directions of both surfaceless and dimensional space at all times. It is, thus, no less a phenomenon of dimensional space than of surfaceless space, but it also goes beyond both. I will briefly turn to the mythological framing of the *ruk*, the traditional men's dance in Palau, Western Micronesia, exploring the oral history of its origin to take a closer look at structured movement activity at the interfaces of surfaceless and dimensional space. In closing, I will reflect on the conceptual implications for this contribution's central question: what is the aisthetic labor of structured movement?

Structured Movement as Aisthetic Labor

Gernot Böhme, the second pivotal figure in neo-phenomenology next to Schmitz and one generation the latter's junior, contends that aisthetic labor is implicitly or explicitly central to any post-Benjaminian aesthetics. It is

> generally conceived of as the production of atmospheres and, as such, ranges from cosmetics to advertisement, from interior and stage design to art in a more specific sense. Autonomous art, in this context, is simply one specific form of aisthetic labor, and even where it is autonomous, it has a social function: to impart, in situations that relieve their participants of their agentivity (such as in museums and exhibitions), familiarity with and exposure to atmospheres.[21]

21 Gernot Böhme, *Atmosphäre. Essays zur neuen Ästhetik* (Berlin: Suhrkamp, 2013), 24. In the original German: "[Ästhetische Arbeit] wird allgemein bestimmt als Produktion von Atmosphären und reicht insofern von der Kosmetik über Werbung, Innenarchitektur, Bühnenbildnerei bis zur Kunst im engeren Sinne.

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To labor aisthetically, then, is to invest skill, time, and energy in the emergence of atmosphere as collective feelings poured out in space. Böhme strategically distinguishes between the production and the reception side of aisthetic labor; he identifies aisthetic theory as, on the one hand, a general theory of the production of atmospheres, and on the other, as a theory of perception in an encompassing sense from the recipient's perspective. In the context of the latter, "perception is understood as the experience of the presence of people, things, and surroundings."[22] Böhme's categorical distinction between the dynamics governing the production and reception of atmospheres, respectively, has been useful in application-oriented contexts, such as architectural design; in connection with structured movement, however, it is of little analytical value because the "producing" movement artist is always already a "receiving" participant as well. Movement artists do not create an objectifiable atmosphere, they are enveloped by the atmosphere their aisthetic labor creates throughout the process. The atmospheres created by structured movement—through their performative processuality—are characterized by a heightened immediacy of Böhme's "presence of people, things, and surroundings." This is where I locate structured movement's ability to intensify—Kaeppler, in connection with *hula*, uses the word "enhance"[23]—the meaningfulness inherent in the complex and ongoing stream of suggestions of motion by transducing them into and manifesting them as culturally qualified bodily structured movement. This intensification occurs through a bundling of diverging spatial and temporal modalities of experience.[24] Any type of bodily movement can experientially bundle such divergent experientialities and, by doing so, produce atmospheric energy. Through structural self-referentiality (Kaeppler's "invisible system"), however, the culturally qualified nature of structured movement atmospheres

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Die autonome Kunst wird in diesem Rahmen nur als eine spezielle Form ästhetischer Arbeit verstanden, die auch als autonome ihre gesellschaftliche Funktion hat. Und zwar soll sie in handlungsentlastender Situation (Museum, Ausstellung etc.) die Bekanntschaft und den Umgang mit Atmosphären vermitteln."

22 Ibid., 24. In the original German: "Die neue Ästhetik ist also auf seiten der Produzenten eine allgemeine Theorie ästhetischer Arbeit. Diese wird verstanden als die Herstellung von Atmosphären. Auf seiten der Rezipienten ist sie eine Theorie der Wahrnehmung im unverkürzten Sinne. Dabei wird Wahrnehmung verstanden als die Erfahrung der Präsenz von Menschen, Gegenständen und Umgebungen."

23 Kaeppler, "Visible and Invisible," 39.

24 Birgit Abels, "Bodies in Motion. Music, Dance and Atmospheres in Palauan *ruk*," in *Music as Atmosphere. Collective Feelings and Affective Sounds*, ed. Friedlind Riedel and Juha Torvinen (London: Routledge, 2019), 165–83.

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can open dance situations up to their own historicity, thus dynamically positioning a structured movement performance vis-à-vis the situation's temporospatial positionality. This positionality emerges atmospherically from the aisthetic stream of meaningfulness through the aisthetic labor of structured movement for the brief duration of the performance or just a moment thereof. Through this process, a performance movement becomes meaningful. It takes cultural conventions of structured movement for Kaeppler's "deep meaning" to manifest, and it takes deep meaning for cultural conventions of structured movement to self-referentially bundle divergent experiential frames into atmospheric intensity.[25]

Thinking of Böhme's aisthetic labor regarding Schmitz, a key moment of the transductive work that occurs as a *Gestalt* unfolds and manifests—as musical motif, structured object, or physical object—is the transition of a felt-bodily sensed suggestion of motion in surfaceless space to, in one way or another, physical motion in dimensional space. Space for Schmitz "is not originally encountered as the measurable, locational space assumed in physics and geography, but rather as a predimensional surfaceless realm manifest to each of us in undistorted corporeal experience, for example, in hearing voluminous sounds or sensing atmospheres."[26] Schmitz gives the example of the resounding of large church bells, the sonic immediacy of which envelop those within hearing range. Another example would be the weather, which

> presents surfaceless spaces that are felt immediately in our bodily responsiveness to the atmosphere surrounding us. Crucially, the felt body itself is a surfaceless space, or more precisely an assemblage of many such spaces: corporeal 'islands' such as the stomach region or the soles of feet are felt as diffuse but still separately identifiable spatial realms.[27]

Surfaceless space is primary in Schmitz's neo-phenomenology; dimensional space, to him, is an abstract construction and a secondary spatial experience. Structured movement activity impacts surfaceless space in a way that introduces directionality to surfacelessness:[28] in the now directional space of structured movement activity, suggestions of motion, for instance, as exuded by chants and music, can be incorporated in a felt-bodily manner, and in this

25 Something similar could be said about sonic atmospheres versus musical atmospheres, see Abels 2022.

26 Schmitz, Müllan, and Slaby, "Emotions Outside the Box," 245.

27 Ibid.

28 Hermann Schmitz, *System der Philosophie III.1: Der leibliche Raum* (Freiburg: Karl Alber, [1967] 2019), 179.

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way feed into one's own movement practice.[29] Similar to structured movement activities, a suggestion of motion enters directional-spatial experience; its motional energy transduces from energetic flow into palpable structured movement. Such transduction intensifies the synesthetic quality of structured movement: that which we know in directional space and that which we sense in a felt-bodily manner in surfaceless space enter into correspondence. "Body-spaces of sound and sound-spaces of the body enter into conversation with one another to give rise to new body-sound-spaces," writes Stephanie Schroedter.[30] Such new body-sound spaces are always transitory and ephemeral, and I suggest we conceive of them as the threshold between surfaceless, directional, and dimensional space. To dance, then, is to experientially explore and savor a spatial threshold experience, and to actively engage with the spatial properties of one's environment. This accounts for the experiential intensity of structured movement.

Weaving Together Temporospatial Complexity beyond Time and Space: Palauan *ruk*

If all creative processes are essentially motional in nature, then it makes sense, against this backdrop, that Pacific Indigenous communities have not traditionally categorized motion in a way that compares to the notion of "dance." "Dance," in its academic usage, is a distinctly North Atlantic category and sets a specific type of kinesthetic repertoire apart (from daily life activities but also from other types of cultural practices), assigning a bounded category to it. In most of Oceania, kinesthesia is deeply entangled with daily practices and to think in terms of dance as a distinct category would conflict with lived experience. Kaeppler has suggested the term "structured movement systems" instead.[31] Structured movement systems, by definition, include some that are integrally related to

29 Ibid., 71.

30 Stephanie Schroedter, "Neues Hören für ein neues Sehen von Bewegungen. Von der Geburt eines zeitgenössischen Balletts aus dem Körper der Musik—Annäherungen an Martin Schläpfers musikchoreographische Arbeit," in *Bewegungen zwischen Sehen und Hören. Denkbewegungen über Bewegungskünsten*, ed. Stephanie Schroedter [Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2012], 43–104, 48. In the original German: "Körperräume des Klanges und Klangräume des Körpers treten miteinander in einen Austausch, um neue Körper-Klang-Räume entstehen zu lassen."

31 Adrienne Kaeppler, "Structured Movement Systems in Tonga," in *Society and the Dance*, ed. Paul Spencer (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 92–118; Adrienne Kaeppler, "Understanding Dance," in *Garland Encyclopedia of World*

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music. They are "systems of knowledge, the products of action and interaction, and processes through which action and interaction occur."[32] Structured movement systems

> denote specially marked or elaborated systems of movement [...] that result from creative processes that manipulate human bodies in time and space in such a way that movement is formalized and intensified in much the same manner as poetry intensifies and formalizes language. [...] These specially marked movement systems may be considered art, work, ritual, ceremony, entertainment, or any combination of these [...] A person may perform the same or a similar sequence of movements (consisting of grammatically structured motifs) as a ritual supplicant, as a political act, as an entertainer, or as a marker of identity. Thus, the same movement sequence may be meant to be decoded differently if performed for gods, [...] for a human audience, or [...] as a participant for fun; and it may be decoded differently depending on an individual's background and understanding of a particular performance and the individual's mental and emotional state at the time.[33]

The Austronesian language spoken in Palau, a small island nation in the westernmost part of Micronesia, has the neologism *dangs*, adopted from the English word dance. Generally, however, Palauans will discuss specific dance forms by the name of their dance genre (e.g., *ngloik*, *ruk*) rather than a generic category. The actual movements and motion-based gestures are inherited from either the Gods or the ancestors. Similar to elsewhere in Oceania, therefore, they "may be perpetuated as cultural artifacts and aesthetic performances, even if their meanings have been changed or forgotten."[34] Importantly, such underlying systems of structured movement are invisible themselves, "existing in the minds of people as movement motifs, specific choreographies, and meaningful imagery;"[35] but, as the performers move their bodies through time-space, the dance takes shape as visible form. This is, in a tangible manner, reminiscent of Schmitz's archetypical creative process, which transduces motional energy into a visible medium and impacts the performers' spatial surroundings.

Schmitz's notion of space(s) radically complicates notions of space as established in the North Atlantic philosophical traditions. At the same time, however, it remains indebted to European conceptualizations of space, which make a basic distinction between the spatial and the temporal. Many Oceanic languages,

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Music, vol. 9, *Australia and the Pacific Islands*, ed. Adrienne L. Kaeppler and J.W. Love (New York and London: Garland Publishing, 1998), 311–8.

32 Kaeppler, "Understanding Dance," 311.

33 Ibid., 312.

34 Ibid.

35 Ibid.

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by contrast, know the word "space-time" in one form or another,[36] which reflects a conceptualization based on the sense that time, place, and space cannot categorically be distinguished from one another: "The *vā* [i.e., space-time in Samoan and Tongan[37]] is necessarily relational, implying not a static point of observation but a movement, or possible movement between."[38] More specifically, *vā* perceives of space as points and their interrelationships rather than a bounded area.[39] Tevita O. Ka'ili conceives of the Tongan practice of *tauhi vā* as a nurturing cultural practice of establishing and strengthening beautiful sociospatial relationships. She emphasizes how it is impossible to think of *vā*, space, without *tā*, time, both in Tonga and Hawai'i. In Hawaiian culture, "the past is the time in front and the future is the time that comes behind."[40] Ka'ili's thinking is closely related to Tongan historical anthropologist 'Ōkusitino Māhina's *tā-vā* theory of art.[41] Māhina sees *tā* and *vā* as the common medium of all things natural, mental, and social that exist. Accordingly, all things unfold in time and space, with nothing whatsoever existing above or beyond this realm. All things in nature, mind, and society have four dimensions: three spatial dimensions (height/depth, width/breadth, length) and one temporal dimension, which is form.[42] Ka'ili explains how *tā-vā* is "collective and communal but [...] also arranged in a circular fashion"; and, "the purpose of ontologically organizing these concepts in a cyclical fashion is to bring multiple entities into

36 Damon Salesa, "The Pacific in Indigenous Time," in *Pacific Histories: Ocean, Land, People*, ed. David Armitage and Alison Bashford (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2014), 31–52, 41.

37 See Andrea Staley, *Identifying the Vā: Space in Contemporary Pasifika Creative Writing* (Master's Thesis, University of Hawai'i at Manoa, 2017), accessed 14 December 2020, https://scholarspace.manoa.hawaii.edu/bitstream/10125/62661/2017-05-ma-staley.pdf.

38 Salesa, "The Pacific in Indigenous Time," 43.

39 See Staley, *Identifying the Vā*, 52; Fepulea'i Micah Van der Ryn, *The Measina of Architecture in Samoa—An Examination of the VĀ in Samoan Architecture and Socio-Cultural Implications of Architectural Changes* (Apia, Samoa: The Institute of Samoan Studies, National University of Samoa, 2007), 3.

40 Tēvita O. Ka'ili, *Tauhi Vā: Creating Beauty Through the Art of Sociospatial Relations* (PhD dissertation, University of Washington, 2008), quoted in Staley, *Identifying the Vā*, 53. Also see Lilikala Kame'leihiwa, "Hawai'i-nui-akea Cousins: Ancestral Gods and Bodies of Knowledge are Treasures for the Descendants," in *Te Kaharoa. The eJournal on Indigenous Pacific Issues* 2, no. 1 (2009): 42–63.

41 See Adriana Lear, *A Study of Traditional Tongan Music Using the Tā-Vā (Time-Space) Theory of Art* (Bachelor's Thesis, University of Wollongong, 2018); Hūfanga 'Okusitino Māhina, "*Tā*, *Vā*, and *Moana*: Temporality, Spatiality, and Indigeneity," in *Pacific Studies* 33, no. 2/3 (2010): 168–202.

42 Staley, *Identifying the Vā*, 54.

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harmonious relations with one another."[43] This is made visible in the practice of *tauhi vā*, especially among closely related people in a '*aiga* or kin group."[44] At the same time, *tauhi vā* underlines the social importance of *tā* and *vā*, which literally mean "beating space:" *Tauhi vā*, as a cultural practice, regulates and maintains social relationships between groups by performing reciprocity. The symmetry or asymmetry of such exchange-based relationships leads to either a harmonious relationship or a conflict.[45] This illustrates the deep entanglement of notions of time-space and sociality in Tonga.

Oceanic temporalities, thus, tend to place emphasis on the interlacing of the cultural, the relational, and the spatial with the temporal. While this differs significantly from Schmitz's understanding of space, it does resonate with his acknowledgment that music-making and structured movement are spatial practices of the felt body and, simultaneously, ingrained with a fundamental historicity: "[In sound], sound's history often lives on," contends Schmitz.[46] To engage with music through kinesthetic listening, then, can also be understood as a temporalizing act of the felt body as engaged with its temporo-spatial environment.[47]

This is certainly the case for *chelitakl rechuodel*, the traditional repertoire of the performing arts in Palau, Micronesia, and a closer look at the traditional conceptualization of structured movement activity in Palau will reveal the central role structured movement and kinesthetic listening hold vis-à-vis lived Palauan temporality (see Abels 2022[48]). In traditional Palauan thinking, motion is ingrained in the concept of space-time to begin with:

> [Traditional Palauan] culture unites [the two categories of space and time] through the notion of a journey (*omerael*, from the verb *merael*, "to walk, to travel," itself derived from the noun *rael*, "path, road, way" [PAN **dalan*]). The journey of a god, person, group, or mythological creature provides a basic space-time continuum for conceptualization and discourse.[49]

43 Ka'ili, "Tauhi Vā," 41.
44 Staley, *Identifying the Vā*, 55.
45 Ka'ili, "Tauhi Vā," 42.
46 Hermann Schmitz, Atmosphären, Freiburg: Verlag Karl Alber 2014, 88.
47 Mariusz Kozak, *Enacting Musical Time. The Bodily Experience of New Music* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020), 3.
48 Birgit Abels, *Music Worlding. Chanting, Atmospheres and Meaningfulness in Palau* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2022).
49 Richard J. Parmentier, *The Sacred Remains. Myth, History, and Polity in Belau* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), 134.

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Chelitakl rechuodl are not the result of the specifics of Palauan temporospatiality; in fact, they are a set of cultural conventions in the practice of Indigenous time-space that render them experiential in their "deep" sense. "Deep," here, refers to what Kaeppler has referred to as the "invisible system," the complex entanglement of cultural, social, and aesthetic values interlacing with Oceanic spatio-temporality (note here that while surfaceless space is primary to Schmitz, he also refers to it as the "deeper layers" of spatiality[50]). Importantly, the spiritual world is a fundamental component of Palauan deep time, and Palauan structured movement activities were originally created by *chelids*, the Palauan Gods. During the Hamburg South Seas Expedition of 1908–1910, Augustin Krämer recorded the following oral history describing the invention of the Palauan *ruk*, a men's dance:

> [Uchelchelid] is considered the inventor of the *ruk*. It is said that once when he sat on the shore of a Ugél pelú, he saw a *gorovídĕl* [caranx] jumping after a *tebér* sardine. The jumps inspired him so much that he decided to adopt the caranx as a symbol of the dance. In *a* Irâ̂ĭ, especially, this is observed, because their god Medegê̂ĭ is a descendent of Ugél'lëgalíd [= Uchelchelid]. In *a* Irâ̂ĭ, during the period of seclusion, the dancers have in the bai [men's house], in addition to their *tet* hand baskets, another little basket called *gomsangĕl*. This basket contains the betel quid for the god and is hung on the bai wall behind the back of its owner. In *a* Irâ̂ĭ, where several other unusual things occur, the *klemeâ̂ĭ* ['locked in', i.e. secluded for the purpose of the *ruk* preparation] people engage in something special. Everyone from [a specific house] makes thread (*ker'rël*) and weaves a net with a particular mesh size; even the *uriúl* members [i.e., the ones of lower rank in the social hierarchy] take part. All of the nets are then tied together, resulting in a long net, which is spread out over the water on the Megórei stone wharf [...], as a soul-catching net for the protective deities, the 7 Galid ['Gods'], the Tekíël maláp ['man-eating devils'] [...]. These special practices apply only to *a* Irâ̂ĭ and Ngátpang, however, which are the villages of Medegê̂ĭ pélau [= a specific *chelid*] [...]. after all of these activities, the day of coming out begins in earnest.
>
> In the morning, the village women go to the village bai and rub turmeric on the *klemeâ̂ĭ*. Each of them puts on a women's skirt. In this state, the men now advance in a festive procession towards the ocean, holding the wooden *gorovídĕl* in their raised right hands. At the edge of the path, at some distance, lies a tridacna clam shell filled with water. The leader dips the head of his dance rod figure into this, an act known as *omárĕg ra gorovídĕl* "the dipping of the caranx." After this, the group returns to the bai in silence, where the women perform their dances on the stage. Now has come the time for the dancers to show what they have learned while being sequestered. First, they do *klemeâ̂ĭ*, a little dance and then return to their bai. It is not until the

50 Hermann Schmitz, *Atmosphären* (Freiburg: Verlag Karl Alber, 2014), 83.

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> afternoon that the great dance *gorovíděl* is performed; it is followed by the *kotebáděl*, the other clubs.[51]

The *ruk*'s choreography is predetermined by the ancestors.[52] The actual dance is of divine origin and the actual performance of a *ruk* calls upon the deities and ancestor spirits to an extent that determines the structure of the months-long seclusion period prior to the performance of a grand *ruk*. Ritual objects manifest and further consolidate this link into the spiritual realm, rendering the presence of spirits felt. To perform the *ruk* following the ritual observance of the traditional *klemeaî*, then, is not only to dwell on the threshold between surfaceless, directional, and dimensional space. It is also to commune with spiritual beings in the here and now, and to dissolve the boundary between the past and the present while performing—in the present—along linear time structures. The *ruk* makes this possible by creating a performance space in which the performers can listen kinesthetically,[53] and in Schmitzian terms, act upon suggestions of motion. Through its genre conventions, it also provides a set of cultural strategies for both the performers and the audience to navigate the wealth of suggestions of motion it creates space for. These strategies are based on structured movement's ability to guide the felt body in bundling suggestions of motion and transduce them into an encompassing sensation of meaningfulness.

Conclusion

The dancing felt body's aisthetic labor is based on its kinesthetic awareness.[54] Kinesthetic listening emerges as a participatory multimodal practice of attune-

51 KETC (Krämer Ethnography Translation Committee), *Palau by Prof. Dr. Augustin Krämer*. Vol. 3, trans. of Krämer 1926 (Koror: Belau National Museum/Etpison Museum), 295; for the German original, see Augustin Krämer, *Ergebnisse der Südsee-Expedition 1908–1910* (Hamburg: Friederichsen, 1926), II/B/3, 315.

52 Palau Society of Historians, *Ongelaod: Klekool, Ngloik ma Chelitakl. Entertainment: Sports and Games, Dances and Songs* (Koror, 2008), 8.

53 Stephanie Schroedter, "Denkbewegungen über Bewegungskünste—Erste Gedankenimpulse," in *Bewegungen zwischen Sehen und Hören. Denkbewegungen über Bewegungskünsten*, ed. Stephanie Schroedter (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2012), 9–27, 10; Gabriele Brandstetter, "'Listening'—Kinaesthetic Awareness im zeitgenössischen Tanz," in *Bewegungen zwischen Hören und Sehen. Denkbewegungen über Bewegungskünste*, ed. Stephanie Schroedter (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2012), 113–27, 114 and 123.

54 Brandstetter, "'Listening.'"

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ment to motional energy. Attuned in this way to motional energy, structured movement activity in Palau can be cast as a cultural strategy to intensify—via the felt-body's sensibilities—the sensation of human interconnectedness with everything and everyone around—not only in an ontological and epistemological, but also in a social, cultural, historical, and temporospatial sense. As the dancing felt body bundles and condenses atmospheric suggestions of motion via bodily movement, these suggestions of motion connect the *ruk* performers both with the aisthetic stream of sensory perception, and with those beings and things that share the same space.

Expanding on Schmitz, cultural techniques of the felt-body such as structured movement are strategies to interact with and intensify the holistic meaningfulness present in our felt-bodily surroundings. In doing so, they significantly alter surrounding spatial economies, giving rise to the emergence of new suggestions of motion and changing extant ones. It is of central importance to note here that structured movement activities do not change space as a dimension external to the felt body; the space of structured movement is, by nature, a space-as-felt-bodily-connection. Seen against this background, then, it is no coincidence that Schmitz's conception of dance figures almost literally in the reflections of one of the seminal figures of expressionist dance, Mary Wigman (1886–1973), who in 1922 described the ballet dancer's sensation as she does a *piqué tour* as one of becoming one with "all the oscillating celestial bodies" and of "communion with space;"[55] or, in Japanese *butoh* performer Min Tanaka's statement that "when I dance, I don't dance in the place, but I am the place."[56] Böhme, in recourse to Baumgarten, seeks to emphasize the ultimately epistemological nature of sensory perception and, as such, of aisthetic labor.[57] Following Schmitz, such knowing emerges as the unfolding of *Gestalten*, which manifest in one palpable form or another. Importantly, they also exude suggestions of

55 Mary Wigman [= Karoline Sofie Marie Wiegmann], "Tanz," in *Die Tat* 13, no. 2 (1922): 863–5, 864–5. In the original German: "[…] Teil der schwingenden Weltkörper alle" and "Kommunion mit dem Raum." "Alles schwankt schon, taumelt ineinander, löst sich in einzelnes. Sie fühlt ihren Körper wieder; Stillstand, Ruhe, Beherrschung, letzte Sehnsucht darin, vorüber die Kommunion mit dem Raum" (ibid., 864).

56 Cited in Stuart Grant, "Performing an Aesthetics of Atmospheres," in *Aesthetics* 23, no. 1 (2013): 12–32, 14.

57 Karoline Fahl, *Atmosphäre am Werk. Gernot Böhmes* Neue Ästhetik *als Architekturästhetik*. Study essay. Technical University Berlin, 2016, accessed 26 February 2021, https://www.bda-bund.de/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/Fahl-Atmosph%C3%A4re-am-Werk-DGB-2016.pdf, 14.

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motion themselves, thus re-investing themselves in the feedback loop between suggestions of motions, their unfolding as *Gestalten* and the dimensional sonic event.

For Schmitz, Wigman's "communion with space" would be a natural effect of dance ecstasy: "Ecstatic dance completes itself as an intoxication in which the present and the self [...] are surrendered to an unmeasurable expanse."[58] In her own words, Wigman describes quite vividly the unfolding of *Gestalten* in this process:

> A [sense of] knowing flashes up in her. The wide, invisible, transparent space extends in formless waves, a lifting of the arm will change it. Ornaments emerge, massive, big, disappear again; delicate arabesques dance past, subside; a jump, right in; forms burst, with an evil fizzle; a fast spin; the walls give way. She drops her arms, standing still again, looks into the empty room: the dancer's realm.[59]

Structured movement activity, then, is intense aisthetic labor. The multimodal dynamics of structured movement allow for the "sensation of dropping through space;"[60] space, in turn, is filled with suggestions of motion and shared feelings. To drop through space with structured movement, thus, is to surrender to the temporospaciousness surrounding oneself; and, to feel out for the otherwise ineffable holisms of lived experience is the aisthetic labor of kinesthesia.

The neo-phenomenological-inspired terminology and conceptual apparatus I have drawn on in this contribution offer to the study of dance both a language and an analytic for the experiential intensity described by dancers from very diverging backgrounds such as Wigman and Tanaka. Importantly, it is a conceptual framework that adds an analytical understanding—finely attuned to the felt body—to the metaphorical description of kinesthetic intensity.

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58 Schmitz, *System der Philosophie III*.1, 173. In the original German: "Auch der ekstatische Tanz vollendet sich in einem Rausch, bei dem die Gegenwart und das eigene Ich [...] an maßlose Weite preisgegeben wird."

59 Wigman, "Tanz," 865. In the original German: "Erkennen blitzt in ihr auf. Der große unsichtbare, durchsichtige Raum breitet sich formlos wogend, ein Heben des Armes verändert, gestaltet ihn. Ornamente steigen auf, wuchtig, groß, tauchen unter; zierliche Arabesken tänzeln vorüber, versinken; ein Sprung mitten hinein: böse zischt es von zerplatzenden Formen; ein schnelles Drehen: die Wände weichen. Sie senkt die Arme, steht wieder still, schaut den leeren Raum, das Reich des Tänzers."

60 Albright/Gere quoted in Brandstetter, "'Listening,'" 118.

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