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Raising artists

Dreaming up more holistic dance education

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CREATE – contact/control (2022)
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MASTER'S PROGRAMME IN DANCE PEDAGOGY

ABSTRACT

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ENG:
In my thesis, I aim to answer the question "How does one raise artists?" by dreaming up and applying a pedagogical practice called *raising artists*. The research question stems from my experience and observation that dance education is more focused on the *skill* of dancing than the *art* of dancing and the *aesthetic body* more than the *being body*.

My research consists of two components: the practical and the written. The context of the practical part of my research is the Finnish basic education in the arts and, more specifically, a youth project titled *CREATE*. During the project, we explored our relationship with the self and the world in a multi-sensory way, took time to tap into our creative energies, and searched for ways to connect to the felt sense to establish a home in the body. This written part of the research codifies my pedagogical practice and acts as the analysis of it.

The philosophical and theoretical web I connect to is feminist, post-humanist and non-dual tantrik, and my perception of the world holistic: the whole cosmos is intertwined and in permanent change, and the human being is inseparable from it. With a focus on my own experiences, I reflect on how my artistic-pedagogical thinking relates to the world both in practice and philosophically by using my learning diary, class plans, and excerpts of free-flow writing as material. Furthermore, Professor Gert Biesta's book *Letting art teach: Art education 'after' Joseph Beuys* (2017) is of great importance and a source of inspiration for this research.

My pedagogical thinking is built on the belief that everyone is an artist and that every body is a dancing body. From this starting point, I define artistry as being, sensing, and engaging with the body, the world, and the unknown. Aside from this definition, I contemplate and elaborate on terms such as *holding space* and *being in the body and* reimagine the student-teacher positioning in dance education.

As a conclusion of my research, I suggest that the central focus of (dance) education should be the embodied human being and their relationship to and within the world. Based on this, I redefine the work of raising artists as an artistic-pedagogical practice that holds space for marvelling at life in a multi-sensory way and aims to bring us all back into being in our bodies.

FIN:
Opinnäytetyössäni pyrin vastaamaan kysymykseen "Kuinka kasvattaa taiteilijoita?" unelmoimalla pedagogisen praktiikan nimeltä *taiteilijakasvatus* ja kokeilemalla sitä käytännössä. Tutkimuskysymys juontaa juurensa omaiin kokemuksiini ja havaintoihini siitä, että tanssinopetus keskittyy enemmän *taitoon* kuin *taiteeseen* ja *esteettiseen kehoon* enemmän kuin *olevaan kehoon*.

Tutkimukseni rakentuu kahdesta osasta: käytännön kokeilusta sekä kirjallisesta työstä. Käytännön kokeilun kontekstina toimii suomalainen tanssitaiteen perusopetus, tarkemmin sanottuna *CREATE*-nimellä kulkenut nuorten projekti. Projektin työpajoissa tutkimme suhdetta itseen ja maailmaan moniaistisin tavoin, otimme aikaa oman luovan energian valjastamiseen ja etsimme tapoja kytkeytyä kehotuntumaan (felt sense) tavoitteenamme löytää koti kehosta. Tässä kirjallisessa työssä sanallistan sekä analysoin pedagogista praktiikkaani.

Filosofis-teoreettinen verkosto, johon kytkeydyn, on feministinen, post-humanistinen ja non-dualistis-tantrinen ja maailmakäsitykseni holistinen: koko kosmos on kietoutunut ja jatkuvassa muutoksessa, ja ihminen on erottamaton osa sitä. Omiin kokemuksiini keskittyen pohdin työssäni taiteellis-pedagogisen ajatteluni suhdetta maailmaan sekä käytännössä että filosofisesti käyttämällä oppimispäiväkirjaani, tuntisuunnitelmiani ja otteita free-flow -kirjoituksestani sekä ammentamalla omista muistoistani. Mainittakoon myös, että Professori Gert Biestan kirja *Letting art teach: Art education 'after' Joseph Beuys* (2017) on erittäin tärkeä inspiraation lähde tälle tutkimukselle.

Pedagogisen ajatteluni pohjana on uskomus, että jokainen on taiteilija, ja että jokainen keho on tanssiva keho. Tästä lähtökohdasta käsin määrittelen taiteilijuuden olemisena (being), aistimisena (sensing), ja kytkeytymisenä (engaging) kehoon, maailmaan ja tuntemattomaan. Tämän määritelmän lisäksi pohdin ja täsmennän termejä kuten *tilankannattelu* (holding space) ja *kehossa oleminen* (being in the body) sekä kuvittelen uudelleen oppilas-opettaja-asetelmaa tanssinopetuksessa.

Tutkimukseni päätteeksi esitän, että (tanssi)kasvatuksen keskiössä tulisi olla kehollinen ihminen ja hänen suhteensa maailmaan ja maailmassa. Tämän perusteella uudelleenmäärittelen taiteilijakasvatuksen taiteellis-pedagogiseksi praktiikaksi, joka tarjoaa tilaa elämän ihmettelylle moniaistisella tavalla ja jonka tavoitteena on tuoda meidät kaikki takaisin olemaan kehoissamme.

ENTER KEYWORDS HERE

artist, art education, body, creativity, dance, dance technique, dreaming, embodiment, felt sense, holding space, holistic, non-dualism, pedagogy, presence, skill

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Are you willing to meet the unknown?

Take a moment to pause. Tune into your breath, your weight.

Root in your body
This is your home

Now look around, allow your gaze to wander
Maybe explore something in more detail
Perhaps you begin to learn its topography, navigating its shapes

Now find your breath again, allow it to guide you back
Return to your body, your home.

Welcome, it's nice to meet you

1. INTRODUCTION

What makes an artist? Is everyone an artist? Have I ever been taught art? What does art education teach?

I have spent a lot of time with these questions leading up to this research. These questions stem from my observation that my own dance education did not teach me to become an artist who creates (as an embodied subject)—instead, it has taught me to become excellent at mimicking what other people do, or doing what others tell me to (as an object). From this observation, a single salient question emerged: **How does one raise artists?** In this artistic-pedagogical research, I aim to answer this question by dreaming up and applying a pedagogical practice I call ***raising artists***.

To begin answering this question, I looked back at my own dance education in Finland, the UK, and Ireland both as a student and a teacher. I noticed an imbalance between technical skills (the different techniques) and the art itself; this kind of Western dance education is not as much concerned with the body as it is with how the body looks. It seems to me that the skill has become more important than the human being, wherein lies "the potential disappearance of art" from art education (Biesta, 2017, p. 37). By placing more importance on the skill, we educate technically skilful dancers but in the process may deny them their agency as creative human beings. This is not to say that technique should be abandoned in art education, by all means—but I ask whether there is a way to educate artists that does not disregard the unique, multifaceted, and embodied human being.

My thesis research attempts to dream up one example of more holistic dance education that raises artists, and to answer the question: How might art education be art education, teaching **the art of something**, rather than skill education, teaching **the skill to do something**?

This research is firmly rooted in the body which is the home to the mind, the heart, memories, and dreams. In the following pages, I take time to shed light on my own experiences within the dance world to make my viewpoint and value basis clearer to the reader. I hope that this will explain my research motivations. In the spirit of intersectional feminist and non-dualist practices, I bring myself into this research as a whole: I do not

strive to divide the researcher-self from the self's values and worldview. There is only one me, and so all of me seeps into my work as a researcher, just as it seeps into my work as a teacher. All of me is the basis for everything I do.

My research consists of a practical part in addition to this written thesis. In the practical part, I tried out and further developed the practice of *raising artists* in the context of a youth project titled *CREATE*, which took place in a Finnish dance institute providing basic education in the arts, between August 2021 and May 2022. During this time, I kept a learning diary which, together with class plans and bits of free-flow writing, form the research material. To complement these, I am sourcing from my memories of dance education and reflecting on what it has taught me as well as what is currently taught. This thesis codifies my practice and acts as the analysis of the practical part, thus trying to convey my dream of what dance education could be.

Since my research is a reflection on the philosophy of art education through my own embodied experiences, I have chosen not to discuss in detail the participants' experiences. The purpose of this work is to explore and better understand my artistic-pedagogical thinking, its relation to the world, as well as what it could be in practice, instead of aiming for an outcome of how the approach has affected the participants' experiences.

In chapter 2, I introduce myself to shed light on my dance background, journey, and philosophical conceptions as they relate to my worldview. Chapter 3 contextualises my research, namely within the Western contemporary dance canon and the Finnish basic education in the arts. Chapter 4 elaborates on my dream and the ways I suggest making it reality, as well as on the pedagogical practice of *raising artists*. Chapter 5 delves into the process of the *CREATE* project, both outlining and reflecting on the project's aims, content, progression, and findings. Chapter 6 concludes my research with an analysis of the outcomes and looks ahead to what could come next.

Sprinkled here and there, you will find thoughts, reflections, quotes, suggestions, and memories written in italics that I wish would serve as invitations to pause and breathe. You have already encountered one such invitation at the beginning of this research paper. I utilise these poetic texts to capture aspects of human experience that cannot be conveyed

otherwise and believe that the poetic form makes space and allows for multiplicity, thus speaking to each reader uniquely.

In the following pages, you might recognise action research, a touch of autoethnography, perhaps phenomenological research, or even a soft, caring rebellion. To myself, the researcher-artist, this study has been one of meeting the self eye-to-eye, heart-to-heart, via the means of artistic-pedagogical practices and dreaming. The philosophical and theoretical landscape of my thesis is feminist, post-humanist and non-dual tantrik, which means that the premise from which I gaze out sees the world as an intricate web of perpetual emergence and change, and the human being as interconnected with the world. Amongst others, I reflect on the work of feminist scholar and Professor bell hooks, Professor Lauri Rauhala, philosopher and lecturer Timo Klemola, and, most abundantly, Professor Gert Biesta, whose book *Letting art teach: Art education 'after' Joseph Beuys* (2017) is of great importance and a source of inspiration for this research.

The overall research aim is to provide just one example—one person's imagined what-could-be—on basic art education in dance that focuses on human *beings*, holistically. This single example is not perfect, nor should it be. I wish to spark and invite conversation and critical examination of art education's, dance education's, and the global dance industry's values and attitudes so that we can dream up a different dance world, together. I hope that even should people disagree with and find fault in my dream, this research will encourage all of us to stop for a moment, and reconsider what art education is about.

1.1. A few words on 'art' and 'body'

To avoid misunderstandings, I wish to clarify my use and understanding of the terms 'body' and 'art' in this research paper.

To be utterly transparent: I begin with the base assumption that art, artistry, agency, and embodiment are vital to life, whether or not one is an artist or dancer by profession or hobby. This is because my understanding of 'art' is not limited to artworks or fields of art, and therefore artistry is not limited to the practice of any specific art form. Rather, I see being an artist as a way of being, sensing and engaging that encompasses all aspects of life. Thus, *raising artists* does not only aim to raise human beings with life-long, nourishing relationships with artworks and fields of art as a maker and/or

experiencer—it also aims to encourage and cultivate the 'art' of living as a human interconnected with the world (e.g. situationality as defined by Lauri Rauhala, 2005, pp. 41–47), placing the world in the centre (e.g. world-centred approach as offered by Gert Biesta, 2017).

The word 'body' is a slightly more complex matter. In many ways, I embarked on this research because, in dance contexts, I have often experienced being seen and treated as a body only, instead of a whole human being with a mind, a heart, memories, dreams, ideas, and history. At the same time, despite the importance of the body in dance, I have not been taught to be in my body nor sense its subtle messages. These two observations perplex the term 'body': Does dance concern the body only, or does dance disregard the body entirely?

To solve this conundrum, I use ***aesthetic body*** to refer to the body as it is perceived externally, and does not include the whole being of the person. I then use ***being body*** to refer to the entirety of the human being, including both the externally perceivable *aesthetic body* as well as each human's interiority. I also distinguish between *using the body* (which involves the *aesthetic* body) and *being in the body* (which involves the *being body*). The quality of being that I refer to as *being in the body / the body as the home* could also be called *presence*. However, I feel that 'presence' is not transparent enough about the significance of the body. It lacks the weight, flesh, blood, and cells of the body, and is too vague a term, easily only including the mind. Therefore, as synonyms to *being in the body* I use *embodied presence* and *embodiment* which I think recognise the body as its base, site and anchor. I hope these clarifications help the navigation of this text.

1.2. The practice of dreaming

> "A dream is a place that has the potential to unsettle the realities of the so-called real world. Where we can approach the unknown and accept what we do not understand." (Abdulkarim & Lindfors, 2021b, p. 5)

Whilst I have always been someone who dreams, I did not consider dreaming to be a valid artistic practice until I attended a workshop as part of the #StopHatredNow platform, titled "Self-Help Session for the Striving Feminist" hosted by Monica Gathuo and Sonya Lindfors (2021). It was during this session that I understood the effect that dreaming can and does have. We were presented with a speculative writing exercise in which we were

posed questions: What do you dream about right now? What if you had what you dream of? Where would you be, how would you be, how would you spend your time, with whom, how would your body feel? Being with these questions and sharing answers with the other participants showed me something about the potential of dreaming. The act of dreaming and sharing dreams with others makes dreams somehow more real, more tangible, more potent, and more attainable. Their potential for existence is amplified. In sharing our dreams, we build a world in which we wish to live.

Inspired by the above workshop as well as Sonya Lindfors and Maryan Abdulkarim's ongoing practice *We Should All Be Dreaming* (2018)[1], I have put my own dreaming practice into words as follows:

By dreaming, I can imagine something different, explore various realities, or come up with things or situations that are not real (yet). Dreaming has the potential of freeing us from the limitations of rational thinking—it is a creative practice that stems from hope. Dreaming, to me, is an inherently feminist practice, one which strives for change with softness and care. That is how it differs from the patriarchal way of do-act-bigger-more: dreaming as a feminist practice calls for slowing down and imagining something out of this world, i.e. something with possibly a very different paradigm than the one of the current reality. This offers a possibility of a world with many truths and many stories rather than a single central point of reference, such as white Eurocentrism.

Although dreaming may seem and feel passive, I recognise tremendous power in it. I see dreaming as an expansive action in which one creates worlds which otherwise appear impossible. Dreaming can shake us into seeing new possibilities and give us ways to begin moving towards making the dream into reality, making the impossible possible. Dreaming is anything but idle.

Lindfors describes the dreaming practice as "an impossible attempt to learn how to think beyond" and continues that "[t]hese speculative fictions and mind games that we play become a part of our lived realities and they open up potentialities. I don't know what true freedom feels like, but I can dream about it and that changes me. And then maybe the changed me can change something else in the world." (Abdulkarim & Lindfors, 2021a, p. 64) Here, Lindfors suggests that part of the power of dreaming is its transformative potential between imagination and lived, embodied experiences. In this, I

[1] *We Should All Be Dreaming*. Initiated by Sonya Lindfors and Maryan Abdulkarim. Premiered in 2018.

recognise the same feeling of fullness and amplified potential of existence I experienced during the #StopHatredNow speculative writing exercise: dreams became something that I had a felt sense of.

Dreaming has been an active part of my practice ever since that workshop in May 2021. In the context of this thesis, dreaming means the following:

- dreaming of (dance)[2] worlds which are kind to all humans regardless of colour, nationality, age, size, ability, sexuality, or gender; worlds in which humans have not forgotten that they are nature, too
- comparing the dreamt-up[3] realities to the current reality
- dreaming of conditions that could guide the current reality towards the dreamt up realities
- choosing some of these dreamt-up conditions to shape pedagogical practices
- experimenting with the resulting practices in reality
- feeling, sensing and assessing whether or not these practices transformed dreamt-up possibilities into reality
- dreaming again, with this new embodied knowledge

In addition to dreaming being part of my own practice and research, I extended the practice of dreaming to the *CREATE* workshops. It was perhaps less explicitly as it was not my research focus, but the invitation to seek, imagine, and dream up something new, anew or different was always present. Cultivating this kind of environment and mentality was important to me in order to make space for hope in a world tormented by several crises.

The importance I place on holding space for dreaming practices in my research stems from feeling extraordinarily small when facing the massive dance industry or Western dance canon and tradition. How can I possibly change an establishment so firmly rooted? Even now, I wrestle with the fear of sharing my dreams, ideas, and vulnerability, let alone

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2 Note: I put “dance” in brackets because I do not think we can ever fully separate the world and the dance world, they are always interconnected.

3 Note: I am using “to dream up something” to refer to an act of dreaming that has a feeling of activeness to it. This is a combination of ”to dream” and “to come up with something”.

suggesting to change the way dance is taught. Dreaming, however, always involves varying degrees of fear. With this fear, I dream and share truthfully with you.

I have professed the fact that my research, observations, and suggestions are very much motivated by my own experiences, and I acknowledge that personal experiences are always limited in the scope of the world. Furthermore, I do not make lofty claims to singular truth nor originality: I am just one *being body* proposing pedagogical alternatives. There may be much within existing dance research and education which runs parallel to the alternatives I present here, and there is an infinite number of ways to work towards more holistic dance education.

> "Making and receiving art are both ways of participating in a space where alternative worlds are possible through imagination." (Foster & Turkki, 2021, p. 3)

2. STARTING POINT: WHERE DO I COME FROM?

I come from a need to stand out and be unique
But it has to do with skills and being the object of praise
And I realised that where THIS comes from
Is the need to get to be truly me
Sensitive
Lost
Blue
Calm
Loving
Light and darkness
Fire and candy floss
That is where I come from
But where am I going to?

I am going towards me
And thus, towards home
Towards everything
(free-flow writing, 31.8.2021, original text in Finnish)

In this chapter, I aim to give the reader a sense of who I am as a human being, mover, artist, and teacher, and of my background and path in dance. I will also look at the landscape of my conception of human beings and the world, as well as the theoretical and philosophical canons I sense connections with.

2.1. Who am I?

I like to think that I have laid roots in many places on this Earth. My first roots, however, are in Finland, where I also currently reside, and where I have found that the most nourishing soil for rooting is in my body, the home for everything I am. This is where I begin.

My body has been an object of both praise and humiliation, a tool of control and mastery, a site of hate and demands, a vessel of love and refuge, my motivation both to be seen and to hide, and both the reason why I want to dance and the reason why I do not. It is safe to say that my relationship with bodies, especially my own, is complex, and while it is possible that this would be the case even if I had never engaged with dance, the dance industry only further complicates relationships with bodies. I realised some time ago that my struggle with and unease within the dance world I know (Western,

European, Finnish) was caused by a clash of values: My own versus the dominant dance industry's. The dance world seemed to me inauthentic and shallow, with no room for diversity of any kind, and exclusive in its narrow (body) standards and constant demand for perfection.

My own dance education started in Finland with a children's dance class at the age of five. This was followed by classes in contemporary dance, jazz, ballet, and show. Around my teenage years, I attended my first street dance workshop and was introduced to locking and hiphop. When I was sixteen, I began taking classes regularly in hiphop and dancehall reggae, occasionally participated in voguing and waacking workshops, and tried house, too. Until this, I had mainly been taking classes within one dance school, with the occasional course or workshop elsewhere.

At the age of twenty, I was admitted to a dance conservatoire in London, UK, where for the next three years I would study ballet as well as contemporary dance in some of its various forms. In London, I also encountered a street dance style called krump, which ended up changing my whole life[4]. Eventually, I graduated with a Bachelor's degree in Contemporary Dance, returned to Finland, and taught at the same dance school I grew up in. After two years of teaching, I began to admit to myself how unhappy I was. I moved to Dublin, Ireland, where I got an office job and took a break from dancing. When I returned to the dance studio half a year later, I met a wonderful colleague with whom I could discuss the dance world—delights, paradoxes, issues, and magic. Those conversations first led me to the realisation that the prevalent values of my chosen field were not aligned with my own, and eventually, here to this research.

What I understood then about myself and dance is that the dance training I have received has taught me to quickly pick up movement in detail from someone else: to repeat, to dance for others, to make visible something someone else wants to see. It has trained me to second-guess my limits and to always remember that I could be better, more flexible, thinner, jump higher, go lower, turn more times—nothing is ever enough. It has taught me to look at my body from the outside—as an aesthetic body— and to assess its value by what is perceivable in the mirror, rather than encouraging living and being in my body, as a whole self. It has not asked me many questions; I have mainly remained as the malleable ingredient and, even as such, not malleable enough. The dance world I grew

4 More on this in section 2.3.

up in is still very much dominated by the aim for "the perfect dancer", an unattainable and toxic parameter in more ways than one. This parameter naturally and very dangerously invites competition, a twisted relationship with the body, unhealthy behaviour, and appreciation for only one kind of body (young, white, and small) and skill set (strong ballet technique). Although these standards can be motivating, they are often morally reprehensible.

Whilst I am eternally grateful to most of the teachers I have had the chance to train with both in non-professional and professional settings (after all, it is because of them that I am here), there has been a general lack of support for critical thinking development, creative exploration, and being in, understanding, and valuing my own body. This assessment has alarming implications, as art deals with creativity, the world needs critical thinkers, and the body plays a central role in dance and life.

These realisations came with many kinds of emotions ranging from sadness to rage to relief, and many kinds of emotions have also been present during this research. What has enabled me to begin articulating my thoughts are my studies in dance pedagogy at the University of the Arts in Helsinki in the last two years, as well as yoga studies in the style of Authentic Flow in the summer of 2021. Both of these have changed me significantly as a teacher and as an artist as I have begun to learn to slow down and observe, to trust myself and my body, and to sense my body from the inside (as a *being body*) instead of assessing it through a mirror. In other words, I have learnt embodiment and body awareness, and thus, a new way of being in the world. Perhaps most importantly, my studies have taught me that things can be done differently, which has guided me to this research and the practice of dreaming alternatives.

2.2. Conceptions and conventions of dance

My conception of dance has changed a lot over the years. Whilst I am not sure whether I started with a belief that dancing equals ballet, I do recall thinking that real dancing was mainly the repetition of codified steps and movements[5]. I also thought that only ballet, contemporary, or jazz/show in the form of musical choreography belonged on the big stages, and thus I gave them more respect than other dance styles. I never questioned this until I saw street dance taking the centre stage at Breakin' Convention 2014 in London. Since no one is born with a hierarchical perception of dance, it must be socially or

5 Such as plié (ballet) or running man (hip hop).

educationally conditioned. These nurtured biases indicate the lack of representation and diversity of dance forms in my education.

Beginning my studies in London, I was shocked to find out that there exist separate sets of techniques within contemporary dance; I had never heard of Graham, Cunningham, Limon, Laban, or the Release technique despite having had contemporary dance as my hobby for fifteen years. Up until that point, I had thought contemporary dance meant training in ballet technique with slight modifications and more freedom for the body as well as artistically. One could, of course, argue that that is or at least used to be the case, but my point here is that "contemporary dance" is used for many different ways of dancing without sufficient clarification of what the user means by the term. I became aware of this flaw, and with that my perception of dance began to expand. I began to see that any and all movement can be dance and that even everyday tasks such as making a coffee can be seen as choreography. For this expansion, I have largely to thank my encounter with krump, which showed me how everything I do and am, can exist in my dance.

From then on, I became increasingly critical of the importance ballet is given in the Western world of dance. As an example from the professional field, when in an audition call the notice says they are looking for "technically skilled dancers", they most often do not refer to having strong skills in hip hop technique—they want ballet. The general perception of a dancer's appearance[6] is that of a slim, small, young, able-bodied, and white. It seems to me that ballet's standards still rule dance in the Western world. Whilst I name ballet as the culprit, my intention is not to blame ballet as a dance form. Instead, I wish to shine a light on the dangerous one-sidedness and homogeneity that exists in the Western dancing world. Luckily, there have been recent efforts to begin correcting this.

Today, my perception of dance is that any movement, or no movement, is and can be dance. The world is full of beautiful, defined techniques, and not one is superior to another. Dance does not require any certain kind of body, skill, or age. Dance is and should be available and accessible to everyone. I am currently interested in movement that is not an internalised, conscious repetition of a codified movement, but that rather

[6] Not only the perception within the dancing world but also the perception of people who are not engaged with dance.

makes visible the inner world. I call this movement authentic[7], or raw, and to me, art's greatest potential lies in this capability to communicate that which is within.

2.3. Krump

Krump has had a profound effect on me as a mover, artist, learner, and teacher, and therefore, it needs and deserves its own section. Below, I first give a brief introduction to krump as a dance style and community. I will then proceed to describe how my encounter with krump has shaped my thoughts on pedagogy, explaining the way this dance style has been life-changing for me with its individual yet communal teaching/learning processes, focus on process rather than on perfection, and invitation for the uniqueness life to be present in the movement.

> *I stomp on the beat and slide right, arms rising. My movement builds up, more, more, faster, heavier, rawer. I tell my story and I can feel the whole group echoing the movement that transforms into ours instead of mine. We lose track of who is feeding on whose energy, the hype gets louder, finally erupts, and I finish my round covered in hugs, knowing these are my people.* (a recollection from years 2013–2016)

Krump is a street dance style born in the early 2000s in Los Angeles (USA) as a non-violent alternative for gang life. It evolved from another dance style (Clowning) in the African American communities in the rough outskirts of the city, in the midst of gang riots. Krump dancing is often described as aesthetically ugly, rugged, and aggressive, which makes sense considering the ghetto origins this style honours, but krump is so much more than ugly. Dr Sarah S. Ohmer defines krump as "a movement of resistance to the oppression" (Ohmer, 2019, p. 17), implying both the oppression of the enslaved Africans brought to the American continent, as well as the oppression of the African American people still happening today. I understand that Ohmer's "resistance" refers to the way in which krump provides means and room for emotional expression and sharing of narratives.

Krump is irrevocably rooted in African American history and identity and can be seen as a way of processing the generational and individual trauma of the African

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[7] Note: I use 'authentic movement' as a name for movement that arises from being in the body, rather than as the improvisational movement practice by Mary Starks Whitehouse in the 1950s (source: https://www.goodtherapy.org/learn-about-therapy/types/authentic-movement). There is a lot of similarity between the mover's experience, but in my use of the word, there is not necessarily a witness apart from the self.

American people. Since the 2000s, krump has spread across the world and is a global community today. As an outlet for emotional processing, krump has persevered and thrived, keeping with it the essential element of storytelling even while it is now practised by people outside the African American community. The extensive cultural and political facets of krump cannot be overestimated, but I will proceed without delving deeper into this.

I first encountered krump through a friend in London in 2013. I quickly came to realise that krump is more than just a rough-looking dance style: it has a soul and a purpose much like other street dance styles, though in krump this soul and purpose seem more present. The word "krump" is sometimes broken down as an acronym, K.R.U.M.P.: "Kingdom Radically Uplifting Mighty Praise", generally referring to the connection with God through dance. As a non-religious (although spiritual) person, this aspect did not particularly appeal to me, but I soon discovered that the definition of "God" was not so narrow. Krump can be a powerful way to experience spiritual fellowship, religiously or secularly, to connect with the creator or to connect deeply with the self. I do not think krump can be used as simply an aesthetic variation because it holds in it multitudes of depth. After all, krump always has a purpose: to face oneself, to share one's story.

After appreciating this capacity, I decided to give krump a chance. Especially at the beginning, I remember mostly feeling uncomfortable. I was often the only female, which surely contributed to this feeling, but I also felt internal resistance to allowing the "ugly and aggressive" motions to take place in and on my body. Having grown up in a dance world full of beautiful, balanced movement where perfection was the goal, this ugly, aggressive quality of movement was new to me, though it was the idea of pouring my emotion into the movement that was an especially foreign concept. Previously, I had been asked to prioritise how the movement feels rather than how I feel. Bringing in my own feelings, history, and everyday to create movement and performance was novel and life-changing in the long run.

In terms of pedagogy, krump is of interest, too. Teaching and learning krump is an individual process in the sense that krump is mostly taught from one person (the big homie) to the other (the little homie) as a 1-to-1 interaction. Yet, it is also a collective

process since the community, especially the fam[8], also takes part as a teacher: for example, during sessions, I was often given tips by other krumpers[9], and was thus supported by the whole community. The focus is on the individual, but through the individual's success, the whole community progresses which might be the reason why there seems to be a genuine joy in following another krumper's process, in particular within the fams. This cultural, communal trait is not unique to krump, but is glaringly scarce in more cutthroat industries, like Western contemporary dance. Because each krumper has their own path and pace of progression, no one krumper is better than the other. There is a degree of critique and evaluation in the sense that there are ranks within fams, and battles are always a competition for and opportunity to change who is the "best". However, I have never personally felt pressure or anxiety within this evaluation because the focus has always been on the process, on my own path of progress.

Krump seldom takes place in a class form at dance studios, though there are some classes and workshops, too. In my experience, the classes are rarely capable of accommodating krump in a way that is true to the dance style. Krump does not fit the traditional pattern and code of conduct similar to that of many classes of the Western dance canon most importantly because it does not require everyone to do the same, in the same way. It expects variation and uniqueness. Therefore, I find that the workshops and classes that do justice to the style are the kind that provide starting points for freestyle (or in contemporary dance terms, for improvisation), thus making space for each participant's development wherever they are on their path, as well as for their own stories. This balance or relationship between skill and oneself (being, listening, engaging) is what makes krump special in terms of pedagogy.

Although I did not teach krump as a dance style during the *CREATE* project and will not discuss the style further here, the base principles of krump are always part of me as a human being, artist, and teacher. Its impact can be seen in my pedagogical practices in the focus on the individual and process, expecting and making space for uniqueness, and the invitation of the whole embodied human being to be present and visible at all times. Even if not mentioned later in this research paper, krump's quintessential values are foundational to my pedagogy.

[8] A fam is short for "family". It is built by the big homie who chooses little homies to share their knowledge with. A fam consists of at least one big homie and one little homie.
[9] Krumper is used in reference to a Krump dancer, someone who actively practices Krump and is part of the community.

2.4. Conceptions of human beings

My conception of the human being is, perhaps, less learnt through upbringing or study and more gathered in the experience of life. I find the interconnectivity of all life very obvious and think that the human is an ever-changing sum of its experiences and environment. At the moment, my conception of the human being is closest to those of non-dual tantrik philosophy (e.g. Kempton, 2013/2019), holistic/monopluralistic theory (e.g. Rauhala, 2005) and posthuman feminism, under which I categorise eco-social conception of the human being (e.g. Karhu, 2020; Ylirisku, 2021; Foster et al., 2022). The common denominator for these is a non-dual view of the world and the human.

Dualism sees the world in opposites such as nature-culture, woman-man, mind-body, and the human as something entirely separate from and superior to animals and nature. It is a human-centred worldview that has been dominant in Western philosophies, theories, and religions. (Aaltola, 2020) In non-dualism, the world is not divided into opposites but rather is intricately intertwined (e.g. Klemola, 2004). Whilst I have encountered non-dualism as a core concept previously, I first understood it in an embodied way through a yoga teacher training with Satu Tuomela and Fanny Olsson in 2021, which brought together somatics (e.g. BodyMind centering), movement arising authentically from the embodied self, the container of yoga asana, and non-dual tantrik philosophy in the tradition of the Trika lineage.

According to author and yoga philosophy teacher Sally Kempton, the first evidence of non-dual tantrik philosophy emerged in the 6th century AD in India (2013/2019, p. 46). It is a philosophy that emphasises the significance of goddesses and feminine power and believes that rather than a deceit that hides the divine, the world is divine, made of feminine energy, shakti. (Kempton, 2013/2019, pp.47–49.) This is where non-dual tantrik philosophy differs from classical teaching of yoga. Where the classical teachings say the spirit is separate from the physical world, the tantrikas (practitioners of tantra philosophy) recognise that the physical world is as sacred as the spiritual, because the physical world is a manifestation of the divine awareness or power of the Shakti goddess (Kempton, 2013/2019, p. 50–51). Therefore, the human body is not something to get away from, but a way to experience the divine life. Yoga with its poses (asanas), breath work (pranayama), and meditation practice are a way to recognise the divinity and to make it lived experience. Embodiment is at the core of the philosophy.

One important teaching from my studies in this philosophy has been the idea of microcosm of body and macrocosm of life, "as it is within, so it is without". According to this idea, everything that is outside of the physical body can also be found inside it. We can look at the diaphragm, expanding and contracting, and notice a similarity with a jellyfish, or at the lungs and notice their resemblance to trees, only upside down. (Olsson & Tuomela, 2021) Within us, there is an ocean of cells and streams of blood, around us rivers and seas. In this time of climate crisis, polarisation of political ideologies, and violence due to race, nationality, and religion, bringing it back to the basics—back to the *being body*, the home we all have—seems to me like a great way to remind ourselves that we humans are essentially the same, and that we are not only a part of nature, we *are* nature.

According to my understanding of non-dual tantrik philosophy, it is the separation—human-animal, nature-culture—that causes so much human suffering. What perhaps started as a way to clarify communication ("this is a cat, this is a human") has become so fundamental a way of being a human that it is easy to forget that there is no separation, only difference. In non-dual tantrik philosophy, this is called "multiplicity within non-duality", which means that in essence, everything is of the same, simply different manifestations of it, like waves of an ocean. Therefore, each human is seen as one unique wave with its one-of-a-kind experience of life. (Olsson, 2021)

Lauri Rauhala's holistic, monopluralistic theory perhaps does not name itself as a non-dualist, however, it has matching characteristics. Where non-dual tantrik philosophy teaches that there is "multiplicity within non-duality", Rauhala uses the term "unity in difference" to describe the infinitely intertwined existence of everything. The parts of everything constitute an entity—for Rauhala, the human being, for non-dual tantrik philosophy, the Consciousness within which everything is—which has different aspects that make up the whole. (Olsson, 2021–2022; Rauhala, 2005, pp. 54–62)

Rauhala's conception of a human being is based on and developed from Edmund Husserl's phenomenology and Martin Heidegger's existentialist philosophy. It regards the human as an embodied, conscious, and situational being. (Rauhala, 2005, p. 32) By *embodiment*, Rauhala refers to the physical body which processes are not symbolic but truly functional, contributing to and enabling life by "complementing [--], balancing, [and] controlling one another's functions" (Rauhala, 2005, pp. 38–41). Embodiment is

the physical, corporeal existence of the human. *Consciousness* refers to human existence in the form of spirituality or the psyche/the mind. It is experience, observation, dreaming, and emotion, out of which meaning is created. Meaning can only arise in relation to an existing experience, and this is how an individual's worldview and concept of self are formed. (Rauhala, 2005, pp. 34–38) As new meanings continue to arise, the worldview and concept of self are in constant flux. *Situationality* refers to the interconnected existence of the individual with their reality. This means that all components of an individual's life affect the person they become and are. Some of the components the individual cannot affect (such as parents or nationality), and some they can (such as occupation or place of residence). (Rauhala, 2005, pp. 41–47) Embodiment, consciousness, and situationality are dependent on and influenced by one another and are the parts that make up the human being.

All of the three forms of being mentioned above revolve around connection: connections within the physical body, and between the physical body and the world; connections within the mind, and between the mind and the world; and connections between an individual and their environment. This points to the constant dialogue and exchange that happens between a human being and the world, wherein the human is not only shaped by, but also shapes the world in which they live.[10]

Like non-dualism and the non-dual tantrik philosophy, post-humanism regards the human not as superior but as parallel to nature and the world and works to de-centre the human. In addition, post-humanism places humans as inherently and indisputably equal. (Aaltola & Hänninen, 2020, p. 299) The eco-social conception of the human being continues with these paradigms and goes further to suggest that since there are more non-human cells in humans than human cells, we are not, in fact, individuals, but rather social communities, aggregations of several beings: holobionts. Thus, even if we exclude anything external to the human body, a community of humans is still multi-species. Through our multi-sensory, multi-species bodies we humans are part of the world and the world is part of us, and we thus have a bodily or embodied connection with it. (Foster, 2021; also Foster & Turkki, 2021; Foster et al., 2022)

[10] For more thoughts and discussion on the role of dialogue with the world in education, see e.g. Freire, 2000; Värri, 2004.

Whilst further discussing non-dualism per se in dance is out of scope of this research, I am aware that in the field of Finnish research on dance education overcoming dualism has been an important starting point. This can be seen in several research papers discussing and re-thinking the Cartesian body-mind split (see e.g. Anttila, 2003; Kauppila, 2012; Turpeinen, 2015).

In conclusion, my conception of the human being is that a human is nature; is a sum of experiences and environment; is always changing; is a non-dual being (body-mind-heart); and is reciprocally connected. Each human also has agency, i.e. power to create their own reality. In addition, I believe in each human being's right to art and ability to create, regardless of their situationality (e.g. race, age, nationality, gender, ability, size or class). This is the basis from which I teach, where the values that seep into my way of holding space and the content that I share are rooted. This is how I perceive the human being, and in art education taught by me, I wish that the interconnected human being is present both as the spaceholder and as the participant. While this may sound like human-centred pedagogy, what I think happens when connecting to ourselves is that we can realise that we are not the centre but a part of. This happens because the more we know, sense, and are in our *being bodies*, the more sensitive we are to how the world is communicating with us.

3. STARTING POINT: THE CONTEXT OF DANCE

In this chapter, I will give a brief introduction to the history of Western contemporary dance as it relates to Western dance education today. I will then provide information about the Finnish basic education in the arts, unpacking the national curriculum and the foundation it lays.

3.1. Western contemporary dance canon

My background in dance is colourful, and I like to call myself a mover rather than a dancer as I feel it gives me more freedom when it comes to movement. However, if I must choose a dance style, I mainly identify as a contemporary dancer because it is the style in which I have the most experience and the style in which I was trained professionally. But what is contemporary dance, really? A comprehensive exploration of this question is outside the scope of this research, however, I do wish to proffer a few questions regarding the history of contemporary dance and how that history is still today affecting our perception of and education in contemporary dance.

To understand the beginnings of contemporary dance, we must go to the beginning of the 1900s when new dance techniques began to develop as an emancipatory evolution of classical ballet. Modern dance in the United States and Ausdruckstanz in Europe were concerned with the expression of inner processes, and each pioneer worked to develop their own techniques. Despite having started as a movement to free the body from the aesthetic aims of ballet, modern dance developed into specific techniques with specific aesthetic goals, such as those of Martha Graham and Merce Cunningham. (Törmi, 2016, pp. 38–39) In the 1960s, the postmodern era brought with it a different approach, as instead of a "virtuoso performing a given choreography as skilfully as possible [--] [the dancer] could be, for example, an artist exploring bodily consciousness" (Törmi, 2016, p. 40, free translation by me). This is when somatic approaches began to emerge, and instead of being a vessel for something symbolic, the body was (again) valuable on its own accord, as a *being body* (Törmi, 2016, pp. 40–41).

Kirsi Monni (2004; 2012), too, recognises a development in the paradigm of dance in the 1900s, referring to a change in how a dancer's skill is perceived. Monni (2012) links this to breaking free from the Cartesian body-mind-dualism and names the 1960s–70s postmodern dance in the United States as the culmination of this paradigm

development. According to Monni, in the new paradigm, a dancer's skill is not a technique to produce aesthetically shaped movement, instead, it is embodied knowledge that "reveals the temporal and spatial events of being, the kinetic logo, and bodily involvement in being, interpreted through the historical and located world" (Monni, 2012, free translation by me). This paradigm development—a complex and multi-directional one—has continued, bringing about what we today call contemporary dance. What seems to have happened in the process is, on one hand, a gradual emancipation from the classical ballet form, and on the other hand a development of several new forms. Therefore, the range of contemporary dance is as wide as the range of its makers. However, this development has not been visible in my dance studies (basic education in the arts nor BA studies) which have still been very much an embrace of the aesthetically shaped movement and have lacked the artistic diversity that is visible in the professional field. Nowadays, contemporary dance seems almost like an easy name for anything that does not quite fit any specific, established dance style's format. This is not necessarily a bad thing, but it is baffling that the education does not reflect the professional field's reality in the Western dance scene. For some reason, Western dance pedagogy teaches restricting both the *aesthetic body* and the *being body*.

Despite contemporary dance having a very ambiguous definition in the professional field, in dance schools and institutions providing professional training —at least in those I am familiar with in Finland, the UK and Ireland—there seems to be a silent agreement when it comes to the content of contemporary dance classes. That content is often rigid and coded as opposed to also including the more freeform side of the style[11]. Dance classes usually follow a pattern of warm-up – technique training – choreography – stretch/cool down, or a variation of these elements. Furthermore, the elements are often choreographed by the teacher: warm-up dance; technique routine with tendus, pliés, jumps, pirouettes; and a choreography to finish off. Perhaps this pattern is sometimes spiced up with a short improvisation, or maybe the students are given free hands to make a piece of choreography that the teacher will then fit into their choreography. I do not mean to say that there is no value in teaching in this way; I wish to ask why Western

[11] I should mention that this does not seem to be the case in the BA and MA programmes of the University of the Arts in Helsinki, where more freedom seems to be encouraged. However, as I have not studied in those programmes, this is not first-hand-experience, and thus with my comment above I refer mainly to the non-professional dance education as well as the BA programmes abroad I have knowledge or experience of.

contemporary dance education in non-professional settings rarely makes space for experiencing, exploration, and not-knowing, and seems to be keen to only repeat known things and to reserve creativity as the teacher's prerogative?

Kirsi Monni asks whether there exists a conception of dance in the Western world that is not directly derived from classical ballet (Monni, 2004, p.143). The question is specific in terms of the aesthetic heritage ballet has passed on to Western *"art dance"*, *taidetanssi*[12], but also includes language and concepts. Other interesting questions Monni poses are whether dance is inseparably intertwined with the tradition of aesthetics and whether there exists *taidetanssi* that has its roots in the *being body* rather than in the *aesthetic body*. (ibid.) This juxtaposition of the *being body* and the *aesthetic body* is of interest to me as it is tied to the question I have for dance education: what is the balance between the two? From my experience, the *aesthetic body* has been given more importance, especially in non-professional dance education, which I believe is the primary cause of body discrimination and competition between dancers, as well as the reason why I feel that the freeform, embodied side of contemporary dance is not reflected in the pedagogy with which it is taught.

3.2. Basic education in the art of dance

The Finnish basic education in the arts is extra-curricular art education primarily aimed at children and young people. The Basic Art Education Act was passed in 1998 (633/1998), and education is provided in nine art forms, of which dance is one. It is a unique educational system in the world which, similarly to basic education, is designed to progress from one level to the next. The purpose of basic education in the arts is for students to gain skills to express themselves with, as well as to prepare them for vocational or higher education in the field. (Köngäs et al., 2022; Taiteen perusopetusliitto, 2019)

Basic education in the arts has a government-agreed fundamental curriculum that indicates what education should include and be like. The fundamental curriculum covers

[12] In the Finnish language, the term *taidetanssi* (art dance) is used to refer to dance that has a pursuit of artistic presentation and performative motivation. *Taidetanssi* mainly includes contemporary dance and ballet. As the term has no organic translation to English, I will opt for using the Finnish term. The discussion regarding this term, its definition, and what it excludes is certainly an interesting one also in the way the term might be representative of the Finnish dance field's structure of operation. However, I will not dive deeper into the matter in the scope of this research paper.

each art form separately and is used as the basis for creating their own curricula in each educational institution. (Opetushallitus, n.d.-a) This means that each dance institution has the freedom to make their own interpretation of the national fundamental curriculum. Therefore, the curriculum of each institution can slightly differ depending on the director(s) and their conceptions of the art form.[13] Aside from a requirement of pedagogical qualification, the curriculum does not explicitly name the kind of pedagogy that should be practised, though it does give an outline of the kind of supportive and encouraging learning environment that should be provided (Opetushallitus, 2017).

In terms of the art of dance, basic education in the arts aims to "support the student's holistic growth, creativity, artistic expression, and cultural inclusion" and to "broaden the student's understanding of the diversity of dance, both as an art and a cultural and social phenomenon, and to support their growth as a civilized, tolerant and respectful citizen" (Opetushallitus, n.d.-b, free translation by me). On paper, the purpose of basic education in the art of dance is beautiful and goes together with my own dreams and views of what art education should and could be, though it is another question whether the education and facilitation actually enable what is desired. The same goes for the national fundamental curriculum, which includes, for example, awareness of the unique body, creativity, joy, and knowledge of the vocabulary of different dance styles (Opetushallitus, 2017). The curriculum is divided into three categories that give indication of the aims of the education. The categories are well-being and embodiment, interaction and cultural competence, and skill and art (ibid., free translation of categories by me). These categories and the elements within them are presented as equal to one another, starting from early childhood education and continuing throughout the studies.

Based on the national curriculum, I do not see a lack of the *being body*, creativity, or art in dance education. Furthermore, the curriculum does not assume humans with certain body types or skills or encourage the shaping of them, and I do not see a reason why this curriculum would not raise artists in the sense that I propose: human beings who live in and through their bodies openly sensing and engaging with the world, and who have a sense of agency when it comes to the creation of the self and the world around them. Hence, I have concluded that the issues I have identified are not rooted in the system

13 It should be noted that not all dance schools choose to offer basic education in the arts and thus their curricula may be very different from what I discuss here, just as the curricula in dance schools outside of Finland is likely somewhat different.

of basic education in the arts itself. This is a relief since it means that it is possible to do things differently even without abandoning a system that does so much good.

Where do the issues I observe arise from, then? A comprehensive understanding of the situation would call for vast research observing several dance schools and teachers over a period of time, but as that is out of the scope of this paper, I can only assume that it is the interpretation of the curricula by the dance school directory as well as each teacher that shapes the teaching and its content. Since each dance school has the freedom to build their own curriculum (based on the national curriculum if part of the basic education in the arts scheme), the emphasis of the teaching may fall on different components. Thus, the root of the issues could be in the translation of the fundamental curriculum into the institution-specific curriculum, or in the application of the curricula, i.e. in the pedagogical practices.

4. DREAMING AN ALTERNATIVE

In this chapter, I will first elaborate on the pedagogical practice and philosophy of *raising artists*, and then specify what this means in terms of practice for teachers, students, and the content of education.

4.1. Raising artists

Raising artists is an idea that emerged in the spring of 2021 when I began putting into words my pedagogical philosophy. The term *raising artists* comes from the Finnish word for art education: *taidekasvatus*, in which I sensed a connotation of using art to raise someone, thus making the participant an object. To reimagine dance education, I transformed the term into *taiteilijakasvatus*, artist education or, as I have come to call it, raising artists.

The idea began to develop after asking myself a startling question: Have I ever been taught art? I had a feeling that I have been taught several skills when it comes to dance, but could not recall having been taught to find my own voice or to tap into my own creative energy (note: I have been given opportunities to make my own performances and perform them, but that seems to have a difference to being taught how to). I realised that I had not felt like an artist until only a few years ago, and began to wonder why.[14] As a result, a question was formulated: How can art education be art education, teaching the **art of something**, rather than skill education, teaching the **skill to do something**? This question is what sparked the research on what **would or could it mean to raise artists.**

I currently define *raising artists* as work that encourages individual decision-making, use of one's own creative energy, and trust in one's own ability and vision. This involves meeting the self and the world, deliberating one's ideas and thoughts, and trying, failing, getting lost and finding. At the core of *raising artists* is holding space for the participants to discover and explore their connection to their embodied beingness. This approach can lead to giving a lot of responsibility to the participant, however, the role of the space holder is essential. That role is the focus of my research. I believe that as a facilitator I

[14] Professor and educational theorist Gert Biesta has made an observation which he articulates as "the potential disappearance of both art and education from the theory and practice of art education" (Biesta, 2017, p. 37), and because of the questions I have regarding my own artistry, this claim resonates with me. I will return to this in section 4.2. to discuss further how this disappearance might be visible in dance education today.

must help establish a safer space to work in, stay alert to what is happening in the room, and stay aware of when to actively reach out and suggest and when to take a step back and let the magic unfold by itself. The secret, I think, is finding the balance. How to share responsibility in a way that is ethical, supportive, and caring? What is essential to the work of a facilitator, and what can they trust to the process?

The quest to raise artists begs the question, what is an artist? Whilst this question can perhaps never have a definitive answer, I would name the practice of creating the essence of artistry. However, I think we human beings do create something all of the time, and thus by this definition, everyone is an artist already, every day from birth to death. There is a perfect quote on this from Rebecca Solnit: "The self is also a creation, the principal work of your life, the crafting of which makes everyone an artist" (Holman Jones & Harris, 2019, p. 1). In a sense, this is exactly what I advocate for: everyone is an artist, and everyone has the right and the knowledge to make art. We do not necessarily need to be educated in any specific way to make art, but we can be. My question is whether we are educated to make art, or taught to, for example, dance in specific ways. This is certainly an unending discussion with no simple answers. Regardless, I will now try to define being an artist by introducing some elements I feel are at the core of the matter.

Being an artist calls for the following capabilities:

- **BEING** (in the body, in the world, in and with the unknown)
- **SENSING** (the body, the world, the unknown)
- **ENGAGING** (with the body, with the world, with the unknown)

The body is where we live the life we live, where we experience life from and in—it is a *being body* as opposed to an aesthetic object body. I believe that to engage with the world with openness, the *being body* is where one must first establish a home base, and therefore from fairly early on in this research, I began to speak of the body as the home, BEING at home in the body. By this I refer to a feeling of groundedness in the self, trusting and honouring oneself. These I see as possible paths to the feeling of agency which is also indispensable in order to create something. Body as the home means that one has a place from which to reach in and out towards the world, a place from which to sense and engage with the world within and without. Being at home in the body enables being in the world

in a way that does not forget the self. 'Being' also refers to the patience required to just be with oneself, with the world, and with not knowing (the unknown), and allowing things to emerge. Such patience is important to art, as art cannot be forced. Art requires time. Broadly speaking, I think that being at home in the body is essential for any human being and their wellbeing because it lays a foundation for everything, but it may be easier to disregard the *being body* if we are not engaging in artistic and/or embodied, somatic practices.

We benefit from BEING in order to SENSE the body, the world, or the unknown. By sensing, I refer to a way of existing that engages all the senses at our disposal. Among these are sight, hearing, touch, taste, and smell, as well as proprioception (the space and body position sense) and interoception (sense of internal signals). Sensing brings us into contact with the world. When we open ourselves to life in this way, our experience is richer and more vibrant, which nourishes creativity.

When we SENSE from a place of BEING, we can ENGAGE mindfully. We can listen to our creative intuition and find ways to engage with the world, be it purposeful or "just because". 'Engaging' is not inherently social, or an action outward—one can also engage internally.

It is worth taking a moment to discuss the matter of the UNKNOWN—of not-knowing, of uncertainty—which I believe sparks creativity. In my experience, the unknown has a life-nurturing quality that feeds creativity by engaging curiosity and inviting questions. Working with not-knowing is not easy, especially for teachers, because it demands us to "let go of the control" and to rely on our instincts and senses instead, and so it "requires courage from teachers" (Foster & Turkki, 2021, p. 4). Courage then, as researcher and Professor Brené Brown has discovered, requires vulnerability (Brown, 2013). In my case, I have observed that vulnerability requires authenticity, which Brown defines as "the daily practice of letting go of who we think we're supposed to be and embracing who we are" (Brown, 2010, p. 50). Being in the body is a must in order for us to be and engage with the unknown, because only by being at home in the body can we be authentic so that we can be vulnerable so that we can have the courage to invite the unknown.[15]

[15] The unknown could be explored in much more detail, but due to it not being a central focus of this research, I can only scrape the surface.

In summary, being an artist is something that anyone can be and that yet requires a special kind of presence in the world. Being, sensing, and engaging are the actions that unite the artist and the *being body*, the world, and the unknown. Without the unknown, there is no creativity and thus, perhaps, no artist. As to my question "how to raise artists?", I offer this research as an example of one possible pedagogical approach in which I believe the three above-listed aspects of artistry are cultivated.

4.2. What change do I dream of?

> *It feels difficult to write about this matter in a calm, objective way, when inside me something is moving. I wish to shake the world, do you not see how harmful it is to teach children, youth, adults to look at their bodies in the mirror in order to assess whether it's doing something correctly? Do you not see how we must first establish the home base in the body, before we start to try and fit it into forms given from the outside? Do you not see how easily the attempts to fit a certain form kill authenticity of movement? Do you not see? Do you not sense?*
> *I have heard too many stories of beautiful souls who have been shamed because their bodies were of certain shape, called lazy because their bone structure only allowed so much rotation, labelled weak because they could not take the constant demand of perfection and leave their emotions at the studio door.*
> *It may not be reality to all, but it has been reality to too many. And I don't want to contribute to that.*
> *I feel tears coming up, I feel how it's harder to swallow.*
> *I just can't allow*
> *Myself to stand and do nothing*
> *To dance and say nothing*
> *That is why I now write. That is why I now feel. That is why I now cry. That is why I now scream.*
> *I do it for all those to whom the dance world has been cruel. I do it for myself. I do it for those who are yet to meet the magic of movement.*
> (free-flow writing, February 2022)

For a while now, I have had a feeling that dance education—at least at the pre-professional stage—does not include much embodiment; it is not concerned with the bodies as much as it is concerned with how the bodies look. It is also my experience that there has not been space for creativity in classes, or that there has been little support in the moments of creativity. For example, the beautiful chance to make and perform our own choreographies at autumn matinees was pretty much a "do what you want" situation. By this I refer to a lack of guidance during the creation process, as no toolkits or choreography labs were provided to help with and make time for exploration, seeking,

creation, looking, changing, analysing, editing, etc. All of this was expected to happen by itself, with the occasional checking-in with the teacher. While I wholeheartedly appreciate getting to make and perform our own pieces, I now see how vital more support would have been in terms of agency and artistry. We need the guidance and challenge teachers can provide us with to learn about ourselves, the world outside of ourselves, and the relation between the two.

Because of my own experiences of lack of support and time for creativity and lack of making and strengthening connections to and within the *being body*, I dream of dance education that provides more of both. In practice, I believe this means a change in two things: firstly, **a shift in focus** when it comes to what is placed central in dance education, and secondly, **rethinking the student–teacher positioning**. I believe these changes are vital not only because they might help with raising people who are comfortable within and with themselves, but also because in doing so they can positively contribute to the world.

I believe that what I am offering through this research is interesting also in terms of the "disappearance of art and education from art education" that Gert Biesta suggests (2017, p. 37). Biesta identifies the disappearance of art in the instrumentalisation of arts in education, i.e. in that art is not practised for its own sake but as a way of gaining something that "really counts" (2017, p. 37), undermining the value of art on its own. In the article "EcoJustice Approach to Dance Education", Foster and Turkki (2021) also raise concerns regarding instrumentalisation, though vis-à-vis the (aesthetic object) body of the dancer that is "used" as a tool for dance techniques (p. 4). Both concerns are very real.

A recent example of the instrumentalisation of dance is the message for Dance Day 2022 by Dance Info Finland, in which the organisation provides a list of reasons why dance is important. The list argues that dance is important because it, for example, increases intelligence and empathy, contributes to health, and reaches a diverse range of people (Dance Info Finland, 2022). Whilst these arguments may be true, I cannot help but wonder why these arguments are needed, in other words: Who is this message written for that this list of justification is needed? The importance of dance needs no justification or proof of results because dance is valuable on its own.

Instrumentalisation or use of dancers' bodies for aesthetic purposes without recognising they are *being bodies* is precisely why I question the status dance techniques have been given in dance (education and industry). It seems that rather than the techniques being access points to further exploration of the body-mind-heart, they set the standards for bodies that are correct and acceptable for the aesthetic execution of those techniques. This way, the dance techniques use the bodies as instruments instead of accommodating the *being body*; in other words, dancing bodies are seen as malleable material rather than as human beings.

The following excerpts from a free-flow writing moment in March and my learning diary entry in February were sparked by this precise matter of bodies being used for the purposes of techniques:

> *The emphasis of the education is not to learn to be with and in the unique body. The education is general, often made for a certain kind of "made-for-dancing" body.*
> *Oh how I wish I were that kind of a body. Then I would not be here, writing this. It is hard to see flaws in a system that works for you.*
> *Writing this makes me feel uncomfortable. I am exposed, I am vulnerable. I am showing that this world has hurt me. [--]*
> *I squirm on my chair, I want to stop writing this. I feel out of breath. The shame, the name calling, the sadness, the disappointment, it's all bubbling up.*
> (free-flow writing, March 2022)

> *Oh how I wish I didn't think there was anything profoundly wrong in the dance world. Oh how I wish I could just be happy with what is.*
> *But 'what is' makes me sick. Immediately my body tells me that it has been neglected. I might just brush this off as my own problem, but when I have heard so many stories of the same kind, I cannot. I cannot do nothing when a friend who is a breathtakingly beautiful dancer, only a few years older than me, says they are past their peak and retired from the role of the performer and now taking up the role of the teacher. What kind of a world are we living in if at 31 we are already past our due date, no longer suitable to be on the stage?*
> (learning diary, 11.02.2022)

Regarding the disappearance of art, Biesta suggests it is visible in how art in the context of education has come to mean providing an opportunity for the participants to express themselves. He sees that the issue here is the lack of resistance and challenge from the world, something which the teacher can provide by, as I suggest, holding space and asking questions, thus reflecting their expression/actions/thoughts/ideas/work back to the

participants. (Biesta, 2017) Although my first instinct was to disagree with Biesta's judgement of art education as an opportunity for expression, I believe I now understand what he means by this. There is a difference between letting the participants do whatever they want—that is, to follow whichever desires they wish—and being there to guide them to see things other than themselves. Biesta calls this "bringing [the participants] into dialogue with the world" (2017, p. 117). Whilst I think self-expression is a way of engaging in this said dialogue, Biesta does have a point in that without the teacher's presence, guidance, and participation, the self-expression might stay turned inwards and shut out the world. Without the teacher, one's world might stay very small and comfortable when there is no one to challenge to see the interconnectedness of everything. Newness encountered by the way of not-knowing is how we keep our dialogue with the world alive.

Foster and Turkki (2021) also bring up the importance of the unknown when it comes to art, explaining that "art can challenge our habitual ways of seeing and acting and suggest novel approaches to be in the world", but "[i]f we only act in a way that we already know, nothing new can evolve" (p. 3). As a response to Biesta's question of the disappearance of art from art education, one might understand that in the case of dance Foster and Turkki point towards the repetitive nature of dance education and training (2021, p. 3). Despite the fluctuation in the emphasis depending on the institution and teacher, the basis of dance education that focuses on dance techniques is the repetition of the same movements until they are mastered. These points bring me to ask the question of whether art has or is slowly disappearing because, for art to exist, the unknown and the possibility of discovering new must also exist. With permitting conditions, how can we bring the art back to dance education? I return to raising artists.

Whilst Foster and Turkki (2021) refer specifically to the ecosocially sustainable education they advocate for, I have a strong sense that we are speaking for the same kind of art education that encourages "abandon[ing] the assumption that only a specific, 'ideal' type of body can work as a proper instrument for a fixed and 'correct' form of dance" as well as has "the potential to [help with] break[ing] out from the practices that cause social and ecological degradation and act toward an ecosocially sustainable future" (Foster & Turkki, 2021, p. 4). Although in this research I do not explicitly bring forth the ecological

aspect my re-imagined dance education includes, it is part of it through the connection to the always intertwined self and thus to everything.

4.3. How do I dream to bring about this change?

Below, I list the means by which we might raise artists. In the next chapter, I will expand on these points by delving into the practical research phase, the *CREATE* project.

How to make the dream come true:

- providing space and time for meeting oneself (being in the body / the body as the home) and meeting the world
- teacher and participants as co-explorers
- teacher as spaceholder/facilitator instead of the one who holds knowledge and pours it into the empty vessels that are the students
- reconsidering what we teach by recognising that what we teach is never neutral but always conveys values -> what do we value (teaching)?

What this means in terms of the environment, ways of working, and content of the class:

- more embodiment, less ignoring all the aspects of oneself
- more diversity, less one type of bodies (the current body ideal is restricting and toxic—every body is a dancing body)
- more creativity and engaging with the unknown, less repetition/copying and the known
- more suggestions and polyphony, less one absolute truth (techniques taught as truths)
- more respect, compassion, and empathy, less competition and comparison
- more humanness and emotions (being in the body), less pretending that the body is separable from the rest of the human (using the body)
- in essence: more emphasis on art, less on skill

5. THE *CREATE* PROJECT (TRYING OUT THE ALTERNATIVE)

Workshop 5, the first demo emerging.
Photograph: Reettaleena Rauhala

As part of my research, I facilitated a series of workshops under the title *CREATE* for a small group of young people aged 12 to 15 years. The project took place during the academic year 2021–2022 at Western Uusimaa dance institute Hurja Piruetti, which provides basic education in the arts for children, youth, and adults. The participants signed up via an open call and their backgrounds in dance varied in terms of styles, which I believe was a source of richness. I also knew most of the six participants from my previous years of teaching. Aside from being the practical part of this research, the project was also my second teaching practice for my MA studies.

The project was open to dancers over the age of 13 with several years' background in any or various dance styles. I required a group of artists whom I could safely prompt with new tasks which I had no previous experience guiding. Although I believe that the kind of approach I was exploring is very much accessible and inclusive for all age groups and levels of experience, for the purposes of this research I wished to create a safer space for all in this way.

The project was realised in the form of twelve workshops, two demo sharings (December and May), and two wrap-up sessions (one in December and one in May). The workshops varied in length from three to five hours. To soften the lengthy and at times

intense work, I aimed to make space for breaks as well as gentle exercises here and there. It was also important to me to begin and end the workshops with grounding into the *being body* and tuning into the present moment. Admittedly, a few times my time management did not accommodate a grounding practice at the end of the workshops, but I am glad that most of the time it did take place.

For this practical part of my research, I did not include teaching any specific dance technique as the participants get that training in other classes. Instead, I wished to explore new ways of working by providing different starting points for creative exploration and artistic processes, as well as for warm-ups and cool-downs. I believe that by consistently making space for improvisation/freestyle/free movement, the participants could move and create from their own basis and process which I hope also meant less and less need to be at the same place or on the same "level" as the others, thus reducing the competitive element I have identified in dance education.

Movement was the focus of our work due to it being my main practice as well as the context in which we met. However, as I wished to introduce the use of various art forms for artistic working purposes, we worked with sound, image, text, and fine arts as the starting points for or a result of movement. This cross-disciplinary work naturally invited working with the five senses of hearing, sight, touch, taste, and smell, as well as the senses of proprioception and interoception, thus increasing the participants' possibility of partaking with the fullness of the *being body* that includes the senses, emotions, and dreams—the whole human being.

By having various modes of expression present, I aimed to make space for various ways of being. It was important to me that everything about the workshops communicated that there is no single truth or one single correct way of doing things. I hope that this made the working space more inclusive. My idea, in a sense, was to create a container that would work for all practitioners, and I dream of getting to hold this kind of space in the future for people of all ages and abilities, artists of any field, professionals or not.

5.1. What did I set out to do?

True to its name, the project's main purpose in terms of the participants' takeaway was to provide an opportunity for creative exploration and creation. I wished to make space for exploration of the participants' own movement languages and artistic interests, thus

tapping into each person's own creative energy. In practice, I tried to facilitate this by not teaching ready choreography apart from in the very first workshop when the task was to take existing choreography and mould it into a new one. Whilst teaching ready choreography can also be stimulating—such as hopefully in the case of our first workshop—I find that it too often is one-directional transmission and mimicking. Instead, in this project, I mainly suggested starting points that provided something to get things going but left a lot open for interpretation, exploration, and creativity.

My other wish was that the project would allow the participants to feel a greater sense of agency when it comes to dance classes/movement/life and to experience a new way of learning. By this, I refer to the absence of an all-knowing, all-providing authority who pours information in and, instead, the presence of requirement, opportunity, and invitation to actively take part in their own learning process. My decision to avoid teaching ready choreography combined with the language I used in these workshops contributed to decentralising the omniscient teacher figure.

This kind of approach —which I have chosen to call **holding space—**that requires active participation can lead to giving a lot of responsibility to the participant, however, the role of the facilitator is essential. It is up to them to help establish a safer space[16] to work in and to stay aware of when to actively reach out and suggest and when to take a step back and let the magic unfold by itself. If from the participants' view this project was about getting to create and explore their own movement vocabulary, for me it was a research of *what it is to hold space in a way that raises artists*. This question holds within it the questions: how can I as a teacher share responsibility with students in a way that is ethical, supportive, and caring? What is the essential a facilitator must do, and what can they trust to the process?

16 I will briefly discuss safer space principles with regards to *holding space* in section 5.7. For an example of safer space guidelines, you can visit the ethical guidelines of the Stop Hatred Now platform at https://www.stophatrednow.fi/ethical-guidelines

5.2. Beginnings

Workshop 1, contemplating safer space guidelines.
Photograph: Reettaleena Rauhala

I started off with a decision to try to stay authentic, which meant being transparent about my choices in facilitating the workshops; giving an outline of the structure I had planned; regularly reminding the participants that they are allowed to listen to their own needs; asking for help in decision making; and not being afraid of saying that I do not know. Because this project was the practical part of my thesis research, I introduced the project as a shared investigation, which meant that I was there asking questions without having the answers, together with the participants. I also wanted us to not decide—to not know––what we were working towards and to be with whatever emerged, instead.

As the first workshop approached, I had big plans for this project. I was filled with soft and caring rebellious spirit, ready to give creative freedom for everyone and everything. I also wanted to do everything correctly, which meant making sure to include pronouns in my introduction and inviting others to do the same; being as transparent about my research and plans for the project as possible; remembering to take breaks whenever the body calls for it; workshopping safer space guidelines together with the participants; including breaks; including sharing; including written reflection; including a warm up; including some anatomical teaching followed by experiential anatomy; including creative

tasks and a sharing of the "results"; and facilitating a group sharing at the end to unpack the experience. On top of this, my strive for perfection also included my learning diary entry in which I meticulously explained what we did, why I chose to do it, and how I thought it succeeded. In retrospect, I can tell that in this first workshop I did not arrive in my *being body*, and I did not facilitate this workshop rooted in myself and as my whole self. Therefore, the notes are impersonal and mechanical. There is no emotion, no vulnerability—just a cold, generic analysis of the rational self. Despite my efforts to embrace not-knowing, I had pre-planned a workshop with little space for the unknown. Looking at this now, there was no trust in the self, which prevented trusting my instincts when guiding the class.

Reflecting on the first workshop and my analytical approach, ahead of the second workshop I clarified two aims for the project: to make space for creative growth and to allow the participants (myself included) to be in and inhabit their bodies. This quality of being I ended up referring to as **being in the body** and the **body as the home**, and by it I mean *experiencing life in a multi-sensory way from within and seeing our bodies as the organic being each of us is, instead of looking at them from the perspective of aesthetics, addressing only what the bodies should do and should be.* This approach also recognises that the body-mind-heart carries in it a past that affects the present, and that that history is inseparable from anything the body is, does, or experiences.

This being in the body became the basis for everything, replacing engaging creativity which now became secondary as I realised that, for me, creativity requires authenticity, which in turn requires rootedness in the home body. As a result, my focus shifted from giving creative tasks to guiding us back home and building solid yet supple roots there. From this home, it is possible to safely venture out for creative exploration. Rooting meant consciously introducing somatisation and arriving in the *being body* at the beginning and at the end of the workshop, which I began to call starting at home, and returning to home. What happened between, I called an adventure, which together with observing the workshops inspired thinking of the creative process as a **practice of getting lost**[17].

[17] This thought process is a very intriguing one for me as an artist, but unfortunately it is out of scope of this research and will therefore have to be left for future explorations.

5.3. Being in the body / the body as the home

> *Every time we return to what we think we know, we meet it differently because everything has shifted: the body has shed dead cells, the oxygen inside us has changed, the Earth has changed place, the weather is different, the number of other beings on the planet has changed, our body-mind-heart has learnt/seen/heard/tasted/sensed/felt new and that profoundly changes us. There are no two moments or encounters that are the same.*
> (learning diary, 19.01.2022)

By *being in the body* / *the body as the home* I refer to a quality of being in which one experiences life in a multi-sensory way from within, and that recognises the body as the unique organic being—an organic entity, a oneness of multiple—that is not just a physical shell but our whole self with history, emotions, and consciousness. In this approach, I see the body as both the site and the vessel for meeting the world: it is in and through the body that we exist, feel, sense, and engage. This approach is important to me because the world we are living in is driving us further and further away from our bodies. We are getting more disconnected by the year with all the technology (and most recently, the COVID-19 pandemic) shutting down live human interaction, our minds focus on things outside of ourselves rather than experiencing things from within, and social media encourages assessing our worth in how our bodies look in pictures. We are busy, distracted, worried, depressed, burned out, confused by fake news and information overload, told by apps when to drink, how long to chew our food, and whether we had a good sleep or not. I believe there is a dire need to bring ourselves back into our bodies.

Being in the body means to me that we can create a connection to ourselves and learn to listen to what our body says—the emergency signals as well as all the good stuff. It is a connection to the **felt sense** of the body. The felt sense, as defined by Dr Peter Levine, is a physical awareness of the body contributed to by the external and internal sense, giving us information about how a particular situation makes us feel (Levine, 1997). According to Levine, it is "through the felt sense that we are able to move, to acquire new information, to interrelate to one another and, ultimately, to know who we are" (1997, p. 71). By tuning into the felt sense we can learn vulnerability through a greater understanding of ourselves, which can be a gateway to empathy not only towards ourselves but other humans as well as the nature, too.

Being in the body encourages non-duality as the absent, forgotten body (physical and energetic) comes into our awareness, thus uniting the mind and the body. Timo Klemola writes that "in forgetting our body [--] it in a way ceases to exist" (2004, p. 87, free translation by me). Klemola observes that this 'auto-pilot' is what happens in our usual day-to-day and offers the practice of "listening to the body" as the alternative. By this, he refers to tuning into the sensations in the body by, for example, paying attention to how we move our body. (Klemola, 2004, pp. 86–87) This way, we become present in the body and the mind is filled with awareness of the present. This is what *being in the body* is. Presence then is what enables meeting the world. Discussing phenomenological philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty's theory of operative intentionality, Klemola writes that "I can only get information on the world because I have a body and I move" (Merleau-Ponty, 1986; Klemola, 2004, p. 198, free translation by me). By being present in the body, we open ourselves to receive more nuanced information about the world, which means that we also can make more informed decisions about our actions within it as well as notice the effects our actions have.

This kind of body awareness is especially important considering the state of the world, but I see a lot of value in it also specifically in terms of dance education. If, as Klemola suggests, the body ceases to exist to us in the everyday, it is easy to continue disregarding it in the dance class unless we consciously invite awareness of the body. As a very concrete example, a body that is forgotten is less informed of its position, spatial positioning, relation to gravity, and limits, and thus is more prone to hurt itself. By having a better awareness of ourselves, we can recognise our limits and meet them gently, perhaps even expanding them without force. I see this as the key to sustainable dance training.

There is certainly not one correct or foolproof way of coming into the body. Because this practice of *being in the body* was developed during the *CREATE* project, I tested different ways of coming into the felt sense as we proceeded. The access points I found work for myself and with which I aimed to encourage embodied presence were the exercise of arriving and practices of breathing, tuning into the senses, observing, and experiential anatomy (somatisation). In short, throughout the workshops, I invited awareness of the body in the form of sensory input (e.g. "what are you hearing?") or internal sensations (e.g. "how do you feel?"). I found that at the beginning and the end of the workshop,

tuning into the body by first tuning into the breath was safe because it was something concrete and, in a sense, familiar to focus on. Whilst not many of the participants commented on the practices of breathing, one did mention that they would like to bring the practice of "rooting in the body" (arriving into the *being body* by tuning into the breath) at the start of the class to other dance classes, too. This tells me that at least for one participant, there was a difference in the quality of being/doing after having tuned into the felt sense, in comparison to not having done that.

Whereas the breath seemed to be the easiest access point to *being in the body*, experiential anatomy was perhaps the most challenging one and often caused nervous giggling or confused faces in the workshops. I suspect this is because we are not used to our bodies: at school, I was not taught how intertwined the body's organs and functions are, nor how the mind, body, and heart are interlaced and was only shown the clean and clarified pictures of the human body that do not resemble reality. I am guessing this is the case for many others who have grown up in a Western school system. Whilst I can appreciate the effort of trying to simplify the knowledge of the body for all to understand, I cannot help but wonder whether the reason we may so easily ignore the body is precisely that we do not understand how complex, delicate, and intricate beings we are, not to mention how big an effect the world around us has on us both physically and mentally. By having an experience of how, for example, our lungs feel as we breathe, we are tuning into the felt sense of the body. By leading us to the felt sense, experiential anatomy can bring us closer to ourselves and remind us of the knowledge our bodies hold, giving back to us our agency: we know what we need. Furthermore, just as by getting to know cats we can grow empathy toward them and thus perhaps all other non-human animals, I believe that by getting to know our bodies we can become more loving toward them and thus others.

Whereas I speak of the body as the home, Gert Biesta writes about the world as the home, borrowing the idea from philosopher Hannah Arendt (Arendt, 1994; Biesta, 2017, p. 37). For Arendt and Biesta, being "at home in the world" refers to an ever-on-going dialogue with the world, one which is "not a matter of trying to make sense of the world but rather of letting ourselves be addressed by the world" (Biesta, 2017, p. 39). This quality of being puts the world in the centre by giving it an active role whilst we open ourselves to receive. With *being in the body*, I refer to something similar: rather than forcefully trying to reach

out, I find a home in myself and become more aware of my emotional state and the sensory input I receive, as well as how these relate to one another. This way, I give time for the world to come to me and can sense more nuances due to having taken the time to sense them. This, in turn, allows me to engage mindfully—to respond rather than react.

According to Biesta, education is (or should be) precisely about facilitating space for individuals to engage in this dialogue with the world. In terms of art education, Biesta argues that the "expressivist" idea of art education as providing space for self-expression brings the students into contact only with their own ideas, thus not challenging them to meet the world around them (2017, p. 37). Biesta suggests that this approach does not teach the individual to "exist as subject" because, without dialogue with the world, there is no challenge to the individual's desires and no accountability for one's actions (2017, pp. 57–58). Existing as subject is "not about *who* we are, but about *how* we are" in the world. Therefore, Biesta proposes being at home in the world instead of being at home with oneself (in the body) (2017, p. 63).

Whilst I feel like I and Biesta speak largely of the same, for Biesta, existing in the world seems the polar opposite of existing with oneself, whereas to me existing with oneself is the only means to exist in and with the world. For me, being at home with oneself, in the body, is the precondition for existing as subject in the way Biesta suggests. Although *being in the body* may seem individualistic, especially in comparison to Biesta's being in the world, I see a difference between the super-individualisation of our time and embodiment. Individualisation, in my view, calls to look at and be with ourselves intellectually from the outside (via mirrors and pictures) or via action (What can I do?), whilst an embodied presence invites us to be with our whole selves in the body, from where we can look out to the world (How is this affecting me?). This is what I understand Biesta, too, refers to as not existing as the centre of the world (2017, p. 65). I believe that we must be at home in ourselves in order to be at home in the world; in other words, I believe we must be aware of what we are feeling, sensing, dreaming, and thinking to engage in dialogue while acknowledging our responsibility. *Being in the body* strengthens our sense of self as subjects in the world, our agency, as we become aware of how the world affects us and we the world.

5.4. Meeting the world

Workshop 4, “touch and materia”.
Photograph: Reettaleena Rauhala

> *What is important is the direction from which we look, as that determines what we can see. If I only look from outside in, I will only see myself, and thus the centre of my world will be myself. But if I look from within, I can see the whole world.* (free-flow writing, March 2022)

Having clarified my aims for the project, an intuitive idea of thematising each workshop emerged. I felt a strong pull towards working with different senses as starting points because I believed that focusing on one or two senses at a time would organically invite pausing and observing both the self (the body-mind-heart) and the world in a more attentive way than we humans tend to do in everyday life. This can enable noticing how the world outside of ourselves affects the world inside us and how the world inside us affects the world outside of ourselves—the exploration of different senses “reveal[s] different ways of being in dialogue with the world”, as Biesta puts it (2017, p. 39). As I understand it, this dialogue refers to living in this world in general, pointing at how all life on the planet is a constant and intertwined exchange of something.

Throughout the project, we worked with hearing (& sound), sight (& image), touch (& materia), and taste and smell, respectively. I believe that starting from these “primary” senses paved the way to connect to the less-familiar senses of proprioception and interoception, which were, nevertheless, present at each workshop. For example, when working with taste and smell, one of the food items we had was lemon. I first invited the participants to observe the lemon with sight and touch and to imagine what it might

taste like. Then we proceeded to taste (and smell) the lemon, which is when I suggested observing what happens in the felt sense as a result of the taste, or what kind of memories or other associations emerge, thus connecting to the interoception. At the end of the workshop, one participant shared that they were surprised to have come up with movement with a starting point of eating/tasting, as they had first thought it would be difficult and they probably would not come up with much. For this participant, the somatisation of the digestive tract with which we started this particular workshop paved the way for a connection to the felt sense, from which movement was able to arise.

Throughout the workshops, we ventured continuously between the five senses that explore the world outside of us and the senses that explore the world within us by asking ourselves questions such as "what is this picture telling me?" or "what is this flavour stirring up in my *being body*?". For Biesta, these kinds of questions open us to be addressed by the world by placing the world in the centre instead of the individual. Biesta suggests that this is the place "where we let ourselves be taught". (Biesta, 2017, p. 39) This idea of encountering the world in a way that allows it to speak to us rather than speaking for it is fascinating to me, as there is a huge potential for transformation. I believe this is true both regarding the climate catastrophe as well as all life in general: I believe that with less assuming, guessing, and speaking for, and more listening, sensing, and observing it would be impossible to ignore the needs of our home planet or the needs of life around us, be it a human, another animal, or a plant.

I also want to draw attention to how Biesta used the words *we let ourselves be taught* instead of *we are taught* (Biesta, 2017, p. 39). The difference is that by asking questions that put the world in the centre, we deliberately and willingly invite the world to teach us. There is agency and a decision to be open for this, not a command that is obeyed blindly.

5.5. The container

> *It seems that teaching anatomy in an experiential way is very important. An access point to engage with the felt sense in a conscious, purposeful, and deep way. The anatomy in this project's case comes in via the exploration of different senses which turned out to be the overarching container of the project. It was not planned, it was just a starting point, but as I followed it the clearer it became that it was solid enough and supple enough a container that it could hold space for exploration as well as allow the spilling out that was needed for working the exploration into a demo work.* (learning diary, 05.02.2022)

Below is an example of the workshop structure which I came to call **the container.** I first came across referring to class plan or movement sequences as a container in the Authentic Flow Yoga teacher training. I fell in love with this wording as I think it aptly describes giving participants boundaries within which to work without taking away from the agency and creativity of the participant.

The container is the main framework or the class plan that gives the workshop or class boundaries that are solid enough to create safety but also porous and malleable when needed. Within the container, I usually had a more detailed plan for the workshop, although it was clear that with the presence in the present that holding space requires, willingness for spilling over and letting go of the plan was essential. The exploration of the senses was sort of the umbrella container, the frame which held within it the whole. Within the overarching container, I constructed the container for workshops, which is what I present in this section.

While not one workshop was the same as the other, gradually, the workshops took roughly the following shape:

- Opening circle
- "Arriving"
- Somatisation and warm-up
- Working with the theme of the workshop
- Sharing
- Developing and integrating
- Cool down and grounding
- Ending circle

In the opening circle, I shared a little about the workshop's theme and working methods. I felt that to foster a more equal working environment, transparency of my ideas for the particular session was important. We also did a short check-in with the group, either by making space for anyone to share something they wish to share or with a prompt question such as "What has made you smile this week?". The circle formation was a conscious decision to establish an equal and shared space in which everyone can be seen, heard, and sensed by each other.

"Arriving" refers to my practice of tuning in to the breath and via that to my body to fully arrive and be present in that space and moment. Arriving is checking in with ourselves, rooting in the home body. We usually did this in the circle formation directly continuing from the opening circle, and I invited closing the eyes or softening the gaze to encourage turning inward.

Finding a natural flow from arriving to somatisation and warm-up was a challenge because I often had the need to explain a lot before the somatisation to make sure that everyone had as much knowledge as possible. The natural flow, however, required me to find the words that say just enough but that leave time for the flowing from one thing to another. Depending on the sense theme of the day (hearing, sight, touch, smell and taste), we did somatisation of a different organ or body part. The somatisation progressed gradually to movement that possibly increased in intensity and then finished with an integration of some sort. If I observed a lot of bubbling energy in the room, I often added something high intensity (such as a five-minute rave) as an additional warm-up to make space for that energy to be in the space.

After warming up, we moved on to working with the theme of the workshop. Oftentimes the theme was one of the senses, but around the demo sharings, we also took time to simply focus on developing the demo work. In this part of the workshop, we used approaches of being, sensing, and engaging, and worked alone, in pairs, as well as in groups. This work aimed to create something—movement, sound, writing, drawing—that could be shared with the group in the next section of the workshop. After giving my suggestion for a starting point, I stepped back to make space for exploration that was not driven by me, the teacher.

Sharing the outcomes of the previous section was an important part of the process, although it was always voluntary. Each participant either individually, in pairs, or in groups shared what they made, after which we "played" with the new materials. The play could mean, for example, putting two different outcomes in the space at the same time and trying out different spatial positionings. The play time most often happened so that I asked if anyone immediately had an idea they would like to try out and often someone did, so we tried their idea and then intuitively continued from then on, trying out different compositions and discussing them. Fruitful questions that I found for this section were of the kind that asked about what happened in the witness's (audience member's) experience, such as "what caught your attention now that there were three people in the

space?". The essence of shared play time was in getting to try out any and all ideas without the need to make anything ready.

Developing and integrating often overlapped with the play as some tried-out ideas ended up being liked by the group and thus added to the material reservoir. With developing and integrating, we looked at the new material from the day's workshop next to what we already had from before. Sometimes this section was very hands-on with trying out how pieces might fit, and sometimes it was more of a discussion. The aim was to remind ourselves of the older materials and integrate the new ones as part of the old and continue shaping the demo.

Cool down and grounding was something that I easily cut time from if the previous, more actively creative sections needed more time that day. This can be seen in how, at first, we always took time for a written reflection at the end but did not do so in the last five or so workshops. This section shrank in duration; however, we always did some sort of a checking-in with the *being body* at the end. I felt that after so much of being open and perhaps even vulnerable to the world and to our own experiences, it was important to ground back into the body so that we could safely leave the dance studio.

The ending circle was a moment to verbally share any thoughts or feelings present at that moment, but often we spent some time just being quiet. Before wrapping up the session, I usually reminded the group of the next workshop and its theme, and always thanked the group for their time, attention and energy.

5.6. Spilling over and intuitive teaching

> *We found magic that time, and I believe it was because I was ready to let go of my lesson plan and guide [us] to get lost. I felt so connected to the students and to what was unfolding, and I followed the flow of events, allowing what was emerging to emerge. – There was connection, listening, being, chaos, mass, clarity.* (edited version of a learning diary note, 19.11.2021)

What is spilling over the container and letting go of the plan, then? For me, it is venturing out and following what is there (present, here) instead of following something we think should be there (planning based on the past or the future). It is perhaps more clear in the context of, for example, movement improvisation: rather than planning in my head what comes next, I drop into my body and follow the energies, weight, flow, or surroundings in the moment. It is an uninterrupted unfolding and constant change that takes place in the present.

In the position of a teacher, however, I believe that we cannot simply throw everything out and let everyone do as they please—there would be no pedagogy there. I found that from the teacher's perspective, spilling over or letting go of the plan means staying alert to the energy of the room and to what is taking place organically. For example, if I sense that the participants are starting to be low in energy, I might deviate from my plan and suggest a break or a restorative practice. Or, if I see that something I had not planned for begins to happen, I can assess whether it would be wise to let that take place and encourage following it. Spilling over is also encouraging the participants to listen to themselves and letting them know that the safe haven of the container is always there to fall back on if needed.

I believe that spilling over could be synonymous with how author, activist and Professor bell hooks describes an aspect of engaged pedagogy (1994/2007). She points out that if the students are not in the right mindset to engage with the content of teaching, the teacher might still deliver that content and feel successful, but the students will not have learned anything. For the students to even have the opportunity to learn, it is necessary that the teacher is ready to deviate from their original plan and to be present for what is there at that very moment. hooks suggests that it might be more fruitful for everyone to together find a way to engage with the content from the mental space they are in, not despite it. She also includes a reminder that unlike in the more traditional perception, "the class is never the same" and that "[i]t lives", which is why we must always stay present. As a contrary pedagogical practice to being present, hooks names the traditional perception in which the teacher does not stray from their original class plan—"for the fear of running out of material"—and in which the class is the same regardless of the participants. (hooks, 1994/2007, pp. 232–233, 236)

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> *I wonder if this is another moment when I should just trust. Arrive there on that day, and see what is present, see what comes up in the moment, trust that that is enough, to BE. HERE. NOW. But something in me is telling me that not planning is lazy. I wonder if it's the society that has taught me this. The society that encourages planning and prepping for efficiency's sake at the expense of being.* (learning diary, 01.03.2022)

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Yet another way to describe this spilling over might be following one's intuition or gut feeling, which makes the fundamentality of an embodied presence visible. Timo Klemola

(2004) writes about the inner space of the body, where two experiences of awareness lie. One of them is the egological self (orig. “egologinen keskus”, free translation by me), in which we experience the centre of our being or our body somewhere in the area of the head. The other is an embodied self, in which the centre is situated in the area of the belly. According to Klemola, the awareness ruled by the egological self leaves the body in the periphery, as often is the case in the Western culture ruled by rationality and reason, i.e., the head. (Klemola, 2004, p. 147)

Despite many of the important sense organs being situated in the head, we can understand that the head-heavy approach does not refer to the sensing head but rather to the brainy, planning, clarity-seeking, and knowing-needing head that disregards (most of) the sensory input. This way, we are not living in an embodied way, being present in the body and with the world, and we easily miss not only the signals our bodies send us but also the vibrant life that happens within and around us. The embodied self represents to me the intuitive awareness of the gut feeling and the *being body*.

If the teacher is not present in and through their body, I argue that they will not be able to hold space for what is happening and what wants to emerge in the room, which can lead to the situation hooks referred to: the teacher delivers the content they planned and feels successful, but the students have not been engaged in learning (hooks, 1994/2007, p. 233). Thus, rather than teaching, I suggest *holding space within which teaching and learning can take place*.

But how do we invite intuitiveness? How do we drop into the body, the gut and the felt sense? Over the course of the *CREATE* project, I have identified two things that work for me: arriving into the *being body* with the help of **the breath** and **embracing not-knowing**.

> *Inhale. . . exhale. . . inhale. . . exhale. . .*
> *Following the inhalation down to the diaphragm, exhaling allowing the air within me to come out to meet the world without.*
> *An energetic shift, like leaning back, like weight being given to the Earth, like support being received from the Earth.*
> *I am here, I am now. I do not need to go anywhere else.*
> *I am here, I am now. I do not need to know, things will emerge when ready.*
> *I am here. I am now.*
> (free-flow writing, July 2022)

Klemola, too, suggests exercises of conscious breathing—like those in many Eastern traditions such as yoga or tai chi—which allow us to become aware of the inner space of the body (2004, p. 147) and, thus, also enable deeper awareness of the space around us. The breath brings us to the body that is "unavoidably always here and now" (Klemola, 2004, p. 111). In the here and now, the egological self has to let go and the embodied self takes over, which means that planning, reminiscing, and trying to figure out cease. This both calls for and makes space for embracing not-knowing, which then, according to researcher and author Brené Brown, gives way to our intuitive voice (2010, p. 88).

Turns out that teaching from a place of intuition and not-knowing gives me a thorough sense of fulfilment. As I previously explained, I had meticulously planned out the first *CREATE* workshop in August 2021, and despite successfully following through with my plan, there is a strange sense of emptiness when thinking back on that workshop.[18] It was a one-directional delivery of what I had thought of days before the workshop took place. Once I began to work more with the breath and consciously embracing not-knowing—which in the workshops showed as guiding in the moment and posing more questions rather than aiming to provide pre-planned answers—even my learning diary notes are vibrant in language and free from a simple description of what happened. Thinking back to moments within workshops when I could go completely off-script and follow something that emerged, the area of my heart becomes warm and the sensation of my pulse stronger. There is happiness, joy, and excitement over the unknown that might reveal itself. As a result of teaching with intuition, my sense of intuition has become stronger in my everyday life, too, and I feel more present in my life in general. The traditional way of not deviating from a class plan is what I have been feeling a pull to rebel against. For me, it has taken the form of "spilling over" which can consider the mental and embodied space the students are in. To hold space sensing the mental and embodied states, I advocate for intuition by way of *being in the body*.

5.7. Holding space

> *I use "cultivate" in the same sense of caretaking as one might care for a house plant - patiently watering the soil, perhaps giving nutrients, allowing for the right amount of sunlight and warmth, and trusting that the growth will happen, because the plant knows.* (learning diary, 29.12.2021)

[18] A similar sense of emptiness to the one I recognise from my previous years of teaching before beginning this research and finding new ways of working.

Although intuitive teaching and holding space go hand-in-hand for me, I wish to take a moment to discuss what I mean by holding space that raises artists and how it connects to other practices and educational ideas. If *being in the body* / *the body as the home* is what I propose as the aim and focus of education, *holding space* is the foundation for the pedagogical practice I believe leads to that.

In my work, the nowadays common concept of safer space exists together with holding space. The concept of safer space originates from sub- and alternative cultures as a way of ensuring that participants at, for example, an event can attend as themselves without the fear of discrimination (Utopia Helsinki, 2013). It is becoming common practice for organisations, event organisers, and institutions to publish their own set of safer space guidelines which communicate the values and principles to which every participant, guest, and employee commits if visiting or attending events, classes, or places. My approach to safer space guidelines in the case of the *CREATE* project was that we constructed them together with the participants. I find that when the participants are involved in the process, the guidelines become more specific and are easier for them to commit to. It also acts as a great starting point for communication of values and working culture, and asks for the participants to voice their needs when it comes to fruitful, safe, and inspiring learning environments.

Based on my research:

the practice of holding space as an approach to (educational) situations asks for the active participation of the participant. This means that instead of seeing the student as empty and waiting to be filled with the knowledge given by the teacher, the student is respected, and the teacher recognises the student as knowledgeable. I believe the feminist scholar bell hooks was speaking of a similar situation when writing of caring teachers, who via "[c]ommitted acts of caring let all students know that the purpose of education is not to dominate, or prepare them to be dominators, but rather to create the conditions for freedom" and who "open the mind, allowing students to embrace a world of knowing that is always subject to change and challenge." (hooks, 2003, p. 92) Holding space challenges the traditional teacher-student hierarchy because it acknowledges that the teacher does not hold all the knowledge and that knowledge is in a state of constant flux. This means that both the student and the teacher have the opportunity for learning and growth as well as for contributing to the creation of knowledge.

For this to happen, bell hooks (1994/2007) observes that vulnerability is required of the teacher. hooks suggests that since education as the practice of freedom asks for the student to open up and share of themselves, the teacher must make themself equally vulnerable, otherwise they risk misusing their power. hooks goes on to propose that by sharing their own experiences, the teacher can no longer take the role of the "all-knowing silent interrogator", instead, they make themself present as a "whole person: feeling, embodied and thinking being". (hooks, 1994/2007, pp. 51–52, free translation by me) As hooks points out (1994/2007, p. 52), this vulnerability takes practice from most teachers, and it was not easy for me, either.

Especially at the beginning of the project when the participants were still somewhat shy to share, I aimed to encourage sharing by example, but wanted to avoid presenting my observations as "the correct ones". I was often wondering whether I had shared too much. I feel that there is a fine balance between being open to sharing my experience and taking up space to demonstrate the kind of observations that "should be made". I aimed to sense where the balance was tipping by staying alert to what I was sharing and by making sure that I was not speaking only to fill the silence. The more comfortable the participants were to share, the less I had to think of the balance. What I sensed began to happen then, however, is the more interesting point here. The more the participants shared their experiences, the less I felt I was placed in the traditional position of the teacher. The participants began to give increasingly more value to each other's contributions. Instead of only learning from the teacher, they could learn from the whole collective.[19]

This is one of the beautiful aspects of feminist pedagogy, which Jaana Saarinen, Hanna Ojala and Tarja Palmu also mention (2014). They write that as feminist educators challenge the idea of knowledge as universal and absolute, space is made for the group to take responsibility for the learning situation. Thus, whilst the teacher-student hierarchy is still recognised, it is faded toward as horizontal and democratic a situation as possible. (Saarinen et al., 2014, p. 23) Foster and Turkki recognise this, too, summarising that "to embrace multiple ways of knowing, creating, and sharing genuinely—and have it embedded into the means of working—both the teacher and student need to accept the

19 As I only observed this when reading my learning diary afterwards, it should be mentioned that this is my own observation and interpretation of the situation, and I did not discuss the matter with the participants during the project.

un-readiness and unknown to leave space for ongoing transformation while learning" (Foster & Turkki, 2021, p. 5).

the practice of holding space as an approach to (educational) situations requires allowing, trusting, and *being in the body* of the teacher. As I explained above in the section regarding intuitive teaching, I believe it is of utmost importance for the teacher to be present in an embodied way to hold space. Being and staying in the body can be a challenge, as I found out in those moments when I stepped out to make space for the group to work amongst themselves. The process continued but I was no longer as active a participator in making it happen. It was hard to stay present for that "nothing" time, which led to my thoughts scattering and my mind taking over, thinking over past events or planning the future. When we all came back together, the process had moved on and I had to find my way back to it and re-arrive. This situation is perhaps particular to the kind of process we had in which the group worked on suggested tasks for longer periods of time without the imminent guidance of the teacher, and if I get the chance to hold space for similar projects in the future, finding ways to stay in the *being body* even when stepping out is something I wish to work on.

In addition to an embodied presence, or perhaps included in that, holding space requires a lot of allowing compared to teaching in the traditional sense (pouring information in). This is what I wrote about *allowing* in my learning diary on January 8th, 2022:

> *Allowing changes, allowing life, allowing a flow. Allowing emotions, allowing distractions, allowing energy levels. Always holding space to those PRESENT [rather than worrying about those missing the practice]. [--] I cannot hold onto what I thought we'll do, what I wanted to teach. I have to stay present for what is there that day, that moment, what arises as we move and everything moves. And that requires confidence in the self, or perhaps more than that, it requires TRUST in myself. I cannot hide, I must be vulnerable in order to be available for the present. It requires rootedness, standing on my own two feet. This is something I am in the process of learning more of. I have noticed that I have been missing the rootedness in many ways for a very long time, and therefore holding space -> trusting myself to do so is, quite frankly, fucking scary. Not trying to control, but hold. Support. Embrace.* (learning diary, 08.01.2022)

When I was writing this, I had just received a message from a participant that they were not going to continue in the project. The same participant had been missing workshops in the autumn term and I had been experiencing a lot of stress and frustration because of it. I was worried about the group dynamic and process and about the participant missing out on the discoveries we made, but on that day, I found myself calm because I understood that as a teacher, no matter how well I plan, the student will only get out of the class what they need and are open to, and I must trust that that is enough; trust myself to have done enough, and trust the student to have taken what they need. Furthermore, I realised that the situations when people miss practices are the ones where my capabilities to hold space and to flow with the changes are valuable. I can either get stuck and annoyed, or I can accept and allow it and make space for "okay, what can we do now?".

This is also a good example of the kind of being with the unknown that is part of trusting and allowing. In my experience of educational processes, there are always sticky moments but it makes a great difference what the teacher does when those moments are encountered. The teacher has a choice to either embrace the perhaps even uncomfortable stickiness caused by something new and unknown, or to retreat to the known lands. The teacher's readiness to be with the unknown directly impacts the readiness of the students: if I as a teacher always back down when I sense that a proposed task brings on that sticky feeling, I argue that the students will learn this pattern of only staying with what they know because it does not bring with it the stickiness, it does not challenge them. Therefore, the teacher's trust in the students and their abilities to engage with the proposed tasks is essential for the students to learn to yield into newness.

the practice of holding space as an approach to (educational) situations requires patience to wait for something to emerge or be revealed. Hannah Arendt writes about how in and through action one becomes revealed (1958/2021, p. 184). Her thoughts revolve mainly around the "who" of the person becoming revealed, but I would like to extend the "who" to cover more than just the human being. I suggest that nourishing the skill of patience means nourishing the skill of waiting for something to be revealed. From this, there is a connection to being able to withstand uncertainty, of not-knowing, which requires braveness since, as Arendt points out, there is always a risk involved in becoming revealed (Arendt, 1958/2021, p. 185). For anything to be revealed to us we must be open to it, i.e. brave enough to be vulnerable to an extent, whether it is something being

revealed about ourselves, someone else, or something. Therefore, holding space requires vulnerability and braveness.

The skill of waiting patiently for something to be revealed is also needed to combat the individualistic ego that wants to be fast and to take control, silencing the intuitive voice. The ego (my ego) wants to know, wants to decide, wants to arrange, and wants to be praised for it. By consciously bringing in more of this patience to observe what is, what comes, and what is about to be revealed, I can gently comfort the ego and show that things are constantly happening even without pushing to make something happen. It is only once we slow down that we can notice and appreciate the details.

Before this research, I often taught classes with a lot of content and kept up a good pace to make sure no one gets bored. This is probably an influence of my dance teachers in the past as well as of what feels like a capitalist idea of more-equals-efficient and productive-equals-better that has been ingrained in my head for as long as I can remember. Thanks to my master's degree and yoga teacher studies, I have noticed the benefit of slowing down and taking my time, as I found that it allows for the emergence of things and ideally eliminates the pressure of producing something. In terms of making art, this is significant, because art takes time to happen. According to Gert Biesta (2017), so does education. He writes that "[t]he educational work [--] is that of slowing down rather than speeding up" because this allows the student to encounter their own desires and relate them to the world (Biesta, 2017, p. 89). I understand this as engaging in a dialogue with the world via the realisation of how the seemingly individual "I" is interconnected to the rest of the world. Noticing this requires taking time to sense.

As a result of learning to trust myself more, my class plans became less and less dense as the project progressed. I knew that even if I only went in with one starting point or suggestion, things would happen there and the collective would be able to work from whatever was at hand. In our first feedback session before Christmas break, a participant recalled how awkward they had first felt when I left space for silence and for "nothing" during a sharing. By then, however, they felt "nice and okay to just be quiet". The need to fill silence dispersed slowly, and we learned to appreciate the time it sometimes took to put experiences into words. It is important to acknowledge here how lucky I was to have a group that trusted me enough to lead them to be with uncertainty, and I am aware that no matter how skilled we are as teachers it is not always possible to go in and trust that something happens without having the safety net of a plan to fall back on. Regardless,

I believe we can make space for that something to be revealed, even if it is in tiny moments between more structured activities.

the practice of holding space as an approach to (educational) situations is asking questions rather than providing answers. At least in the case of co-creating and developing a work, the spaceholder's task of creating a container and making space for spilling over calls for the ability to pose questions. I must identify questions that can be asked but not answer them myself, unlike in the case of a choreographer who might make the decisions by themselves. When holding space, I must find the questions and leave them unanswered until I have shared them with the group, which is when I, too, can begin to allow some possible answers or responses to surface. However, even then I must refrain from embracing my answers to stay open to the answers arising from the group and be ready to find new questions to help the process along. This way, we make space for multiple voices and multiple stories: a polyphony.

This is a revelation I had during the third workshop when I tried asking more "clarifications" from the students when they answered questions or suggested trying something. We were experimenting (the play/developing part of the container) with the day's material according to suggestions made by the participants. After each experiment, I asked the participants questions such as whether the result was what they thought it would be, whether it surprised them, or whether something new was highlighted through the new composition. Their replies started first with a simple "yes" or "no", but when asked to elaborate, I could see them going back to the embodied experience and sharing their response which sometimes found its form in words and other times stayed out of reach of spoken language. In either case, I feel like asking questions allowed the participants to think about and analyse the outcomes, hows, and whys in more detail. In other words, they were learning about their own experience in relation to what was, what was changed, and what happened. Sensing the students finding something new is very inspiring and encouraging to me because it lets me know that I have managed to hold space in a way that has enabled discovery.

This kind of asking questions is akin to Biesta's (2017) suggestion of education as the act of showing. With the help of artist Joseph Beuys' work *How to explain pictures to a dead hare* (1965), Biesta demonstrates how education is an action of "someone showing something to someone", in which the one showing something "actually believes

that there is something to see that is worth seeing by another person" (Biesta, 2017, pp. 38, 44). In this scenario, the teacher guides the attention of the student toward what they think would be worthy of paying attention to. Similarly, the questions I ask reflect what I think would be worthy of the student's attention. This way, the teacher's values (or learned patterns) are directly revealed in what they show. Perhaps, then, the key question of the educational task of the teacher is *what do we value showing?*

While I agree with Biesta's suggestion, I think the word "showing" can easily be interpreted too literally, thus making it too exclusive a term. Understood exclusively, we might argue that all education is about the act of showing: the teacher shows something to the student. However, I understand that Biesta's "showing" refers to something broader than just showing: it involves room for questions, dreaming, and agency. Rather than being a command to look, showing something is an invitation to see, a question "What about that there?".

Speaking from my own experience, the teaching of an established technique such as ballet rarely leaves space for exploration and questions; the teacher shows the correct way to execute the steps, the students watch, and then the steps are repeated to "perfection". There has been very little play within the classes, but this does not mean there could not be room for more. Though this kind of teaching method has been part of ballet's canon for hundreds of years and breaking it may be arduous, I firmly believe that we can teach anything whilst still making space for questions and exploration by, for example, introducing questions such as "How can I transfer *tendu* from the feet to other body parts?" or "What happens in the felt sense during a *plié*? How does that make you feel?". The question that needs asking, in my opinion, is whether we as the Western dance world have the courage to put the human existence in focus instead of the dance technique, and trust that the dance techniques will not go extinct or perish if they are not the centre of our dancing world. Rather than commanding to see something specific, could we have the courage to invite sensing anything and everything and to embrace the individual decision to tune into details?

A key essence to both *education as asking questions* and *education as the act of showing* is that they make room for the student to decide whether they will engage or not. This brings us to the next point:

the practice of holding space as an approach to (educational) situations acknowledges the agency of the participant. By this, I refer to how *holding space* does not try to impose any one truth but rather makes space for several experiences. Holding space enables agency because it *shows*[20] rather than tells (telling makes the student an object), which means that the student has the choice whether to engage. I as the teacher may suggest something that I deem as worthy of attention but it is up to the student to make the decision. Thus, the student is invited to "exist in the world as subject" (Biesta, 2017) with choice and responsibility. Their agency is recognised. By seeing the student as knowledgeable to make their own decisions, holding space includes the student in the knowledge-making, which further strengthens the agency of the student. Holding space means the absence of an external force telling us what to do or how to act. Instead, opportunity and means are provided to ponder questions, engage or withdraw, and come to our own realisations.

As a definition of *agency*, I find that Kirsi Törmi's description (2019) resonates with me:

> By agency I mean the ability and desire to actively influence one's own affairs. Agency involves voluntariness, foresight, responsibility and boundary-making. The opposite of agency is victimisation, which means that the prevailing belief is that one is unable to influence the situation and that the circumstances are only caused by others. (Törmi, 2019, free translation by me)

Like Biesta with "existing as subject" (2017), Törmi (2019), too, names voluntariness as one of the aspects of agency, and I wish to emphasise it to once more make a point. Because every student is knowledgeable on their own, they will take from the teaching what they will and can at that very moment depending on several factors such as the environment, how well they slept, or what their friends said the other day, i.e. depending on their situationality (Rauhala, 2005, pp. 39–42). I as a teacher cannot disregard these factors nor force anyone to learn. What I can do is suggest and teach that the student has the power to choose, and hope that what I am suggesting and guiding them towards has been done in a way that makes them want to engage, voluntarily. In Biesta's words, "the educational imperative [of the educator] [--] might therefore be described as arousing in another human being the desire for wanting to exist in the world as subject" (2017, p. 58). The educational task of the educator is to raise humans who know and embrace their

[20] See the above section regarding Biesta's *education as the act of showing*

agency, and who are aware of the responsibility that comes with it, namely the responsibility towards themselves, other beings, and the planet.

Why is it important to name the acknowledgement of agency as part of *holding space*? I find it important because we still live in a world in which the power to define what is good, what is worthy, and what is valuable is predominantly given to people other than ourselves: the government, the scientists, the teachers, the parents. Biesta points this out, too, and reminds us of how this hierarchy can cause us to act in the world not out of our own desire to do so, but out of pressure or guilt (2017, p. 70). In such a scenario, I argue, we are not listening to ourselves, are not at home in the body, and are not recognising ourselves as situational beings with their own life force.

Holding space can both establish and fortify a sense of agency by giving a choice––by giving time, space, and means to listen to one's *being body*—and by including the participant in decision and knowledge-making by admitting that knowledge is not universal, absolute, nor exclusive to someone else. In short, *holding space* allows the participant to partake and relate to the learning situation from their own worldview, embodiment, and situationality.

the practice of holding space as an approach to (educational) situations challenges the teacher to come face-to-face with their assumptions and expectations. As I already mentioned with regards to intuitive teaching and spilling over, by holding space for what is present, the teacher can recognise when, where and how they are called to deviate from the original class plan. In that moment of recognition, we come to face our assumptions or expectations of what we thought would happen. This moment might be over in a split second or last longer, and it might manifest as resistance or discomfort as the ego—which I will speak more of in the next section—strives to maintain control. According to Katariina Hakala (in Saarinen et al., 2014), this kind of discomfort that comes from encountering oneself is characteristic of feminist pedagogy which "in addition requires certainty in being in uncertainty in educational situations" (p. 33, free translation by me). In other words, feminist pedagogy calls for embracing not-knowing, which I previously named one of the ways of inviting intuition and being in the body. As we face our assumptions and expectations, we have the choice to either keep moving regardless of what is taking place, or we can recognise that we had these assumptions and take a step toward the unknown by "making space for difference, surprises, fumbling,

conflict and resistance" (Saarinen et al., 2014, free translation by me). The unknown is important because it encourages learning and questions instead of knowing.

On one occasion when I came face-to-face with my own assumptions, my embodied experience of the moment was a tiny pressure building up around my sternum, and a mass of cold air dropping quickly along my back. The students were busy by themselves so they did not see my moment of despair over the task not going as I planned, though they might have sensed it on some level anyway. I turned away from the students and took a deep breath which quietened down the voice of the ego. This gave me space to assess whether it was really necessary to follow my plan the way I planned it, or whether this turn of events simply meant that something else than what I planned would happen. Realising that nothing would be ruined by deviating from my plan, I felt a smile rising to my lips and a blissful warmth all around as tension was released. I was able to take a step toward the unknown despite the full-body reaction of resistance. This particular event took place during our third workshop and was the strongest bodily reaction I had. Since then, I could recognise the moment but no longer had such a strong embodied reaction, which I suspect is due to learning to resist less the letting go that is required to embrace not-knowing. Had I stuck to knowing, I believe not much would have happened. In the words of Ursula K. Le Guin (1969/2017): "The only thing that makes life possible is permanent, intolerable uncertainty: not knowing what comes next" (p. 70).

To summarise, *holding space* is a practice of feminist pedagogy. It aims to empower the student by reminding them of their ability, agency and responsibility. Holding space softly rebels against the idea of teaching as an adaptation to the world because it gives space to and encourages questioning the prevailing situation. As the Brazilian educator and philosopher Paulo Freire points out, "the more the students work to store the information given to them, the less they develop their critical awareness that would lead to participation in the world as an agent of change" (1970/2016, p. 78, free translation by me). Similarly to Freire and hooks (e.g. 1994/2007), I believe that education can and should be a practice of freedom; a practice that allows the dreaming and making of a better world.

5.8. The ego

the ego cries in my chest
the loss of control

begs me to grab it back
I stand calm
smile blissfully
as control slips further and further
leaving me standing
among other beings
equally wise
equally lost
(learning diary, 09.10.2021)

The biggest challenge in *holding space* and the shared responsibility it brings along was what I call *the ego*. During *CREATE*, it showed itself in a few different kinds of situations:

- I thought I felt stress from the whole group over finishing the demo we worked towards, but a discussion with my practicum mentor helped me understand that it was pressure only I was feeling. The ego wanted to know, plan, and control what will happen.
- When we were one rehearsal away from the first demo sharing, I had a moment of panic over how the piece will go and whether something needs to be changed within the piece because some participants had missed practices and we had not had the chance for even a single run-through with everyone present. Luckily, a participant who was there took it better, and calmly said "it's okay, we will film what we have done and those who miss the practice will rehearse with the help of the video, and then on the day of the sharing we will catch up together if there are any questions." And that is how easy it truly was, this matter was an issue for my own ego, solely.
- During a workshop, I had planned a creative task that had several phases:

  1) looking at pictures and choosing three each
  2) in pairs, coming up with a movement for each picture
  3) combining the six movements in some order into one sequence
  4) teaching the sequence to the other pairs
  5) combining all the sequences into one big sequence

  After having given the instructions for phase 2, I noticed that the pairs had begun to work differently from what I planned: they were already making a sequence that was also a duet, whereas I had planned to end up with a sequence that does

> not depend on others (is a solo, in a sense). I could already feel myself prepared to take a step toward them and voice a correction to what they were doing, but luckily something held me back long enough for me to catch myself and reflect on what I was about to do. I realised that what had happened was a surge of need to control my "perfectly planned" class that had gotten interrupted when the participants interpreted the instructions in their own way. With this realisation, I decided to not be in the way of creativity as that would have gone completely against what this whole thing was about. I wrote in my learning diary:
>
> *How quick can I let go of my 'best plan'? How quickly do I recover (immediately or do I first say no and then take it back after some reflection)? I think this is a lot about being flexible since the very start, knowing that the plan is more a suggestion and a starting point than a rule or a list to follow. Right now, the pairs are teaching each other, and I can hear how they bend the rules, i.e., follow their own artistic intuition [and interpretation]. I feel in my chest this "oh no" but I feel somehow calm knowing that all is well and this "oh no" is just my ego not wanting to give up control.* (learning diary, 9.10.2022)

The ego I refer to is similar to the egological self situated in the area of the head that Timo Klemola refers to (2004, p. 147). The ego is the opposite of the embodied self: rather than being at ease with "simply being, where the mind is quiet, expectant and empty" (Klemola, 2004, p. 187), it likes to stay in the past or the future, either ruminating on what was or planning what will be. It thrives on control. As seen in the above examples of situations when I encountered my ego, it often arose when things, in reality, did not go as my learned patterns told me they should, though the first example is a little different. In the case of the first example, I recognised a feeling of having to impress others by making something that makes everyone go "wow!". This is also a learned pattern: the need to impress that comes from comparison to the work of others and a need to be good by someone else' standards. Realising this made me very aware of the expectations and values we educators may project onto or transfer to our students especially accidentally if we have not done crucial self-reflection on why, how, and what we teach. It also highlighted the importance of knowing oneself and listening to the group to be able to distinguish whether it is the teacher's ego's need/want/concern emerging or that of the group's.

The two other examples are situations in which my learned patterns tell me that the teacher must be in control in order for the group or the working to function. Both

situations are ones I remember happening when I was a student part of a dance group. People have been cut out from works for missing practices, and teachers have intervened to give more information to stir the working back to the track they intended. I have been that teacher who does these things. This time, however, I stopped to assess the situation as well as the need to control; whose need is it, and why is it needed? Asking myself these questions revealed the ego and its fear of uncertainty. Holding space makes the ego visible because the ego needs us to be in our heads and holding space needs us to be in our bodies. The ego is revealed when its desire to remain in control brings us to our thinking minds.

Contemplating my ego and the ways it manifests in my work as an educator made me realise that teaching is something I share out of pleasure—it is "a gift", as Gert Biesta describes it (2017, p. 48). This means that whilst I can, of course, ask to be respected as a human being and expect that trust towards other participants, too, I cannot expect anything in return for my teaching. It is crucial to remember that the students are not there for me but themselves. Biesta makes a bold statement when writing that "any desire to receive something in return is [--] a desire that would indicate perhaps, that the teacher is not yet ready to be a teacher" (ibid.). I agree, at least in the sense that I believe every aspiring teacher should take a moment to know oneself to understand why they teach. If one finds that behind there lies the need for affirmation of one's skills, there is, perhaps, still some work to be done before the work of teaching holistically can begin.

However, this does not mean that one cannot have (artistic) ambition as a teacher. There is a difference between wanting the students to excel for themselves and wanting something from them, and the difference can be a fine line. I certainly still find myself swinging from one side of this line to the other, especially when holding space for a process such as *CREATE* where we aim for an outcome. I wonder whether the difference is in that the artistic ambition of the educator does not override that of the group. In other words, the educator should not set the standards of what 'good' means, or should at least be conscious and transparent about why the 'good' is a goal in that situation as well as how to proceed toward that goal in a considerate way.

Standards, expectations, and the need to impress were also topics that arose during our wrap-up session in December 2021. Regarding the demo sharing, the participants raised questions about whether the audience had found the "artsy" demo boring, which invoked

a discussion on whether art needs to be entertaining and impressive. The young participants also suggested that the particular audience of a dance school Christmas matinee is probably more used to "easy, finished, and pre-digested" pieces, but concluded that they would not want to edit the piece to suit the audience. To me, this discussion was one of the most meaningful and impactful discussions we had during the project because we touched upon the subject of embracing what one does as opposed to aiming to please others. Based on my experience during *CREATE*, the ego is clearly present and in control in the latter, whereas the former has a very grounded, embodied feel to it.

In the wrap-up session, I was also curious to hear whether the participants experienced a difference between the way we had been working in *CREATE* versus the ways of working in other classes or projects. What struck me was the point they raised regarding communication: one of the participants said that the biggest difference for them was that they felt an open line of communication with the teacher directly, face-to-face. Another participant chimed in, saying that they also recognised that there was no fear to voice opinions or ideas or to tell that something hurts and they wish to not do it. It seems that at least some of the participants experienced that, as a spaceholder, I managed to leave my ego and its expectations aside and to truly be embodiedly present for them.

5.9. Questioning

> *I am trying to be patient, to let things be instead of trying to control them all the time. But the need to know is strong. What will this be like? Will anyone like this? Is this of any relevance? When will this be ready?* (learning diary, January 2022)

I started by questioning the value of technique or skill-focused dance education as well as the presence of art in art education, kept referring back to issues I saw within the basic education in the art of dance, and set them up against what I saw as the freer, *raising artists* type of education. This was causing me a fair amount of anxiety since in front of the massive size of the basic education in the arts and the Western dance tradition I felt small and powerless, though not opinionless. My questioning was often met by more tenured colleagues with resistance and questions about whether I wished to throw all dance techniques out the window. Whilst that was not the case, at the beginning of this research and the emotional processes it has included I was still very much in my feelings about the damage skill-focused training had caused me, and so it was difficult to give it value. Furthermore, I was struggling with questioning myself: having only experienced

basic education in the art of dance first-hand in one dance institution (the rest of my information and observations being second-hand knowledge through colleagues or via general discussion), how could I know how basic education in the art of dance is actually even taught at the moment? And since I cannot know that, how can I question it? Who am I to question this establishment?

With the *CREATE* project, I found myself in front of a new, pressing question: would the kind of work I propose be possible if the participants did not have skill-focused dance training in the background? After all, I was questioning something that in the end has brought me here. I am a product of skill-focused dance education, in a sense. How do I know what I suggest would 'work', and how do I know it would bring about what I hope it would? Regardless of the gravity and weight of these questions, I could not stop wondering why certain dance techniques are so important that rather than learning to move with my own breath, for example, I should spend years learning *pliés*.

The resistance I met from colleagues often justified the status of techniques with matters of safety or tradition. I do not argue with either as they are both of importance, however, I have come to think that neither needs to be disregarded even if the skill is not the focus. In fact, nothing needs to be left out, per se, but skill should not come at the expense of the human's own movement language.

It turned out that the most difficult population to discuss radical dance education reform with were dance educators because when I brought up concerns regarding things that are established and deeply intertwined into the core of dance education, it felt like my questions were barely considered. Instead, I encountered at times even patronising comments about how I was still in the rosy university bubble but would eventually return to the techniques, or firm opinions about how the young people just want to learn the techniques. This has caused me fear over speaking up and suggesting change.

Below I list some questions that have emerged during this research, but that are either not for me to answer, or too big or complex to be answered in any definitive and simple way:

- Why does somatic knowledge seem to be less important than dance technique?
- Why is contemporary dance class within the Finnish basic education in the art of dance not, for example, Flying low, Limon, Gaga, somatics, and improvisatory approaches, although they are also categorised under contemporary dance?

- Why is ballet technique training (still often) part of contemporary dance classes?
- Could we reconsider the kind of imagery we share on the walls at the dance schools?
- Could we reconsider the kind of dance pieces/productions the school organises trips to go see or the kind of pieces that are shared during classes?
- Does “meet the participants in their world” mean go with what they know and do already? Could we point in different directions?
- Do dance classes have to be entertaining all the time? Could we trust that even if the participants don’t get what they ask for, they might find something they need and keep coming back?
- 60 minutes is a short time, though how short depends on what we put emphasis on and what we work hard to include in those 60 minutes. What do we value?
- If there are changes you would like to see in the dance world, where else do you start making those changes happen if not on the grassroots level where it all starts?

Asking questions made it possible for me to distinguish personal trauma from my pedagogical views. I realised that whilst I am working within the context of basic education in the arts, my concerns are not exclusive to it, and that although this specific project does not include teaching dance techniques, it does not mean I am blind to the value of them. I simply see more value in other things.

5.10. Towards the end

Workshop 12, “a body painting”.
Photograph: Katja Köngäs

The further into the project we were, the easier the work of holding space became. I trusted myself and my intuition more and more and could feel that the participants trusted me to guide them into deeper and longer explorations. One of my favourite moments took place during our twelfth workshop, titled “a body painting”, and the below poem was written after that workshop:

I coat my skin
to paint my home
I drop my weight
to meet the air
cold, golden
in between my fingers
I speak to the world
with life force
recklessly glowing
(learning diary, 12.03.2022)

In the workshop in question, we dove into the sensitivity of the skin, especially, and explored the traces movement leaves by using paint. We had covered the whole dance

studio with white paper, brought in finger paints in different colours, and did a one-hour-long movement exploration during which I guided us into the feel and weight of the paint, our current mood, our bodies, our home, the world, finally spilling over to follow whatever was arising in the moment for each of us individually. Having guided the exploration to a rest and then to an end, I finished—as usual—with an invitation to transition to lunch when they felt ready for it. The previous times, the participants had stood up almost immediately to go on their break, but this time everyone stayed quiet and still. There was a sense of resting in the aftermath of what had just taken place, and the participants took their time to move on. It was a special moment, one that lights up a deep, full-bodied joy within me as I think back to it. I feel very grateful to have gotten to hold space for this particular exploration.

After the paint workshop, we mainly worked on putting together the second version of the demo which was presented to an audience at Tryckeriteatern in Raseborg, Finland at the beginning of May 2022 as part of the dance school's spring festival. We ended up using the painted paper from "a body painting" workshop as the floor of the piece, which drew much attention and brought many people to speak with me. This gave me the opportunity to speak of the collaborative nature of this work and the whole *CREATE* project, which paved the way for a few great conversations regarding how dance is taught currently and whether that reflects what dance is today. The response to the demo and the conversations sparked by it have given me hope as well as more trust in that the questions I am articulating in this research and through my work as a teacher are important and should be voiced.

6. CONCLUSIONS

it all started with a dream
dreaming
of a different world
with multiple dreams
and multiple stories
and multiple dreamers
a dream that was not one but many
(free-flow writing, 28.03.2022)

6.1. Reflection on what was and what is

In our very last session together, I wanted to hear about the participants' experiences of the project as a whole. Whilst I aim to not seek validation or affirmation, I was happy to hear that at least to some extent what I hoped would come across via my ways of working, did. The participants named, for example, that the space felt nonhierarchic, which they said was very concretely demonstrated in how there was no 'teacher's place' and 'student's place' in the dance studio. I loved this observation of a different spatial arrangement and how they felt they could take up space anywhere in the studio. This was not something I planned for specifically but goes to show how usual it is to organise dance classes so that the teacher demonstrates in front and students stand behind in rows. Simply by breaking this formation we were able to shift the power structure of the classroom.

Positively reviewed aspects were consistently **time**, **breathing**, and **freedom**. Time was referred to, for example, in the case of having time to share one's own thoughts as well as to hear out others. Breathing was discussed together with arriving or 'rooting at home', which is how I often described this moment of arriving into the *being body*. Freedom came up in relation to feeling safe to speak up, and one participant also shared that through this project they have found freedom when it comes to movement because insecurity regarding how they look dissolved. To me, these three things sound like the perfect result of the distillation of the *CREATE* project as they embody the essence of what I wished to offer. In a sense, they are the main components I used:

- providing time and space, but also slowing down so that we can have "more time" (to be, to sense and to engage)
- introducing the practice of breathing as a way of guiding us to our *being bodies*, our homes

- encouraging freedom from the forms set by other people to find freedom with our own movement and being, thus exploring our own relationship and dialogue with the body, the world, and the unknown

They are also, of course, intertwined to one another: by taking time to ground into the *being body* by breathing, we can become more comfortable in this home body and find freedom from aesthetic form. By focusing on breathing, we can naturally slow down and take time to observe, thus finding freedom from the pressure of production. By recognising our freedom—and agency—, we can breathe more fully and realise that time is relative. From my perspective, it seems that in the workshops we found our way to teaching and learning *the art of*, as opposed to *the skill of*. I believe that we were artists who by exploring being, sensing, and engaging found ways to unite the *being body*, the world, and the unknown.

Now that the project has ended, I am left with warming contentment and happiness as well as the will and inspiration to keep working in the ways I offer as the pedagogical philosophy and practice of *raising artists*. I believe that by facilitating these multi-sensory, embodied workshops and by making time and space for exploration, we have met the world and the self within it and engaged in a mutual dialogue. This was done not by facilitating space for the participants to do whatever they please, but by facilitating exploration and expression with guidance stemming from the embodied presence, i.e., from being in the body.

I firmly believe that this kind of work stemming from a non-dual, holistic value base is necessary not only for dance education but for the whole world as humankind tries to learn to live more in tune with nature in the face of global emergencies. To give a better overview of what I believe and experienced *raising artists* can accomplish, I have reworded the aim of this work as learning to recognise embodied experiences and to translate (some of) them into movement, text, sound, image, words, etc., but most importantly, acknowledging that the felt sense is there and constantly gives us information on ourselves, others, and our environment, thus reinforcing our interwoven beingness with the world. More concretely, this is done by **marvelling at life in a multisensory way** and bringing back the *being body* (into dance education), or rather, **bringing us all back into being in our bodies**. These are my pedagogical missions.

My pedagogical missions have arisen from the work of deconstructing and reconstructing my pedagogical views, values, and principles that has been ongoing throughout this research. They have also been heavily influenced by non-dual tantrik philosophy at the core of which, according to my experience, is finding the beauty and wonder in our unique human experience. Through this research, I have understood that the task of pedagogy is to raise humans to be themselves with and in the world. The educator can do this by creating opportunities for a conscious dialogue between the student and the world, an event that at once creates new knowledge, allows for reconsideration of existing knowledge, and provides a chance for the student to test their own ideas, dreams, opinions, values, and views in relation to a responding world.

This does not mean abandoning all existing knowledge such as dance techniques as incorrect, hostile, or futile. What it does mean is that the knowledge and skills "can never be an end in themselves but always need to be placed within the wider question and the wider challenge of human existence, in and with the world" (Biesta, 2017, p. 85). Therefore, the central focus of dance education should be the human in the world, not the transmission of pre-existing knowledge and skills, although they are or can be part of education.

Furthermore, I believe art education should be focused on the practice of art—which I in this research have defined as being, sensing, and engaging with the body, the world, and the unknown—rather than on skills, because it is through the embodied practice of art that one can find their own (creative) voice. The practice of art should be central because whilst skills can be used to make art, art can also be made without skills. Most importantly, however, art cannot be made solely with skills, because art requires the element of the unknown. The unknown makes space for us to dream and to see differently, and this is why art is a practice of dreaming newness into existence. Art is valuable as the practice, not only as a result of the practice, as Biesta summarises: "[T]he work of art is the work, is the ongoing challenge of figuring out what it might mean to be in dialogue with the world, of figuring out what it might mean to reconcile oneself to reality and to try to be at home in the world" (Biesta, 2017, p. 118).

This research has been important for me not the least because through it I have had the opportunity to better get to know myself as an educator, artist, and human being. Understanding my past trauma as a dance student has helped me to realise what I value,

and thus, reshape who I wish to be as an educator as well as what kind of content I wish to hold space for. I am now a more embodied, empathetic, and trusting teacher with the courage to facilitate dialogue with the *being body* and the world. Delving into the thoughts of fellow teachers, artists, and researchers has given me hope as I have realised that I am not alone with my questions and needs. This is one of the biggest changes that emerged from this research, and it is what has helped me take the first step towards accepting that I am not the kind of teacher who can find happiness in the repetition and preservation of the existing. Instead, my gift to give is that of exploration and seeking.

6.2. Where to from here?

> "In the unforgiving world of dance, I have purposefully chosen to give failure a chance, rather than aiming at perfection and accomplishments. My message is that each and every dancer is good enough in his or her own right. It is more important to discover that state of being which allows you to surrender to the movement, than to concentrate on weeding out mistakes and the ensuing feelings of inadequacy. Only then can the mind and body be unshackled, and the dancer dares to find his or her own dance." (Ervi Sirén according to Rauhamaa, 2011)

Even if this research was important to me in many ways, I cannot ignore the fact that it did not provide answers to all of the questions I encountered myself or was asked by others, namely the conundrum of teaching dance techniques as well as the general perception of dance. In this research, I chose to focus on bringing in more embodiment and art at the expense of dance techniques in the sense that I chose to not begin answering or exploring the question of how dance techniques could be taught holistically, nor how to make this more holistic dance education appealing to people who are fed one type of imagery of dance and the human body. Although I timidly dream of a world in which each person's own movement is valued first and foremost with time invested in seeking, refining, and defining it before the movement of other dancing bodies is brought in, I must acknowledge that dance has a long history that contributes to it being identified as certain kind of movement structured according to the rules of specific dance techniques. This, I believe, is what has shaped the current dance education into what it is, and it takes time to shift perspectives rooted as deeply as that of the Western dance canon. Nevertheless, I stand by what I dream of because I believe change is not impossible.

I have a feeling that this research could organically lead to further research of what it would mean to teach specific dance techniques more holistically, using the

elements I have introduced as part of the work that is *raising artists*. I think this would be an important next step because of the status dance techniques currently have, and could potentially pave the way for more embodied practices and gently begin the work of shifting perceptions on dance. Another challenge that calls for tackling is exploring how the concept of *CREATE* could be made to work as a weekly, 60–90-minute class. This would be important to make the concept—and so, the philosophy of *raising artists*—easier to fit into the existing formats of dance institutions. I would also love to bring this concept to different age groups, differently-abled bodies, as well as to enthusiasts of different art forms.

Being an artist requires courage to trust that the world will speak to us and willingness to listen. In this, there is the courage to be vulnerable to be affected by the world, allowing the world to come to us, and the courage to encounter the unknown with open arms, an open heart, and an open mind. The reason I call it 'courage' is that trusting, being vulnerable, and meeting the unknown are not easy tasks. They require certain risk-taking that comes with not only looking at what we know, since in only looking at what we know there is no risk (no opportunity) for our relationship with the world to change. If, as Vietnamese Buddhist Monk Thich Nhat Hanh suggests, "[i]n a true dialogue, both sides are willing to change" (hooks, 2003, p. xv), and engaging in a dialogue with the world is the work of art (Biesta, 2017) and thus the work of an artist, then being an artist involves the exciting risk of perpetual change. Taking this risk, over and over again, is the courage of the artist, and this courage is the force that together with dreaming brings new worlds into existence. Holding space for this dialogue, risk-taking, courage, and dreaming is the work of raising artists.

Take a moment to return to here

Inhale through the nose
Exhale and allow everything to soften just a little more

Bring your palms together, rub to create heat
Place them on your eyes, blocking out all light
How do you feel now?

Slowly lift your hands, letting light in little by little
Opening your senses, meeting the world without

What is the unknown you dream of?

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RESEARCH MATERIAL

CREATE project class plans, 2021–2022

Free-flow writing texts, 2021–2022

Learning diary, 2021–2022