**Instituto Interuniversitario de Desarrollo Social y Paz**

DOCTORADO EN ESTUDIOS INTERNACIONALES DE PAZ, CONFLICTOS Y

DESAROLLO

Tesis Doctoral

Dancing Conflicts, Unfolding Peaces: Dance as Method to

Elicit Conflict Transformation

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## Extracto de la Tesis Doctoral en Castellano

Danzando Conflictos, Desdoblando Paces: La Danza como Método Elicitivo de Transformación de Conflictos

**Resumen**

La presente tesis explora el potencial de la danza como método para elicitar la transformación de conflictos y desdoblar paces. Se busca comprender cómo acceder a las energías de un conflicto de manera que inspire nuevas alternativas de transformación y nuevas dinámicas de relacionamientos, desdoblando paces en este proceso. Partiendo de la perspectiva transracional, la paz es entendida como presencia, como forma de ser y estar en el mundo, y el conflicto como un elemento natural en las relaciones humanas. Se investiga, entonces, cómo propiciar un contexto en el cual se haga significativa la experiencia del movimiento corporal consciente en el momento presente, creando condiciones auspiciosas para elicitar conflictos y desdoblar paces. En busca de elementos que concierten tal método, esta pesquisa pone en diálogo las familias de paces propuestas por Dietrich, con expresiones de la danza de períodos históricos y culturales correspondientes. La interacción de las fuerzas dionisíacas y apolíneas basadas en la perspectiva de Nietzsche guía este diálogo.

Asimismo, se elabora sobre la filosofía de las paces transracionales y una perspectiva sobre la danza que reconoce el potencial de las expresiones de ésta para la experiencia de paz y se sugiere distorsionar tendencias nocivas con equilibrio y consciencia. A partir de ahí se cambia el enfoque para explorar la perspectiva elicitiva de transformación de conflictos y los métodos para facilitarla, con énfasis en el nivel intrapersonal. Los elementos clave identificados en las expresiones de la danza y en los métodos transformativos conforman un abordaje teórico

y práctico de estos elementos por medio del movimiento corporal consciente, que informa el potencial y las limitaciones de la danza como método elicitivo de transformación de conflictos.

**Introducción**

¿Qué es la paz? ¿Qué es eso que es tan discutido en conversaciones, agendas políticas y noticias? ¿Qué es esto tan buscado, pero que parece tan difícil de acceder? El opuesto de guerra, ausencia de violencia, superación de conflicto, armonía, bienestar holístico de todos y todas; tantas perspectivas, ninguna completa o que abarque todo su significado. La paz es inequívocamente un tema complejo y variado.

Esta exploración insta a otra perspectiva: yo lo invito a tomarse un momento para reflexionar sobre cuándo se siente en paz. ¿Qué está haciendo en aquellos momentos en que es tomado por este sentimiento? Mientras facilitaba discusiones sobre paz, los participantes me comentaron cosas diferentes: durmiendo, orando, surfeando, leyendo un libro, cantando, corriendo, andando en bicicleta, compartiendo con familia y amigos. ¿Encuentra resonancia en alguna de estas experiencias? Para mí, danzar también me trae la sensación de paz; o para decirlo de otra manera: la danza abre ese espacio dentro de mí. Reflexionando sobre estas preguntas, los participantes de los talleres y yo percibimos algo peculiar: en nuestras definiciones, la paz es generalmente abstracta, pero cuando traemos la discusión para el ámbito de la experiencia, ella es substancialmente corpórea. ¿Esta incompatibilidad dice algo sobre las perspectivas de paz vigentes? Esta seguramente influye en las estrategias adoptadas para traer paz al mundo, y consecuentemente en sus resultados.

¿Y qué pasa cuando mi forma de sentir la paz es meditando, pero la de mi compañero es cantando? ¿Y si una madre siente paz compartiendo con su familia, y su hija adolescente escuchando música? Conflictos pueden aparecer, naturalmente, porque los seres humanos somos diferentes. ¡Afortunadamente! Entonces aún con la mejor de las intenciones, a partir de

un deseo de estar en paz conmigo misma y con los otros, yo puedo enredarme en conflictos. Esta reflexión trae perspectivas sugestivas sobre los conflictos y cómo ocuparse de ellos. En estas discusiones sobre la paz, los participantes y yo también nos preguntamos, con relación a aquellas actividades que nos permiten sentir paz, con qué frecuencia nos dedicamos a ellas. Muchos contestaron que no las practican con la frecuencia que les gustaría. Otras veces, aun haciendo la actividad, ellos estaban tan distraídos que no pudieron aprovechar el potencial de sentir paz en aquel momento. Pero es tan agradable - preguntamos entonces: ¿por qué no logramos acceder a la sensación de paz con más frecuencia? ¿Qué nos lo impide? Nos dimos cuenta de que muchas veces priorizamos las responsabilidades diarias. ¿Pero, por qué entonces no podemos tener la misma experiencia de paz en nuestras actividades diarias? o ¿Podemos? Esta posibilidad nos ilusionó, y nos dejó con la cuestión sobre cómo ponerla en práctica.

Finalmente, en estos talleres nos preguntamos cómo es sentida la paz. ¿Cómo la experiencia de paz se hace evidente en la consciencia? ¿Puede la danza contribuir en el proceso de transformar conflictos y desdoblar la paz? Estas cuestiones me motivaron a hacer esta investigación. Algunas de ellas eran mías, otras me fueron compartidas por los participantes de los talleres. Yo no tengo respuestas para todas ellas, y es probable que en el final de esta investigación algunas sigan siendo un misterio. Esta es el viaje al que lo invito. A propósito, yo trabajo con paz y conflictos y danzo. Esta investigación gira en torno a dos grandes pasiones, la danza y la transformación de conflictos. Este es un viaje académico, profesional y personal, que he danzado por la vida. Éste implica un esfuerzo académico de explorar la danza como método para elicitar la transformación de conflictos y desdoblar la paz. Involucra una transformación personal de intentar ver la belleza de las personas más allá de los prejuicios. Este viaje inspira también nuevos rumbos en mi vida profesional en dirección a trabajar con métodos elicitivos de transformación de conflictos, especialmente danza y movimiento.

Para explorar estas preguntas, yo empiezo esta tesis con una presentación de mi perspectiva como investigadora, y detallo mi interés en la investigación y la pregunta específica a que me propongo a contestar. La discusión subsecuente es sobre metodología, y mientras presento los procedimientos específicos de esta tesis, introduzco algunas de las perspectivas metodológicas que definen mi mirada. Con el objetivo de contestar algunas de las preguntas iniciales, e indagar otras, en el capítulo que sigue pongo en diálogo las familias de paces con las expresiones de danza desde aquellas perspectivas históricas y culturales, y busco una mirada a expresiones de danza desde las paces transracionales. La paz me lleva al conflicto, que exploro en el capítulo siguiente a partir de una perspectiva más amplia que la usual o clásica, abarcando aspectos intra e interpersonales. Prosigo investigando formas de transformación de conflicto, con énfasis en el enfoque elicitivo. La cuestión de 'cómo' me lleva a examinar elementos en diferentes métodos que fomentan a la transformación. El último capítulo explora el potencial de la danza y del movimiento como método que contribuye para transformar conflictos y desdoblar la paz en la experiencia del movimiento corporal consciente en el momento presente. El texto será permeado por ejercicios desarrollados para explorar este método, y las reflexiones generadas por estas discusiones. El texto será también nutrido por escritos desde el punto de vista del cuerpo escritas por mí, y con entrevistas de los participantes del grupo de investigación y práctica desarrollado para esta investigación.

**Estructura y Conclusiones**

Esta tesis partió de la investigación de formas de explorar creativamente la energía generada por conflictos para desarrollar nuevas dinámicas de relaciones humanas, con enfoque en la danza como método para desdoblar paces y elicitar la transformación de conflictos. Este enfoque fue inspirado por mis propias experiencias transformativas con la danza, por usos transformativos de las danzas, e investigaciones en estudios de paz que resaltaron potenciales

contribuciones de artes y técnicas de cuerpo y mente en este campo. Identificando la paz como presencia, como forma de ser y estar en el mundo, esta investigación buscó explorar elementos que conformen una forma que haga significativa la experiencia del movimiento corporal consciente en el momento presente, creando condiciones auspiciosas para elicitar la transformación y desdoblar las paces. La filosofía de las paces transracionales y la perspectiva elicitiva de transformación de conflictos provee la referencia teórica para esta exploración.

Con el objetivo de explorar estos elementos, empecé estudiando las formas en que expresiones de la danza e interpretaciones de las paces se reflejaron e influenciaron mutuamente. Para esto, detallé cada familia de paces y dialogué con expresiones de la danza correspondientes a estos periodos históricos y culturales. Este diálogo fue guiado por la interacción entre las fuerzas dionisiacas y apolíneas desde la perspectiva de Nietzsche.

En un entendimiento energético de paz, el equilibrio es un elemento llave, caracterizado por el fluir irrestricto entre las fuerzas apolíneas y dionisiacas, representativas de los opuestos existentes en el mundo. Las danzas enmarcadas en esta perspectiva de mundo ven el cuerpo y la mente como una sola entidad, conectada con la naturaleza y el cosmos. La danza es entonces una práctica espiritual que posibilita al ser humano sintonizarse con la vibración de las energías del cosmos. Este proceso refleja una búsqueda por el equilibrio en el sistema del que el ser humano hace parte y por lo cual es nutrido, y en el cual él ejerce influencia con la resonancia de su propio cuerpo. La danza en esta cosmovisión es una práctica comunitaria, en la que todos y todas son participantes y comparten el éxtasis dionisiaco de la tragedia y del regocijo en la vida. Las danzas hacen parte de la vida y por lo tanto son accedidas para celebrar el nacimiento y la muerte, las estaciones, espiritualidad y elementos naturales.

Los elementos espirituales, comunitarios y participativos sufrieron un cambio significativo en las culturas con una preponderancia de la perspectiva moral de la paz. La paz es desconectada de su locus en las relaciones humanas para ser relacionada con el único Dios,

alcanzada solamente en un futuro y regalada por la gracia de Dios, de acuerdo a compromisos con las leyes divinas coordinadas por los representantes de Dios. La danza es privada de su contenido espiritual, y el lazo comunitario sustituido por el performance con énfasis en la diferenciación en términos de ranking, posición y habilidad. Se establece un público, separado del artista, cuya función es meramente la de observador. En otros casos, la danza se volvió solamente un entretenimiento. A partir de la misma observación de la existencia de opuestos en el mundo, las perspectivas morales de la paz privilegian las fuerzas apolíneas en detrimento de las dionisiacas, que son reprimidas. Como consecuencia, los encuentros de percepciones morales con las danzas energéticas fueron en gran parte violentos y tendientes a la exclusión y aniquilación. El cuerpo es separado de la mente, así como de la naturaleza, y despreciado como pecaminoso o idealizado como etéreo, diáfano y blanco como los vistos en los ballets románticos.

Sin embargo, algunas integraciones fueron intentadas, y los rituales energéticos fueron incorporados en las prácticas morales, una estrategia utilizada por ambas partes. En el caso de los practicantes de danzas energéticas, se hizo como una tentativa de perpetuar su cultura bajo tradiciones morales, y en el caso de las personas motivadas por la visión moral, para aplanar, transmutar o contener aquellas prácticas en una forma apolínea. Todavía, otras danzas energéticas permanecieron presentes bajo la condición de toleradas o non oficiales. Mientras el elemento dionisiaco puede ser encontrado en prácticas como el giro Sufí, en el ámbito de las tradiciones religiosas; éste también encontró un camino de expresión, extirpado de cualquier significación religiosa, en los carnavales y fiestas populares.

Las danzas en la tradición moral se tornaron entretenimiento, apartadas de la vida diaria, característica que fue perpetuada en sociedades con un entendimiento moderno de la paz. Mientras tanto la paz permaneció fuera de alcance y desconectada de las relaciones humanas, proyectada en el futuro, ésta ya no era regalada por la gracia de Dios, sino que podría ser

alcanzada por la racionalidad humana. Los conjuntos de reglas todavía son referencia, pero ahora es la ley del Estado nación y la razón de los científicos quienes establecen las pautas. La perspectiva sobre el cuerpo en una interpretación moderna profundiza la ruptura entre éste y la mente, que se vuelve el centro del razonamiento, del pensamiento racional y, por lo tanto, de la verdad. El cuerpo, así como la naturaleza, es visto como un recurso para el triunfo de la mente, y de este modo se tornan explotables y desechables. La imagen ideal del cuerpo es el cuerpo perfecto, y las danzas alaban la técnica, la precisión y la perfección. La forma apolínea sigue en posición dominante, como puede ser observado en los ejemplos de los ballets *Apolo* de Luís XIV y de Balanchine.

Las paces postmodernas cuestionan las verdades absolutas de la modernidad, como lo hizo Isadora Duncan en su feroz crítica a los ballets y sus reglas de zapatillas de punta, postura, formato del cuerpo y técnicas rígidas. Las paces postmodernas defendían las paces locales e imperfectas. La danza de Duncan abrió camino para múltiples exploraciones en la danza, enfatizando el respeto al cuerpo y el aspecto espiritual en la danza revelado en el arrobo dionisiaco. Su danza y sus visiones fueron consideradas innovadoras, así como las paces postmodernas cuestionaron las creencias de la modernidad con verdades plurales y paces ligadas a las relaciones humanas en todo y cualquier encuentro. Así como la postmodernidad criticó la modernidad con métodos racionales, también Duncan permaneció enredada en medios de los ballets. Sin embargo, ambas, las paces postmodernas y las danzas de Duncan, fueron cruciales para preparar el camino para múltiples perspectivas y exploraciones en la paz y en la danza.

Las paces transracionales por su parte no niegan ni refutan los elementos claves de las interpretaciones energéticas, morales, modernas y postmodernas, sino que las reconoce como aspectos necesarios de la vida. La necesidad es equilibrarlos, distorsionando las tendencias nocivas cuando se tornan desenfrenadas y descontroladas. La división entre cuerpo y mente no

se sostiene, éstos son integrados como elementos esenciales en este equilibrio, a través del cual las muchas capas del ser humano pueden ser exploradas, y las energías pueden fluir con intencionalidad dirigida a la transformación. Siguiendo esta perspectiva, discutí una perspectiva transracional en la danza, a partir de la cual las muchas expresiones de la danza pueden ser exploradas y, potencialmente, pueden proveer condiciones para experiencias de paz, cuando se es consciente de las tendencias nocivas de uno u otro extremo de desequilibrio, dionisiaco, o apolíneo. De esta manera, muchas danzas pueden proporcionar la pista para la celebración de la diversidad de la vida, en su sufrimiento y alegría. Sin embargo, el grado con que cada danza provee condiciones auspiciosas para desdoblar las paces difiere. Así, mi próximo paso fue identificar elementos y combinaciones que contribuyen para componer un formato que facilitara experiencias significativas.

Partiendo de una perspectiva de los conflictos como elementos naturales en las relaciones humanas y de la posibilidad de desdoblar la paz en el proceso de su transformación, procedí a explorar la dimensión de la transformación de conflictos, con especial énfasis en el enfoque elicitivo. En el equilibrio dinámico del fluir de las fuerzas dionisiacas y apolíneas, tensión es inherente al proceso, y necesaria para sostener ambas fuerzas, abriendo espacio para creatividad, lo desconocido y para presentar nuevas alternativas. Como los conflictos son vistos como obstrucciones en el fluir de energía, explorar estos bolsillos de energía restringida permite, potencialmente, la fluidez y el desdoblar de las paces. Desde una perspectiva elicitiva, la situación del conflicto contiene los elementos necesarios para su transformación en las relaciones entre las partes. Asimismo, valida la existencia de un espacio para explorar estas energías y permitir la creatividad, lo desconocido y la combinación de diferentes posibilidades.

Guiada por la estructura en capas de la pirámide de transformación elicitiva de conflictos según Dietrich, yo investigué las capas intra e interpersonales para iluminar formas de encontrar resonancia y equilibrio entre ellas. Un tercer principio de la filosofía de paces transracionales

también fue explorado: la correspondencia entre las capas internas: sexual, socioemocional, mental y espiritual; y las externas: familiar, comunitaria, societaria, policitaria y global. Básicamente, cuanto más profundo es el trabajo, más amplio es el impacto. Explorando interacciones más allá del episodio - la causa aparente del conflicto, y de la persona - la máscara del individuo, es posible investigar las disonancias en las fronteras de contacto activadas y potenciales de explorar las energías conflictivas aproximándose al epicentro.

El paso siguiente fue estudiar los métodos desarrollados para elicitar la transformación de conflictos, sus principios, formatos y elementos claves. En este punto me beneficio de la proximidad de la perspectiva transracional con la psicología humanista y su exploración de métodos elicitivos, para brevemente enfocar el movimiento, la danza y el cuerpo desde esta perspectiva y derivar ideas para inspirar mi percepción de la danza como método de este tipo. También dedico una mirada a la meditación debido a su influencia no sólo en la psicología humanista pero también en mi práctica de la danza. Otras influencias son prácticas de cuerpo y mente como el movimiento *Gymnastik*, Terapia de Danza/Movimiento y el Movimiento Auténtico. De esta manera, incluyo otra mirada sobre la danza que difiere de aquella de la danza profesional, y se enfoca en estas técnicas como una aproximación a la curación, la consciencia y frecuentemente también a la espiritualidad. En el núcleo de métodos de la psicología humanista yo también señalo Gabrielle Roth y su técnica de los 5Ritmos, que influenciaran el desarrollo de mi investigación en danza como método de transformación de conflictos. Asimismo, me adentro en las exploraciones sobre el arte y las técnicas de cuerpo y mente hechas desde los estudios de paz, con el objeto de fundamentar mis discusiones sobre las necesidades que han sido identificadas para el trabajo en paz y conflictos.

Con estas contribuciones en mente me lanzo en una exploración práctica y teórica de la danza como método elicitivo de transformación de conflictos, teniendo como base las sesiones de danza que facilité para el grupo de investigación y práctica. En el diálogo entre la literatura,

la forma y el contenido de las sesiones y los comentarios y percepciones de los participantes, los elementos identificados en las investigaciones previas y otros fueron probados, distorsionados y combinados. Este ejercicio generó una mirada a la danza como método elicitivo de transformación de conflictos anclado en la exploración de múltiples elementos que contribuyen a proveer condiciones auspiciosas para experiencias significativas.

En este sentido, la investigación de cuerpo, presencia y tiempo permitió probar diferentes técnicas para refinar la atención y la presencia, trayendo consciencia al movimiento, explorando el conocimiento corporal, enraizando la presencia en el movimiento de los huesos, músculos, cabeza, caderas y miembros. Por un lado, este ejercicio favorece familiarizarse con el cuerpo y sus potencialidades, ayudando a ir más allá de vergüenza y de la separación entre cuerpo y mente, permitiendo el descubrimiento del cuerpo como fuente de seguridad, abrigo y vulnerabilidad. Por otro lado, permite sentir y escuchar las historias, memorias y deseos del cuerpo, envolviendo la consciencia del momento presente con el pasado y el futuro revelados en el aquí y ahora.

La exploración conjunta de la respiración, los sentidos y el espacio motivó penetrar en los espacios internos y externos, conectando la respiración que se extiende de la inhalación, los latidos del corazón, el fluido de la sangre y la exhalación con el aire, y los vientos que ocupan el espacio externo. En este sentido, la respiración revela los espacios internos, así como estimula la sensación de las fronteras que sostienen la vida en su individualidad y el soplo espiritual que la anima. El aire también devela nuestra conexión con el espacio externo, diluyendo aquellas mismas fronteras por medio de la sensación de pertenencia al paisaje de los aires que animan la vida en la naturaleza y en todos los seres. En esta interconectividad, no solamente la vida es nutrida, sino también la vulnerabilidad humana es compartida, revelando nuestra participación en los cambios del cosmos y también en el impacto de nuestras acciones en él, y consecuentemente, la responsabilidad por nuestras opciones. Por medio de la respiración, se

comparte las tragedias del mundo, pero también la posibilidad de contribuir a su nutrición y plenitud por medio de la calidad de la presencia que doy en cada respiración. La respiración revela el espacio en el momento presente, que es imbuido con la creatividad y lo desconocido, los cuales son necesarios para desdoblar múltiples posibilidades de transformación de conflictos y de vida en su plenitud.

La presencia anclada en el cuerpo y la respiración, extendiendo la consciencia de nuestra participación en el amplio espacio y en el paisaje de los aires de la existencia, permite la observación más detenida del dolor y los sentimientos. La exploración de los espacios revela no sólo alegría, pero también dolor y sufrimiento. Contando con el cuerpo, la respiración, el paisaje de los aires y la comunidad como fuentes y recipientes, este formato posibilita la exploración del dolor y los sentimientos, que requieren soporte porque son fácilmente nublados por las manipulaciones del ego. Sin la nebulosidad del ego, descubierta por la presencia consciente, el dolor puede ser visto como una señal de desequilibrio, y los sentimientos como respuestas a la resonancia y disonancia en nuestras fronteras de contacto. Observar la textura de los sentimientos posibilita identificar su función como sistema de protección, y también su potencial dañino en caso de desequilibrio. A partir de esta familiarización facilitada por el movimiento, es posible explorar manifestaciones y expresiones de sentimientos, la calidad de sus energías y formas de aprovecharlas de forma que puedan generar respuestas más auténticas y decisiones que contribuyan a la vivacidad.

Conocer a los sentimientos por medio del movimiento y familiarizarse con sus expresiones y formas de usarlos de manera saludable y protectora provee soporte para aventurarse en ámbitos más nublados por proyecciones del ego, los sufrimientos y emociones. Habiendo acordado que las emociones son mecanismos de sobrevivencia, evaluaciones hechas a partir de experiencias pasadas que informan el discernimiento para opciones y elecciones futuras, en el movimiento es posible identificar apego o negación proyectados en el momento

presente por estas memorias. Por medio del movimiento, es posible ofrecer dinamismo y espacio para discernir los sentimientos de las emociones y el sufrimiento del dolor, develándolos, danzando con ellos y dejándolos ir. Entonces, es posible aprender de ellos mientras ser capaz de responder y tomar decisiones basadas en la claridad del momento presente. La energía liberada del drenaje generado por el apego y la negación puede entonces fluir de forma curativa, instalando vitalidad e inspirando acciones basadas en la compasión.

La vulnerabilidad desenredada en el dejar ir el control, el apego y la negación revela interconectividad. En las resonancias y disonancias de las capas internas y externas de la persona, los conflictos ocurren y son transformados por medio del fluir de energías, cuyo flujo no obstruido y equilibrado origina poder. En el fluir de energías que nos conecta a través de todas las capas, en el sistema cambiante del cosmos en el cual participamos como humanos, también ejercemos influencia en la transformación a través de la intencionalidad. Por medio de la presencia practicada en la danza, es posible experimentar nuevas formas, movimientos, ritmos de nuestro convertir-nos. Danzando en asociación con otros y otras, es posible explorar dinámicas de relacionamientos, sintonizando las respuestas con nuestra autenticidad y actuando desde la compasión. El poder generado por el fluir de la energía emitido en el movimiento, derivado de la vulnerabilidad y del estar abierto al proceso continuo de convertirse, ofrece la libertad de cambiarnos a nosotros mismos en tantas posibilidades como el momento ofrezca, incrementadas en la polinización del encuentro.

La consciencia del poder de cambio derivado de la aceptación de la vulnerabilidad permite explorar las texturas de los sentimientos, emociones y pensamientos partiendo de un punto amoroso. Rindiéndose al fluir, nudos más profundos de energía se vuelven perceptibles al ser pulsados por el amoroso fluir del poder. La danza contribuye a la vitalidad a través del contacto con esos bolsillos de tensión, y libera los canales y caminos para este poder navegar, tocando las energías aprisionadas y utilizándolas en el proceso transformativo. Explorar los

lugares que drenan más energía en negación y rechazo contiene mucho potencial, y en la dualidad de los opuestos es posible investigar resistencias, simpatías y aversiones, sombras, miedos, y liberar estas energías para una comunicación más resonante en las relaciones. En el proceso de incorporar el lenguaje y comunicar lo corpóreo, es posible refinar la atención e infundir vitalidad en las convicciones vivificantes como el actuar y el servir compasivamente.

En el fluir de los opuestos sin obstrucciones, sostenidos en correlación por la tensión de la disciplina, múltiples alternativas de combinaciones emergen. En la relación de las fuerzas dionisiacas y apolíneas, posibilidades de convertirse se desdoblan, de una manera que no es solamente inevitable, sino que además permite una influencia creativa, una participación con el poder energético de darle una cierta forma temporaria, un estilo y textura al proceso. Danzar, explorar el conocimiento proveniente del cuerpo, de la intuición, de las emociones y de la razón permite acceder, volverse consciente del fluir de energías penetrantes que nos conectan al todo y todas las cosas. Buscar un entendimiento que alinee piezas de conocimiento que no son completamente traducibles o coincidentes, informa un vivir que puede ser contradictorio a veces, pero que tiene sentido, que anima los sentidos, desafía el intelecto, estalla la intuición e instila gratitud espiritual.

Practicar la danza en este sentido, como una forma de ser y convertirse, no orienta la acción o la voluntad en dirección hacia una conclusión, resultado, pico o éxtasis, sino los envuelve en el espacio intra e interpersonal del continuo volverse. La canalización y amplificación de esas vibraciones son poderosamente colectivas. Y es en la posibilidad compartida del horizonte que el volverse toma forma y se disuelve en el momento presente, en un descubrimiento continuo y apreciación de la exuberancia de la vida que invita a danzar. Y es en esta invitación a la danza que yo concluyo este texto, que ojalá no se termine en él mismo, sino que sea puesto en movimiento y adquiera nuevas formas en el fluir de las fuerzas apolíneas y dionisiacas que permean la exploración de las paces y la transformación de conflictos.

## Abstract

This research explores the potential of dance as a method to elicit conflict transformation and unfold peaces at the intrapersonal level. It is motivated by the question on how to tap the energies of conflict in a way that inspires new alternatives of transformation and new dynamics of relationships, unfolding peaces in the process. Following the transrational perspective, peace here is understood as presence, as a way of being in the world, and conflict as a natural feature of human relationships. This thesis investigates how to provide a frame which renders the embodied here and now moving experience meaningful, creating auspicious conditions for eliciting conflict transformation and unfolding peaces. Exploring elements that contribute to this process, this investigation delves into interpretations of peaces, according to Dietrich's theory of the five families, and establishes a dialogue between them and expressions of dance corresponding to these cultures and historical periods. Nietzsche's interplay of Dionysian and Apollonian forces guides this dialogue.

Furthermore, this thesis discusses the transrational peace philosophy and an approach to dance that acknowledges the potential of dance expressions for peace, and suggests twisting harmful tendencies with balance and awareness. It then explores the elicitive approach to conflict transformation and methods to facilitate it, with focus on the intrapersonal level. Drawing from key elements identified in the dance expressions and in the transformative methods, this text presents a theoretical and practical approach to those elements through embodied movement, which informs the potentials and limitations of dance as a method to elicit conflict transformation.

## Introduction

What is peace? What is it that is so discussed in daily conversations, political agendas, and news? What is it that is so eagerly wanted, but sometimes very difficult to get? Opposite of war, absence of violence, overcoming of a conflict, harmony, holistic wellbeing of all; so many different perspectives, none all-encompassing or complete. Peace is undeniably a complex and varied topic. This exploration leads yet to another perspective: I invite you to take a moment to reflect on when you feel peace. What are you usually doing in those moments when you experience an outpouring of that feeling? While facilitating discussions about peace, participants have told me different things: sleeping, praying, surfing, reading a book, singing, hugging, running, biking, being with family and dear ones, enjoying the company of friends. Do any of these experiences resonate with you? For me, dancing takes me to that place of peace; or put differently, opens that space within me. Reflecting on these questions, participants and I noticed something peculiar: in our definitions, peace was often abstract, but when we brought the discussion to the level of the direct experience, it was substantially corporeal. What does that mismatch say about our approaches to peace? It certainly influences the strategies that have been adopted to have peace in the world, and the outcomes of it.

And what happens when my way of contacting that peaceful experience is meditating, while the way of my loved one is singing? What if a mother experiences peace being with her family but her teenage daughter experiences it being alone listening to music? Conflict may arise, naturally, because human beings are different in many ways. Thankfully! So even in my best intention, out of a will to be in peace with myself and others, I may get involved in struggles. What does this tell about conflicts, and how to deal with them? In those discussions about peace, participants and I also reflected on how often we practiced those activities that enable experiences of peace. Many of the participants pondered that it was not as often as they would like to. Other times, even while doing such activities, they were so distracted that time

went by, they finished their particular activity and did not enjoy its full peaceful potential. But it can be so pleasant, we discussed then; what prevents us from accessing its benefits more frequently? We realized that many times we choose to prioritize our daily responsibilities. So, why can we not feel the same experience of peace in our daily activities? Or can we? This perspective thrilled our imagination.

Finally, how does it feel to be in peace? How does that experience make itself evident into consciousness? Can dance contribute in the process of dealing with conflicts and unfolding peaces? These are the questions that motivated my research. Some of these enquiries were questions I had and others were shared by the participants during the workshops I facilitated. I do not have answers to all of them, and probably by the end of this research some of them will remain a mystery, but nevertheless this is the journey I invite you to join. By the way, I am a dancing peace and conflict worker. This research deals with two great passions: dance, and peace and conflict transformation. It is an academic, personal, and professional journey, which has been danced throughout my life. This journey embraces an academic effort of exploring how dance can be a method to elicit conflict transformation and unfold peaces. It involves an intention of personal transformation in terms of trying to see the beauty in each person, beyond bias and prejudice. This approach also inspires new ways in my professional life toward working with elicitive conflict transformation methods, specially dance and movement, with peace and conflict workers and people in their daily lives.

In order to delve into these questions and intricate topics, I present my perspective as a researcher, and discuss my research interest and research question. The subsequent discussion is on methodology, and while detailing the specific methods and procedures, I present an overview of the methodological approaches that inspire my perspective on this topic. In an attempt to answer some of the opening questions, and discovering new questions along the way, I reflect on the families of peaces and their connections to dance expressions, and especially on

the implications of the transrational approach to peace. Then, peace takes me to conflict in a perspective different from the more traditional school of thought, encompassing mainly intra and interpersonal aspects. I proceed then to explore ways of conflict transformation, highlighting the contribution of the elicitive approach. The question of 'how' leads to peruse elements in methods which contribute to transformation. The last chapter details the exploration of the potentialities of dance and movement as method, that contribute to elicit transformation and unfold peaces in the embodied here and now moving experience. The whole research is punctuated by exercises developed to explore such methods, and the reflections generated by those discussions. It is also informed by embodied writings of my own and interviews with the participants of a research/practice group developed for this research.

# 1 Objective and Motivation

## 1.1 Author's Perspective

I stepped onto the dance floor, barefoot, after a couple of days at a 5Rhythms workshop, a meditative movement practice. The big and bright room was inviting, the wooden floor was open to whatever could come. I knew from previous experiences that it would hold me and whatever I brought into it. I had been dancing since I was a kid; I trusted it. The white curtains were fluttering around, moved by the soft breeze of a delightful summer day in the charming city of Graz, in Austria. The curtains and the breeze were inviting us to dance. There was an atmosphere of trust and support within the group and the teacher, courageous people from different regions and backgrounds. I had travelled from Brazil to participate in a conference in Vienna, and made quite messy arrangements to conciliate holidays and appointments, as well as ensure a suitable budget for expenses. It was my first experience with 5Rhythms, one I had been eager to undergo for some time.

We had moved and sweated together for many hours and a couple of days and I felt totally supported by the group. Each of us were going through his or her own journey, but we shared a common floor and intentionality. We delved on feelings, observing how joy, sadness, anger, fear and compassion were sensed and felt in the moving body. Hours of dancing, finding out, resisting, exploring, releasing, and starting over. In the beat of the music some layers of mine had been uncovered, explored, and some beliefs and identities had been shattered. It had been an intense and deep activity, but I sensed that in the afternoon a bigger challenge was awaiting. We were invited to work on fear, guilt and shame. I was scared, but also excited with the possibility of confronting the topic of shame that had long been bothering me, in a subtle

but recurrent way. Shame derived from an experience of not being authentic to myself and, in consequence, to a dear person, causing harm to both of us.

To really embody fear, guilt, and shame, each participant was supposed to concentrate on a particular situation in their own life, the judgments they felt, and the resulting head trips, then bring them into awareness. Unlocking years of hiding, suffering, diminishing the importance of it, and judging myself. Each person was guided to run in circles around herself, creating a swirl in the center of the circling movement. I gathered everything related to this feeling and put it in the swirl. The next step was to jump right into the swirl, and let the swirl of shame move us. I made several more laps, resisting the appeal of the swirl, fearing what would be there, until the lure was too strong. What was there? Boiling energy, which took me into an intense dance. Movement, tears, contraction, fears, expansion, breath, pain, letting go, chaos, release, laughter, more tears, more sweat drops wetting the floor, gathering the pieces, self-forgiveness, compassion, unification, gratitude, calmness, peace. A powerful, deep, and transformative journey.

What happened exactly? Hard to tell, but the shame seemed to melt away with each drop of my sweat and tears. When the music finally waned, I was exhausted, dripping sweat from each and every pore, my clothes wet and stuck to my body, my hair a complete mess, my face red from exercising and my eyes burnt from the tears shed. A comic picture, indeed. And I was in complete peaceful joy, emptied. There was nothing else I wanted to do, besides being there at that moment. And the next, and then the next. I am always astonished when I reflect on that experience. Opening the space and being present to move with my feelings put a healing process in motion. Through movement, I dropped prejudices, found compassion, and was deeply grateful.

Giving in to the rhythms was not a novelty for me, although, exploring a range of emotions with it definitely was. In the Northeastern region of Brazil, where I was born, dance

is celebration and joy. The rhythms of *lambada*, *axé*, *forró*, *samba* and *frevo* were part of my childhood soundtrack. We danced to celebrate Carnival, São João (St. John), birthdays, to celebrate life. Life, which could be harsh in a region, where drought was as constant as poverty for most of the population.

Having lived in different parts of the country as I grew up, I was constantly enchanted by the richness of human relationships and cultures, which varied so differently from region to region. People from each region had its difficulties, but also rich and diverse ways of dealing with them and producing beauty and art, living a meaningful life. On the other hand, I could see poverty and social problems throughout the country that touched my heart and concerned me. I was also baffled by the innumerous misconceptions from people from one region to another, prejudices and labels that did not translate the richness of each culture. Moreover, these pejorative characterizations were misleading and would hinder the possibility of dialogue or empathic engagement. The responses I developed would alternate between defense and accusation, and sometimes compassion.

These experiences contributed to a characteristic of being deeply grateful for what I have. Knowing there were people who did not have much to live on, who struggled to find water and food, brought a deeper meaning to the acknowledgement of having tasty food, material resources, education, friends and an incredible family. On the other hand, I now realize that comparing the hardships and realities of those living without so many of life's basic necessities diminished my own pains because in the greater picture there were people suffering much more. The logic that followed was that I had been so blessed that I did not have the right to suffer. The belief in everybody's potential, amplified by this thought of having to give more turned out contributing to a quite competitive girl. I had a lot; therefore, I had to give my best, I had to be the best. Adding to that, a mindset for competitiveness contributed to trying to be the best, being it in sports or at school. Beyond the energy of the competitive impulse, which

can be seen as a working force in itself, I consider it problematic to view others as opponents to be overtaken. I bring these aspects into light because they contribute to some challenges I have in the journey of writing this thesis: my difficulty in acknowledging my own suffering and my competitive impulse that tends to see others as opponents, and therefore, not beautiful beings in their humanity.

Dancing called my attention to those biases. Shifting again back to the workshop I began sharing in the introduction, we were requested to search for other people's eyes, to interact with them through our dance. The eyes partnering with mine transmitted the strength, feistiness, and solid presence of a fiery mid-aged female dancer. We were guided to acknowledge that person, her history and sufferings. Joy and suffering poured out from her eyes, fused in a glance of completeness and vulnerability, which contrasted with her rock and roll shake. "Everybody in this room has already been deeply hurt", the facilitator shared with us. The acknowledgement of this sentence as a truth was felt through my body. My shoulders unstuck from my ears, arms found their way back to hanging beside my body in a relaxed manner, my chest opened in deep breath. My body released into the acquiescence that the secret was unveiled, I no longer needed a tough and strong posture anymore, a position that revealed to be tense. Everybody knew I had suffered; but furthermore, I recognized I had suffered. And surprisingly, that was fine; I was one among others, just part of the web of life. As the truth of that saying hit my stomach, tears instantaneously came to my eyes. Seeing others through the mirror of water of my tears was revealing; a wave of respect and awe for each person made my heart beat faster. I wanted to hug the world. Instead, through the dance, I felt embraced by it, as I released my protective barriers and joyfully succumbed to the rhythms. Another healing process put in motion. It also revealed that keeping respect for my suffering and others', while acknowledging empathy and

recognizing that we are the same in our humanity, could open the way to compassion and to be of service from a heartful place.

I have searched for different ways to be of service in the world and promote positive changes. When I was younger, I could not understand why people made wars. I wanted to be president, so I could stop that nonsense. I wanted to be an ecologist, so I could save nature. I wanted to be a dancer, so I could bring people joy. Contact with inequality incited indignation and an impulse to take action. I chose to study International Relations to avoid wars. In my college years, however, I was disheartened by the dry discussions about war and peace – it sounded as if it was a game – not real people with all their humanity involved in war situations. I approached cultural studies to get a more enlivening perspective on it.

When I graduated, I sought complementary studies that could equip me with the theories and practical tools I was searching for to work with transformation and peace. Then I found Peace Studies and felt more at home. Through theory and practice, I realized that the act of unfolding peaces has to be enacted consciously in the daily practice of making small actions and decisions. I also got in contact with some embodied practices whose objective was to empower this conscious living. The relation of these practices with peace inspired me to further investigate their connections. I was encouraged to engage with a research topic which I had passion for. Dance naturally appeared as an option, which I was excited to explore and, in this way, reintegrate aspects of my life I thought would permanently diverge between hobby and profession.

I love to dance. I have dedicated many years of passion, sweat, rehearsals, learnings and a few years of teaching to it as well. In this journey, I had the chance to experience different forms as folk dances, ballet, jazz, modern and contemporary dance, as well as partying, carnival, 5Rhythms and Sufi whirling. Movement nurtures me. It seems that movement develops from within to blossom through my body. Nevertheless, each time I dance is different, and sometimes

I experience many diverse feelings in the same dance. That is a magical aspect of it, in my perspective. Sometimes I am self-conscious: movements are weird, disconnected. Sometimes I don´t feel anything – I just think, think, think. At times, I dance in complete flow - I do not remember the act, I do not feel time passing by. It is blank, void, but there is a wave of joy and I can feel a flow of warmth in my body. Other times I feel present – every part of my body moves in a continuum, connected, and I can be present in each movement, being it a slight movement of fingers or a wide movement with the whole body.

The air around my skin caresses it, amplifying the sense of presence and of expansion through the space around it. Space around, space inside: breath is accelerated because of the movement, but deep because of focus and concentration, widening the internal space, from ribs to guts, airing my limbs, allowing movement to be born from within. When in this kind of vibe, I can feel the beating arteries pulsating energy, the dynamic balance of the feet moving in tune with the beat. Sometimes the heart beat tunes with the music, and then boundaries become porous and slowly melt away. Everything is sound, vibration. Such experiences of peace through dance and the glimpses into its potential in conflict transformation are the inspiration for this research, which sets the ground from where I am writing and my expectations of self-transformation.

## 1.2 Research Interest

One of the starting points of this research is acknowledging the short comings of viewing conflict as merely a negative concept. Certainly, dealing with conflicts can be demanding, but seeing it as only negative, and therefore something which should be avoided, hides its potential for greater self-knowledge, for strengthening human relationships, birthing new ways of seeing the world, and different forms of action. If conflict is considered negative, the logical next step is to get rid of it. This is often the same logic applied to some approaches of practicing medicine

while addressing one's pain or suffering – prescribing a pill as soon as pain arises – not taking time to understand where it is coming from, and what imbalance it is trying to signal.

In this metaphor of conflict and pain, peace is equated to a pill that is delivered from one part of the world to another, so it can keep on functioning as it was, without going deep into the causes of the conflict and what imbalances it is pointing to. What can be even more problematic is that the source of the pain is frequently still there and the existing mechanisms for dealing with it are silenced or numbed, decreasing their ability to act. Peace as a pill has a bitter taste, despite how nice the package is. Even though pills may be necessary and welcomed in some occasions, the constant numbing of the body comes at a high cost.

This understanding of peace as a pill that can be prescribed, or a product that can be delivered or exported, does not correspond to the personal experience of peace that the participants of the workshop have identified in their lives. This discrepancy points to evidence that there is more to peace than what the current concepts encompass. Therefore, this research is grounded in the understanding that peace can be experienced as presence, as a way of being in the world. In that sense, it draws from the framework of the transrational peace philosophy (Dietrich 2012).

However, experience has shown that such a peaceful presence is difficult to sustain. It is easy to slip back into patterns of reaction that clouds the awareness of that presence. Also, as seen earlier in the introduction, even our attempt to experience that activity that brings us a sense of peace may cause conflict with others. For example, for one person riding a bike may be an experience peace, yet for another person it may be her exact translation of a nightmare, a source of fear, and frustration. What does this say about peace, conflict, and their relation? Peace is experienced and perceived differently for different people and begs for the acknowledgment of many peaces (Dietrich and Sützl 1997). Conflict then is not something to be avoided, but a natural feature of human interaction and also an opportunity for peaces to

unfold in the very process of its transformation. Following the elicitive approach to conflict transformation, alternatives can be elicited from the net of relationships happening here and now (Lederach 1995, 2005, and Dietrich 2013).

If conflicts are not the problem, but rather the way we deal with them (Satir 1991), how can we transform them in a healthier and more fulfilling way? Unquestionably, there is a lot of energy generated in conflictive situations – perceived as heat, palpitation, flush, tension, sweat, urge to action. What if this energy is directed at transforming the conflict, inspiring new alternatives and options for that interaction? This question motivates me to research further on how to transform conflicts by tapping the energy generated by them creatively to develop new dynamics of relationships, with a special focus on the intrapersonal level of transformation. Among the variety of practices and methods developed by humanity to engage on those energies and to enable an experience of peace, such as meditation, martial arts, music, dance, and prayer, my interest is drawn to dance and its potential contribution to this field.

What is expected from dance as a method of this kind then? Peace and conflict work is a demanding endeavor, which requires different abilities. Dealing with conflicts with an emphasis on relationality takes one out of the comfort zone, requires one to open-up, drop defensive barriers, and show one's vulnerabilities. It is an invitation to get to know one's own lights, shadows, and layers, and work with them in a way to elicit possibilities of transformation from within. In this perspective, peace is already within each person, and is experienced by people to different degrees and situations in life. So, one of the attributions of the methods is to provide auspicious conditions for this peace within oneself to unfold more vividly and constantly.

Revisiting the role of the person expecting to transform conflicts and to unfold peaces is also necessary. Being relational and embedded in the here and now moment, conflict transformation cannot be dictated by guidebooks or a step by step manual, because it is

dynamically related to each person's stories, expectations, desires, and fears. But, it can be elicited from people's connections (Lederach 2005). The job of eliciting conflict transformation involves also the work of looking at those internal stories, fears, and desires, to better understand how they influence a person's behaviors and ideas regarding the conflict.

Additionally, for a transformation to be elicited, presence and awareness are vital. But, it is not easy to be present, in a state of awareness of one's own influence in the surroundings and inner motivations. It is necessary to carry out deep and constant self-work to unfold this potential, and to be able to facilitate a space of interaction for the conflicting parties. In the same manner that there can be an external and interrelational space of facilitation to elicit alternatives, an internal, intrapersonal space of exploration is also possible and necessary for eliciting transformation and unfolding peaces. Dance may contribute to exploring this inner space, to cultivate the openness necessary to resonate with the system's energies, the sensitivity to perceive imbalances, and identify where, when, and how one's abilities can be used to favor the next step toward balancing the system.

In addition, intellectually understanding layers and levels of conflict is an inexorable exercise, but it may go beyond. It is necessary to promote changes in daily life in order to change deep rooted patterns and allow authentic responses to conflictive situations. Peace work requires more than rational understanding, but a multifaceted perception of the many elements in a conflictive situation and at the intrapersonal level. Dance may contribute to expand this perception from the rational to the embodiment and back, facilitating presence, an experience of the here and now embodied moment that open and sustain a space for eliciting conflict transformation and unfolding peaces in daily life. Furthermore, it may help navigate the

rhythms of conflict, the beats of emotions, and the dimensions of knowledge, fostering transformations in behaviors and in ways of living.

In this research, I understand peace as presence, as a way of being in the world, and conflict as an opportunity to explore different possibilities of living together. The question that sparks my curiosity is: how can conflicts be transformed while tapping into the energy generated by them, in a creative way, to develop new dynamics in relationships and allow peaces to unfold in the transformative process? In response to this question, I explore dance as a practice as well as a primary method of research. The investigation is then to identify elements that compose a frame which render the embodied here and now moving experience of dance meaningful, in a way that opens space for eliciting transformation and unfolding peaces.

## 1.3 Method and Structure

Some time ago I was telling a friend about my research on dance as a method to unfold peaces and elicit conflict transformation. He listened to me and asked: "So, the solution to war is that everybody starts dancing?" I could not refrain from laughing at the picture I imagined, which would actually please me a lot. But my answer was no. Dance is not the solution to war, let alone in that causal relation. However, it can be a method to elicit conflict transformation, a practice, that enables peaces to unfold. Sometimes I express peace with two fingers up, one of the commonly known symbols, to confirm to doubting faces that the field is peace studies. Once, I was asked if I was studying peas. Mendel immediately came into my mind, and this funny misunderstanding made me realize that I needed to be very detailed in the clarification of my approach.

The conversation gets more interesting when I tell my interlocutors that I deal with dance as a method to transform conflicts and unfold peaces. That is the moment when I invariably see puzzled faces. People who relate to dance only in the form of ballet seem to think the proposal is a hippie ballerina dream, and a friend offered me the captivating picture of

fighting guns with *pirouettes, jetés* and *grand battements*[1]. The difficulty I faced to get the message of my research across to different people emphasized the importance of the methodology chosen for this research.

To encompass this challenge, this research is informed by four sources: literature review; reflections on culture of peace workshops I facilitated in the first stage of the research; my own experience as a dancer; and outcomes of a research/practice group I facilitated, from where derive my reflections as facilitator and recounts of the participants. While literature review relates to books and articles produced in varied academic fields, the other three sources are practical and experiential. As I detail these sources, I also introduce the methodologies which guided each of these steps and, consequently, inform this research.

### 1.3.1 Literature Review

In terms of literature, I draw from mainly primary sources, such as books and articles in academic journals, but also some secondary sources like biographies. I also draw from websites of organizations for their official and updated communication. Movies and music are used not only in theoretical terms, but mainly in the personal exploration. In this sense, I refer to songs to contribute to the theoretical debate, but they are mainly used in the personal-practical exploration and in the context of the research/practice group. Although there was a large number of songs which provided the beat for the practical experiences, I refer directly only to those which had a specific impact on the discussions.

### 1.3.2 Workshops on Culture of Peace Informed by Dance and Movement

Deriving from the perspective that peace is experiential, I intersperse the chapters with reflections on workshops on peace and conflict I facilitated in the first cycle of the practical

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[1] *Pirouette, jeté* and *grand battement* are the names of ballet steps.

approaches of this research. It started with a project to work with culture of peace informed by dance and movement, which comprised the facilitation of workshops on culture of peace, exploring movement as method. To approach the topic of culture of peace experientially, I developed exercises, inspired by dance and movement, complemented by theater games and meditation. These exercises intended to explore the topics of peace and conflict from a local and embodied perspective, starting from the felt observation, proceeding to the combination of intellectual discussion afterwards. Two one-day workshops were held in São Paulo, Brazil, with ten employees of an NGO's educative center. A third workshop with a total of seventeen participants was held in another educative center. The exercises developed for those workshops were also the base for five encounters of approximately one hour each on the same topic of culture of peace with kids of the sixth grade (from eleven to thirteen years old) in a public school in São Paulo. This practice-reflection cycle informed this research through a feedback loop and helped suggest exercises to be adapted to a written format. I also complement the exercises with my observations as facilitator on the group dynamics and with a general reference to the comments, questions, and evaluations shared by the participants. These observations permeate all the chapters, and inspire assessing experiential and local knowledge as a source for engendering discussion.

Based on the conversations which inaugurated this chapter, I realized that an initial challenge in developing an approach to dance as a method to unfold peaces and elicit conflict transformation was related to language and communication. The difference between concepts and the experience of peace led me to opt for an approach to draw knowledge from the experience of the participants of the workshops. Popular education methods, developed by Paulo Freire, was then a rather coherent option, as it offers the foundations for assessing knowledge already shared by people, and is part of my academic and professional journey. From my contact with popular education, I had experienced the potential of its catalytic effect,

in tapping into vernacular knowledge and combining it with external sources to bring up new perspectives. This new perspective potentially has its roots in the knowledge, values, and traditions of the community, while at the same time being enriched by different approaches, which are debated, agreed, disagreed, stretched, and combined. It is grounded in the local context, is open for outer influences, and stems from a community empowered by the process, which has agency to put new perspectives into practice because they were birthed collectively.

On the other hand, I had also experienced the difficulties of such approaches, in the form of the amount of time and energy consumed in the process and the risks of slipping into glorification of local without the necessary critique. Furthermore, I realized also the angst generated by the contradictions between the preached horizontality and the deep-seated hierarchies imbedded in workshop culture. Aware of the risks, I proceeded with the incorporation of this method to the design of the exercises and of the overall structure of the workshops.

Paulo Freire's theory of popular education, mainly known through his book *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (2000) therefore informs this research in terms of seeing production of knowledge as a collective endeavor, based on lived experiences. Inspired by his experiences as an educator, Freire developed an approach which did not teach people to read and write from abstraction, but from the near reality of the student. So, if they were a group of construction workers, they would start with bricks, not with abstract concepts. Starting with a theme close to the lived experience gives a familiar and relational aspect to the learning process, allowing it to be owned by the participant and responsive to the context. Popular education understands that knowledge is contextual, and that everybody has lived experiences, and therefore, knowledge available from these lived experiences. The process of learning according to Paulo Freire develops in the praxis of reflection-action-reflection (2000: 51).

Therefore, a group discussion on an issue based on popular education does not begin with concepts from outside actors, but with collecting the understandings about that topic from the present participants, based on their lived experience. This first collection of meanings is then discussed, compared among them, and informed by outsider researchers, in a sense of contributing to the discussion, not as a superior source which should be learnt as the right one. Again, context and the theories are crossed, looking for similarities and disparities in their observations of reality, and from this pollination new understandings emerge, based on participant's contexts and combined with theories about the issue. But the work is not done yet, there is a need to inform practice with those new insights gained from the moment of reflection, to check how it contributes to daily life. And the cycle continues, action generates reflection and theory is constantly informed by practice and questioning.

This approach inspired the elicitive perspective on conflict transformation, from John Paul Lederach (1995), as is discussed in subsequent chapters. His critique on prescriptive methods points out to the same disadvantages of the "banking education", which Freire contested so vehemently (2000:72). Banking Education is merely transference of a restricted knowledge detached from its social, historical, and political roots and deposited on supposedly unenlightened students. This type of education, according to Freire, needed to be counteracted by an education as a practice of freedom, implying an educational process aware of its own role as a social and political vehicle, which could instead be used in liberation (2000:80).

In this sense, the learning process is attached to a transformation of reality in its indispensable relation to reflection, transformation, and practice. In terms of this research, this pedagogical view embraces one's lived experience as the starting point, both in the writing process and in the practical exercises. It also inspires the horizontal relationship of facilitator and participants as co-participants in the learning and transformational process, once "(…) human beings in communion liberate each other" (Freire 2000: 133). This has a very direct

impact in the way that the exercises are proposed to the readers, and were proposed to the groups I worked with. The idea of the exercises is not necessarily to teach, but to learn. It requires a constant reminder of asking the questions in a way of not expecting right answers or to pose the participants in a trap which would reinforce my worldview.

Another cornerstone of popular education is the nonhierarchical relation to knowledge. Local knowledge is valued equally as knowledge brought from different perspectives, and the discussion and dialogue among them is held in terms of contributing to the context. Popular education inspires a horizontal approach to different perspectives, always grounded in lived reality. However, to access experience, especially regarding dance and peace, perspective cannot be restricted to cognitive reasoning. The lived experience is broader than what can be reasoned, and requires a broader assessment of means to be contacted in its vibrant aliveness. The nonhierarchical relation of different forms of knowledge and the ground on lived experience is stretched, in order to encompass not only cognitive perspectives but also the multiple ways of knowing available to human beings.

A reality check seems appropriate to discuss this idea. I invite you to check how you identify that you are alive. Take some moments to consider the answer. Perhaps you feel your heart beat; or you realize that the fact of making meaning out of this question is indicative of life. Even a surprised reaction to the awkwardness of such a question may be telling you that. Doing this exercise with groups, the first thing that frequently came up was breathing, followed by checking the heartbeat, and thinking. What does this fast check tell us? Usually we use more than one source to gather information, and we frequently combine different observations. After nightmares, a usual reaction is to turn the lights on (if possible), to see the surroundings. In cases of traumatic events, breathing is used as the fastest way to reconnect to a sense of reality. Touching may also be resorted to, for example being touched on the back, holding hands, or feeling one's feet or body firmly planted on the ground. After checking these sources, one may

think, "Ok, I am safe", or at least perceive where one is and what is around her. This observation introduces the discussion on multiple ways of knowing, which anticipates some of the debates that take place later on, but it is crucial in this presentation of the methodology to highlight the sources from where knowledge is drawn from.

Scientific research has prioritized intellectual thinking as the source of knowledge, consequently disdaining other sources as non-scientific, not accurate, or too soft in contrast to what is considered the hard consistency of the restricted circle of scientific methods. The famous quote from Descartes, "I think, therefore I am" (1649: 51), has been used as the foundation for the approach to science based exclusively on rationality. Nevertheless, the exercise suggested above, regarding the checking of being alive, shows the insufficiency of such an assumption. An attempt to integrate the learning experienced from the above-mentioned exercise to this assumption generates something as 'We think - but also breathe, feel, sense - therefore we are'.

The very scientific observation involves other forms of knowing that facilitates and makes possible the process of observing. Having said that, it is important to emphasize that the multiplicity of ways of knowing does not invalidate the intellectual work of the scientific method, but integrates and differentiates other ways of knowing, identifying plural and complementary sources. Indeed, research methods that explicitly consider other ways of knowing as scientific sources challenge the intellect. It needs to organize more variables into a text, including information that is beyond its capability of processing. It also has to cope with not being able to understand and classify everything. For people who learned to research in modern ways, in which I include myself, these methods are very challenging, although they may also be very rewarding.

What are these multiple ways of knowing? From the initial exercise in this chapter I derived sensing (breath and heartbeat) and intellectual (thinking). To these, different authors

add other ways. Jung (2006) discerned about thinking, feeling, intuiting, and sensing, thereby contributing significantly to the recognition of the intuitive aspect as a source of knowledge. Ferrer, Albareda, and Romero called for breaking away from the dichotomization between cognicentrism and anti-intellectualism, fostering exploration of intellectual knowing and conscious awareness enriched by somatic, vital, emotional, aesthetic, intuitive, and spiritual knowing (2005).

In a similar stance, Gabrielle Roth based the medicine mandala of her 5Rhythms on body, heart, mind, soul, and spirit, and made a parallel between them and the acts of being, loving, knowing, seeing, and healing, respectively (5Rhythms 2015). Roth's distinction of the ways of knowing is comprehensive, without being extensive, and has been meaningful in practice as well, reasons why I adopt it in this research. Conferring a methodological stroke to Roth's mandala, Koppensteiner[2] lists the intellectual knowing of the mind, the sensuous and somatic knowing of the body, the emotional and empathic knowing of the heart, the intuitive knowing of the soul, and the visionary knowing through spirit.

Although it is possible to differentiate these ways of knowing, it is crucial to emphasize that they work together. There is a tendency in academia to see the head, especially the brain, as the good player, and the emotions and the body as the bad players, what Ferrer, Albareda and Romero called mental pride (2005). Consequently, other ways of knowing are forgotten, body and emotions are cast aside, or are dealt with in the expectation of eliminating the limitations they supposedly place to the rational brain. Unfortunately, this led to a long history

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[2] Personal notes on the lecture "*Transrational Methodologies of Peace Research*: *The Researcher as (Re)source*", held by Norbert Koppensteiner at the Innsbruck Many Peaces Academic Festival, at 11 August 2015, Innsbruck, Austria.

of denial of the essentiality of body and emotions to our presence in this world, which is detailed more in depth further on.

Ways of knowing work together, also in the sense of validating one another, or pointing to dissonances and incongruences. For example, I may have a gut feeling that a place is dangerous. After assessing my senses to check threat and rationally pondering risks, I realize that the situation does not offer danger. The gut feeling functioned in the sense of making me alert to possible risks (based on memory of threatening situations), while rational pondering led me to further evaluate the low risk of the situation. On the other hand, sometimes I try to reasonably justify an action, but my guts contort in my belly in what I interpret as resistance to the argument and a hint to act differently, even if I had not formulated a rationally-based counter-argument at that moment.

Another important reflection is that rationality is not pure or absolute. What is socially acceptable as rational is related to the known variables in a context and reflects a worldview of a particular group or person. Countless were the times when I heard two sides in a dispute saying that their perspective was the rational one, blaming the other side for being dominated by emotion, or illiterate, deceived, stupid (or all of these together). I have also caught myself in this cycle endless times, and the striking similarity with political discourses is not mere coincidence. What about the times when a decision has to be made between two very reasonable options? One does not exclude the other, and intuition may inform a choice that hopefully brings more adequate consequences for that context.

In other words, whenever I attach 'rational' to essentially 'good', and 'body or emotions' to essentially 'bad', I lose sight of a whole spectrum of human experiences that are valuable sources. The knowledge deriving from plural sources may inform a person of healthier ways of living together and enliven her connection to nature, and to a spiritual experience. In my experience, reason made me refrain from causing harm provoked by a burst of rage, and gut

feelings have convinced me of addressing a wrongdoing even when rationally I was trying to build the rationale to justify my inaction. Nausea is one of my reactions when dealing with overwhelming experiences that cannot be addressed immediately through reasoning. Goosebumps and strands of energy flow up my spine and indicate a valuable insight. Having these ways of knowing working together and balancing potential polarization is essential to the discussion on research as practice and a way of being, and specifically, to work with conflict transformation. Basically, the more dimensions informing an issue, the more holistic the perspective on it becomes.

This dynamic balance among multiple sources is important to establish a dialogue in which there is a constant back and forth between embodying and languaging. Referring to this dialogue, Les Todres argued that:

> Sometimes, the bodily depth of what one has lived through is 'more than words can say'. Yet such experience 'looks for' words. Sometimes, the language of what things mean changes bodily experience, and the words disappear; in and out language. Embodying language; languaging the body: each has its day in an ongoing process (2007: 34).

Concurring with this description of the process of embodying and languaging, dancing and thinking combine as entwining languages in the process of engendering knowledge. This means that I do not analyze movement as a primitive source of knowing to which I add meaning afterwards, but that I try to put it in words and reflect intellectually on the experience that happened, recognizing that parts of that experience are ineffable. In the same vein, after languaging, moving the words and connecting them with senses and feelings allows them to change and be changed by bodily experience. It is an ongoing process where each has its timing.

Also, this dialogue between languaging and embodying may be promoted by focusing attention on different sources at a time, searching for congruencies and discrepancies. So, the proposal is to start from where a person is, from what she feels, senses and observes, and then to compare, combine and complement it with knowledge already developed by theorists and

researchers. Anderson and Braud affirmed that a training of the ego is necessary to collaborate with these multiple sources of knowing, especially spiritual, in a process which may "(…) require a temporary suspension of critical thinking in order to access non-egoic input. Afterwards, ego steps forward to integrate the new material into the study" (2011: 132). This way, the objective is to delve not only into the social, historical and political areas that influence a person's perceptions of the world, but that are also inscribed in her muscles, emotional patterns, identity roles, and interpretation of intuitions. The understanding of this information contributes to a more aware presence in life.

Languaging these bodily experiences enables a sense-making that has a healing quality, which according to Les Todres:

> (…) involves the emotional relief that happens when words are felt to serve the uniqueness of personal experience. Such 'goodness of fit' is a pleasing reassurance that the private world can enter the shared space of language, and bridge the 'inner' and the 'outer' in a credible way (2007: 71).

There is healing in sense-making, in finding words and language that enables integration of pieces and sharing with others. Due to the correspondence in the ongoing process, there is also healing in embodying language, in that moment when words disappear in a presence aware of interrelations. The examples listed above as ways of sensing reality call my attention to the fact that they involve connection: I see my surroundings, I feel fresh air through breathing, I feel the touch of others or the ground. Sensing reality has a subjective aspect of feeling nested in the web of life. It is more than belonging, is being nurtured and made possible by this web. As well as words disappear, also that sense of temporal order and continuity are drawn to the presence of an encompassing here and now.

The creative process itself is more about observing than acting – being aware of the unfolding of visionary knowing of the spirit through the same participating ways of knowing. Practicing awareness to the multiple ways of knowing enables participation in the unfolding of

spiritual insight pouring out from the web of life. Openness to these processes lets this insight flood the senses again, fostering research and practice through knowledge attuned with spiritual inspiration.

The main tenets that inspired the workshops of this cycle of the research were the valorization of experiential knowledge, as well as the nonhierarchical and complementary value attributed to the multiple ways of knowing. They guided the development of exercises aimed at encouraging not only rational but also sensitive and emotional engagement, valuing these responses equally and dialoguing them. Furthermore, they inspired an attitude of respect and openness for intuitive and spiritual insights to blossom, and thereby inform the research/practice group held afterwards, and consequently inform this research.

### 1.3.3 Personal Experiences with Dance

The third source which informs this research is my own experience with dance. This decision is based on the multiple ways of knowing and the possibility of getting a broader perspective through participating in more ways than just thinking or feeling in the engendering of knowledge and perception of life itself. Furthermore, the productive dialogue between languaging and embodying has potential to benefit the reflective and writing process, while also informing a more authentic practice and a more grounded facilitation.

In the process of noticing and perceiving the experience I draw from phenomenology, and more specifically from Abram's ecological touch on it. Transpersonal research methods also inform this process, orienting the format of registering and presenting the experience through embodied writing, which I briefly introduce below. At first, I planned to use only embodied writing from experiences on dance itself, but practice revealed that the dancing, the reflections it sparked, and the presence nurtured by it contributed to interesting experiences and reflections also outside the dance floor, which I decided to register and use as source as well.

These observations of quotidian experiences enrich discussion in that they reveal the implication and feedback of practice in daily life and the ongoing aspect of transformation.

How does multiple ways of knowing inform the research? From noticing and observing information engendered by these ways in the first place to the following integration into a process of meaning-making and cognitive reflection, how to incorporate the information gathered as a material of study? Furthermore, how to communicate this experience in a way that does not discard the essence of the lived, but which conveys its textures?

Phenomenology has pondered such questions, and its manifold approaches are on the basis of the debate on the multiple ways of knowing. According to Husserl, the researcher turns toward the world as it is experienced, in a reflective self-experience, infusing consciousness in life in a way that suspends prejudice, allowing the immediacy of the experience to be itself. In the immediate "givenness" of experience, just color, texture, tone, and sensual data can be found (Husserl 1970: 233).

Taking Husserl's perspectives on phenomenology further, Merleau-Ponty described it as a study of essences, in which the world is not a creation of the view of the observer, but an inalienable presence. The researcher's effort is to rediscover the contact with the world in order to then endow it with philosophical status, combining the lived space and time, the lived world, with scientific research (Merleau-Ponty 2012: lxx). The aim is not necessarily to explain from a detached perspective, but to describe as closely as possible the way the world makes itself evident to awareness, the way things first arise in direct, sensorial experience.

It means "to give voice to the world from our experienced situation within it, recalling us to our participation in the here-and-now, rejuvenating our sense of wonder at the fathomless things, events and powers that surround us on every hand" (Abram 1996: 47). Usually the question asked is not why, but how – how something is noticed, what the process is through which a phenomenon is perceived. This turn implies a change of paradigm – it is not an

investigation of a part to try to derive absolute truth to apply to all components in a broader system, but to understand a phenomenon in its local and relational connection with the researcher.

However, this does not mean that the investigation is enclosed in the researcher, but also implies the impact of such observation in relation to other beings as well. Other beings are therefore not only receivers of focus or influence, but active participants in the relationship with the observer. Beings are part of nature, and their interaction is not only held but bred by the animate landscape. Sharing the same web of life, the experience in one body might be similarly felt by another one, reciprocally engendering expression and communication. Abram argued that: "by an associative 'empathy', the embodied subject comes to recognize these other bodies as other centers of experience, other subjects" (1996: 37).

Therefore, a phenomenon observed by the researcher is not only and completely restricted to his own perception of the world, but can also be understood as "(…) intersubjective phenomena – phenomena experienced by a multiplicity of sensing subjects" (Abram 1996:38). In this sense, research includes not only the attentive experience of the observer in connection to the world around him and putting that experience into words, but also the process by which the observations generated stir, or not, empathy in the reader. This resonance helps the participant and the reader make sense of the phenomenon through their own experience.

This resonance may happen considering past lived experiences or be derived through the practice - in the experiment itself. For example, when I describe my experience with dance, the reader may have also had previous similar impressions in dance, or may have felt something similar in life, but in a different context. Another possibility of validation is through the practice of the experiment, in this case dance, to verify if a similar process happens or not. The experience is never the same, because it is a different person in a different context and moment, but some textures of the experience may coincide.

In this sense, the reader, is not only receiver of information, but is part of a system of engendering knowledge. She is invited to join the experience with her whole presence and senses, in order to verify if a similar process happens to her or not, and how that happens. Abram described this process as to make senses, it means, to enliven the senses, to stir resonance through the sensation of the words and meanings having as landscape the language shared within the animate world (1996: 265). Nietzsche called a text with such a quality a dancing text, a text which gives the impression of being conceived not in a closed weary workroom but in leaping and dancing, in outdoor paths which become thoughtful themselves. A text that by its dancing quality entices the reader into movement (2001: 230).

Instead of the imagined distance of neutrality, intimacy is the key in the process of observing, sensing, feeling, and describing an experience afterwards. The researcher is required to open up, to allow language to drop directly from the heart, turning the inner sensor off. At the same time, it requires selective authenticity, which means not to sensor from fear or bias, but to select and debate the information that is important to further elaborate on the topic. The author does not hide behind objectivity, but explores and exposes her interactions with the topic, in order to enrich the discussion and instigate further investigations.

Anderson and Braud, from the standpoint of transpersonal research methods, argued in the same vein that:

> Reality does not exist apart from the embodied participation of being a specific human being with a particular physiology, history, personality, and culture but is interpretative and intersubjective. Human subjectivity is a source of knowing, not dismissible as solipsistic expression or opinion (2011: 64).

Therefore, the potential of this methodological approach in enriching research is based on the exploration of those personal perspectives. At the same time, usually the most personal experiences are those that have more potential of speaking to the human aspect in each of us (Rogers 1961). In other words, the deeper I go into myself, the greater the probability of touching an aspect that is part of our shared humanity. Nevertheless, this same aspect that

enriches research also delineates its limitations in terms of range. Limitation here is not understood as something intrinsically bad, as a flaw, but as revealing the natural incompleteness of such a perspective, leaving open possibilities for further exploration by other people from different points of views and backgrounds.

From this perspective in methods it follows that the separation between research and practice is not possible anymore, because the very process of researching is transformative in itself. The researcher is not only open to transformation, but attentive to it, and how it unfolds, its textures, rhythms, using her own process and the insights derived from it to inform the research. As Koppensteiner[3] argued, the researcher is, therefore, also a resource, who allows the changes suffered by her and the consequent changes in her lenses to provide the text new inputs and reflections stemming from the practice of research. The non-split between research and practice and between researcher and the object of research leads to a flow of information which allows every moment to be a research practice. Therefore, there is a commitment to incorporate this transformation not only as knowledge but also as a way of living.

That is exciting, because the opportunity is given to compose research which does not only generate information but also helps my own transformational process and possibly the processes of others - participants and readers. Anderson and Braud addressed this potential of transformation:

> (…) personal and communal transformation can be an accompaniment or outcome of research if (a) the research project has great personal meaning and is one in which the researcher can become intimately involved, (b) the chosen research approach (…) allows the researcher to engage in a greater variety of ways of knowing that usually is the case, and (c) the researcher more fully prepares herself or himself (and prepares the research participants and even the expected audiences

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[3] Personal notes on the lecture "*Transrational Methodologies of Peace Research*: *The Researcher as (Re)source*", held by Norbert Koppensteiner at the Innsbruck Many Peaces Academic Festival, at 11 August 2015, Innsbruck, Austria.

of the work) for the project at hand by identifying and improving a set of additional research skills that ordinarily are neglected (2011: xvii).

Following this perspective on transformation, I expect this research will help me be more compassionate, in a process of seeing others in their beauty, going beyond judgment and acknowledging their humanity in the plurality of their layers. This is the intentionality of transformation I expect as a researcher. It does not mean that there is a rigid outcome to be achieved by the end of the research, because that might hinder the openness necessary to allow transformation to happen in the first place. So, I work with this expectation of transformation in the sense of intentionality. There is an intention that motivates me to engage in this topic in which I would like to get new insights on. It is not in place to direct or control the outcomes, though. The road has to remain open for different insights to present themselves, and they may not be related to that initial motivation.

Reflecting on this phenomenon, Les Todres called this intentionality an invitation to the encounter in a meaningful way, in which transformation may happen in unanticipated ways, requiring "(…) a changing body and a changing mind" (2007: 89). There is a less linear perspective of time, which allows relating to intentionality without being obsessed about outcome. There are no guarantees of results, but openness to constant transformation. In sum, it takes me to the dance floor, open and comfortable with the fact that there are no guarantees on what will come out of the dance.

To convey the lived experience in written text I work with embodied writing, a method designed within transpersonal research. It is a method that "(…) seeks to reveal the lived experience of the body by portraying in words the finely textured experience of the body and evoking sympathetic resonance in readers" (Anderson 2001: 83). This method allows relaying human experience from the inside out, connecting the inner senses of the "(…) perceptual, visceral, sensori-motor, kinesthetic, and imaginal (…)" with the sensual world (Anderson 2001:

84). As discussed earlier, the connection of the human experience with the sensuous world is vital here as it is in the landscape that the experience dwells. Another split that these methods try to twist is the differentiation and hierarchy between culture and nature. Human beings are not separated from nature, but they are nature and therefore are part of the system. When I think out loud that I need more contact with nature, I laugh, imagining Mother Earth calling me a rebel child – you are nature – I hear her saying – just pay attention to yourself. Nevertheless, I do recognize that it is harder to see my connection to the gray buildings and bricks of a big city than to green leaves of trees dancing on a summer breeze, the magnitude of a mountain range topped with soft clouds, and vivid, fast flowing springs.

Following on that, it is important to emphasize that context matters and what I experience and observe is influenced by the world around me. According to Anderson and Braud, "entwining human sensibilities with the sensibilities of the world, embodied writing is itself an act of embodiment that nourishes an enlivened sense of presence in and of the world" (2011: 267-8). This sense of presence reveals itself through the very awareness of the process happening. Whereas embodied writing proposes to relay human experience from the inside out, the attention to the inner aspects makes the world around more alive, more evident through the very touch of this innerness. While it reveals a very personal experience, honoring the uniqueness of each being, the authenticity of each style and presence, it inevitably reveals the entwining of this same being into the web of life.

Embodied writing is challenging, though. It is difficult to switch from the learned conditioning of writing, which follows a very causal order with subject, action and object with the objective of argumentative persuasion. It took me some time and many loops of writing to switch from this structure to a connection with the experience which allows a flow of words less dominated by that conditioning. But when that happened, the words started pouring in such a natural flow that I could open myself to the experience in a way that other methods had not

allowed yet. After moments of hesitation, teetering on the edge, the fingers pended over the keyboard, I started with loose words, which then became more and more abundant and connected. Fingers trying to type as fast as the insights came, afraid of losing inspiration or being caught in the sensor mode. Heart beating fast, an awe by the process happening by itself and by the aliveness of the experience brought back through writing about it. Awe that I always try to regulate in order not to lose momentum.

It has been interesting to observe how writing about an experience and reading it afterwards sparkled bodily sensations similar to the ones felt then, providing access to textures and new layers of meaning. At times, I get shy after reading what I wrote, apprehensive of too much openness. That is the time to turn selective authenticity on, selecting the parts of the text that enrich the discussion and deleting others that do not contribute directly. It is also the moment to verify if the account is true to the experience, as well as the selection made. In this process, transformation happens not only by experiencing, but also by reliving the experience through the act of writing, which in turn makes writing times exciting.

When referring to my own embodied writing in the research, the paragraphs will be presented as part of the text. When referring to testimonies of the participants, I will present the text in direct quote. This enables the process of empathetic resonance to take place between text and the reader, before analytical interpretations are presented. It is expected, then, to provide the reader space to work on his own impressions before being influenced by the author's conclusions, enabling a dialogue to happen between the reader's interpretations and the ones from the author.

Referring back to the discussion on resonance, it is crucial to highlight the importance of the relationship between the text and the senses of the reader in embodied writing. The very

value and validity of this research technique rests in this process. Nevertheless, not everything is resonance. Anderson argued that through resonance:

> A rudimentary pattern of consensual validity starts to form. Another's depictions are similar enough to mine to help me feel through to the experience of another. It becomes a part of me. My understanding deepens and expands. On the other hand, some accounts feel neutral or dissonant, forming a rudimentary pattern of discriminative validity. Noting consonance, neutrality, or dissonance for individuals from different cultures and subgroups allows patterns of consensual and discriminative validity to emerge (Anderson, 1998b, 2000) (2001: 85).

The multiplicity of human experience is depicted as well on dissonance and neutral reactions to the written text. Dissonance and neutrality may happen as well to the same individual regarding different experiences depicted in the research. Therefore, the dynamic closeness and distance the reading generates invites not only for consensus but also for further exploration: "In this view, the 'authenticity' of a qualitative description or interpretation is also valued in terms of its ability to deepen personal insight in listeners and readers" (Todres 2007: 30). Personal insight that can be inspired by resonance and dissonance. This means that reader and writer do not have to share all the same experiences to make the process work, but that there can be an embodied understanding that words are colored by an extra tone reverberating a bodily sense of being present. In this interembodied process the participants in the dialogue "(…) have 'mores' and see through language in order that these 'mores' can have some common dimensions" (Todres 2007: 39). That explains the emphasis in a text that is personal, sensual, emotional, and rational, to involve the reader in the flow of relationality, generating movement and therefore a potential transformation.

Embodied writing can be a transformative process that involves relaying an experience and doing research as a way of being, encouraging action. Research as practice and practice as research engenders knowledge that is "for experience and action - for making sense of all that we are in relationship with and how we act in such contexts" (Todres 2007: 31). Involving the whole senses of the writer and reader, the transformative aspect encourages analysis, reflection,

and action, out of a desire to be of service, as a natural result of the ongoing transformation through which they undergo (Anderson and Braud 2011). Hopefully this text and the selections of embodied writing invite to action, to the dance itself.

### 1.3.4 Research/Practice Group on Dance as a Method to Elicit Transformation

The fourth source which informs this research involves a research/practice group held in the Eastern Mennonite University, in the state of Virginia, United States, where I was a visiting scholar at the Center for Justice and Peacebuilding in the Fall 2016. The main proposal was to explore dance and movement as method to elicit conflict transformation. The formation of the group followed a lecture, in which I presented the main aspects of this research, and invited the audience to participate in the research/practice group. The advertising of this presentation was made via multiple channels, mainly newsletter and direct communication to professors of various disciplines, with special focus on the Master in Conflict Transformation, and undergraduate classes on Peacebuilding, Arts, Education, and Theater. The audience of around thirty people that attended the presentation was mostly comprised of students and faculty of the Center for Justice and Peacebuilding, with some participation of people from other disciplines as well. After the presentation, there were fifteen emails in the list of people who were interested in joining the group, plus two other who had shown interest. A total of twelve people participated in the sessions throughout the semester.

Participants were all related to the Eastern Mennonite University, and eleven were peace and conflict workers and researchers associated to the Center for Justice and Peacebuilding. Seventy-five percent of the participants were female, while twenty-five percent were male, and the age range varied from twenty-three to forty-five years old. Most of them were students, but there were also two staff members and one faculty. The diversity in terms of country of origin was considerable: while seven participants (53,8%) were originally from North America – more specifically from the United States – most of them had intense international backgrounds related

to ancestry or traveling/working outside the country. Other participants came from West and East Europe, South America, Southeast Asia, and Eastern Asia.

From answers provided by participants on the pre-test form[4], it can be observed that they had plural understandings of peace, related to notions of wellbeing, harmony, calmness, justice, equitable power relations, respect, nonviolence, community, all life, and the divine. The same can be said about conflict, mentioned in relation to disagreement, disequilibrium, need for change, something natural, energy, opportunity, disconnection, and violence. When asked if they used any method, technique, or strategy to deal with conflict, they listed personal practices as meditation, reflection, journaling, exercise as a way to relieve stress and frustration, prayer, taking a step back, photography, writing, and love. The relational practices listed were dialogue, deep listening, Playback Theatre, community building, Nonviolent Communication, conflict coaching, strategic facilitation, mediation, talk-it-out, appreciative inquiry, holding safe space, keeping peaceful tone, and circle processes. Just one person declared using dance as a method to deal with conflicts, to which she added that she loved to dance, and that dancing brought her peace and allowed her to feel at peace in her body.

Regarding their motivation to participate in the research/practice group, love to dance was declared openly in three statements, while interest in moving and being physically active was also reported. Other motivations that led participants to join the group were interest in the intersection of dance and knowledge of one's emotions and expressions with peace and conflict; a belief in movement as a way of knowing and healing, and in arts as transformative; and pure curiosity.

The initial picture of the group can then be described as people who were very engaged in peace and conflict topics, used some methods to deal with conflicts, and were interested in

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[4] The forms used and the aggregated answers can be found in the Appendix.

dance to some extent, being it due to previous experience in dance or just general interest in body practices. Although it did not appear in this first survey, the presence of friends was emphasized in the interviews by the participants. Some of them had friendships which dated back to previous encounters in class and social meetings, and they had shared experiences in transformative methods. Some of the participants, on the other hand, did not have significant contact with the other participants before the dance sessions. My own connection with some of them initially consisted of one weekly class in the Master in Conflict Transformation.

There were no preconditions for participation in the group, it was open for whoever was interested. The frequency was also not mandatory, so there were three persons who could participate on only one of the sessions, while the other sessions had approximately six to seven participants. The smallest session was held with three participants besides me, and the largest with ten. The involvement of the participants in all cases were at their own pace and possibility; participation in the activities was not mandatory and they could opt out at any time. The occurrence of any adverse conditions such as injuries was unlikely, but risks were minimized by reminding them to be aware of their bodies and being attentive to the body's responses to movements. Participation was voluntary, no benefits were offered. Snacks, water, and tea were provided, and a candle was lit in a corner decorated with colored cloths.

Regarding the structure of the dance sessions, I had projected eight meetings, based on content and time availability through the semester. Due to a personal appointment one of the meetings could not take place as expected, so I adapted the plan for seven sessions instead. Hence, this group participated in seven encounters of approximately one hour and thirty minutes each. These encounters were directed specifically to the exploration of dance and movement as a method for conflict transformation. The session involved mainly spontaneous movement and dance, inspired by different rhythms, with some guided exercises based on dance, theater, and meditation. Verbal guidance was provided to draw attention to different observations, such as

body parts, breath, sensations, feelings and emotions, as well as, exploration of energies moving freely or stuck in parts of the body. Moreover, participants were also oriented in some activities to explore repetitive patterns of movement and discover different forms, and their relational interaction in terms of openness to explore movement with others while connecting to their own flow, identifying safe space, and the negotiation of boundaries in the moving relationship. Participants and I sat in a circle at the end of each practice, providing an open space for sharing words, impressions, questions, or silence. Participants were invited to write down their own experiences using embodied writing, and nine of them were interviewed when the activities ended.

The details of each session are described in Chapter Four, as well as comments by the participants collected during the interviews. At this point, I detail the methodologies used in the facilitation of the group sessions, in the surveys applied, and in the interviews. The forms are presented in the Appendix, as well as the compilation of answers. I planned one survey to be applied at two different moments – at the beginning of the research (called Pre-test) and at the end of the semester (called Post-test). This survey was composed of two parts. The first part was structured in a Likert-type scale with six options ranging from less confident to more confident, or less comfortable to more comfortable, and not very often to very often - according to the questions. The second part comprised open-ended questions about participants' understandings of peace, conflict, methods used to deal with conflict, and motivations to participate in the research/practice group. I collected ten surveys in the first collection phase (the Pre-test). The answers contributed to the conceptualization of a group picture and act as a baseline when we started.

I set out to extract information by analyzing the comparison of their answers before the participation in the group and afterwards and so I redistributed the same survey in the last day of practice (called Post-test), but collected just six answers this time. Some participants could

not join the last session due to personal, academic and professional appointments, and others had to leave right after the end of the session and did not complete the survey. Due to the disparity in the number of surveys in the pre- and post-test (ten to six), I refrained from doing a comparative analysis and instead I used the qualitative feedback as independent source of information.

A second means to gather feedback was an evaluation form, handed out in the mid-term and in the last day of the sessions. These evaluations, called 'reflections' were based on Nonviolent Communication, and concerned actions which contributed to wellbeing and discomfort, and consequent needs met and unmet during the sessions, as well as feelings generated and possible requests. This structure is detailed further on when I introduce Nonviolent Communication. This instrument was useful for collecting reactions and responses to the exercises, and in the case of the mid-term reflection helped redirect some activities. I did not include these forms in the one hour and a half time allotted for the sessions, preferring to dedicate them to dancing, and send links to the participants to fill them out afterwards. However, the level of response to these forms was very low, and I got only three answers in total, using them as a contribution to the organization of the sessions, but not as a direct source for the outcomes of the research.

The third means used to collect information was interview. I conducted interviews with nine participants individually, of which I present excerpts in the fourth chapter. I met with the participants after the sessions were over. Seven were conducted in person, and two were conducted by videoconference. In order to preserve confidentially, as requested by some of the interviewees, some names have been changed.

I have referred to Nonviolent Communication as a base for the reflections at mid-term and at the end of the research/practice groups project. My objective in modelling the evaluation through the lenses of Nonviolent Communication was to gather information beyond cognitive

like or dislike, trying rather to understand if the practice helped them to meet some of their needs or not, access requests connected to those needs, and in which ways that experience could bring change to everyday life. Furthermore, Nonviolent Communication also inspired how I communicated as facilitator of the dance sessions, and as an interviewer. In what follows, I introduce some concepts of Nonviolent Communication to clarify how it connects to my research. Empathy was a topic addressed by the methodologies described previously as well, but in Nonviolent Communication it gains even more prominence in terms of communication and action. More objectively, Nonviolent Communication permeated the planning and evaluation of the activities through the lens of needs, the verbal guidance used during the sessions, and the active listening in communication with participants during sessions and the interviews.

Evaluation methods are frequently based on the idea of what the participant in the role of evaluator liked and what she disliked. This often implies judgments of good or bad in a flat way, not considering the subjectivity of the terms and further implications of the activities. Twisting this dichotomy makes it possible to reach deeper layers of understanding. The activities developed in the research/practice group involved work on topics that are not necessarily comfortable or pleasurable. It often encompasses exploring outside of one's comfort zone, expanding it, paying attention to pain and suffering, as well as emotions often considered bad, like anger or sadness, and stories of conflict itself - usually faced as challenging at least.

A like-dislike dichotomy tends to highlight things of which I want more, and things I want to be away from, consequently losing touch of a whole spectrum of learning and insight that may be available in an out-of-comfort-zone situation. It also reflects the aspects of relationality and context, being related to that specific group in that specific moment, because needs may change according to these two – and many other variables. The needs-based evaluation carried out with the groups, then, is expected to reveal more about the transformation

that took place and how it did or did not meet the needs of the participants. This format also allows participants to communicate different ways their needs can be met.

In more subtle ways, Nonviolent Communication orients the design of the exercises, the active listening, and the verbal suggestions provided in the facilitation, in terms of the human interaction on the dance floor. Nonviolent Communication can be considered a method for presenting spoken language less violently, but the principles in which it is based, especially compassion, inspires the entirety of human interaction. Dance is becoming, expressing, and connecting, and therefore also benefits from compassionate lens. There are other approaches that are also based on compassion and could be used in this perspective, but I chose to focus on Nonviolent Communication as method because of the simple and practical structure directed to daily use in human relationships. Additionally, it has been fundamental to my perspective as a peace and conflict worker and inevitably informs my practice.

Nonviolent Communication principles and practices contributed to my work and well-being because it helped me to see my biases and the possibility of seeing beyond them, searching for a deeper connection with other human beings. It departs from the perception that the language used in daily life is mostly violent, based on judgments about what is right and wrong, in attack and defense. This way of communicating may lead to different assumptions: or a person assumes she is completely victorious, or a total failure, or not responsible or guilty for the consequences of her acts (Rosenberg 2005: 15-22). These three assumptions may happen sequentially or concomitantly in her head, but they illustrate a very narrow picture of what is happening and may generate unhealthy patterns of communication. Good news is that Rosenberg, who gave form to Nonviolent Communication, identified these responses as unnatural, learned responses, in opposition to what he calls a natural way of communicating, based on compassion (2005).

In order to counter this violent communication, he described a communication based on natural donation, empathy, and solidarity. The basic assumption is that as human beings we share the same needs, like autonomy, integrity, celebration, leisure, interdependence, harmony, peace, order, and physical needs (shelter, water, food, air, protection, touch, sexual expression), among others (2005: 54-5). So, needs are shared, but what definitely vary are the strategies to have those needs met. There can be very violent, manipulative, and disrespectful strategies of meeting those needs, and in order to navigate this terrain the challenge is to speak and listen through needs, not through strategies (Rosenberg 2005: 12).

Behind feelings there is always a need, so if a person is feeling exacerbated anger, shame, fear of judgments, she is not connected in her heart with compassion, but is trapped in mind trips making moral judgments of someone else or herself (Rosenberg 2005: 3-4). Deep listening is essential in this discernment, to be able to disentangle observation from evaluation, allowing oneself to go beyond judgments, and connecting to the humanity of the other person. It does not deny evaluation, just calls for this disentanglement (Rosenberg 2005: 26-32). It is also substantial to anchor dialogue in responsibility. This means that there are always options; structures and other people cannot force you to do what you do not want to do. Following that, a person does not ascribe responsibility for her acts and feelings to someone else (Rosenberg 2005: 49-50).

Knowing of the difficulty of putting these ideas into practice, Nonviolent Communication offers techniques and exercises to integrate these insights into daily life. Nevertheless, the emphasis is on the intention and the transformation of the attitude. One may follow rigorously the steps of the technique, but if she is not speaking from a compassionate place, communication may still be violent. In my understanding, this compassionate place translates as presence, being in the here and now moment with the other person; as empathy, recognizing oneself in the pain and joy of the other person; and as compassion, recognizing

oneself in the pain of the other and also in his will to be happy and his potential for doing so. These are the main principles of Nonviolent Communication, which I use as a base for inspiring my own transformation in terms of compassion, the facilitation of the groups, interviews, and evaluation.

Regarding the research/practice group sessions, another method needs to be addressed - the 5Rhythms. The theoretical and personal influences of this practice is discussed throughout the text, but it is important to introduce the practice earlier and pinpoint how it inspired the design and structure of the sessions and organization of the rhythms in each dance. My first contact with the 5Rhythms was intellectual - Gabrielle Roth's books were recommended to me. The first experience with the 5Rhythms came in a workshop in 2012, and resonated deeply with my experience and expectation: the transformative power of movement.

The 5Rhythms is called by its founder, Gabrielle Roth, a moving meditation. In her quest to live life in its plenitude, Gabrielle Roth developed a "(…) dynamic movement practice - a practice of being in your body—that ignites creativity, connection, and community" (5Rhythms 2015). Based in the United States, she developed her work at the Esalen Institute, where her practice was informed by humanistic psychology. She also received influence from training with Oscar Ichazo and his Arica approach, and shamanism - she called herself an urban shaman (Roth 1998a, Juhan 2003: 78). Throughout the years of practice and exploration, she developed a map she referred to as rhythms of the soul, based on an understanding of movement as energy and energy as the flow of life. Quoted in Ansell, Roth argued that: "energy moves in waves. Waves move in rhythms. Rhythms move in patterns. Patterns move in cycles. A human being is just that – energy, waves, rhythms, patterns and cycles. Nothing more, nothing less. A dance" (Ansell 2015: 93).

The metaphor of the wave then gives name to the journey of dancing throughout the rhythms of flowing, staccato, chaos, lyrical, and stillness, which mark different qualities in the

ever-unfolding movement. "Each rhythm suggests a vibration, a quality of movement, a state of mind or consciousness, and a state of being" (Juhan 2003: 85). Roth established a connection among the rhythms, the cycles of life (birth, childhood, puberty, maturity and death), the layers of the human being (body, mind, heart, soul and spirit), emotions (fear, anger, sadness, joy and compassion), processes of the soul (inertia, imitation, intuition, imagination and inspiration), and spirit (being, loving, knowing, seeing, healing), encircling these elements in a medicine mandala which unfolds the interconnections of movement as healing transformation (5Rhythms 2015).

Basically, the 5Rhythms is practiced with music (or in silence) and requires nothing more than presence to observe what is there in the moment, allow it to emerge, be acknowledged, and watch it fade away in a continuous wave (Juhan 2003: 86). There is no teacher to copy, in the sense of traditional dance, and no repetition of techniques. It is a journey in which each person listens to his or her own impulses exploring movements throughout the rhythms and within each moment, with deep listening to the creative life force bumping on the dance floor (Juhan 2003: 85). There are no strict rules of space, dressing, frequency, or right or wrong way to do it, and Roth suggested that each person is responsible to explore her own pace, space, depth and connection within the practice. The only commitment is to bring one's own presence and move: "we are constantly changing and any practice meant to serve our authenticity should reflect our fluid nature" (Roth 1998a: 15).

While it seems a simple practice, the 5Rhythms "(…) combines the serious discipline of structured meditation, (…), with the creative and therapeutic process of following impulse, instinct, inspiration, expression and divine guidance" (Juhan 2003: 85). Even though it facilitates such openness, it leaves space of agency for the person to balance her own journey through the rhythms. Expressing the process of awareness motivated by the rhythms, Roth described them as follows:

> In flowing you discover yourself. In staccato you define yourself. Chaos helps you dissolve yourself, so you don't end up fixed and rigid in the self you discovered and defined. Lyrical inspires you to devote yourself to digging deep into the unique expression of your energy. And stillness allows you to disappear in the big energy that holds us all so you can start the whole process again (1998a: 194).

A different approach to the rhythms can be through the lens of masculine and feminine energies: the round and fluid earthly feminine energy is present in flowing; the angular, percussive and fiery masculine energy in staccato; chaos is their encounter in a dissolution of barriers and surrender to the energies released out of their union. Lyrical is the airy, light, celebrative and effortless vivacity after the energetic release, and stillness the quiet vibrating place emptied and unified in the flow (Roth 1998a: 43, Roth 1998a: 159, Juhan 2003: 85-6). Dancing the rhythms is to tap into the power of those energies existing within each person in a catalytic process (Roth 1998a: 159). Through music and movement, the practice guides the dancer through a journey of exploration which may encompass self and connections, feelings and spirituality. The wave releases the body, opens up the heart and empties the mind, in a journey to be more resonant and responsive (Roth 1998a: 24, 2004: 104).

In the continuous aspect of the wave, the unfolding transformation of body, mind, soul, and spirit reveals itself. Practice, then, entails "(…) the ability to enter and sustain ecstatic states of being, a place of no mind, no personality, of total ecstatic timeless union with spirit" (Juhan 2003: 86-7). 5Rhythms then informs this research in the organization of the overall arch of the sessions and the music, inspired in the wave. It is appropriate to state that the sessions facilitated in the context of this research were not official 5Rhythms classes, but draw from that source. Its philosophical approach is also present in this research in the discussion of dance as a method to elicit conflict transformation, and it is also the floor in which some of my experiences take place.

I also draw inspiration and some exercises from Theatre of the Oppressed, a theater form developed by the Brazilian theater director Augusto Boal. First elaborated in 1970, he continued

working and developing it throughout his life, deriving different approaches and techniques according to need and context. Influenced by Paulo Freire and his ideas on popular education, Boal's technique uses theater as means for social and political change, and is not only performative but interactive. The members of the audience are not considered spectators, but spect-actors, liberating theater from the wall which divided stage and audience, allowing for a vibrating collective dynamicity which leads to action. The purpose, according to him, is liberation: "(…) the spectator no longer delegates power to the characters either to think or to act in his place. The spectator frees himself; he thinks and acts for himself! Theatre is action!" (Boal 2008: 135).

In one of its most known forms, Forum Theatre, the spect-actor is invited, at some point of the performance, to assume the stage and substitute the actor (also a spect-actor, either a professional actor or someone drawn from the community) in the character, sharing and testing different alternatives of action in the situation being portrayed. In this participation, the spect-actor not only thinks and interprets, but also voices and enacts possibilities of change, in what may be the end of the scene, but is the beginning of a necessary social transformation taken from the theater to life. This commitment to social change is an uncompromising element in the Theatre of the Oppressed: "as we all know, it is not enough to interpret reality: it is necessary to transform it!" (Boal 2006: 6).

In order to transform the spectator into actor, Boal developed exercises and techniques to free the person of her condition of object and witness into subject and protagonist (2008: 102). Respecting the diversity of knowledge in each group and person, instead of bringing some alien element to guide this process these exercises begin with the body of the participants, with the objective of bringing awareness to the body and body's possibilities and limitations, including those imposed by context, rules, work, and experience (Boal 2008: 103). It is with this same intent of bringing attention to the body through creative and compelling exercises that

I draw from the framework of Theatre of the Oppressed. However, I am also informed by the twisting in the dichotomy 'oppressed versus oppressor' promoted by the more systemic approach held by David Diamond and his Theatre for Living. Having worked with Theatre of the Oppressed for many years, Diamond developed Theatre for Living as an art and science of community-based dialogue, as the subtitle of his book states (2007). Influenced by systems theory, Diamond focused his work not on the oppressed and oppressor relationship, but in making connections. Therefore, it investigates forms that contribute to healthier ways of being together in living communities (Diamond 2007: 24).

This research draws from different sources in order to encompass a look into this multidisciplinary approach to dance and movement as method to elicit conflict transformation and unfold peaces. It is based on literature from a variety of fields, as detailed in the following chapter, and on practical observation and experimentation. This second step involved workshops on culture of peace, from where I derive exercises and the approach to the engendering of knowledge valuing communally held knowledge, inspired by popular education, as well as the multiple ways of knowing.

I also bring my personal experience with dance, inspired by phenomenology and depicted with embodied writing. Finally, I draw from a research/practice group on dance as method to elicit conflict transformation, which is influenced by Nonviolent Communication, 5Rhythms, Theatre of the Oppressed, and Theatre for Living. These sources and the methodologies involved contribute to this research in their overlapping and differentiated aspects, not as isolated theories but as interconnected systems informing a multidisciplinary study through feedback loops of reflection and action - theory and practice.

## 1.4 State of the Art

The study of dance as a method to elicit conflict transformation and unfold peaces requires an interdisciplinary approach. As such, this research develops from a nexus between

peace and conflict studies, and dance and movement studies, drawing from varied approaches from history of religions and spirituality, history of dance, dance and movement therapy, humanistic psychology, and postmodern philosophies.

In peace and conflict studies, I ground my work in the many peaces and the transrational philosophy, consistently developed by Wolfgang Dietrich in his *Interpretations of Peace in History and Culture*, and explored further in his groundbreaking *Elicitive Conflict Transformation and the Transrational Shift in Peace Politics*. This is the lens through which I explore the nexus between peace, conflict, and dance, relying on the elicitive approach as the reference for a practical investigation on dance as a method for conflict transformation. The elicitive approach was first introduced by John Paul Lederach in his book *Preparing for Peace: Conflict Transformation Across Cultures* and further explored in his later works (2003 and 2005). Of resounding importance to this research is also Lederach's *The Moral Imagination: The Art and Soul of Building Peace*, which lays the basis for seeing peace and conflict not only as science but also as art. *When Blood and Bones Cry Out*, from Lederach and Angela Jill Lederach, was also insightful in the exploration of the healing power of words and sounds. Dietrich drew from Lederach's elicitive approach to elaborate on elicitive conflict transformation as the practical implication of the theoretical framework of the transrational peaces. Exploring methods which contribute to elicitive conflict transformation, Dietrich identified movement-oriented methods and explored, among others, 5Rhythms and Butoh dance as such practices. This is the crossing point of dance and peace and from where I ventured further to research the potential of dance as a practice of peace and conflict transformation, drawing also from my earlier research (Facci 2011).

Identifying spirituality as essential in a transrational approach to dance and an inescapable element of the elicitive process of transformation, I researched the history of spiritual traditions. This study facilitated the understanding of the background which delineates

different approaches to spirituality in current methods and body-mind practices. In this area, the seminal works of Heinrich Zimmer (1951), Joseph Campbell (1991), and Karen Armstrong (2001 and 2006) provided the broad perspective into religious and spiritual ideas. I also relied on the *Tao Te Ching* from Lao Tsu for a specific understanding of Taoism. Narrowing my perspective to spiritual practices which could contribute to an understanding of dance as a method of transformation, I focused on readings on Tantric traditions. Swami Veda Bharati (2013), Jack Kornfield (2009), Vessantara (1993), and Georg Feuerstein (1998) provided the thorough explanation of tantric principles and practices with a grounding perspective in an often-misinterpreted area. A closer look in awareness and meditation offered details on tools for the exploration of the self. For that, I drew from the simple, practical, and poetic explanations of Thich Nhat Hanh (1990 and 1999), and from Jon Kabat-Zinn's comprehensive work on meditation from a clinical point of view (1990).

To approach the practices of dance related to spirituality, I delved into the history of dance. Gayle Kassing (2007) and Mary Clarke and Clement Crisp's encompassing works (1981) provided the overall view on dances throughout history. Marie-Gabriele Wosien's *Sacred Dances* detailed aspects and elements of those dances, as well as pointed out consequences of the meeting of those dances with moral and modern traditions. Rodrigo Grünewald (2005) provided the analysis on the *toré*, one of the examples of energetic practice, and Annemarie Schimmel (1977) and Manijeh Mannani (2010) on Sufi whirling. This topic was further explored in Reneé Critcher Lyons' *The Revival of Banned Dances*, which laid the path for further explorations on the encounters and divergences between dance and the different understandings of peace.

For this exploration, I followed Dietrich's perspective on the interplay of Apollonian and Dionysian forces as an analogy to peace and conflict, drawing from Friedrich W. Nietzsche's *The Birth of Greek Tragedy* to further explore this interplay as a connecting thread

between dance and peace. The many peaces was then the structure on which I developed this analysis, dialoguing them with the pioneering thoughts of Ivan Illich (1981) and Jean-François Lyotard (1984). This debate was enriched by the innovative debates proposed on Francisco Muñoz' *Imperfect Peace*, the *Peacemaking Philosophy* of Vicent Martínez Guzmán, and Norbert Koppensteiner's *The Art of the Transpersonal Self*.

These approaches on interpretations of peace were interspersed with perspectives on dance from varied authors. Crisp and Clarke (1981) and Kassing (2007) provided the overview regarding folk, court dances and ballets which were dialogued with Mikhail M. Bakhtin's (1984) and Roberto DaMatta's (1997) insightful debates on carnival as popular Dionysian art. This debate was later complemented by Chris Roebuck's (2004) rereading of Louis XIV's Apollo and Bernard Taper's (1984) presentation of George Balanchine's modern Apollo, continued by a critique to ballet by Deirdre Kelly (2012). To substantiate my approach to the impacting contributions of Isadora Duncan in the light of the postmodern, I relied on her own writings (1928 and 2013), as well as on innovative perspectives on her work by Ann Daly (2010) and Sally Banes (1987).

I approached the transrational perspective drawing from some of its influences. Adam Curle's seminal thinking and practice is approached through his writings compiled in *Adam Curle: Radical Peacemaker*, the important edition organized by Tom Woodhouse and John Paul Lederach. I also drew from Gregory Bateson's substantial discussion on systems theory and the concepts of homeostasis and balance (1987). Fritjof Capra's (1982 and 2000) revolutionary dialogue between physics and eastern mysticism contributed to the understanding of the transrational, particularly with his discussion on energy. The energetic aspect was approached also with Ken Dychtwald (1986) and his perspective on the body aligned with the chakra philosophy.

In the field of psychology, Carl G. Jung provided the understandings on the persona and the shadow (1981 and 1959). Ken Wilber's theories, especially the idea of holons detailed in *Sex, Ecology, Spirituality*, are discussed as they inform transrationality. To shed light on the human potential approaches, Carl Roger's *On Becoming a Person* was highly inspirational, not only in its contribution to the perspective on peace but also on conflicts. Virginia Satir's works, with emphasis on *The Satir Model: Family Therapy and Beyond,* were relevant to the philosophical as well as practical understanding of conflict and the process of change. The discussion on conflict transformation drew from these authors, and was enriched by a dialogue with the approach on resolution offered by Hugh Miall, Oliver Ramsbotham and Tom Woodhouse (2010). Paulo Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (2000), was crucial to understand the elicitive aspect of transformation, and also inspired my methodology.

Arriving at methods for eliciting conflict transformation, I relied on Don Hanlon Johnson's (1998) edition of collected works from pioneers of practices of embodiment, such as Elsa Gindler, Marion Rosen, F.M. Alexander, Thomas Hanna and Ilda Rolf, and their contributions to humanistic psychology's perspectives on the body. Of singular importance for a reflection on methods developed by humanistic psychology was Jeffrey Kripal's research on Esalen (2008). Abraham Maslow's perspective on self-actualization debated in *Motivation and Personality* is referred to as a major reference for methods that study the avenues of human potential. From the universe of methods developed at Esalen, I focused on the innovative work of Gabrielle Roth with dance, detailed in her books *Maps to Ecstasy*, *Sweat your Prayers*, and *Connections*. From a different focus, in the nexus of dance and therapy, I relied on the competent editions of collected works on Authentic Movement by Patricia Pallaro (1999) and on Dance/Movement Therapy by Sharon Chaiklin and Hilda Wengrower (2009). These collections trace developments in the discipline and highlight main achievements in their areas.

In the exploration of essential elements to provide frame and intention to the transformative aspect in the dance practice, Kimerer LaMothe's unique *Nietzsche's Dancers* offered insights into the Apollonian and Dionysian aspects. It also informed the relation of these energies with body and bodily becoming, in a dialogue with Nietzsche, Marta Graham, and Isadora Duncan. The Lenore Friedman and Susan Moon (1997) edition on being bodies from Buddhist and feminist perspectives offered intrepid insights through the lenses of personal experiences of women dealing with suffering and joy. Alan Fogel's *Body Sense* provided a comprehensive and accessible neurobiological perspective on embodied self-awareness, which helped me dialogue body, feelings, mind, dance, and awareness.

In terms of methodology, I drew inspiration from David Abram's *The Spell of the Sensuous* and his interesting ecological approach on phenomenology on the thread of Edmund Husserl (1970) and Maurice Merleau-Ponty (2012). I also relied on Rosemarie Anderson and Willian Braud's (2011) extensive work on the potentials and limitations of transpersonal research methods. Particularly on the method of embodied writing I focused on Rosemarie Anderson's discussion (2001). Les Todres (2007) offered valuable insights on embodied enquiry in the setting of psychotherapy that informed, together with Jorge Ferrer (2003 and 2005), the approach on the multiple ways of knowing. The practical activities also benefited from Nonviolent Communication presented by Marshall Rosenberg (2005), the creative work of Augusto Boal (2005, 2006 and 2008), and David Diamond's systemic approach to theater (2007).

I had the continuous confirmation that this topic was very dear to me by having many "yes" feelings while reading the books. Their contents often brought tears to my eyes – sometimes tears of shared sadness, other times tears of joy and awe for our shared humanity. And it is in the exploration of the potential of dance to access and put into motion the pain and

joy of human existence - through the unique expression of each person - that I venture into this research.

## 2 Many Peaces and the Transrational Perspective

If peace has shown to be experienced differently by the dozens of participants in this study, how many visions of peace, in difference and richness, can possibly exist among distinct cultures? Although experientially peace may have revealed itself in multiple ways, many generations of the twentieth century, in which I find myself, learned to conceptualize it as the opposite of war, and to relegate it to the decision and expertise of those representatives of the state, who would have the power to make wars or to promote peace.

The consequences of politics led by government representatives, nevertheless, raised discontentment regarding the top-down model of war or a monopoly of the state to promote peace. Studying the history of the World Wars, Cold War, Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Holocaust, and watching news about the genocides and civil wars occurring in the 80s and 90s reinforced my perception that the way conflicts were dealt with was misguided. What to say about 9/11, terrorism, and state terrorism in the new twenty-first century, which was expected to be so bright and technological? The century in which we, the so-called generation Y, would make a better future? A bitter taste of failure began to be distinguished amidst sweetness. Critiques directed at the United Nations, my idol representative of changing the world into a better place, began slowly to create cracks in my dream of a future without wars. There was still the emerging role of civil society and media that could tip the balance of power in favor of a more just world. Nevertheless, the range of intervention sounded quite small compared to expectations, and sincerely, not so glamorous.

Studying International Relations in the beginning of the twenty-first century was not an easy job. Amid this crisis, stood me and other international relations students, engaged in trying to understand this scenario. After the primary engagements with the discipline's basic literature, I seemed to be in a dualist world, where we should choose one side to stand with: being a hard-

core realist or a dreamy idealist, as the students would label each other. At this point I presume it is clear that I stood with the dreamers, while I found a third way in cultural studies. The later engagement with other main authors of the discipline did not change significantly this dual perspective, only seemed to make it more sophisticated. Hence, sustaining my dream of peace and an end to wars using the theories available within the scope of International Relations was tough. There I met what I later realized to be postmodern angst.

I got in contact with the transrational perspective in peace studies, and its approach translated my uneasiness with the current perspectives. Nevertheless, it also shattered my dreams of achieving a state of absolute peace in a utopic bright future. And, in doing so, provided the ground I was searching for: a perspective based on practice, that recognized the multiplicity and complexity of the human being, and the potential as well as the responsibility of each one to peace and conflict transformation. Though, sometimes I still struggle with the young idealist inside of me to avoid holding on to this - or any other theory too strongly, and to be aware of what transformation I am talking about.

In Chapter Two, I explore interpretations of peace in culture and history following Dietrich's five families of peace (2012). To elicit and illustrate understandings of peace from daily life, the research is interspersed with personal and group experiences, dialoguing them with expressions of dance related to those interpretations. The objective is to shed light onto the relation of peace and dance in their different understandings, identifying elements which contribute to experiences of peace. In the course of the text, I suggest several exercises, inviting the reader to reflect on your own experiences of peace before engaging in the concepts, in an attempt to anchor the debate also on your own experience. The second subchapter details the

concept of transrational peace, delving into its principles, themes, and layers and exploring potentials and limitations of dance as provider of experiences of peace.

## 2.1 Many Peaces

Peace is a singular word in many languages, such as English, Portuguese, Spanish, and French. In Portuguese, my native language, there is only one situation in which the use of the plural form is grammatically correct, *fazer as pazes*, that is when we talk about people reconciling and making peace. Also, when typing, the automatic corrector of the text editor of my computer continues to change peaces to Peace with a capital letter, or underlining it in red to reinforce that the plural form is grammatically incorrect. I am glad the program is democratic enough so I can include "peaces" in my own personal dictionary. These uses of the word peace in language reveal a lot about its conceptual understanding as something unitary, absolute, almost solid. But this understanding contrasts with the multiple answers I invariably get from participants from the exercises I illustrated in the introduction, regarding experiences of peace in daily life. Every time I do this exercise with a group, I get different answers, and people can also identify with more than one practice as providing an experience of peace.

The variety of these perspectives on peace revealed itself to Wolfgang Dietrich and Wolfgang Sützl (1997) in their groundbreaking work. They realized that people would talk and discuss peace in its singular form, allegedly in a scientific and objective way, but each person had her own position as to what the word meant. Therefore, it would not be a surprise if no consensus could be reached, or constructive dialogue possible in meetings about peace and conflict. Departing from postmodern disillusionment, they realized that:

> The search for the "one peace" is identified as part of a larger universalist mode of thinking which in its totality rests upon disrespectful and therefore unpeaceful basic assumptions, so that the guidelines for action and the real politics that derive from it do at least have the potential for a continuous renewal of violence (Dietrich and Sützl 1997: 10).

They emphasized that the perspective of the one peace is intrinsically violent, because it conceals differences and incompatibilities, homogenizing a plurality by the standards of the conceivers of that idea. This is violent and disrespectful because it imposes a singular perspective and a specific way of living on others who do not share the same worldview. As meaning-making beings, the very act of having to abide to a contradicting worldview may be unbearable. One peace is, therefore, insufficient in a plural world of concrete societies (1997: 15). Drawing from Ivan Illich's perspective on peace as "that condition under which each culture flowers in its own incomparable way" (1981: 54), Dietrich and Sützl emphasized plurality and difference as intrinsic attributes to a peace that is not violent.

Highlighting the importance of culture to the discussion of peace, Illich emphasized that it has always given meaning to peace, which is as vernacular as speech (1981: 53). Illich's concept therefore bounds place as an important element of the different understandings of peace. The idea of a peace that is local emerges, related to place and culture, and therefore to the people who interact in such frames. Following the postmodern thread of doubting the absolute assumptions of modernity, evidence in everyday experience becomes reference for this approach to the many peaces. In other words, concepts stem from everyday experience and their meanings are attached to place, time, and relationships between people involved in generating and recreating this meaning. The authors therefore argue that "without being related to concrete places it [peace] will never have any social power and remain an abstraction in the brains of peace researchers" (Dietrich and Sützl 1997: 15). Abstractions that, as pointed out above, are not harmless, but may be violent as they underpin and justify actions. There is, thus, a call for many peaces that are local and relational (Dietrich and Sützl 1997: 16). Recognizing this is the first step toward respect for multiplicity and potentially a more comprehensive understanding of peaces.

As peace is multiple, what are its different interpretations? Illich said that "each people's peace is as distinct as each people's poetry" (Illich 1981: 53). What are the verses that compose the mosaic of your perspective on peace? As it is local and relational, I invite you to think of sayings about peace that you came across. Are there different patterns or references? Also think of people who are an inspiration to you in the context of peace. What do they say about it? One of the first contacts to the verbal reference of peace that I can recall is the saying, "go in peace". I remember older people would utter this phrase when we said goodbye, as a way of wishing me a safe trip and a life journey with a clean consciousness.

Another saying that I incorporated early on was "leave me in peace", used usually when I was upset and wanted to be alone, or, more exactly, wanted to be away from sources of disturbances. It would also be used for the reverse effect, in which by distancing myself, I wanted people to pay attention to me. Peace is also part of my pack of birthday wishes, together with happiness, health, and love, in a message to celebrate life, as well as to relate to death, in the saying "rest in peace". Peace is a very common word in the routine of Brazilian Portuguese speakers, although it refers to different aspects of daily experience. I came to realize that I wish peace to others with love, in a caring way, but declare I want it for myself when I am distressed and fighting with the world. However, I want to be very far from the peace of the dead. Therefore, if I think of the question: Do I want peace? Well, it depends on which one. So, which is the peace that I want, and in which context do I want it? This research is also a journey regarding this enquiry.

Referring back to people who are an inspiration, I would like to share some of the quotes I have been collecting throughout the exercises I facilitated, with the intention of contributing to the discussion, but not in an attempt to extensively cover interpretations. The well-known quote, "There is no way to peace, peace is the way", is often attributed to Gandhi, but is credited to the American pacifist A. J. Muste (Debasing Dissent 1967). This saying entwines peace to a

process, inviting one to appreciate the way. It emphasizes the importance of the means through which action is taken. In this sense, it links to Mohandas Gandhi's call that "(…) ours must emphatically and predominantly be the way of peace" (1981: 277). The way of peace, in Gandhi's view and practice, involves *satyagraha,* the commitment to nonviolence in each action, in the journey of living in truth (1965). "True peace is not merely the absence of tension: it is the presence of justice", from Martin Luther King Jr. (2010: 27) is also a frequent reference, attaching peace to justice. In his leadership role in the civil rights movement in the United States, he would not refrain from underlining and exposing the tensions of a society in apartheid as part of the pursuit to peace. The context could not be called peaceful while based on the oppression of black people and communities. Pope Francis, in one of his first public addresses as pope, affirmed that "Francis of Assisi tells us we should work to build peace. But there is no true peace without truth!" (Libreria Editrice Vaticana 2013). He highlights the importance of truth to the understanding of peace. The brutal experience of the dictatorships in Latin America, including Jorge Mario Bergoglio's home country Argentina, highlights the power of truth for peaceful societies.

In the preamble of the United Nations Charter, the peoples of the United Nations determined "(…) to unite our strength to maintain international peace and security" (United Nations 1945). The UN Charter clings these two aspects together – peace and security, expressing the desire for a safer international scenario, envisioned by people who were aghast at the consequences of the Second World War. On a different vein, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), recognizing that wars are built in the minds of human beings, recommended building peace in the minds of men and women (UNESCO n.d.). This definition provides a more proactive perspective to peace relating it to building through engaging with education, science, and culture. So far in this exploration of peace, we could characterize it fused together with truth, security, justice, peace as the opposite

of war, and peace as a process and intentional action. What do these associations tell about the worldviews in which these persons and institutions were embedded and how they interpreted peace?

In the same effort that inspired this exercise and after considering the possibility of many peaces, Dietrich set out to study the different understandings of peace throughout history and culture. As a result of his research, he compiled many different perspectives from different parts of the world into a categorization that he called the families of peace, which are the energetic, the moral, the modern, and the postmodern, and he added a fifth one called the transrational (Dietrich 2012). The five families of peaces do not attempt to enclose all the definitions of peace into those five categories, but provide a framework to analyze the different interpretations of it throughout history and culture. It also entices one to broaden the reflection about the meanings of peace and conflict that prevail in one's determined life moment and consequently in the decisions taken. Besides that, the concept of the five families contributes to situate discourses and solutions into a philosophical and historical perspective, providing a background from where to reflect, sense, and act. Interestingly enough, these different families reveal different ways of perceiving peace through different sources of knowledge, as discussed in previous chapters. The worldviews supporting these interpretations of peace also reveal sharp differences on perspectives on the body and on dance and movement, and had vast consequences on how they have been dealt with personally, socially, and culturally. In the following sections, I present briefly each of the families, dialoguing them with examples of perspectives on body and movement/dance expressions engendered by these worldviews.

### 2.1.1 Energetic Peaces

The energetic perspective on peace is grounded in the observation that there are opposites in nature. There is light and shadow, masculine and feminine, life and death. From the need to make sense and thrive among these oppositions, emerges the strategy of balancing

them. Considering life as a constant flow of energy, there is never a stable situation, but a continuous transformation of human relationships and natural phenomena. Jacob Needleman, in his introduction to the *Tao Te Ching*, refers to this flow as the balance between inward and outward movements:

> The point is that a human being can only act, that is, move outward, in a manner that is specifically human, to the extent that he or she can receive the gift of energy being poured out from the source. We are destined to be beings in which the primal two are in conscious, harmonious relationship. We are beings of two movements. (Tsu 2011: xxx)

This movement is reflected in the macrocosm of the earth and nature as well as in the microcosm of each being. Cycles are identified in the passing of seasons as well as birth, growth and death, and moon, dawn, sun, and dusk. Human life is cradled by a harmonious flow of these cycles, and disturbances need to be addressed in order to keep equilibrium, of which life itself depends on. Reflecting on the grand task of the human being in a worldview such as this, Dietrich affirmed that: "it is only in harmony that her own kind and the *Mitwelt*[5] flourish, with whom she is in resonance. This resonance can also be dissonant. Then she has the task of reattunement" (2012: 58). Conflicts are part of this systemic understanding of energy, a natural component of the tension between opposites which signals when energy gets stuck. Peace is not a state, but the experience of energies being able to flow without obstruction (Dietrich 2012: 59).

Therefore, the challenge is to balance our relationships with each other, from the intrasubjective level to the familial, communitarian, societal, and global levels. As reality is perceived through opposites, having too much of one aspect is not beneficial, hence the task is to balance them, finding harmony between the elements in a way that they all contribute to the dynamic system and at the same time keep their flow in equilibrium. As conditions are always

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[5] Norbert Koppensteiner, in his translation of *Interpretations of Peace in History and Culture*, approximates *Mitwelt* to an understanding of the common aspect of a shared world.

changing, harmony is different with each breath, what makes the homeostatic balance a continuous process of adaptation to a changing situation (Dietrich 2012: 57). Orientation of action through norms and ethics is based on relationality and on what is considered to be more fruitful for the whole system. Although navigating between opposites, the system is seen as one, and therefore no exclusion is possible. New elements in the system are taken as part of an enlarged version of the worldview, which now encompasses these different elements as part of the one, and thus, participants in the interplay of energies that need to be in harmony. Dietrich highlighted that "that is why such societies are often very permeable and accepting of foreign elements. Respect, hospitality, and interest in others derive from their striving toward harmony" (2012: 58). Philosophically there is no space for exclusion, because there is no 'out there', but just here in this system.

Harmony then is the fundamental aspect of energetic peace. As expressed in the *Tao Te Ching*, harmony derives from the combination of seemingly opposite energies:

> The Tao begot one.
> One begot two.
> Two begot three.
> And three begot the ten thousand things.
> The ten thousand things carry yin and embrace yang.
> They achieve harmony by combining these forces (Tsu 2011: 45).

Yin and yang represent different forces at play in the dance of the cosmos. The symbol of the yin and yang is a well-known representation of this worldview as it portrays this dynamic balancing of both light and shadow diving into each other. The static image of the yin and yang is very insightful to illustrate the opposite energies in their intention to flow, each drop falling into one another, in an embrace of constant transformation (Campbell 1991: 413).

The small circles or dots of contrasting colors immersed in each opposite hint at how one is contained in each other, revealing a differentiation of distinct manifestations that exist as separate while being part of the same flow. Each one contains the seed of its opposite, which turns them into not separately opposed entities, but always in relation to each other. The moving

image of the yin and yang helps clarify the harmonious interplay of energies. When the yin and yang symbol rotates at a certain speed, the colors begin to enact the flow, and the dots get closer, as if surrendering to the irresistible pull of the force of attraction. What emerges from movement and becomes seeable is a grey circle with a light circle in the middle. This image disappears again as the speed is slowed down, and black and white polarities, with their contrasting inner circles, become visible again[6], although they never cease to exist. The *Tao Te Ching* exemplified this flow in the form of verse: "The ten thousand things rise and fall while the self watches their return. They grow and flourish and then return to the source" (Tsu 2011: 18).

The yin and yang symbol portrays this flow in its static and rotating forms. It is as if the tension to uphold the opposites conceals a centric attraction that, when in flow, reveals momentarily the unknown. Harmony can be understood then graphically as a continuous greyish flow composed of black and white. Black and white opposites never cease to exist by themselves, but their tension in flow reveals the unknown, which although not visible, is also there, concealed.

There is much more symbolism associated to this image and the worldview it stands for in terms of spirituality and human existence that goes far beyond this debate, but I want to steer the dialogue back to the reflection on peace. Harmony then is the flow and peace is the experience of the flow perceived by the human being in its relation to herself and the cosmos. Peace, the experience, needs the observer to capture the concealed unified center and interpret it as peaceful, consequently identifying the opposites as holders of the potential for the experience of the concealed unified center. In the human being rests this ability to, through experience, harmonize herself with the cosmos.

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[6] I am grateful for Maria Lucia Lee, from the Association Palas Athena for this insightful demonstration and reflections. However, I am the one accountable for the way the thoughts are presented here as result of my understanding and interpretation. The rotation of the yin and yang is also discussed in Capra (2000: 251).

The self who upholds the tension of the opposites, directing this energy to its movement, has the possibility of revealing this center in herself. Or in other words, lending herself to the experience of peace not only as observer, interpreter or meaning-giver of the peaceful label to the experience, but as the very participant in which the experience of the flow enacts itself. In this sense, according to Needleman, participation happens through "(…) a quality of human action that allows the central, creative power of the universe to manifest through it" (Tsu 2011: xx).

The task of harmonizing is therefore a participation in the macrocosm, which would be daunting if not reflected in the microcosm of the human being herself. As energetic peace begins inside of the self, it allows agency into the system, which nurtures her own existence. However, agency here is understood differently than in other settings. Needleman describes it as an opening of human beings to consciously receive the energy radiating from the ultimate formless reality, which provides the virtuous quality of human action. This action can be referred then as "(…) an opening rather than a 'doing'" (Tsu 2011: xxi).

Being a part of the same vibration of the universe, in consonance or dissonance, enables the intention to harmonize to happen. However, it does not mean it becomes easier, but provides a simplicity into a complexity that is beyond grasp. The difficulty in this shift of perception did not hinder the development of strategies for participating in the experience of peace. Based on the amount of strategies developed, I would say it even motivated that exploration. Rituals, practices, and habits multiplied for putting the tension of holding opposites in motion so the flow of energies reveals the experience of peace.

Societies with a worldview based on this energetic understanding perceive body and mind as inseparable from the flow of nature. They are cosmic energy organized in the form of a human being for the period of time of her existence. Body then is energy which nurtures itself from other energies, and by its being in constant transformation, also contributes to energy flow,

until death, when this energy is released from its form to nurture other beings and the cosmic flow of energy (Dietrich 2012: 53). The flow of opposites perceived through the body makes it then a privileged medium from where to attune to the resonance of the universe. The body in resonance is then a way to participate in that mystery. Dietrich details this process as follows:

> Part of the art of being human is also, and mainly, the corresponding use of this sensorium, which wants to be learned and practiced. The method is mostly called meditation. Resonance always has to do with vibration. If the human being, with all her faculties, wants to bring herself into harmonious resonance with the macrocosm of the universe, to experience peace, then she has to mobilize all those aspects of herself that can resonate. According to experience these are breath, voice, and movement. It is for this reason that these are the central means for energetic rituals and celebrations of peace, out of which emerged music, dance, and theater, which Friedrich Nietzsche called the "Dionysian arts": (…) (2012: 60)

At first, seeing meditation and dance, music, and theater associated to the same intention may be surprising, because meditation is at many times associated with the immobility of the sitting position with crossed legs, while dance, music, and theater presupposes movement and sound. Also, these arts are frequently related to nurturing the senses and expressing an egoic self, while meditation many times hints at shattering the ego. Nevertheless, dissociating the meaning that arts acquired in modern societies and embedding it in the meaning of energetic practices allows this connection to make sense. In this perspective, arts do not serve an abstract notion of one beauty, which as the one peace is excluding and violent, nor are they mediums to refine the logic of mind or to confirm it, or even to elevate the participants to a condition of purity. They are means for catalyzing the energetic flow and to attune to a resonance with the universe to which the human being relates to and experiences through the whole body.

Music, dance, theater, and meditation are then among the practices which used the aspects of breath, voice, and movement to resonate the inner self with the cosmos, in rituals that frequently assumed spiritual meaning in the emphasis of the relationality of the being and the divine present in nature. Resonance therefore reverberates a sense of the relationality

between human being, human collective, nature, and cosmos, pervaded by the divine, or divine in itself. These practices reveal a sense of belonging and being nurtured by these forces, as well as a participation in the flow with agency to steer it to some point.

Chaiklin analyzed these aspects specifically considering the practice of dance, in what she called the earliest tribal communities, which twisting into a transrational perspective I rephrase to energetically oriented societies. She highlighted that: "(…) dance was seen as a link to understanding and directing the rhythms of the universe whether in the many manifestations of nature or as a statement of self and one's place within that world" (2009: 4). The importance of place discussed in the discussion of the many peaces reappears here, and Chaiklin attributed to rituals and dance the role of understanding this sense of place within community and world:

> The rhythms of work, (…), the rhythms of life's events were the rhythms that formed the cooperative community, the fundamental structure among all early people and folk societies today. The dance enabled each to feel a part of his own tribe and provided a structure for performing essential rituals related to birth, puberty, marriage and death (2009: 4).

One's place in the world was inherently related to the community. Wosien argued that stepping outside of tradition costed the person's sense of belonging, while at the same time implied a cost for the community, which was imbalanced. As rituals are collective, and through them the understanding of the world is grasped, there is an indelible link between inner and outer world, which finds meaning in community. An act of heroism then was not to resist or reform the existing order, but to affirm it, and the hero would be the one who "(…) did so repeatedly on every occasion of his encounter with the sacred" (Wosien 1974: 14).

Furthermore, I would say dance contributed to a sense of place also by the very participation in the rhythms of nature. Dance was for the human being a "(…) natural way of attuning himself to the powers of the cosmos. Rhythmic movement provided the key for both creating and reintegrating the 'dream-like' forms', and was this a means of being in touch with the source of life" (Wosien 1974: 8). Movement allows a self-statement by finding one's place

in the community. Moreover, it enables the experience of belonging to this community and to a wider essence, which resonates in one's body, generating power by this very belonging.

According to Wosien, dance is an expression of the power of transcendent forces moving the human being, which before transposing the expressions of his life to materials, used his own body as source (1974: 8-9). As so, the body and its potency is seen as instrument to the transcendent power, which is encountered in dance bluntly: "The body is experienced as having a spiritual, inner dimension as a channel for the descent of the power" (Wosien 1974: 9). In this sense, the channels which connect the body to the rhythms of the natural world – food, drink, breath, and copulation - are sacred in connecting to the transcendent power. The body's own sacredness "(…) was expressed in the symbolic ornamentation of the whole body or part of it. Body-painting signifies dynamic transformation; and as the ornamented vessel, as the dwelling-place of the power, as the city of God, the body is sacred" (Wosien 1974: 20-1).

Dance, therefore, is a constant in the life of energetically oriented societies. Dance is resourced in the occasion of joy, grief, fear, at sunrise, death, birth (Wosien 1974: 8-9). Also, "(…) to plead for rain, for success in the hunt, or as a way to influence the gods" (Chaiklin 2009: 4). Dance has taken different forms in different cultures, but some commonalities can be found in the body paintings, for example, as well as in the use of masks. Clark and Crisp argue that the mask is sacred, because it is associated with the spiritual force it imitates. By using it, the wearer identifies with the god, and becomes a vessel available for its powers (1981: 17).

Common to these dances were the images of labyrinth and spirals, which represented the wandering of the spirit in entering the journey of encountering the divine, facing chaos, darkness, and then going back, in a return many times associated with rebirth (Wosien 1974: 15-16). Often, the rituals were enacted in a way that led to a state of trance. This change of consciousness in the dance was attributed to the god's presence in the worshipper turned into a vessel, an "(…) instrument for making known his will. The worshipper, on the other hand,

utilizes the divine power in himself for the purpose of acting in the world in honour of his god, working miracles, giving oracles, building sanctuaries, bearing witness" (Wosien 1974: 18). In the process of transforming fear into rapture in the dance, human beings transcend dualities and fragmentation, becoming one with the nature and the cosmos. "On this profound level, in the experience of seizure and rapture, there falls to man a universal relatedness, a sense of totality of life" (Wosien 1974: 9). Embracing dualities and surrendering to dance, comes an acknowledgment that life goes on in the alternation of opposites. Enfolded by life and death, human beings beheld the mysterious as a dimension of existence (Wosien 1974: 16).

The ecstatic state was an important part of the dancing process. Giving a more detailed image of the experience of ecstasy, Wosien argued that:

> Some cults made systematic use of music and dancing with the exclusive aim of achieving the ecstatic state, where ordinary consciousness is flooded, and dammed-up emotional forces are released. The experience of rapture, of being beside oneself, is synonymous with being filled with a power greater than one's own. The prerequisite for such an experience is the worshipper's capacity to surrender, to let go of all that he knows and clings to for support. Such a release of energy expresses itself in dance movements which are spontaneous and dynamic (1974: 116-7).

Many groups sought and still seek through dance the altered state of consciousness found in ecstasy as a form of liberation and (or) connection (Mahrer and Na 2003, Kassing 2007 and Clarke 1981). Stemming from different religious backgrounds, these practices vary enormously in range, methods, and tools used to induce this state. Wosien argued that:

> Every festival of rejoicing and thanksgiving, as in fertility rites or New Year celebrations, includes elements of the ecstatic. Historically, one of the best-documented ecstasy cults is that connected with the worship of the god Dionysus. Rituals in his honour included orgiastic rites, the sacrifice of animals, wine-drinking and trance dances, which continued until dancers collapsed with exhaustion. Self-flagellation, to the point where the body becomes insensitive to pain, and man transcends the awareness of his physical limitations, often precedes the state of trance and the release of ecstasy (1974: 116-7).

Dionysian festivals, held in celebration of the god of wine and fertility of the Greek pantheon, are very often associated with wild, orgiastic, and uncontrolled frenzy. Also, some energetic dances involved practices which caused harm to the body (Kassling 2007, and Clarke and Crisp 1981). Undeniably, the nature of energetic festivities may many times have slipped into shadow aspects of Dionysian energy, like chaos, stagnation and distrust (Dietrich 2013: 91). On the other hand, addressing these rituals is a delicate task, because many of the accounts on these practices, and on energetic dances in general, have been made through the lenses of modern or moral interpretations, which stripped those practices from their spiritual context, and despised them as 'primitive', 'immoral', and 'barbaric'. This disregard also had economic and political motivations, especially in the context of colonization (Lyons 2012).

Stripping these practices of their spiritual context depletes their meaning and power. In resonance with the whole body and mind in the vibration of the cosmos, the dancer is expected to go through a sort of purification, rebirth, in a journey which enables universal power to be manifested through her. In this sense, Wosien stated that:

> In myth, the substance of the cosmos is pure sound, which, when transposed into space through rhythms becomes movement. Ritual chanting aims at reaching the 'sound behind creation' which also lies within the worshipper. Every being who has found his true centre, the 'space of the heart' having been magically transformed into the Centre of the Cosmos, sings and speaks true. The highest Truth being soundless, it is the aim of the mystics 'inner dance' to come face to face with the Silence, the Void beyond the duality of manifest forms (1974: 30).

The identification with the divine and the vibration with energies of the cosmos allow for encountering the silence which is before vibration, from where sound sings the truth, inspiring spontaneous movement, authentic action and speech out of truth.

A practice which is imbued with this cosmovision is the *toré*, a ritual of the indigenous populations of the Brazilian Northeast. Shared by many indigenous populations of the region in multiple forms, it is difficult to trace universal characteristics of this practice because it has suffered innumerable influences and interventions. Furthermore, many aspects of its science

have been kept secret from non-indigenous, and still are. Much of the cultural and spiritual meaning of the ritual has been transmuted in its encounter with colonialists and evangelizing groups. Oliveira, in the preface to Grünewald's book about the *toré*, recounted that these groups have been baptized and forced to disguised slavery by the first colonizers. Detached from their lands, they migrated, continuously seeking for refuge and adapting traditions, exchanging influences with other indigenous and African traditions, and Catholicism (Grünewald 2005: 9).

The *toré* has been persecuted and prohibited as witchcraft, punished with penalties and humiliation (Mota 2005: 176). In this process, it was passed down to the following generations just as a pastime or play, or was erased from practice, remaining only in stories of parents and grandparents. These populations have been accultured also due to land interests and in an attempt to conform to an ideal of national identity (Grünewald 2005). The *toré* has regained meaning and importance when it was identified as a reference of identity for the recognition of the indigenous status of groups for the delineation of lands and access to resources from the nation state. This may have led to an actualization of the practice in its many meanings, being it as an adaptation to an idea of what is an indigenous expression according to non-indigenous, and also as a uniting and bonding practice, reviving cultural and spiritual meanings (Grünewald 2005: 17-23).

However, its current practice highlights the essentiality of such an experience for its participants. It can be described as play, tradition, religion, union, and profession of the indigenous tribe (Grünewald 2005: 13). In this rite, they connect as members of the same tribe, in a communion that mobilizes identity feelings and differentiates them from other groups. In some manifestations, it can also be described as a sacred practice, in which they share the mystical force infused with ancestry and the magic of forests and nature (Grünewald 2005: 13). Furthermore, it also incorporated a political meaning in communication and contrast to the official narrative and identity, becoming an expression of indigenous traditions performed to

non-indigenous audiences, in dialogue with a rising interest in shamanic tourism (Grünewald 2005: 28).

The ritual involves singing, praying, moving in rows and spirals, and stamping the feet on the ground (*pisada*) (Nascimento 2005: 41), a practice that can be associated with the life-giving movement of the phallus in imitative magic for the fertilization of the earth (Wosien 1974: 64). In terms of instruments and materials used in the diverse expressions of the *toré*, several can be identified more frequently, such as the maraca, the flute, whelks, feathers, and body painting. Other characteristic elements are smoking, rituals of healing, pipes, whistles, and *cachaça*, an alcoholic beverage made from sugar cane. Often restricted to indigenous participants is the ingestion of *jurema*, a drink with psychoactive substances, and forms of possession by magic entities which bestow orientation, protection, and healing (Grünewald 2005: 27 and Nascimento 2005: 46).

I once had the chance to join a circle of meditators, in which one of the participants shared a simple rhythmic demonstration of *toré*, which she was learning as a way of connecting to her ancestry. The practice involves dancing and singing in what conforms a complex ritual, but in our humble attempt we just moved in a circle following the stamping she had started. We were also singing something but I cannot recall what. What remained vivid in my memory was that the stamping imitated the heartbeat. But at some point, the feet were not imitating it anymore; the heartbeat was in the feet, beating there as well as in the chest. The pressure of the floor against the feet amplified the effect, reverberating through the legs and upper chest, followed by skin, breasts and arms, which would vibrate with the impact. After the group had incorporated the tempos and harmonized the rhythms, it seemed that the floor began answering to the movement and moving itself. What was felt through the feet was not anymore just pressure that a soft surface feels when bumped against a harder surface. The ground responded to the heartbeat rhythmic stomping by revealing the beats of itself. My heart beat resonated with

the stomp of the group and the beat of Mother Earth. Humility, gratitude, and belonging filled me and the room, following the experience. Moving in the same beat together bonds in a collective feeling. Very powerful, indeed, even though this was a very brief and decontextualized experience by people who are not immersed in that worldview.

The role of dance, music, and theater in providing the means through which resonance can be experienced is also approached by Nietzsche in his analysis of Greek tragedy as the interplay of the opposite energies of Dionysus and Apollo. Nietzsche's discussion on the Apollonian and Dionysian is important for this research because it provides the thread to analyze the interplay of energies and the balance of opposites that follow.

In Greek tragedy, Nietzsche identified two forces present in the artistic endeavor: one that is imperturbable in its trust in the principle of individuation, reassuming an "intense pleasure, wisdom and beauty of 'semblance'" (1999: 17); and the other that reflects the breakdown of this principle, an intoxication which causes subjectivity to vanish to the point of complete self-forgetting, compared to nature pervaded by the lust for life in spring (Nietzsche 1999: 17). These forces have been associated to the characteristics of the gods Apollo and Dionysus of the Greek pantheon, related also to the opposite - however related - actions of creation and destruction, or individuation and dissolution. The Apollonian is then characterized as dream-like clarity and calm, and the Dionysian as dizzying rapture. A work of art usually involves both forces, however visual arts are more Apollonian and music and dance are more Dionysian (LaMothe 2006: 24).

Dance, therefore, with its constantly changing and ephemeral movements reveals aspects of the creation and destruction, continuously forming and dissolving forms and appearances. This ever-changing process is one of the elements that characterizes dance as a Dionysiac art, which also wants to "(…) convince us of the eternal lust and delight of existence", through constant shattering of form, and thereby reminding us to "(…) seek delight

not in appearances but behind them" (Nietzsche 1999: 80). In Nietzsche's Dionysian arts, by delving through appearances it is necessary to recognize the indelible relation of life and death: "(…) we are forced to gaze into the terrors of individual existence - and yet we are not to freeze in horror: its metaphysical solace tears us momentarily out of the turmoil of changing figures" (1999: 80).

Through the interplay of these two forces change is evidenced and their flow allows transformation in the first hand. In other words, such transformation occurs when the temporary reconciliation between these two forces is negotiated by a work of art (LaMothe 2006: 24). The participation in these artistic celebrations becomes not an imitation or metaphor of life, but the very process itself through which human beings partake with forces of nature, recognizing themselves as being nurtured by it at the same time as participating in its power. Nietzsche described those moments as follows:

> For brief moments we are truly the primordial being itself and we feel its unbounded greed and lust for being; the struggle, the agony, the destruction of appearances, all this now seems to us to be necessary, given the uncountable excess of forms of existence thrusting and pushing themselves into life (…); we are pierced by the furious sting of these pains at the very moment when, as it were, we become one with the immeasurable, primordial delight in existence and receive an intimation, in Dionysiac ecstasy, that this delight is indestructible and eternal. Despite fear and pity, we are happily alive, not as individuals, but as the one living being, with whose procreative lust we have become one (1999: 81).

How does this process described by Nietzsche happen in the Greek tragedy itself? LaMothe, out of her attempt to recreate her experience of empathizing with the traces left in writing and dance by others (2006: 12), provides a description of the Dionysiac rapture as experienced by the spectator of tragedy:

> In so far as the elemental rhythms of the singing and dancing spark a visceral identification of spectator with chorus, the spectator is drawn to see herself in the image of a satyr and thus see herself in relation to the dramatic narrative on stage as the agent though which the characters of that narrative come to life. She is able to sense in that narrative a power of nature in which she is a member, by which she is created, and in whose power she herself participates as an image-creator. In this moment, in other words, she experiences the two faces of Dionysian wisdom: as an individual actor she is doomed; as a member of the chorus she is ecstatic,

immortal. In short, the Dionysian message of the narrative – "the terrible destructiveness of so-called world history as well as the cruelty of nature" – combined with the Apollinian image of the dancing chorus that precipitates the transformation (2006: 25-6).

The power steaming from the contradiction of being bred by nature and from participating in the changing processes through one's own presence is identified here as the spark for transformation. It is transformation that happens inside the being, but by its depth impact a powerful transformation in the system.

Through the analysis of Nietzsche and LaMothe, it becomes evident the fundamental role of arts in societies with an energetic understanding of peace. Arts, through the medium of the body's ability to resonate, provides the ritualistic frame for the enactment of energies to flow. From an energetic perspective, the artistic experience is much more than just an addendum, or decompressing moment, but the moment itself of delving through the sufferings of life caused by an ever-changing appearance, celebrating this same aspect as affirmation of a vibrant life. Vibrant here fulfills not only the meaning of dynamic and vigorous but also the more literal meaning of pulsating in resonance with the cosmos. Koppensteiner, corroborating that Greek tragedy was more than amusement, affirmed that "it had been the expression and celebration of a cosmovision. The shift that occurred when tragedy started to wither might have been imperceptible at first, but it would turn out, (…) to be a fundamental break in Western history" (2009: 46).

One of the reasons for this change is pointed out by Wosien as being the development of intellect and reflection, which affects a change in spontaneity, diminishing it: "worship shifts increasingly from active physical participation – as in dancing – to contemplative looking-on, and toward a conscious meditative internalization which excludes physical activity and even renders it unnecessary" (1974: 30). Internalizing spirituality turns the attention from the natural world to the inner levels of the mind. While spirituality moves inward, the outward expressions

of dance and music also moves from spiritual practices to spectacles, with far reaching consequences (Kassling 2007: 55). The Dionysian festivals, for example, are referred to as providing the origins of Greek tragedy, which in turn tamed the frenzy of the previous races across the countryside. Greek tragedy, due to the separation of the audience and the chorus, became a more ordered and organized spectacle when introduced with the spoken verse of the dithyramb (Kassling 2007:55 and Clarke and Crisp 1981:29). In this process, it lost the ecstatic power of communion with transcendental forces.

A less subtle, but still fundamental break was the encounter of energetic dance practices with moral understandings of peace. Wosien argued that the ecstasy of the wild whirls, leaps, strong chanting, and powerful rhythms effect change in the sense that:

> (…) dances with exciting rhythms heighten the feeling of togetherness, instill courage and break down emotional and mental barriers. Ecstasy cults are dynamic, and because of their strong impact they are contagious. Consequently, whether inside or outside a current religion, they tend to be suppressed and their exponents persecuted, as constituting a potential or actual political danger to the established system (1974: 117).

With the increase of monotheist structures' power and the colonialism of morally oriented monarchies, these practices began to be seen as immoral, which justified bans on the practice, as well as forced impoverishment or even imprisonment of dancers, which in some cultures held power and richness. This was the case, for example, of the *devadasi*, dancers who performed the *sadir katcheri* (also known as *Bharata Natyam*), a dance in worship to the gods Brahma, Shiva, and Vishnu (Lyons 2012: 5). As representatives of female energy, they personified auspiciousness, empowerment, and luminosity. Highly respected and enjoying high social status, they enacted devotional performances and temple services. In an attempt by British colonial rule to alter the social order and diminish the power of the rituals, the *devadasi* order was attacked and banned (Lyons 2012: 5).

Similar patterns can be found in the bans of energetic dances throughout the world, of which the *sadir katcheri* of the *devadasis* and the *toré* are just examples. In general, the elements of light and darkness in a balancing totality and the mystery of life and death in recurrent transformation were aspects honored equally in those dances and societies. According to Wosien:

> It is only when the god appropriates to himself the light or good aspects exclusively, the dark, evil aspects being transferred to the wholly other (as in the Christian idea of the Devil) that the dance, as an experience of total possession by the power, begins to be forbidden and disappears from worship in favour of quietist meditative practices and the spoken word (1974: 15).

In this process, the spontaneous movement of dance embedded in spiritual surrender to the energies of the cosmos becomes taboo, seen as dangerous, evil, immoral, lascivious, and other denigrating references with which they have been labelled (Wosien 1974: 30). Fortunately, many of these forms resisted bans and are still practiced, although frequently detached from their spiritual meaning, as a form of retaining or reviving identity, conforming national identity, or studied and protected as national heritage (Lyons 2012 and Clarke and Crisp 1981: 14). Nevertheless, they continue stirring the Dionysian energies even when thrown in the background by Apollonian dominance.

In sum, an energetic understanding of peace perceives harmony as a dynamic flow of opposite energies which is different in every moment. This flow is as pervasive to human beings as breath itself. Human beings are cradled by this flow perpetrated by nature, while the very fact of being embedded in it provides them responsibility and agency to be actors in the continual process of maintaining harmony. The acknowledgment of the existence of opposites and the engagement in the strategy of harmonizing them involves holding these opposites, although related energies, in a flow. This flow unfolds in the experience of merging into the resonance of the universe through the very reality of its manifestation. Through this resonance with the cosmos derives a transformative power capable of changing the world with every

breath, as well as its intrinsic and unavoidable counterpart of also being changed by it. There is no harmony when one of the elements of the system stays the same – or resists to see the change that inevitably happens.

### 2.1.2 Moral Peaces

The moral perspective departs from the same observation as the energetic – there are opposites in the world, and the same need to make sense and thrive. Nevertheless, the strategy conceived is in stark contrast - instead of balancing opposites, they are categorized, evaluated, and one is given precedence over the other, resulting in praise of the one considered positive and exclusion or repression of the aspect considered negative. Thriving here is not seen as being part of a cycle, but as the linear path of the warrior toward glory. Out of the need for orientation and reference, the evaluation is made according to normative rules, which in the case of societies whose worldviews reflect a moral understanding of peace is given by the one god. From this categorization derives that there is a right way of acting, and therefore a wrong way of acting. Pairs of opposites are reinforced, differentiated, and put into a hierarchy (Dietrich 2012: 76).

While norms exist in an energetic worldview, they are relational and abide to the ever-changing situations. In a moral understanding, norms are not relational, but derive from God as a superior normative, the Truth. The importance of the relational aspect wanes as it loses its status as a locus of peace. Peace is then removed from the world of human interaction to become something that can be granted to human beings out of grace, according to the obedience to the previously stablished norms. This attaches peace as a possible - but not necessarily guarantee in this life – outcome of a series of behaviors, projecting peace into a future which in some interpretations only prevails infallibly when the good wins over the evil (Dietrich 2012: 113-4).

The concept of justice emerges here, as a supporter of the good way of acting. Justice, in such a worldview, is inspirational when it supports equity in the relational aspect. It becomes problematic, though, when the relational is taken off the table; when the split between the good and the bad opens the way for an interpretation that leads to "us versus them", where "us" is characterized as good, and "them", consequently as bad. This dichotomy entails harmful consequences in terms of oppression and violence, as Dietrich pointed out:

> This has its price: instead of a cosmic energy with its visible allegories, now the personified creator god Yahweh as sole and highest principle enters the believers' conceptual horizon. This narrows the respective understanding of peace considerably. The peace of this god manifests in worldly justice, also and just because it remains promised. It introduces a linear understanding of time in a hitherto energetic concept of peace, thereby secularizing it. Peace is thus no longer perceived here and now, but it is projected forward from a pitiful now into a better future, which first of all has to be imagined (2012: 74).

Dualities are no longer associated with the task of balancing, but of conquering in a specific range in linear time. When victory happens, peace will prevail. But until then, fighting is part of the pitiful now. A sequence of associations derives from that side-taking: light is good and right, and should prevail over darkness, which is wrong and bad. A long list of dualities is then reinterpreted according to the definitions of the one God and the interpretations of God's representatives. A hierarchy is established and agency does not derive from the vibration of a human being's movement, breath, and voice in harmony with the universe, but rather is concentrated into representatives who are accredited as interpreters of divine laws. What derives from that is the likelihood of a concentration of a great amount of power into representatives and the institutions which accredit them. In other words, vertical hierarchies and unbalanced power dynamics in relations have more space to become normalized.

The consequent change in the relation between Apollonian and Dionysian forces illustrates this turn in regard to the fundamental break in Western history as pointed out by Koppensteiner in the previous section. As discussed, Greek tragedy displays both forces in their continuous interplay. When opposites are still observed in the world but the strategy on how to

deal with them shifts from balancing to choosing one over the other, Apollonian clarity and purity is elevated, associated with the male, light, truth and beautiful. Dionysian forces, associated with female energy, darkness, and what is false and ugly, are casted out as impure and evil (2012: 169). By following commandments, the task of the human being in such a worldview is to tip the scale with the dominance of Apollonian forces over Dionysian energies. Analyzing this change, Dietrich affirmed that in moral understandings: "the assessment of good and evil does not reside relationally between human beings, but with the creator God. He is above any willpower and in possession of the absolute truth" (2012: 76).

As a consequence, appropriate and inappropriate actions cease to be a personal and relational orientation open to discussion and redirection according to changes, thus becoming absolute truths defined by god and interpreted by god's representatives. In the same vein, as in the energetic understanding the opposites here they continue to exist and be perceived, and what follows is an attempt to exclude, marginalize, outcast. The "us" is associated with the good, being right and therefore having the Truth, while the shadow, once seen as an energetic force intrinsic to every being, is now considered bad and projected onto others - those who do not abide by the norms. "Us", then, attempts to expurgate Dionysian energies, shadow aspects, by excluding "them", in a strive for purity. This strive for purity then may be extended to "that of the self and the own physical body, the purity of one's thoughts, of the social body or the race" (Koppensteiner 2009: 49). Underlining the problematic combination of the claim to absolute truth, the rejection of otherness, and the strive for purity, Koppensteiner affirmed that:

> There so surfaces something extremely violent in an unchecked Apollonian striving for purity. Everything indeterminate, uncertain, everything in contradiction to the established rules – be that rule of the law, the formal code of conduct of morals, but also everything that does not fit the pre-ordained standards of normalcy – is constantly under the threat of aggression (2009: 49).

What is unknown or different from what is considered ordinary, according to societal norms, is then in a constant state of persistent, yet sometimes subtle, violence, as long as there

is a threat to its existence. In this turn toward purity, the body, with its earthly needs and desires, became part of the aspects casted out. Nevertheless, the difficulty of casting aside something so ingrained required the development of a whole apparatus of covering, oppressing, suppressing, and dissimulating. These strategies took different forms and levels in different times and places, ranging from the complete prohibition of certain practices; the actual punishment of the body with physical pain; to the manipulation of it to fit an ideal (which many times also meant painful techniques). A source of sin, body's expressions should be repressed in name of a purification which would allow spiritual achievements.

Consequently, Dionysian arts were condemned as evil. In this scenario, dance also underwent a drastic change. In energetic dances, consciousness is intermingled and spread all over the natural world and in the net of relationships with the cosmos, not reflecting about the individual self, but responding spontaneously to life rhythms. With the dawn of judgment between good and bad, there is a gradual tendency that "(…) reflection takes over from ecstatic expression, and knowing action supplants unwitting impulse" (Wosien 1974: 11). The sunder between opposites also splits spontaneity from reflection: when the dance is not about experience but performance, the proposal shifts from communing with divine forces to a spectacle to influence human beings. The empowerment derived from the spiritual component is lost, and it becomes amusement, social games, a pastime for communication and social identification, or folkloric curiousness (Wosien 1974: 30, Kassing 2007: 72, and Clarke and Crisp 1981: 8). In some of those manifestations, "(…) the matters of fertility, of worship of the seasonal gods, of tree cults and of curative dances can be seen". However, they became a mimetic representation of the original intent, being known as at most 'lucky' (Clarke and Crisp 1981: 51): "The dancing round a may-pole, the leaping over a bonfire, the mimetic combat, all hark back to an original function as magic and worship which is now lost" (Clarke and Crisp 1981: 46).

Nevertheless, in the transition, many energetic celebrations were absorbed into religious practices, in different strategies. On one hand, for the church it was a way to domesticate certain practices, when banning them would be unpractical due to their deep roots in the celebrations in people's lives. On the other hand, joining religious celebrations was a way of keeping old traditions alive, but masked under monotheistic forms, which would not otherwise be permitted in their full expression. In between, there were also true conversions, while maintaining the known way of celebrating, and faithful devotees who would find in dance an expression of their belief. Focusing on the Mediterranean region, Clarke and Crisp affirm that: "(…) pagan survivals and celebrations were, like their participants, in a sense baptized, becoming part of the Christian worship" (1981: 37). Official dates were set for church celebrations by Pope Gregory the Great in the late fourth century, which, in an interesting move, matched many dates of Christian events with celebrations of energetic traditions, such as the changes of seasons, crops, and harvests, equinoxes and solstices (Kassing 2007: 74).

However, this absorption, either way it went, it carried a violent component to it, and in some cases the absorption was more like a sweeping coupled with harsh consequences for those who insisted on dancing. Persecutions, shaming, punishments, prison, and death were among them (Lyons 2012). In other cases, rules were enforced as a means of uprooting the people from their tradition. Nevertheless, the consequences have far-reaching impacts which go beyond the individual threat. For traditions in which partaking in those ceremonies was the fuel of life, belonging, empowerment, and resonance with the divine energies of transcendental and natural forces, such prohibitions meant a shattering of a cosmovision.

Highlighting the tensions between the movements of absorption and full out banning, Clarke and Crisp stated, regarding the process in Europe:

> There is a recurrent conflict to be observed throughout the Middle Ages and the early Renaissance between the traditions of ecclesiastical dancing and the moral reprobation of the Church itself. As early as AD 554 Childebert, King of the

Franks, had proscribed the religious dance in all his lands. In the twelfth century Odo, Bishop of Paris, forbade church dancing with particular reference to funerary dances in the graveyards. Five centuries later, on 3 September 1667 the parliament of Paris issued a decree proscribing all religious dances, citing those on I January, I May, the torch dances on the first Sunday in Lent and those held round bonfires on the eve of St John's feast day (23 June). Yet still the dance survived, and indeed became intimately linked with certain observances (1981: 38-9).

In the official accounts, those bans were based on a licentiousness which took place during these events and celebrations. Some of them blamed the participation of women for the "inevitable lewdness" of such practices, much in tone with the association of the female as evil, together with magic and witchcraft (Clarke and Crisp 1981: 39).

While the dances were banned from religious practices and sometimes also from the everyday practice of people, they remained present in some very specific forms as a way of unleashing repressed Dionysian aspects. Carnival is a prime example of this. Approaching this topic from a very different point of view, the Russian philosopher Bakhtin shed light into this split between the popular and the official. Although not focusing on dance, his approach to the festivities and later to the perspectives on the body illustrates in a blatant way the unleashing of Dionysian energies in the background of Apollonian order and structure of moral understandings of peace.

In his study of folk culture in the Middle Age through the lens of the comic work of Rabelais, Bakhtin discerned that "a boundless world of humorous forms and manifestations opposed the official and serious tone of medieval ecclesiastical and feudal culture", which he called the "culture of folk carnival humor" (1984: 4). Composed of carnivals processions, comic folk aspects of Church feasts, feasts celebrating the harvesting of grapes, it also included mimicking of serious rituals as the tribute rendered to the victors at tournaments, the transfer of feudal rights, or the initiation of a knight (1984: 5). Although certainly descending from and sharing many aspects with celebrations of the societies embedded in an energetic understanding of the world, this medieval carnival humor conformed a different expression of Dionysian

energies as a response to a moral context. While assuming that in energetic understandings "serious and comic aspects of the world and of the deity were equally sacred, equally 'official'" (1984: 6), Bakhtin discussed the impossibility of equality of these two aspects in a state and class structure. Comic forms were, then transferred to a nonofficial level. In this process, it suffered a metamorphosis acquiring new meaning and becoming the expression of folk consciousness and culture. In this process, it got differentiated from the community's ritual laughter, which pervaded all aspects of life (1984: 6-7). Laughter, understood here as a Dionysian manifestation, was detached from daily life and segregated to specific recesses:

> The basis of laughter which gives form to carnival rituals frees them completely from all religious and ecclesiastic dogmatism, from all mysticism and piety. They are also completely deprived of the character of magic and prayer; they do not command nor do they ask for anything (Bakhtin 1984: 7).

In the same vein as the Dionysian arts described in the previous subchapter on energetic understandings of peace, carnival is not separated from life, but life itself, "(…) shaped according to a certain pattern of play" (Bakhtin 1984: 7). There are also no spectators, but participants in the experience. Nevertheless, carnival is not the celebration of life in its fullness, but an escape from the official way of life, a kind of second life, which relied on laughter and festivity. In the setting of feudal societies, which exemplified a moral understanding of peace, those festivities could be realized without distortion only in the carnival and in similar marketplace festivals, because of their characteristic of turning the world inside out. Symbols of change and renewal were characteristic of this turnabout and relativized, even if for a while, the authoritarian truths, allowing for a temporary realm of community, freedom, and equality. Bakhtin proceeds to a comparison between official and folk feasts that sheds light into the stark differences between both. Regarding the official festivities, he affirmed that:

> (…), the official feasts of the Middle Ages, whether ecclesiastic, feudal, or sponsored by the state, (…) sanctioned the existing pattern of things and reinforced it. The link with time became formal; changes and moments of crisis were relegated to the past. Actually, the official feast looked back at the past and

used the past to consecrate the present. (…) the official feast asserted all that was stable, unchanging, perennial: the existing hierarchy, the existing religious, political, and moral values, norms, and prohibitions. It was the triumph of a truth already established, the predominant truth that was put forward as eternal and indisputable. This is why the tone of the official feast was monolithically serious and why the element of laughter was alien to it (1984: 9).

Nevertheless, although betrayed and distorted, the festivity character was still present. Dionysian energies would find their way into different avenues outside of the official one, on the streets and marketplaces, being it prohibited, tolerated or legalized. Following the idea of turning the world inside out, carnival celebration meant opposition to the immutability and to all that was completed. It demanded for ever changing, playful, undefined forms, a liberation from authority and norms, a denial of completion and a celebration of becoming and renewal. It suspended and defied hierarchy in stark opposition to the official feasts, in which rank was insistently displayed: "(…) everyone was expected to appear in the full regalia of his calling, rank, and merits and to take the place corresponding to his position. It was a consecration of inequality" (Bakhtin 1984:10).

The reference to place appears here again, but in a different understanding from the idea of place discussed in energetic societies. It is not a geographical or cultural place as discussed in the many peaces, much less a relational place in the web of the community and the rhythms of nature. Here place appears as a spot on a structure, detached from relational ties or changing flow. It is static and oppressive, because attached to the fulfilment of a role stablished by norms beyond agency. The official feasts reiterated the rigid segmentation and the position of dominance of certain individuals over others. According to Bakhtin, carnival, on the other hand, was an opportunity for contact that equalized participants and regenerated them to human relations, in a connection not possible in daily life (1984: 10).

By suspending norms and barriers, carnival festivities provided a space for contact, a remembrance of relationality, even if for a restricted period. Although many times related to masks and fantasies, it is referred to as a time of unmasking roles, suspending the dichotomic

tension generated by the structures and birthing new relations. This aspect is of extreme importance to Bakhtin's carnival, and as stated by Holquist in the prologue of *Rabelais and His World*, lends to it the understanding that "it is not only an impediment to revolutionary change, it is revolution itself" (Bakhtin 1984: xviii). This revolutionary aspect is related to the existence of Dionysian forces themselves, which could not be suppressed without consequences. In this sense, Holquist argued that "the sanction for carnival derives ultimately not from a calendar prescribed by church or state, but from a force that preexists priests and kings and to whose superior power they are actually deferring when they appear to be licensing carnival" (Bakhtin 1984: xviii).

Nevertheless, there is a risk of domestication of the whole festivity, especially if it is tolerated and allowed for a restricted period as a decompression, after which everything returns to what it was. DaMatta, a Brazilian anthropologist which researched carnival, pointed to this risk. He affirmed that when the poor participant plays the rich in the festivity giving him a sense of nobility, it is a sign of truce and inflation of good behavior. On the other hand, when this play is satirized, it opens the possibility of seeing layers beyond the veil of ranks, claims, and truths (1997:58-9).

It is in the sense of its transformative power that Bakhtin emphasizes laughter in carnival festivities, differentiating it from satire of later times, adding an energetic approach in terms of the scope of the laughter. It is not a laughter aimed at the other, but an all-in laughter, which provides an approach not in the sense of one side against the other, but of a transformative process where the observer is participant. "The satirist whose laughter is negative places himself above the object of his mockery, he is opposed to it. The wholeness of the world's comic aspect is destroyed, and that which appears comic becomes a private reaction" (Bakhtin 1984: 12). In a satire that negates, there is isolation, mockery of certain aspects while asserting a good pattern. On the other hand, the laughter of carnival to which Bakhtin refers to, laughs at the world and

oneself in it. In addition to this universality of seeing the whole world in its droll aspect, there is also the aspect of ambivalence to this laughter: "it is gay, triumphant, and at the same time mocking, deriding. It asserts and denies, it buries and revives" (1984: 12-3).

I concur with the transformative aspect of the ecstatic moment by itself, defended by Bakhtin. In my experience of Brazilian carnival, the perception of color, dance, intoxication by music, rhythm, and the suspension of certain normative rules leads to a vibrant celebration of life as it is, in that moment of surrender and release or via the mockery of the world. Singing out loud, dancing until the sweat drips, jumping with dozens of other people responding to the loud music. It is an abandonment to the here and now moment, which lift the weight of responsibility and difficulties of daily life. Another aspect is the subtle although stimulating pride of having defeated the rules to which one abides socially during the rest of the year, even if for a limited time.

Nevertheless, referring back to the critique of DaMatta, there is a risk that the energy generated by those moments may be consumed in its own benefit (1997: 58-9). When the Dionysian aspect is celebrated in a licensed period and not integrated in the flow of life, the energy generated by those moments fails to integrate and give dynamicity to everyday life. It feels more like a burst than a flow of energy. There is not necessarily a dance between Dionysian and Apollonian forces, and thus carries the potential to become a violent blast of repressed energy, which can materialize itself in forms of violence, drug abuse, and sexual harassment. Even if it does not burst into a violent manner, the energy derived from that ecstatic moment is often used to bear routine until the next holidays, which is an underuse of its power. In this sense, DaMatta's argument on carnival as also being domesticating gains another dimension. On a different stretch, such bursts of energy can also be used as justification for a clash of opposites, classes or civilizations, and therefore be used as an argument for the intensification of order.

Following his analysis of Rabelais' work, Bakhtin discussed further aspects of the split between the opposites and the valorization of Apollonian aspects over Dionysian. Based on Rabelais's grotesque realism, he detailed a perspective on the body which is infused by an energetic approach, while contrasted in a moral worldview. He juxtaposes the grotesque to the 'classic' revival of the Renaissance, then introduces degradation as an essential principle of grotesque realism, which means "(…) the lowering of all that is high, spiritual, ideal, abstract; it is a transfer to the material level, to the sphere of earth and body in their indissoluble unity" (1984: 19-20). This lowering is rather geographical than judgmental, once the "cosmic, social, and bodily elements are given here as an indivisible whole (…) representing all the people" (Bakhtin 1984: 19). Images of bodily life are, in this context, characterized by abundance and the all-people's element, which in its gay and festive character opposed the dullness of daily life.

The grotesque image of the body reflects then an amplified image of people's body, not an individualized perception of it. In this way, it purports metamorphosis, transformation in the cycles of life and death, growth and aging. Exposing and exaggerating these aspects, these images stand in shocking opposition to the complete body of aesthetics seen as classic, which would condemn these images as ugly and hideous. Whereas inserted in a linear and historic understanding of time, these images keep traditional contents as "(…) copulation, pregnancy, birth, growth, old age, disintegration, dismemberment" (Bakhtin 1984: 24).

The grotesque image of the body is then infused with energetic elements while incorporating and contrasting aspects of the moral understanding in which it is embedded. This context generates a concept of the body that is differentiated, not closed or complete, but unfinished, transforming, transgressing its own limits:

> The stress is laid on those parts of the body that are open to the outside world, that is, the parts through which the world enters the body or emerges from it, or through which the body itself goes out to meet the world. This means that the emphasis is

on the apertures or the convexities, or on various ramifications and offshoots: the open mouth, the genital organs, the breasts, the phallus, the potbelly, the nose (Bakhtin 1984: 26).

This perspective stands in striking contrast to the body images portrayed by literary and artistic canon of antiquity which were in the basis on Renaissance aesthetics, which was complete and finished, portrayed in youth as the farthest distance between birth and death. As a complete body, it was also seen as isolated and fenced off from exterior influences:

> All signs of its unfinished character, of its growth and proliferation were eliminated; its protuberances and offshoots were removed, its convexities (signs of new sprouts and buds) smoothed out, its apertures closed. The ever unfinished nature of the body was hidden, kept secret; conception, pregnancy, childbirth, death throes, were almost never shown. (…) The individual body was presented apart from its relation to the ancestral body of the people (Bakhtin 1984: 29).

This assertion highlights that the current trend of manipulating images of the body with photography software is just a recurrence of an old tendency toward the body. From these definitions and the striking differences to the approaches to the body in both perspectives, it becomes evident that the body of grotesque realism, that body of all people celebrated in carnival did not fit the aesthetics of the beautiful of the Renaissance (Bakhtin 1984: 29). This gap led to a distance from the grotesque and its space in history. Bakhtin, referring to the reduced interest in the grotesque, points out that if mentioned, it was referred to as vulgar, or in the sense of depreciating satire. "Because of such interpretation, the deep and universal nature of grotesque images was completely obscured" (1984: 45). Dionysian energies were condemned and damned, and with it aspects as the earth and the body.

On the other hand, dances meant as entertainment for an audience, performed by trained dancers, assumed Apollonian qualities. The ideal of purity, weightlessness, ascendance became part of these sanctioned dances which would play between making fun of or scorning folk Dionysian-expressions, considered demoniac, and portray an ideal, elevated form of art, usually transmitting a moral teaching to the audience. With the casting out of Dionysian forces, dance gains gradually more emphasis on performance, implying: "(…) a system of movement

dependent upon rules and disciplines, which radically alters the relationship between mankind and the dance" (Clarke and Crisp 1981: 11). In this sense, folk dances which were allowed gained more steps and rules, being framed into an acceptable performance according to parameters of identity established by the ruling power (Lyons 2012). For nobility, it assumed the twofold objective of amusement and display of manners:

> During the Renaissance the relationship between dance and the church faded as religion's influence was supplanted by society's. Dance was the amusement, pastime, and passion of the nobility. For the developing rich merchant class, dance was instrumental in demonstrating position, etiquette, and manners. For the peasants it remained an important way to celebrate social and life-span events (Kassing 2007: 72-3)

Dance changed drastically. The emphasis changed from spontaneity to a display of appropriateness, with contained body movements, couple relationships, and intricate floor patterns (Kassing 2007: 80). Some dances implied just simple walking. Clothing also influenced the dances, as armors, headdresses, and long trains and gowns did not facilitate movement. The *basse dance*, for example, a type of court dance performed in medieval Italy and France in the time span from the 1300s to the 1550s, was a display of grace and etiquette, and exemplified the quiet dignity, polite manners, and decorum expected in such contexts (Kassing 2007: 80-4).

This dream-like, ideal aspect of Apollonian forces can also be found very eminently in the ballets. Ballet can be considered a representative of Apollonian force which permeates moral and modern understandings of peace. This category, nevertheless, names a broad field which encompasses the *ballet-des-cours* from the sixteenth century until the classic and contemporary forms (Kassing 2007, Clarke and Crisp 1981). Its development was marked by the gradual evolving of complex steps and rules, the professionalization of dancers, the move from outdoors to courts, and later on to theaters, and the spectacle characteristic it acquired,

separating dancers from audience. Trying to capture an evolving pattern in the wide range of ballets, Clarke and Crisp pointed out that:

> In the West, it has meant the development of exceptional physical skills, the offering of an ideal of beauty which results from the refining of the human body through arduous training to create an expressive instrument. To hold the public's attention, ballet has had to turn to greater and more complex spectacles, increasing virtuosity in performance and presentation. The dancer and the dance thus became further and further removed from any possibility of close identification with the followers of the dance. An instrument has been forged to explore human relationships (or political ideals, or aesthetic theories) as spectacle rather than as experience. Ballet has become a spectator art, where dance was once a communal one (…) (Clarke and Crisp 1981: 11).

As the importance of the relational aspect dwindles, the focus of dances change from community to spectacle. In this move, some aspects of ballet in different periods underscore predominance of moral elements, while others display more modern aspects of the understandings of peace. In this subchapter, then, Apollonian aspects related to a moral understanding of peace are highlighted in ballet, while the modern aspects are discussed in the following subchapter.

In Romantic ballets such as *La Sylphide* and *Giselle,* and the following classical forms influenced by them, the ballerina appears as a pure, angelical, and diaphanous being, with airy movements, whose feet almost do not touch the ground (Banes 1998). In the first performances in the nineteenth century they wore wings, and wires were used to give the impression dancers were flying (Kassing 2007). *En pointe* dancing (tip toe) gives the impression that ballerinas are floating, weightless. Garments give the touch of ineffability of lightness, form and appearance. It is the idealized ethereal being in its pure and white revelation. No physical pain or effort is shared onstage; at most emotional suffering is portrayed, resultant from a moral love or as punishment for deviations from the law, in a way of teaching a moral lesson to the audience. Ballets, especially the ones from the Romantic era, portray a magic dream where the ballerina

can be princess, sylph, swan, and fall in the prince's arms, in a representation of the feminine which is ideal, unblemished, virginal and untouchable (Kelly 2012: 1).

The dominance of Apollonian characteristics over Dionysian reveals a tendency to the pure, the ideal, the dream. On stage these are the characteristics portrayed, valued and praised. However, what became evident through the repression of Dionysian elements is that this ideal has a very high cost. It excludes or disowns several practices, and excludes and causes harm to people with personal traits that do not correspond to the ideal of the white, long-legged, thin ballerina. Furthermore, it costs a lot for the insiders as well. There is a significant contrast between the lights and glamor on the stage and the suffering of the ballerina behind the curtains. There, "she has had to suffer enourmous deprivation to maintain the ideal of the classical dancer as a symbol of perfection, enduring pain, frequent humiliation, and even starvation to create the illusion of weightlessness on stage" (Kelly 2012: 2). Although this perspective cannot be generalized to every ballerina, school and company, it highlights a recurrent situation which was also echoed inside and outside the professional dance field (Gordon 1983, Kirkland and Lawrence 1986, Duncan 2013 and Kelso 2003).

In my contact with nonprofessional ballet, I have seen situations that illustrate this critique: crazy diets, teachers telling students that they were too chubby, students thinking they were too chubby themselves, use of tight corsets to thin the waist, blistered and bloody feet. What I heard often from ex-practitioners is that they quit because they were not young enough, flexible enough, thin enough, tall enough. In an idealized image, human beings are usually seen as 'not enough'. The Brazilian musician Chico Buarque has a lovely song depicting this image, called - in a notable play of words - the "*Ciranda da Bailarina*" (*Ballerina's Folk Dance*) (Buarque and Lobo 1983). In his account, everybody commits sins, right after leaving the mass, except for the ballerina. Everybody has lice, wounds, familiar problems, fears, except for the

ballerina, who does not. And, by so much not having and not being, her life passes by, just an ethereal form.

The discussion of these critiques toward ballet goes on, but the point that I want to emphasize is that the strive for the ideal of purity has a harmful tendency. This account is not essentially to criticize ballet as art or practice, which actually brought me a lot of pleasure and satisfaction. Ballet can be very meditative, contributing to stretch the body, working on posture and fun to dance. It feels delightful to execute jumps, turns, pirouettes, and waltz. The celebration of Apollonian aspects is not a problem in itself, but the struggle for the ideal at the exclusion of Dionysian aspects is. What I want to emphasize is that its practice and performance as a strive for a perfected ideal and the exclusion of other forms as 'exotic' is violent, obviously for the ones who are excluded, and also for the ones who try to adapt to it.

This introspection in the ballet world can be seen as a microcosm of the unbalance between Apollonian and Dionysian forces playing among cultures. Discussing the roles of these energies in life, Nietzsche affirmed that in the same proportion that the Dionysian reveals the foundation of existence in all its tragedy and suffering, offering opportunities for ecstatic experiences, it can only be absorbed by consciousness inasmuch it is accompanied by Apollonian power of transfiguration. In this sense, "both of these artistic drives are required to unfold their energies in strict, reciprocal proportion, according to the law of eternal justice" (Nietzsche 1999: 115-6). An equilibrium in the measures of these energies in life is necessary, as the excess of any is unhealthy independently of which side the balance tips. Nietzsche's correlation of this reciprocal proportion to a law of eternal justice brings an interesting twist in the discussion of the moral understanding of peace in terms of justice. While associating the proportionated flow of these energies to justice, Nietzsche related justice to balance, although the reference for this balance is in an eternal principle beyond the interplay.

Concurring with this need for energetic balance, Dietrich affirmed that "while striving for justice enhances the dynamic of a system, the natural oppositional movement of the actors requires an energetic balance". Nevertheless, he continued, "justice as a principle of order is a totalitarian nightmare" (2013: 197). In a moral understanding of peace, the laws deriving from the divine are attached to Apollonian form and purity, which do not flow in equilibrium but in exclusion to the Dionysian. Therefore, justice turns into something different from that hinted at by Nietzsche's comment. In this vein, Dietrich underlined that: "the separation of contradictions that unify in a fertile manner leads to desolation, boredom, and cultural violence" (2012: 169).

While Nietzsche (1999) associated this separation to Socrates, Dietrich identifies how this Socratic tradition continued with Plato and influenced strands of Christianity and Islam, leading to the envisioning of an Apollonian "(…) beautiful world of the just who judge over others and lead just wars" (Dietrich 2012: 169). The idea of just war, justified by this separation as a moral commandment against the evil, reveals the epitome of how violent Apollonian predominance can be. Unfortunately, it has not been the only of its kind. The formula of justice which Dietrich questioned entails an association of "(…) revenge and the past, envy and the present, and greed and the future (…)" (2013: 196). This formula is repeated, even though with different traces, in the modern wars and genocides.

Although the dualistic aspects of moral concepts of peace have been stressed as violent, it is also important to highlight that this may be an interpretation of them for power. Nevertheless, affirming that it has not always been the case, Dietrich specifies that:

> They are not of this kind whenever they are not directly tied to ultimate explanations of the world or phobic claims to truth. In this case, they either migrate out of an energetic worldview – as concepts of limited reach, or they exist besides them as a pragmatic regulative for the relations of everyday life (Dietrich 2012: 102).

How can thus an energetic approach be embedded in a moral understanding of peace? It has been argued how some dances were absorbed by Christian events, incorporating some elements of energetic worldviews into a moral setting. The case of the carnival also sheds light into Dionysian forces playing within Apollonian rigid structures. At that point, the appreciation of Dionysian energies happened detached from explicit spiritual or religious content. Now I would like to approach this topic from the perspective of ecstatic dances within moral religions. My curiosity led me to investigate some practices of traditions that are considered mystical within the general mainstream of moral interpretations. The accounts of prayers leading to ecstatic union in the Christian tradition caught my attention, but it was the dancing tradition of the Sufis that sparkled my interest to the point of taking me to practice it myself.

I got interested in Sufi whirling out of amazement. Also, I was curious about how practitioners could twist and twist, and not get dizzy. I had had a little bit of that experience in ballet classes, but Sufi whirling challenged my assumptions. In ballet, ballerinas also do that; they spin and spin in continuous pirouettes. But there is a technique which, supposedly, if enough trained, would allow the spins without dizzying or nauseating. This is how it goes: you focus your sight in a point at the level of your eyes, and turn your body as much as you can without losing eye contact with that point. When you cannot maintain eye contact anymore, because your neck is pulling your head, you turn your head faster than your body, reaching that same point and focusing your eyes on it again before your body has completed the turn. This way you have a longer period of focus, and a very fast period of view which is unfocused, preventing the head from spinning around. In my experience, I saw that practice corroborates to the performance, but in the end, I would invariably get dizzy.

The whirling also sparkled my interest out of curiosity for the spirituality involved in the ritual. Or, putting it differently, for being a spiritual practice that involved dance and movement. Sufism is a mystical strand of Islam, and as so stands in the verge of a moral

understanding of peace, combined with energetic perspectives and practices, because it "(…) twists the morality of the monotheistic concept of peace" (Dietrich 2012: 121). Sufis follow the Koran and the teachings of Prophet Mohammed, although they see that just the law might not be enough, needing a way to support the search for the truth. In this sense, the way is a form of putting the law into practice, and truth "(…) is the inward states and stations attained by the traveler in his journey to God and in God" (Mannani 2010: 162).

Mannani argued that it is the belief in the need to put the Law into practice that sets religious jurisprudents apart from Sufis. In the same vein, also the method of putting the Law into practice differentiates Sufi denominations. While different methods are contended, all Sufis see the annihilation of the ego as a necessary part of the journey toward the beloved. This journey also entails the waning of material concerns, as "the love of God will substitute all the needs the Sufi had once experienced; once he surrenders himself wholeheartedly to Him" (Mannani 2010: 162). The goal of the mystic is annihilation, and subsequent perseverance in God. "This final experience is always regarded as a free act of divine grace, which might enrapture man and take him out of himself, often in an experience described as ecstatic" (Schimmel 1977: 178). In Sufism, ecstasy means finding, to "(…) find God and become quiet and peaceful in finding him" (Schimmel 1977: 178).

This love is present in classic Persian Sufi texts, but is evident in a special way in the life and work of Rumi. The fear of God, present in other Sufi writings, is not present in Rumi's poetry, who "(…) sees himself immersed in the ocean of God's love and bounty—he is surrounded by the love of God and he cannot see anything but graciousness and love in Him" (Mannani 2010: 165). In this metaphor of ocean's love, Rumi calls for going beyond the surface of things, reaching deeper meanings, exemplified by the metaphor of foam and ocean:

> How can mere foam move unless moved by the waves?
> How can dust mount on high unless raised by wind?
> When you see the dust-cloud, see the wind too!
> When you see the foam, see the ocean that heaves it! (Rumi 2015)

In this sense, going beyond form allows one to discriminate between the appearance and the core, and when that happens "one will be able to see that the pulling force behind all phenomena is one" (Mannani 2010: 166). As part of his journey toward the Beloved, Rumi encountered Sufi whirling. Mannani described the whirling dance as "an instrument to help them distance and detach themselves from their material surroundings through rhythmic yet controlled and highly symbolic movements of different body parts" (2010: 164).

In his poetry, Rumi described the dance as nourishment for the soul, a rapture into the love of God. In his poetry, he compares the dancing to the movement of the planets around the sun, affirming God as the spiritual center of human beings:

> The *Sema* (ritual of the Dervishes) means to die to this world and to be revived in the eternal dance of the free spirits around a sun that neither rises nor sets. (…) annihilation and eternal life in God, can thus be represented in the movement of the mystical dance as understood by Rumi and his followers (Schimmel 1977: 184).

Rumi described the movement of the whirling as inspired in the vision of god, "(…) who himself may dance on the screen of the lover's heart in the hour of ecstasy" (Schimmel 1977: 185). I did not know much about Sufism or whirling, but I was thrilled to read Rumi's verses posted on the website of the center where the whirling is taught:

> Oh daylight rise! Atoms are dancing,
> Souls, lost in ecstasy, are dancing,
> I'll whisper in your ear where the dance will take you (Harvey and Rumi 1994: 218).

Having found this center near São Paulo - where I lived in Brazil - I enrolled in the next workshop available. It was a retreat in a beautiful homestead in the middle of nature, two-hours-drive away from the big city. Getting there was a process of unattachment and discovery: I went alone, did not know anybody, and got a ride with other practitioners.

People were welcoming, and the teacher was very kind. During the three-day retreat, we learned the ritual steps, the cleansing before the ceremony, the bowing before stepping into the room. Then we heard some stories and poetry of Rumi, practiced *Dhikr* (recollection of God, in this case, aloud) (Schimmel 1977), learned that in Sufi tradition Allah is the sound breath, and got prepared to swirl. It seemed easy. No complicated techniques or secrets. It is just energy - I was told – or pure love for the Beloved. One foot is based on the floor, the other one keeps crossing the base foot to generate the turn. Arms are crossed in front of the chest, the head turned slightly, looking to the backside, in search of the Beloved, which as the dancer turn to see, is never revealed, but whose call can be heard intimately.

I started slow, getting used to the movement. As the music accelerated, I felt and urge to follow the speed, but it would take me out of balance. 'Keep your rhythm', I kept telling myself. The experienced dancers opened their arms at some point, and turned graciously. The beginners were not supposed to open arms yet, as we were just getting acquainted with the practice, and also because it is part of the initiation process. It felt comfortable to keep the arms crossed, warm, cozy, just like a caterpillar in the cocoon. The music stopped, meaning that the training of the morning was over. Surprisingly I had whirled for half an hour. No nausea or dizziness, but a subtle sensation in the forehead and inner trunk. Not exactly a tingling, or the numbness of tiredness, but a sensation marking its presence, its existence into awareness. The tea drunk afterwards would circulate down the throat, its warmth expanding through tissues and bringing comfort, echoing in the walls in its descend.

But it was not as easy as it seemed. My legs hurt, my lower back as well, and I did not really know why, because the movements do not require much effort. Later, I came to figure out that it was exactly because they did not require effort that my legs hurt, complaining of my resistance, hesitation and at times my push to compel the twist, eager to get something out of it. As I practiced, it became clear through the movement that it is more about giving in to the

spin than making it. As the group whirled, the teacher kept on reminding us of the positions of the head - to hear the call, as I would forget of it in the minimum sparkle of something different going on, igniting. In the last day, the beginners practiced opening the arms above the head with a stick. Exciting, although the open chest resented the warmth and protection of the arms. Opening the arms gives more speed to the movement, making the whole whirl more difficult to control.

I finished this workshop with a sense that there was something special in the whirling, as Rumi and the teacher talked about with so much love and surrender, although I had just teetered on it. This feeling took me to my second workshop, a few months later. It was much colder, and the mist enveloped me every morning as I woke up early to meditate with the group and do circular dances. That morning, the mist slowly faded away while the sun was rising over the mountain, revealing the vivid green of the Atlantic forest and the smoke coming out of the chimney, anticipating the tastiness of homemade bread that would be served for breakfast. Amid this delightful view, Pachebel's Canon in D (Pachelbel n.d.) coordinated the musical notes which played the strings of my heart, outpouring gratitude in the form of warm tears. Gratitude which I felt expanding in waves for being in that place, with the chance of learning and experiencing all that - from the grass I was stepping on to the whole homestead, the blue sky, the warm sun.

It was in this accord that after breakfast – which confirmed the expectations created by the smoke in the chimney – I stepped again in the *Sema* for the last session before the end of the workshop. In the last days, I had practiced opening my arms without the help of the stick. One hand is turned upward, open to receive from the divine, and the other one is turned downward, willing to give, to be of service. Receiving and giving, being an instrument for the love of God. Slowly beginning the movement, turning round and round, I started with the arms crossed in front of the chest, according to the tradition, in a signal of humbleness, and then

opened into the 'v' position with one hand upwards and the other downward. The act of opening triggered a willingness to be taken, to be emptied or filled, like a vessel. As the hands turn across the space, they lose their exact form to the viewer, as does the space around to the eyes of the dancer, which gets a bit blurred. Sufi music gave the rhythm to which the movement was executed. As I started to feel the surrender, that sensation of giving in to the movement, I relaxed and breathed the expectation that something special was going to happen. And with that exhalation the sensation began – the centeredness of the feet, tunneling the earth while the arms extended into sky, being the body of the dancer, my body, the vessel connecting both, being emptied – or expanded internally - as the energies pass through it. Giving and receiving at the same time, through the same movement. As I write, the image of the yin and yang appears as very analogous to this description– the opposites melting into each other, meeting in the center, although the whirling adds depth to the width and breadth of the yin and yang image.

As I got excited by the whole experience, I started judging it and got caught in my thoughts. I resisted them, trying to push them aside, but as I did that unbalance increased. I slowed down, together with the other dancers in the room as the music receded. We bowed in thankfulness and finished the workshop, before having lunch and leaving to São Paulo. I did not want to talk much, as I was still feeling a little shifted. Silence felt so pleasant as any sound would reverberate in a louder manner. Bewildering it was then to go back to Sao Paulo, riding the subway with all its noises, which daily I would sometimes not even realize. It was an amazing experience, which filled me with respect for the practice.

There are many energetic elements in the Sufi practice, which although posited under a broader moral understanding of peace, transits to energetic practices and worldviews. It is also important to emphasize, following this account, that there are societies with a predominantly energetic or moral or modern understanding, although they are not found in totality. A total hegemony of any of these understandings would probably have been unbearable (Dietrich

2012). Sufi whirling is one of the examples in which practices with energetic components are kept mingled with moral understandings. Nevertheless, for the very maintenance of these energetic factors, many groups which represent mystic interpretations of moral understandings have been persecuted. They were caught in the same logic of confrontation which faced societies with energetic worldviews. Although energetic aspects can be found in societies with strong moral orientation, if the social foundational discourse remains totalitarian and exclusionist, it justifies actions to enforce this approach onto others.

### 2.1.3 Modern Peaces

The third family is the modern understanding of peace, which departs from the same observation of opposites in the world and the need to make sense of them. It also follows the strategy of the moral perspective in terms of discerning between the opposites and choosing one, qualifying it as right or wrong and good or bad (Dietrich 2012: 159-60). Nevertheless, the reference is not based on normative rules given by God anymore, but reason. The development of science and the study of natural phenomena according to laws that could be decoded and mastered by human beings weakened the necessity for a daily presence of God to make sense of the world. It does not mean that reason replaces God, but God is taken to a backstage position, to answer those ultimate questions that reason could not, and the interest is on objective measurement devoid of any influence of religious or moral values (Martínez Guzmán 2000: 52). The center stage, then, is taken by reason, which through scientific methods explains natural phenomena and advances by controlling and manipulating the laws of nature for human benefit.

The weakening of the divine ideal to be strived for is also an important difference between moral and modern understandings of peace. The vector direction of reference changes from an abstraction that escapes mundane things to an abstraction that analyses worldly things, but nevertheless is not mixed with the mundane, which continues to be relegated (Dietrich 2012:

152). It persists, though, being abstract and absolute, therefore not influenced by relational interactions of human beings.

As rationality is the main premise, relevance in life is in the things that can be rationally understood and dealt with, especially material things. However, it does not mean that any material was recognized as a source of information and knowledge, but only those susceptible to mathematical or logical explanation, in a conception of science which is mechanistic, quantitative, Eurocentric and secularized (Martínez Guzmán 2000: 52). Although human observation is necessary to quantify something, the modern vision of peace exults objectivity at the expense of human subjectivity and declares the position of the researcher a neutral actor separated from their work. For that, the emphasis on the mathematical and experimental pattern of Galilean's perspective on phenomenon distanced it from human flaws, and therefore from life itself and human relationality, hindering the development of humanities (Martínez Guzmán 2000: 56).

The belief in neutrality becomes one of the pillars of science. The scientist, seen as a being completely separated from the observed, should remain like that, not getting involved with his object of study, neither emotionally, historically, nor in any way which imprints human traits to his abstraction. His involvement with his object is nothing other than a quest for truth, and later, for progress and development. This supposed neutrality also defines the quality of research whose level of abstraction praises the researcher. However, stripping reason from the values of the researcher in a quest of neutrality denies the possibility of a local and cultural approximation and therefore, its very questioning and refutation. Whoever engages in such endeavors becomes labelled as unscientific or irrational (Martínez Guzmán 2000: 70-1).

The prioritization of one perception over the others and its sustenance as the only real and possible one generates exclusion and totalitarianism. Martínez Guzmán argued that the approximation of science and development to democracy disguises its link with racism, sexism,

imperialism, and colonialism (2000: 70-1) The consequences of such prioritization perpetuated the problematic aspects of exclusion already discussed regarding the moral understanding, adding a layer of complexity, in terms of conception of worldview, which would impact the developments of history. What was left then was a very materialistic approach, allegedly detached from human subjectivity whose linear perspective of time and strict cause and consequence method continues to compromise the present in the name of a bright future.

This same perception was applied to peace in a modern understanding, which brings forth a perspective on peace that is a product, a predictable outcome of calculated steps. Just like a mechanic process which can be manipulated to generate the expected outcomes (Dietrich 2012: 158). This approach borrows the scientific methodology of compartmentalizing and dividing to get to the smallest part, and from that deriving a truth that could be extrapolated to apply as a method for the whole system. Since relational aspects do not have any influence and things are observable, independent, and separate unities, something developed here would work somewhere else, deriving for example a peace that is exportable. Paired with the idea that 'us' is good and right, it consequently meant that politics developed here were better than somewhere else, which needed then to receive this peace as a package of measures. Following the step-by-step booklet, the ones devoid of the one Peace could expect to one day get to where the good ones were, which was not yet peace, because peace would be attainable in the future, but at least would get closer to it. For that, they would have to leave any vernacular or indigenous trace behind. The modern approach to peace gives continuity to the violent aspects of the moral one, in some cases making it more sophisticated exactly due to its abstraction which detaches the human aspect of it (Dietrich 2012: 158).

As a product, peace would go hand in hand with development – the package of measures which contain the promise of a bright and peaceful future. Considering the beliefs in neutrality and in the separateness of things, what follows is that conflicts are also amenable of the same

method of analysis characteristic of this understanding. Therefore, an expert, someone neutral and not involved in the problem, would be able to analyze all its elements, compartmentalize them, and come up with a procedure which would solve the conflict. As a consequence, "(…) peace and development were defined as feasible, practicable and desirable processes which could be attained through the civilising process" (Dietrich and Sützl 1997: 5). The parallel with the good and bad ones is more than coincidence, being perpetuated now as the civilized versus the uncivilized.

Whereas reason assumes the active role into judging what is right or wrong, this decision is condensed in the hands of enlightened men of science and politics only. Here I use the word men on purpose because there were still mostly men in those posts - women mostly were still relegated to their attempt to fulfill the moral ideal, while at the same time being incorporated as labor where and when it was understood as necessary. In a modern understanding, this moral was not related to religious references, but beauty. George Balanchine, a well-known ballet choreographer born in Russia, who worked many years in the United States, puts this moral ideal clearly in his letter to Jacqueline Kennedy, first lady of the United States from 1961 to 1963. As recounted by Bernard Taper in his biography of Balanchine, he urged her to assume the role of "spiritual savior" of America, explaining that he meant that not in a religious sense, but "to distinguish between material things and things of the spirit – art, beauty" (Taper 1984: 263). He continued:

> Your husband is necessarily busy with serious international problems and cannot be expected to worry too much about the nation's art and culture. But woman is always the inspiration. Man takes care of the material things and woman takes care of the soul. (…) Even in arts, it is woman who inspires man. God creates, woman inspires, and man assembles (1984: 263).

His invitation in the letter translates also the image of women in ballet. Women usually appear as representation of the ideal, being it a religious, diaphanous one, or the ideal of Beauty

or perfection. Men, on the other hand, assume positions of power, as the images of Apollo in ballets portray.

This power represented by the access to reason is confined in academia and the nation state. It is not of public dominion or for regular people. Laws are the normative code that facilitates a standard of reasonable decisions for the whole society, and enforce people to live by them. It also worked as keeping the power over them concentrated in the hands of the representatives, makers, and interpreters of these laws. Compared to the moral understanding, power dynamics in modernity present the same patterns, changing just the representatives. While the church was not out of the game, its solid presence in the organization of life in political, economic, and philosophical terms was taken by science and the nation state.

This change also implied a substantial inversion in terms of the main focus. As the reference shifts from normative rules given by God to a materiality of things that are palpable, moral justice loses its grip. The flip from Phobos to Thanatos represented the inversion of the fear of God to a fear of losing (Dietrich 2012: 94-5). It means that alongside the relevance of material things appear the fear of losing them, being them possessions, comfort, one's own life. From fear arises the need for protection, and therefore security gains prominence. The problematic exclusion of "us versus them" continues in this worldview, but it assumes a different trait – just wars are now justified by security.

The formality and abstraction of the modern approach to security, whose bases are laid on scientific universalism, is violent in a very sophisticated way. The Apollonian form, not balanced with any Dionysian content, reaches extremes:

> (…) with Apollo rampant and unchecked the Dionysian is ever more pushed to the margins. The complete formalization and anesthetization of the social and political sphere can so lead to the complete rejection and annihilation of the energetic force of life. The Fascist regimes from this point of view are not the accidents of modernity but the culmination of its Apollonian tendencies (Koppensteiner 2009: 50).

The shock after the catastrophic consequences of fascist regimes reinforced doubts about the absolute status of truth out of reason, as had been propagated by postmodernity. On the other hand, out of the same shock some would defend that these regimes would be a deviation from the bright promise of modernity. Maybe a calculation had to be remade, or an analysis had to be furthered. Postmodern critique and the insistent repetition of tragedies, nevertheless, showed that it was not exactly the case. Koppensteiner condensed this critique in a very direct way, emphasizing that the problem is in the logic itself.

Addressing again the analogy of energies by Nietzsche, it becomes evident through this discussion that modern understanding continued the segregation of Apollonian and Dionysian forces. The advance of science and technology and the apparatus of domination of the nation state made the scale of its impact broader than ever before. These tendencies, nevertheless, were not hidden or completely surprising. The raise of Apollonian forms had been dominating many areas, including dance, since medieval times, with a noticeable tendency of following this track.

The increase of rules, forms, and appearances in choreographies celebrated this aspect, while the communal and ecstatic aspect of folk dances were limited or suppressed. Spontaneity was relinquished as an unacceptable form of relationship, while reflection, rehearse, training took over, to the point that, "by the seventeenth century, courtiers took dance lessons every day" (Kassing 2007: 80). The codification of the five positions of the feet and arms, the notation of movements and the development of a body of knowledge which made possible to name movements reinforced the approximation of dance to scientific methods (Kassing 2007: 97-9). The figure of a dance master, although present since the fifteenth century, became increasingly more important in the following centuries. He taught dance steps together with social etiquette to the nobility (Kassing 2007: 72). This reinforces the idea of professionalization and distance of dance as a community practice - it became something learned and honed, perfected not only as an ethereal ideal but also as mechanical sharpness and precision.

Besides being a way of displaying etiquette, conformity, and mastering of social rules, it also became a way used by kings and queens - who were often the main characters of the *ballet-des-cours*, to deviate attention of the court and peasantry from political decisions (Kassing 2007: 97). Clarke and Crisp argued the dances served even as a means of governing: "(…) a recurrent theme to be observed in the many grandiose ballets of this period was the praise of the monarchy and insistence upon the power of the throne (…)" (1981: 133), reaching the point of the dancers forming the letters of the royal name (1981: 132).

This tendency of the *ballet-des-cours* reaches its pinnacle with Louis XIV, who reigned France from 1643 to 1715. Known historically for the excesses and extreme concentration of power in his hands in the most powerful nation of the time, he was a dancer and patron of the arts (Kassing 2007: 97 and Crisp and Clarke 1981: 132). An account of a *ballet-des-cours* scene exemplifies exquisitely the elements of the predominance of Apollonian force in its mingling with moral, science, and political power, in what sounds like a preordered allegory. The performance is *Le Ballet Royal de la Nuit*, the main character is Louis XIV, and the scene takes place in the Hotel de Bourbon's Salle du Petit Bourbon (nowadays Louvre's colonnades):

> It is nearly dawn on the morning of 23 February 1653. So far, members of the French Royal court have been treated to an almost twelve-hour mélange of dancing, singing, poetry and elaborate stage effects depicting various scenes of village life, demoniac activity and Greek myth. At the climax of *Le Ballet Royal de la Nuit*, and to herald the rising of the sun, the magnificently dressed king Louis XIV (1643-1715) appears as *Le Roi Soleil* to lead the entire cast in a grand ballet. Circled by masked courtiers according to the then controversial cosmology of Copernicus, the young king was portraying Apollo, one of the many Greek gods who had passed into the allegorical conventions of fifteenth-century Christian Europe. As the god of music, medicine, prophecy and archery (…), the king symbolized physical light and mental illumination. By enshrining himself as the corporeal emblem of knowledge, truth and moral purity, Louis was sending out a clear signal not only to the local masses but also to the *haute monde* (Roebuck 2004: 48-9).

This account succeeds in portraying the concentration of powers, once divine, into the enlightened male, as might have been the original message of the king to his court and the world. By assuming the place of the sun in the - by that time - recently scientifically

acknowledged heliocentric theory, he assumes a position of command of society represented in the planets, which he leads in a dance. The association with the potency of the sun depicts the concentration of powers in a ruling individual. Previously I highlighted Koppensteiner's analysis on the unchecked Apollonian tendency emphasizing the problematic of the claim to absolute truth, the rejection of otherness, and the strive for purity. Here, another element is presented that in the modern perspective contributes to the volatile combination: knowledge.

Another Apollo in ballet's history sheds light to this reflection on the combination of moral truth and beauty, rejection of otherness and strive for purity. Balanchine's Apollo was an Apollonian response to the emerging Dionysian elements vibrating in the spreading jazz age, as well as to the changes in the scenario in the late twenties and early thirties with the Wall Street crash, the subsequent depression, and the influence of fascism and communism emerging as potent political movements (Clarke and Crisp 1981: 177).

George Balanchine, a Russian dancer and choreographer, was part of the Diaguilev's *Ballet Russes* before moving to the United States with the mission of making an American ballet, which until then had been heavily influenced by the Russian school. As odd as it may sound bringing a Russian choreographer to make American ballet less Russian, it is interpreted as a successful endeavor. An article at the *U.S. News and World Report* from 1970 noted him responsible for the successful fusion of modern concepts with older ideas of classical ballet (New York City Ballet n.d.). Balanchine, nevertheless, preferred calling himself a craftsman rather than a creator or artist, rejecting too many explanations or labels to the dance (Taper 1984: 4; New York City Ballet n.d.). His ballet *Apollo* was staged for the first time in Paris 1928, and was restaged in the United States in 1937, as a revival of the version he created for the Diaguilev's *Ballet Russes* (New York City Ballet n.d.). Balanchine stated *Apollo* was a turning point: "In its discipline and restraint, in its sustained oneness of tone and feeling, the score was a revelation. It seemed to tell me that I could dare not to use everything, that I, too,

could eliminate" (New York City Ballet n.d.). In contrast to the opulent pageantry of Louis XIV's performance of the god Apollo, the twentieth century *Apollo* tends to a purification of form, flattening expression and feeling.

Taper, in his *Balanchine: A Biography*, affirmed that Balanchine "(…) turned to classicism – or, rather, he evolved a new classicism, which serenely embodied the classical virtues of clarity and grandeur and yet in spirit and in style of movement was more up to date and adventurous than the run of ultramodern ballets" (1984: 98). By reviving the Greek reference, this performance rejects the otherness of the African American music and dance traditions present in jazz dance. It reaffirms Apollonian values emphasizing aspects of modernity. In Taper words, the story is "(…) simple, compressed, evocative: Apollo is born, discovers and displays his creative powers, instructs three of the Muses in their arts, and then ascends with them to Parnassus. The theme is creativity itself – Apollonian creativity, vigorous but lucid, untortured, civilizing" (1984: 99). Edwin Denby, a critic of the epoch, described it as a:

> (…) sustained and more and more satisfying impression of the grandness of man's creative genius, depicting it concretely in its grace, its sweet wit, its force and boldness, and with constant warmth of its sensuous complicity with physical beauty. 'Apollo' is an homage to the academic ballet tradition – and the first work in contemporary classic style, but it is an homage to classicism's sensuous loveliness as well as to its brilliant exactitude and its science of dance effect… And it leaves at the end, despite its innumerable incidental inventions, a sense of bold, open, effortless and limpid grandeur (Taper 1984: 99-100).

In this account, the description of the performance both by the bibliographer and the critic reveals a lot not only about Balanchine's choreography but also about the lenses with which they looked at the choreography. The exaltation of clarity, lucidity, and creativity reinforces the Apollonian values at play, describing it with the definition of "civilizing", which gains broader meaning when contextualized with the growing jazz dance at the time. The praise of beauty is attached to the classical tradition, which defines it and limits it to a specified type.

This tradition also limits and keeps under control the "untortured" creativity and adventurous spirit – it is bold and open, but not to the otherness, in a creative process "untortured" by Dionysian raptures. But what is most distinct is the use of references such as "science of dance" and "exactitude", being it an homage to the academic ballet tradition. Exactitude brings forth the pursuit of perfection, and not only the perfection according to an ideal, as in a moral understanding, but mechanic perfection – precision. The strive for perfection of form became the ideal itself.

The image of Apollo in both pieces hints still at another aspect of modernity which is fundamental and differentiates it from the previous energetic and moral understandings of peace: individualism. Balanchine's Apollo is composed of four dancers: Apollo and three apprentice Muses. The sole figure of Louis XIV is the very reference of knowledge and truth, in the same manner as the figure of the scientist or politician, who deal with the "serious issues", in the words of Balanchine. Although backed up by the abstract institutions of science and nation state, the individual gains a relevance she did not have before: in energetic understandings because of her belonging and place in community and the emphasis in relationality; in moral understandings because God was still the one predominant figure. In modernity, the abstraction of the concepts opened space for individual voice – yet restricted only to the individuals allowed. Individualism also gained a wider meaning in modernity because of the separation of observer and observed, the understanding of a person as an independent and solid block, unrelated to others or nature.

This is a second implication of Descartes famous saying, "I think, therefore I exist" (1649:51). The first one, as analyzed earlier, is the prioritization of thinking over other ways of knowing and the split between body and mind. The "I" is put into evidence, and as Louis XIV Apollonian sun, existence turns around him. This reflection may lead to the thought that this emphasis on the "I" would wane the feeling of belonging to the "us". Theoretically it might had

been the consequence, except for the existence of the discourse of security which holds together the collective "us" of the nation state through building a sense of identity in contrast with "them". Nevertheless, inside the borders, the feeling of otherness continues to threaten the independent "I", and the dynamic between security and exclusion is seen presently in slums, fences, cameras, and isolation. Tension in moral and modern understandings of peace does not imply the task of holding together, as in the energetic worldview, but to keep apart. Whoever has been in such a position knows how extenuating and resource-consuming it can be.

The individual, nevertheless, does not reflect an entity of body, mind, emotions in the modern perspective. The split between body and mind, observer and observed, and nature and culture, reached deep into the modern understanding, pervading the individual as well. As research is striped from senses, soul, and spirit, and god assumes an obsolete position, whatever is in the world is strictly material and therefore can be used. When reason is my reference and value, my body, with its shameful and repressed earthly desires gets in the way of my enlightening. It can, therefore, be used and abused to the mastering of the mind. The same logic applies to nature. If everything is disconnected and independent, nature can be exploited seamlessly. The implications of such a perspective are disturbing. John Mack, in his foreword to Vaughan and Walsh's *Paths Beyond Ego* provides an overview of the troublesome situation:

> The consequences of the materialist worldview are all too familiar. By restricting the scope of reality and the domain of personal fulfillment to the physical world, while excluding from consciousness the power of spiritual realms, human beings are ravishing the earth and massacring one another with instruments of ever greater technological sophistication in the quest for power, dominance, and material satisfaction. The outcome of the continued enactment of this view will be the breakdown of the earth's living systems and the termination of human life as we know it (Vaughan and Walsh 1993: xii).

This disillusionment with the consequences of the materialist worldview was frequent throughout modernity. Doubts on the promises of modernity were raised all along the way, and were amplified after each catastrophic event. The signs of distress and urgency present in

Mack's words are echoes characteristic of a postmodern angst which has accompanied modernity as an inconvenient but persistent shadow all along the way.

### 2.1.4 Postmodern Peaces

Postmodernity is born within modernity. The prefix post- as used here does not indicate necessarily a time frame, a period after modernity, but a doubt regarding the assumptions of the modern perspective (Lyotard 1984). Facing the many tragic consequences of the modern understanding, such as world wars, Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the Holocaust, postmodern perspectives question the absolute aspect of reason as the ultimate normative rule to guide decisions. The basic reflection is that if those tragic consequences were the result of that reasoning, I do not trust it as the sole guidance to action anymore, or, in the words of Martínez Guzmán: "If this is security, we'd rather have an insecure peace" (2009: 18). These assumptions do not imply a denial of rationality, neither are they a call for slipping modernity into oblivion or turning to a premodern worldview. A postmodern perspective perceives reason as a very useful tool for facing life's challenges, but realizes that if human beings are only rational they cannot establish deeper relationships or access all the potentialities that humanity has for interrelations.

Truth becomes essential in this perspective, but not an absolute Truth, with a capital T, but truths in plural, truths that are relative to the moment and space in which they are happening and also inherently relational, attached to the people sharing that truth. Therefore, truth is a weak truth, relative, and relational to each human encounter. In each encounter this truth is worked on, redefined according to the new elements at play, because the very beings involved are different from encounter to encounter. Truth becomes plural, and plurality becomes essential. In the beginning this sounded liberating for me – acknowledging that there are different views, each one has a different take on a subject, and may also be contradictory, and that is fine. Nevertheless, I would soon get trapped by my own – and others' – questioning

about limits, and frames. So what? We may disagree, but we have to work together, to make decisions. Or fight for a better living, and denounce denigrating conditions. And what if your truth causes harm to me? How do contradicting truths coexist; or do they coexist at all? It is important to argue that this plurality does not imply an acritical acceptance of any situation because 'anything goes', but it entails a discussion in dialogue: "a reciprocal acknowledgement of the advantages and disadvantages within different ways of life and a joint reconstruction of the alternatives in the framework of plurality are both required" (Martínez Guzmán 2009: 44). It is in human relationality that the limits and potentials of plurality may happen, as well as further combinations derived from this connection.

There are many truths, which are different and many times incompatible. But this plurality does not mean arbitrariness. It depends on concrete encounters of human beings in the here and now. With this rootedness in the local encounter, it prevents turning plurality into the same absolute truth of modernity. That would just be the cooption of the perspective into the same patterns of modernity. Postmodernity is aware of that danger, and establishes context specific boundaries. Its emphasis in the here and now is resounding: "It cares about the relations between finite human beings and the methods to make the world a bit more beautiful to them, but it does not try to make the world *per se* a better place" (Dietrich 2011: 8). It sounds more unassuming, less glamorous, and rougher, because I have to start where I am, with the relationships I have right now.

The doubt regarding absolute discourses implies then that the security of the one truth as guidance is dropped, as well as the stability of codes and norms. I cannot lull myself in the cradle of righteousness, and from there judge the world. I cannot count on priests, politicians, scientists for a final word because for postmodernists they do not own this last word anymore; the great heroes, great voyages, and great goals are fading (Lyotard 1984: xxiv). This implies a substantial turn in terms of tension and power. As the legitimation in universality is questioned,

the responsibility to define truth and peace is within each person in each encounter. Relationships then are brought back to the spotlight - they are leveraged with power. However, this power is restrained, because these relationships are embedded in the powerful modern structures which keep holding their mandates. This very interpenetration of power is highlighted and discussed as relational: "If truth in postmodernity simply has a conventional character and is bound to space and time, then it cannot claim universal validity because it is the expression of special constellations and of relations of power" (Dietrich 2012: 200). There is no stable ground from where power is exerted, but it is weaved into the intricate relationships of people, their backgrounds, and the institutions they participate in.

The task in a postmodern understanding of peace is neither to uphold opposites together, nor keeping them apart so one dominates over the other, as in energetic, moral, and modern. The task here is to hold them apart, keeping a respectful attitude toward their difference and plurality. The black and white of the initial analogy of the yin and yang in postmodernity begin to manifold in different shades, and colors begin to appear. Thus, tension is created out of their differences and many times incompatibility. Encounters of these differences generate tension and this tension is responsible for new ideas of action. Lyotard addressed this tension and its role in the production of new ideas:

> Postmodern science - by concerning itself with such things as undecidables, the limits of precise control, conflicts characterized by incomplete information, "fracta," catastrophes, and pragmatic paradoxes - is theorizing its own evolution as discontinuous, catastrophic, nonrectifiable, and paradoxical. It is changing the meaning of the word *knowledge*, while expressing how such a change can take place. It is producing not the known, but the unknown (1984: 60).

The act of questioning the one truth and acknowledging other truths with respect, even if incompatible, opens cracks in the notion of knowledge and how knowledge is legitimated. By flirting with ways of legitimation other than the one scientific method, postmodernity twists the understanding of knowledge itself, allowing different perspectives to come up through those cracks, recognized as knowledgeable. As knowledge is also power (Lyotard 1984: 5), this step

allows for diversification in the existent constellations of power dynamics and in the perception of those constellations by people. Consequently, it enables an enlarging of the perceived influence of those people and their relationships. This is momentous for the postmodern turn and its influence in human perceptions, and consequently, for peace, as we will see further on.

The legitimation of these now varied knowledges follows the same discussion as plurality – it is multiple, not arbitrary. It starts from the observation on where doubts about modernity emerged, in the perception of existence of knowledges outside of the scientific discourse. These narratives, quintessential forms of customary knowledge, are present in the daily experience of people who are not officially legitimated by science (Lyotard 1984: 19). The avowal of daily life as a source of knowledge plays then an important role in the pluralization of the means of legitimation, enabling a variety of voices into discourse. "At its best, post-modern philosophy is about the concrete, embodied experience, about the joys, pains, pleasures of the flesh. Life, here and now, in all its forms, actual and potential" (Koppensteiner 2011: 525-6).

This postmodern perspective paved the way for the questioning of the one peace and its consequences. The concept of the many peaces thus is born out of postmodernity. Breaking the monolithic idea of the one peace and one truth allowed for the acknowledgment of many, weak peaces. In Dietrich and Sützl words: "postmodernity calls for many 'peaces'" (1997: 14), a plurality which reflects the relevance of the relational aspect, of multiple sources of knowledge, including daily life, as well as the local and temporal ties of the many interpretations of peace.

Another approach to peace from a postmodern angle was taken by Francisco Muñoz, who argued that peace is not something that is conclusive or a definition, but is always changing, reinventing itself. To express this idea, he coined the term imperfect peace, which plays with the idealist's future-oriented idea of a perfect peace, while also calling attention to the intrinsic relationship of conflicts to peace. Muñoz emphasizes, though, that the term

imperfect does not need to be taken as negative, as something bad or passive. Hence, he calls for:

> (…) accepting the "imperfect" aspects of our species that lives in continuous conflict between the diverse individual and social possibilities that are possible and available afforded by its cultural biological condition, its history or its capacity to feel, imagine, desire, communicate, think or act. Accepting these determinants and the limitations of our biological, individual, social and cultural entity, *imperfect would be equivalent to conflictive,* while also revealing to us, based on the recognition of our parameters of existence, an enormous capacity for productive action (Muñoz 2006: 260).

By acknowledging that conflict is part of human beings' condition, Muñoz liberated its transformative potential, disentangling it from the role it had been assigned as the bad opposite of peace. Peace, then, is brought back from an intangible future to be revealed in the intricacies of daily life, with all its conflicts and potentials. This potentiality derives from the fact that conflict powers the search for solutions and therefore, "(…) could be regarded as a source of creativity and continual renewal" (Muñoz 2006: 254). In this postmodern approach to peace, conflict plays a major role, and opens "(…) major possibilities for analysis due to its relationship with the needs, desires, emotions, etc. that form part of the entire social network" (Muñoz 2006: 254). Muñoz was prophetic in his suggestion on the major possibilities that integrating conflict and peace within the same dynamic could open. His hint into this potential was also shared by others who delved into the possibilities that could come up from the developments of this perspective in specific, and postmodern philosophy in general.

Martínez Guzmán also advocated for plural peaces, the peaces of daily life. He argued that the discipline of peace studies spent considerable time discussing its place as a science, while a critique on the pretentious universality of science would be more appropriate:

> The issue is related more to questioning if in the name of "science" – the way it evolved since Western Modernity influenced by the principles of the Age of Enlightenment, and belonging to the rich part of the world – we kept on dominating, excluding and isolating other forms of knowledge, cultures and ways to look at science itself (Martínez Guzmán 2009: 32-3).

Therefore, instead of fitting the field into a monolithic idea of what science is, he asserted a philosophy for peaces, in which he defended intersubjectivity, mutual interpellation, and a participant-researcher instead of objectivity and a neutral observer. In this sense, relationality gains space in the production of knowledge, to which mutual interpellation provides the regulatory parameter. Calling for overcoming the dichotomy between nature and culture, Martínez Guzmán emphasizes the earthiness of human beings, whose vulnerability may unleash aggression and violence, but may as well expose our need of community and togetherness, revealing tenderness. In this way, according to him, it is possible to overcome the lopsidedness of reason to talk about reasons, feelings, emotions, fondness and tenderness (2000: 91-2).

Postmodern thinking therefore opens a whole new chapter in peace studies, in which it is possible to engage on topics such as tenderness, emotions and feelings from an intersubjective perspective, something improbable in the modern paradigm. It breaks with the violent premises of moral and modern understanding, without dismissing their contributions. In this sense, "postmodernity is not a dismissal of modernity but its twisting, its radicalization in the form of a critical reworking" (Dietrich 2012: 163). Exactly because of this radicalization of critical thinking, the postmodern approach maintains the same means of modernity – it questions rationality through rational means. It paved the way for the integration of other knowledges, but through reasoning itself. The lack of integration of other means, other ways of knowing, as discussed in the chapter on multiple ways of knowing, derives a creative tension that is restricted to the known means while searching for the unknown, and in my perspective, that is partly responsible for postmodern angst.

The other aspect that aggravates postmodern angst is the fact that postmodern thinking does not offer a substitute for the one truth or the metanarratives (Lyotard 1984). And it is deeply committed to not finding one, to not occupying a fixed space, because postmodernity is

aware that assuming it would turn itself into the violent and disrespectful force harshly criticized in modernity. Therefore, postmodern interpretation plays a very important role in questioning the absolute understanding of moral and modern interpretations, but it does so by using the same methods of modern reasoning. This generates an angst in terms of possible actions and transformations, giving a sensation of being trapped into the same reasoning that it questions, fostering disorientation.

However, postmodern disillusionment or angst is not seen necessarily as a bad thing. It is simply the result of the breaking of metanarratives, a part of the process. And mainly, it is a process that has to be undertaken if the unknown is meant to be born. The angst is part of the postmodern stand against metanarratives. It is a result of bearing the incompatible, the instable, the conflict. As Lyotard argued: "postmodern knowledge is not simply a tool of the authorities; it refines our sensitivity to differences and reinforce our ability to tolerate the incommensurable" (1984: xxv). Consequently, incredulity toward metanarratives has reached such a point that it does not expect salvation from the inconsistencies anymore. Tolerating the incommensurable is quite an endeavor, especially if it goes without a denial of salvation. Or better said, with the twisting of salvation, because when conflicts are integrated into daily life as a catalyst for creativity and transformation, there is nothing to be saved from.

That is how postmodernity twists modernity's concepts, it deflates their mainstays, weakening their strength and letting them be just one more concept among others. The call then is for action, once "one can never rely on a postmodern peace. It always wants to be lived, practiced, and won anew" (Dietrich 2012: 207). There is also no stable ground or permanent rest in a final state at the end of the action. Just continuous working. This may sound familiar – the Dionysian aspect is back into play, subtly, but persistently.

The indefinability of postmodernity into a strict and rigid category, due to its constant renewing and questioning is evident in the complexities the postmodern term and thinking brought to the field of dance. In it, the adjective 'postmodern' was adopted to differentiate new styles, which contrasted to the so-called modern dance, and consequently was applied to characterize a period after modernity, ranging from the sixties to the eighties, exerting influence until the beginning of the XXI century. The classification of 'postmodern' in dance is, therefore, related to chronology and not to the postmodern question of modernity (Banes 1987: xiii) as discussed above with Lyotard. The same can be said of modern dance, a term used to address certain innovations in the field of dance in the first half of the twentieth century: it refers rather to the period of time than to the concept of modernity discussed previously, being used to name what at first were called 'new' dances. It was later on, "by the late 1950s, [that] modern dance had refined its styles and its theories, and had emerged as a recognizable dance genre" (Banes 1987: xii). This confusion is natural, as usually innovations happen first, and only afterwards they are analyzed, interpreted, labelled, and categorized according to context, but this process is difficulted when related to postmodernity. This is especially true in the field of dance, which does not necessarily rely on spoken words as primary language, opening a wider range of interpretations. Addressing this challenge, Banes explained that:

> In dance, the confusion the term "post-modern" creates is further complicated by the fact that historical modern dance was never really modernist. Often it has been precisely in the arena of post-modern dance that issues of modernity in the other arts have arisen: the acknowledgment of the medium's materials, the revealing of dance's essential qualities as an art form, the separation of formal elements, the abstraction of forms, and the elimination of external references as subjects (1987: xv).

Historical modern and postmodern dance then does not correspond to the understandings of modern and postmodern thinking in other arts and in the families of peaces. It is indeed curious that Isadora Duncan, considered a precursor of modern dance, attributed this title of 'modern' to the ballet of the time, which she rejected vehemently (Duncan 1928).

Paradoxically, in her journey to find beauty and to establish dance as an art, she led the first explorations in some of the issues labeled by Banes as essentially modern, while also paving the way for postmodern explorations. Banes continued her reflection about the modern and postmodern in dance, emphasizing this overlapping of perspectives:

> Thus in many respects it is post-modern dance that functions as *modernist* art. That is, post-modern dance came after modern dance (hence, post-) and, like the post-modernism of the other arts, was anti-modern. But since 'modern' in dance did not mean modernist, to be anti-modern dance was not at all to be anti-modernist. In fact quite the opposite. (…) And yet, there are also aspects of post-modern dance that do fit with post-modernist notions (in the other arts) of pastiche, irony, playfulness, historical reference, the use of vernacular materials, the continuity of cultures, an interest in process over product, breakdowns of boundaries between art forms and between art and life, and new relationships between artist and audience (1987: xv).

Therefore, the chronological perspective with which the characteristic of postmodern has been applied to dance contrast with the concept of postmodern used in other arts and the one debated here in relation to postmodern peaces. In this sense, historical modern dance inaugurated some postmodern questionings, while historical postmodern dance relied on some modern ideas. This distinction, however, cannot be understood bluntly, but with many shades overlapping one and another. In this sense, postmodern elements in dance - those identifying with a questioning of the principles of modernity as one truth and one ideal, and respect for plurality - can be traced back to the very beginnings of modern dance. This does not mean that they were essentially postmodern, but that postmodern elements can be found in them, as well as modern ones.

It is in this spirit that I approach postmodern elements in dance with Isadora Duncan, considered the predecessor of modern dance (Clarke and Crisp 1981: 215, and Kassling 2007: 185). Contradiction is indeed an inherent trait of the postmodern approach, and is definitely a trait of Duncan's art and personality. With this approach, I do not intend to discuss the categorization of her style as modern or postmodern in the field of dance, but to highlight

postmodern aspects inaugurated in her work, according to the characteristics of postmodernity discussed in this subchapter. This is challenging, because there are no recordings of her presentations, according to her will, and the impressions left of her dance are passionate accounts both from admirers and detractors. She has also written many texts, including her autobiography and articles discussing her work (1928 and 2013), which portray her intense and fiery personality, collaborating to the paradoxes raised around her, and the fascination and contention her dance has exerted in the dance world.

Isadora Duncan was born in California in 1877, and spent part of her professional life in Europe, in a sort of exile. Her dancing was very different from what was practiced at the time, and attracted as much attention as her personal life, marked by tragedies such as the loss of her two kids in a car accident and her own death by strangulation when her scarf was caught on the wheels of her vehicle in 1927, at age 40. Her style was considered a novelty in the field of dance, which had been questioned regarding its place as art due to the outdatedness and lack of innovation of ballet, on one hand (Daly 2010: 24). On the other hand, also contributing to the demeaning of dance, at the beginning of the XX century, was the degraded image of the pastime and pageantry of European ballroom dances, such as waltz and minuet, and the African American dances debased as lascivious and immoral, such as Charleston and the Fox Trot (Duncan 1928: 47).

Part of her audience considered Duncan a pioneer, representing the innovation, vision, and audacity they were willing to associate to the US. Her rejection of ballet was seen as an aversion to tradition, at a time when the country was searching for its own image, dissociated from Europe and related to development and motion forward (Daly 2010: 8-9). Her style was also associated with modernity in terms of motion, in reference to the movement of industrial power, the influx of immigrants and speed (Clarke and Crisp 1981: 213). Preston (2005) also characterized Duncan as a modern artist due to her use of metaphors associated with motors, as

a motor in the soul, and emotions as motors (Duncan 2013: 146, Duncan 1928: 99). However, in the same sentence in which she compares emotion to motor she defends that the dancer has to be open and swayed by the soul as "(…) the trees abandon themselves to the winds", in a reference to the Dionysian rapture (Duncan 1928: 99). Therefore, her style attracted people from different points of view, who regarded through their own lenses what was undoubtedly an innovation difficult to articulate. Regarding Duncan's dance based on release, Daly affirmed that:

> This fluid self freely circulating— an image of "becoming"—appealed to a wide variety of spectators, who saw in her the embodiment of their own desire for social, political, and artistic change. She was, for them, a symbol of spontaneity and freedom. Not only did she appeal to those modernists who wanted to overthrow the old genteel tradition, but she also appealed to antimodernists, who read her "naturalness" through their own longing for a return to something authentic, simple, and pure (2010: 14-15).

Adding to these two perspectives of her spectators, there is also the topic of moral and spirituality which was strongly present in Duncan's argumentation, as well as the presence of words in capital letters such as Beauty, Divine, Self, which Preston associated with Victorianism of the nineteenth century (2005). Daly argued that contrasting with her image of a pioneer, Duncan also relied upon spiritual righteousness, "for the woman who bared her flesh knew that in order for dance to be accepted in America as a legitimate art, as "Culture," it had to be accepted as moral" (2010: 9). Her morality, however, despite tending to righteousness in her effort toward differentiating her practice from that which was considered immoral, was interspersed with an idea of divine association with the cosmos and bestowed through nature and the body (Daly 2010: 9 and Duncan 1928).

Although Duncan adopted in her discourses some progressivist's scores of the time, her approach had a transcendental texture which distanced her from a material stake (Daly 2010: 35). In this sense, she defended "(…) (health, morality, womanhood and motherhood, and education), through which social, political, and religious leaders sought to reform the ills that

had been wrought upon American society by modernization" (Daly 2010: 35). But at the same time, she enveloped them in the idea of Beauty, with which she meant "(...) not just outward appearance but essential human goodness — a state of being in harmony with self, others, and the cosmos" (Daly 2010: 36).

Dancing barefoot, without tights, wearing a light tunic, she was in stark contrast to the tiptoed and corseted ballerinas that portrayed the disconnection from earth and body, and mirrored "(…) all that was wrong with overcivilized nineteenth-century living" (Daly 2010: 26-27). Duncan's flexible and fluid movements were very different from the geometric forms of the five positions of ballet. In her presentations, she dropped the setting and the story, using just blue curtains, and danced to classical music (Daly 2010, Clarke and Crisp 1981, and Kassing 2007). Her exposed limbs portrayed her respect for a transcendental body. She danced solo, without props, revealing in the stage the body in its natural and, according to her view, transcendental earthly presence. Associated with her intense presence, as many described, she captivated the spectators, inviting them into participation in a seemingly simple and fulfilling manifestation (Banes 1987: 63-4). All these elements contributed to the aspect of naturality and spontaneity that stemmed from her presentations. This spontaneity is referred by some as a myth encouraged by Duncan herself, somehow concealing the existence of a technique which, although different from the established ones, nonetheless was there (Daly 2010: 86). Daly argued that:

> It was important that audiences imagine Duncan to be free from technical training, even from choreographic preparation, for she embodied a vision of spontaneity and complete freedom, born of "Nature." That was a large part of her appeal for a generation of Americans whose ambivalence toward modernism left them longing for things simpler, purer, more seemingly "authentic." But the claim to utter naivete also worked against her wider reputation, both during her later lifetime and after her death, because as ballet and modern dance took a foothold in American culture, the display of "technique" became the generally accepted basis of theatrical dancing (2010: 75).

As in many of Duncan's quests, a spark of contradiction is present. She questioned many principles of modernity, as the separation of body and mind, the disconnection and domination over nature, the despise of the feminine energy. She questioned ballerinas' attempted disconnection from the natural world, the distant ideal of purity, and perfection not natural to the body, as well as their uncommunicating technique in the form of mere pastime, without alluring the audience with Dionysian energy. She also questioned formalist aesthetic, the idea of art for art's sake, and the emphasis on form rather than content.

Opposed to it, Duncan defended a body connected to self, mind, nature, and cosmos, a body which is not only form, but is process in the expression of "(…) not only the movements of the body, as in gymnastics, but also the thoughts and feelings of a soul (1928: 83). For her, "the dancing body was no longer a product— of training, of narrative, of consumption— but rather a process. It was about becoming a self rather than displaying a body" (Daly 2010: 68). For such an expressiveness, she emphasized a nakedness, a transparency and detachment which was the expression of the harmony between body and the spiritual soul, a nakedness "(…) no longer at war with spirituality and intelligence, but joining with them in a glorious harmony" (1928: 63). As an expression of the soul, movements would not be taught or forced in different bodies as an adaptation to a technique, but developed from each person's inner being, whose authenticity conferred the natural beauty Duncan professed.

Furthermore, in an emphasis of the becoming, of dance as celebration of life (in which she is inspired by Nietzsche), movement would be beautiful differently in each stage of life as well, according to the forms taken by that body. And the harmony between those forms and the movement would confer its beautiful expression (1928: 61). She had a penchant for form, not the rigid form of ballet, but the fluid form of nature, ever-changing, and perhaps most importantly, animated by the Dionysian force of the waves to which the dancer should surrender

to in order to be moved and touched by the divine. In her view, dance is art, and art serves life (1928: 101,143).

All these arguments composed a vision, with which she created what she called a 'new' dance, with dramatic impact on the dancers of the twentieth century, whether in continuing her legacy, actualizing it or opposing to it. Among the elements of her practice which bear a postmodern inspiration and influenced a postmodern understanding on dance, it can be mentioned: the inclusion of everyday movements such as running, jumping and leaping by legs and feet unencumbered by pointe shoes and tights (Daly 2010: 80); a different exploration of gravity, time and space; an alternation of contraction and release in response to a will of the body liberated from corsets (Daly 2010: 78); the nakedness of the body, for her not a body naked in its physicality, but in its beauty, which later would be stripped by postmodern and contemporary dancers; and her exploration of spirituality which, although attached to a moral, a beauty, nevertheless was embedded in nature, and marked a return of Dionysian ecstasy to dance.

However, to legitimate her new dance, which contained some postmodern elements, she used many of the characteristics of modernity, for example a moral righteousness, which she argued for in differentiation from the sensual ballroom dances. Daly, pondering the question on how Duncan, at her time and context, managed to turn marginalized dance into the center of a cultural vortex, affirmed that:

> The fundamental strategy of Duncan's project to gain cultural legitimacy for dancing was one of exclusion. In order to reinvent the idea of the "dancer," that is to say, to make dancing (but specifically her kind of dancing) a matter of good "taste" within the existing cultural order, Duncan employed the dominant logic of difference along a number of axes, and used it to cultivate "distinction" (Daly 2010: 16-7).

With this strategy, she shifted perspectives on dance, "(…) from low to high, from sexual to spiritual, from black to white, from profane to sacred, from woman to goddess, from

entertainment to 'Art'" (Daly 2010: 16-7). In other words, it can be said that Duncan questioned the status of ballet and dance, introducing considerable changes in practice, experience, and theory, but all that through some of the artistic means prevalent in the status that she questioned. In this sense, while she was criticized by dancers with a modern perspective because of her lack of technique and excess of spontaneity, dancers of future generations with a postmodern perspective would criticize specially these aspects that remained tied to the old means of dancing:

> Rather than freeing the body and making dance accessible even to the smallest children, rather than bringing about social and spiritual change, the institution of [historic] modern dance had developed into an esoteric art form for the intelligentsia, more remote for the masses than ballet (Banes 1987: xv-xvi).

Duncan questioned many of the modern assumptions present in ballet and in ballroom dancing, while also introduced some postmodern notions in her dance practice. However, she relied on the same structures that characterized the dances she questioned, limiting the scope of action in her proposals. Duncan's postmodern provocation had long term effect and continue to be up-to-date, as dance is still very much enmeshed in modern ways.

## 2.1.5 Reflection

Based on the descriptions of the different understandings of peaces discussed above (energetic, moral, modern, and postmodern), I invite you to participate in an exercise that I call the four corners of peace. Imagine where you are right now there are four corners. If you are in a room, look around at the four corners of the room, and if you are in an open space, you can use the four cardinal points as your corners. Now, posit in each corner the key element related to each family of peace: one corner is harmony, another one justice, and then security and truth. Position yourself in the center of the room, and reflect: which perspective guides your life? Allow yourself to feel pulled to a particular corner. Choose only one and move there. How does it feel? Is it easy to choose? Could you fit comfortably in one corner? Usually when I do this

exercise with groups, discussing the concepts of many peaces, some people would instantaneously complain: 'I cannot choose only one… can't I choose at least two?' People described their feeling as being torn apart by the pull of multiple corners at once. Some said it is difficult to deliberately choose only one interpretation to guide our whole life and action. Other people shared that they realized that they orient different aspects of their lives with each of these themes. Frequently, the groups came to the conclusion that people put different weight on each aspect, but they are all relevant. Security is important, but truth is also essential. Justice is substantive, but if it does not intermingle with harmony it becomes troublesome. Stripping life from one of them is indubitably problematic. The second step of the exercise was to move to a more comfortable disposition within the corners, a place which corresponded to how to manage these principles in life. Few people remained in the extreme points. Most of them found spaces in between corners, or closer to the center. What if we consider different aspects of our lives separately? If I think of family, I tend to find a place closer to harmony. If I think of the Brazilian society, the corners of justice and security pull my presence. Nevertheless, if I think of the media, truth calls my attention. But in different times and contexts, my needs regarding these themes may conform to a different constellation. Moreover, my needs can be in stark difference to someone else's. This begs the question, 'How does a person understand her own stance while acknowledging another's position, and then proceed to negotiate them in life?'.

Keeping this exercise in mind helps me remember that these interpretations do not exist in pure states, but they have prevailed in certain worldviews more than in others. In their different interplays, they brought important perspectives, but also created problems due to an imbalance when considering different aspects of human relationality. Also, it is important to

acknowledge that the discourse that derives from such worldviews may be excluding and support one-sided perspectives, as has been evident in the discourses on security, for example.

The need for balance among the different themes of the interpretations of peace is a principle of the transrational peaces, the fifth family proposed by Dietrich (2012). Justice, harmony, truth, and security are important aspects of our lives, and when one prevails over the others, there is imbalance. So, there is the need to acknowledge these aspects and work to balance them in our approaches to life.

But before moving on to transrationality, I would like to address the fact that after going through all these themes related to each of the peace families, the concepts may get a bit blurred. Reflecting on the themes corresponding associations, the roles of actors, structures, and the weight each of them plays in a person's life, which are dynamic and correspond to lived experiences may be bewildering. Especially after the postmodern angst, it may be difficult to see viable ways of acting amidst the vastness of plurality and possible connections. This is one of the aspects that is dealt with in the following chapters; how to move and thrive in such a complex landscape of related issues.

Sometimes I also get to the point where the concepts are so closely related that I lose track of their differentiation, a feeling which resonated with other people who provided me feedback on my work. Additionally, the complexity of contexts in terms of peace - local and global, personal and collective – can be overwhelming. When that happens, a contribution from a colleague floods my mind. Months after facilitating the above-mentioned exercise, I participated in an exercise with analogous characteristics. Later, I discovered it was based on a

play described by Lederach (1999: 51-61) about a dialogue between justice, peace, mercy, and truth.

In this exercise, four people represent each of these topics, and they would dialogue among themselves while we, the other participants, could ask questions. In the end, we could physically move them in order to form an image of how we saw them relating to each other. Participants moved them around, put them facing each other in a circle, then in a line facing the horizon, then holding hands, then in a line, to which there was much discord on who would come first. By the end of what lasted for almost an hour, a local activist from a Southern African country commented something that stroke a chord with me. I am not able to repeat her exact words, but as it stuck with me it goes like this: "you know, based on my context, where I come from, there is no truth, no mercy, justice is far beyond reach, but we are trying to live in peace anyway, to thrive while working for truth and mercy and justice".

Lederach addressed something similar in his version of this play, in which peace both brings forth and is child of the other elements. "I am before and after", she says (Lederach 1999: 58), in a linear and historical perspective on time. In the present moment, nevertheless, I would say she is throughout. In this sense, my peer's saying continuously reminds me that peace and conflict work is not about conditionality, in the sense of what comes first, but about the pulsating relationality of human life and its connectedness.

## 2.2 The Transrational Perspective

One of the first experiences I have had that I could call peaceful – as far as I can recall - is watching the sunset. I used to love it (and still do, for the impatience of some of my friends). The orange sun painting the sky in colors, throwing lights in between clouds, goldening dried bushes and making the dust in the air shine. The dark blue covering fast the light blue, as a blanket, revealing the glint of the first stars, while on the west side of the sky the light of the

sun would still replicate dark balls in my eyes. As it got darker, insects began to make their noises, orchestrating a rare music which would also remind me of getting inside. Mom was waiting, but I did not want to break that moment. As temperature dropped slightly, vegetation seemed to be thankful for the sunlight of the day but also relieved of the strength of the heat that chastises the semiarid region of the Brazilian Northeast. Beauty and awe, partnering with risk and curiosity of the darkness in which kids did not partake. Goosebumps from a slight change in temperature or from the chill of the unknown? Butterflies in the stomach from the adventure of staying outside a little bit longer, anxiety overlapping with fear and a willingness to be cozy inside in the warm embrace of my family. As I write, I think of it and I identify the same reaction, a long exhalation sustained by those moments of postponed inhalation, prolonging a pause felt like a weight in the chest. Longing and belonging. Being. Twenty-five years later, the sunset still thrills me, bringing tears to my eyes, releasing tense muscles and a deepening gratitude for the moment, which contains the mystery of years of evolution and all the potential of the excitement it generates in my veins.

One might say that it is just the earth turning around itself, in reference to the sun. Besides, that happens every day. And yet, it is precisely for that reason that it is amazing. It is the earth moving, moving ourselves with her although we do not feel it, having the sun as reference, whose light and heat flourishes life. And this phenomenon has been occurring for billions of years, allowing the current beings on earth to exist, out of a fantastic and complex organization of basic elements. After all, human beings are made of approximately seventy-five percent of water. For me, the spectacle of the sunset catalyzes this amazement, playing with colors in the sky. A remembrance of the awe of existence. I also see the sunset as a threshold between day and night, moon and sun. While having a significantly different 'status' in the solar system, for earthlings, moon and sun portray opposites, while also being complementary in their successive cycles. Gazing at the magnitude of their succession, it is

inevitable to relate to the divinity attributed to them by different cultures. It is striking how their relation has been given diverse interpretations in different cultures around the world.

On one hand, I think it is not mandatory to believe in anything supernatural, to be amazed by interconnectedness and grateful for existence. On the other, believing in forces, divinities personifying the sun, or creating it, is also another way of relating to it. Is one ultimately right while the other is disparagingly wrong? Does assuming one perspective entitle me to despise the other? In spite of the biases developed throughout history, specially toward more energetic views, the different ways to relate to the sun and the moon provide valuable insights about human beings and their relationships with nature and the cosmos.

The encouragement to look at those interpretations and worldviews of different cultures with respectful eyes was a breakthrough of postmodernity. Going beyond the label of uncivilized, barbaric, or exotic allowed for the expansion of frontiers of knowledge as perceived in the modern perspective. This led to an encounter between different spiritual traditions and philosophies, such as Tao, Zen, Tantra, and different forms of shamanism, and Western rationality (Kripal 2008, Dietrich 2012). It also opened the opportunity to understand the act of watching the sunset as an experience of peace, an incomplete, small, and imperfect peace. Besides that, it derives from the postmodern perception that this local and personal experience is also valuable. The consequent logic then, is that this kind of experience is worth studying. This insight has been a vital trigger to new developments in approaches to peace and the humanities in general. This postmodern approach unfolds into investigations that go beyond postmodernity itself, multiplying in a range of perspectives where the transrational peace philosophy finds itself. In this turn, the peaceful experience provided by watching the sunset, for example, is not just incomplete or imperfect, as in postmodernity; it is imbued with potential.

Dietrich emphasizes the differences between these perspectives, having as reference the key concept of harmony:

> While modern peace research sense that harmony is a basic human concept, its reductionist thinking offers no social science tool for addressing harmony. In a like fashion, this applies to most post-modern interpretations of peace and their rationalistic instruments. In either case, harmony is often marginalized as unscientific new age romanticism (2013: 106).

Transrationality realizes the limitedness of the modern approach to peace from a strictly rational standpoint, and draws from quantum physics, systems theory, and from the dialogue between modern and unmodern perspectives for a more encompassing understanding. It extrapolates modernity's barriers, derived from the limits of reason, and the methods available which were restricted by that limitation, while making these barriers porous. It learns from modernity, incorporates the criticism and the plurality of postmodern perspective, and infuses the understanding of peace with the energetic flow stemming from mystic worldviews. This implies a turn which changes the approach to peace, as can be perceived in the relation to harmony. While harmony in modern and postmodern thinking did not have an appeal, being set aside as unscientific, in transrationality it is a key element in the definition of peace itself, understood as "(…) an aesthetic momentum of an intersubjective, compassionate and harmonious resonance" (Dietrich 2011: 13).

It is important to emphasize that transrationality does not deny rationality, but twists it, weakening its harmful tendencies of absolutism with an emphasis on relationality. This does not imply abandoning the many contributions of rationality and shifting to premodern modes, but recognizes these advances, as well as the catastrophic consequences of denying relationality and isolating reason from the other layers of human beings. Transrationality thus draws from Adam Curle to approach peace work as concerned with the complex web of relationships which permeates life in small and large scale, emphasizing the crucial role that awareness plays in changing these relationships (2016c: 92).

In this sense, the complex web of relationality reveals itself not only in interpersonal connections in a small scale, but also in the larger scale. In the previous chapter I defined the

role of postmodern thinking as popping up the inflated absolute truths of modernity, making them just one more perspective among many, and with that, weakening its power. Transrationality perpetuates that process, but also enlarges the landscape of perception, incorporating rationality as one more element into a broader system in which human beings are embedded in a cosmic and resonant fabric.

The acknowledgment of this turn entails shifts in the philosophy of peace and also in the practices of conflict transformation, and requires adjustments, which range from terminology to practice. For example, in my previous research I approached the need to lay opportunities for the experience of peace with the verb to foster. Reflecting on the argument presented by Kubny (2013) regarding this verb, and going deeper into the transrational philosophy and elicitive practices, nevertheless, I felt the need for a different approach to it. To foster means to encourage the development or growth of ideas or feelings (Cambridge Dictionary 2016). Associated with the care of a child, it also relates to nurturing, sustaining. Fostering implies action. This definition indubitably covers one aspect of peace, but leaves another aspect untouched. This other aspect relates to the serendipitous character of how the experience of peace occurs, and thus acknowledging the intentionality of opening the space for it, through the will, but lack of control to make it flourish at a determined moment and time. In this sense, to unfold seems to be a more appropriate choice to convey transrational peaces with its twofold approach: "to open or spread out something that has been folded" (Cambridge Dictionary 2016). In peace and conflict transformation, to unfold attempts to convey the action of tapping into the potential folded within, available for human experience at each and every moment, while acknowledging its own rhythm. There is a second subject in the process responsible for folding, which is unknown.

The act of unfolding requires intentionality and deed, fostering the known means that enables the experience of peace to happen. But it also requires being open for the unknown and

the ever-changing situation - with the humility that it is not under one's control - and presence to respond, move with the new. In a transrational sense, unfolding peaces requires the combination of intentionality, sensitivity to the ever-changing system, including oneself, and unattachment to previously expected outcomes. It recognizes agency in the human being engaged with peace, but also the existence of dynamics beyond her power and control. Any similarity to energetic peace is not mere coincidence, because the transrational incorporates aspects of that understanding within its scope, as is detailed later.

At this intersection, the transrational peace philosophy overlaps with the approach of the moral imagination proposed by Lederach. This consonance reveals the proximity of the shared horizon of the elicitive, the quality that defines conflict transformation as approached by both perspectives. Lederach argued that within protracted conflicts, in the grounds of violence, there are moments that sparkle with possibilities, pregnant with life:

> This unexpected new life makes possible processes of constructive change in human affairs and constitutes the moral imagination without which peacebuilding cannot be understood or practiced. However, such pregnant moments do not emerge through the rote application of a technique or a recipe. They must be explored and understood in the context of something that approximates the artistic process, imbued as it is with creativity, skill, serendipity, and craftsmanship (2005: 29).

Reinforcing the critique on methods of modernity, which detached cultural, local, and interpersonal aspects from the aseptic concept of intervention, Lederach suggested a different vision of the scenario. Such perspectives do not dismiss technique, but emphasize the vital importance of those moments that sparkle possibilities, and the need to explore them in a context that propitiate their occurrence. Providing these auspicious conditions requires an active mode of creating the space but also a patient mode of awareness to the emerging of possibilities. It requires putting oneself in that place of amazement which sparkles curiosity of science, art, and spirituality.

The complexity of the interconnections at play demand knowledge and skill to prepare the space, and awareness and creativity to embrace the unknow. It reminds me of the training of a dancer, which requires practice and dedication, but also a willingness to be taken by the muses, by rapture, when it comes. Without the first, the probability of the occurrence of the second diminishes, as well as the health benefits of the practices. Without the later, practice becomes mechanical and restricted in meaning.

Unfolding peaces requires resonance of the multiple ways of knowing – personal and collective, from where individual and social harmony may emerge. In their interrelation lays the rhythmic pulsation that provides swing to balance, which otherwise is often related to as a static process. Balance is a key concept for the transrational interpretation of peace, and I realized in the interactions with the groups I worked with that it is often understood as a product, a stable situation. Balance can mean to be in a state where things are of equal weight or force, or a position where someone or something can stand without falling in any direction. It can also be understood as giving something an equal amount of importance, time, and money (Cambridge Dictionary 2016). Depending on the perspective or the time frame considered in these meanings, balance may be understood as something static. If applied with this interpretation to transrationality, that would mean that the same the same weight would be considered for each theme in any given situation: the same portions of harmony, justice, security, and truth for all contexts, and this recipe could therefore be applied to any situation. But that is exactly the understanding that the transrational perspective questions, the attempt to keep things static. Since it deals with energies in a continuous flow, balance is understood as necessarily dynamic, responding to the situation, time, context and relationships at play (Dietrich 2011: 14).

The approach to energy in such a perspective is incorporated from energetic worldviews, and receives a further dimension deriving from scientific findings, which in turn coincide in

many aspects with those worldviews. Energy is understood in the variety of its states, including matter, which is pictured:

> (…) not at all as passive and inert but as being a continuous dancing and vibrating motion whose rhythmic patterns are determined by the molecular atomic, and nuclear configurations. We have come to realize that there are no static structures in nature. There is stability, but this stability is one of dynamic balance, and the further we penetrate into matter the more we need to understand its dynamic nature to understand its patterns (Capra 1982: 88).

The impact of such understanding was substantial not only for physics but also for social sciences. If things are not solid matter, but are in a constant vibrating motion, boundaries are less a question of physics than of perspective. In the same vein, this very perspective is relative and interconnected. As a consequence, observer and observed are not separate entities, but interrelated stances. The separation of body and mind, as well as the one between nature and culture loses its absoluteness, as the universe becomes a net of connectivity in patterns of dynamic energy. In order to understand peace, then, it is necessary to understand its dynamic balance.

Breathing exemplifies in a very experiential manner this idea of a dynamic equilibrium: try to inhale continuously – it is impossible because in a dynamic balance I need to inhale, but I also need to exhale. The reverse is also true: exhalation reaches a point where it cannot be sustained. Sometimes in dance I unconsciously try to challenge this dynamic and forget to breath, to the exasperation of my teachers who perceive my red face and the numbness of my movements before I realize the lack of air. But without air there is no movement. The amount of air taken also varies according to what I am doing, as well as the speed in which the exchange happens – if I am sleepy, inhalation is shorter than exhalation. While exercising, the orchestration is different - I need fast exchange of air to oxygenate my body. In situations of heightened alertness, I may hold my breath to observe, and hear more attentively to be prepared to act. There are also variations as to which body parts participate in breathing in different

moments – stress cuts breath at the neck, while sleeping allows inhalation to extend to the belly. While breathing, a person also access her diaphragm, rib cage, nostrils, neck, throat. And what to say about circulation, the breathing of the cells? It allows me to feel the pulsation of life in my toe. Another fascinating aspect of breathing that sheds light into this reflection on peace is that it has a sympathetic function, allowing certain control on how it functions. This leverage is, nevertheless, not complete, but just until a certain point. It has limits, which although flexible and liable to training, exist. It implies breathing and being breathed, letting inhalation and exhalation flow naturally or controlling it according to will. It also allows, in that grey area of transition between the two, just being aware of its occurrence, being conscious of it without influencing its flow.

The dynamic quality of breath exemplifies a balance that moves, flows, and adapts to the circumstances according to the needs. This approach on balance derives from the principle of homeostasis in biology and systems theory. Illustrating homeostasis, Bateson uses as an example the process of respiration and the adaptation to atmospheric pressure, in which homeostatic circuits in the body regulate and adapt internal needs to external conditions (1987: 356-7). Following Bateson, systems are in constant movement and exchange. To manage the impact of changes and retain balance, a natural tendency, systems have a self-regulatory mechanism which works through loops of regulation and adjustments. These circuits connect multiple and interdependent variables to adapt to internal and external changes in order to keep equilibrium (Bateson 1987: 356-67). Systems are not enclosed in static balance, but work on a dynamic balance through regulatory and adjusting circuits. Balance in a system is then always in relation to its inner and outer means, it is relational. As a consequence, a static peace would be useless and even harmful, due to the effort dedicated to keep its rigidity.

The very act of breathing also reflects relationality and interconnectivity. My cells breathe through circulation, and through the pulse of each heartbeat air is circulating in my

body. Through this vibration, it is possible to concentrate awareness in specific points of my body. Air provides notice from a variety of sensations through different systems in the body: nose senses smell, skin notices temperature, hair notices movement and direction (Fogel 2013). Air is incessantly inside us, as well as around, in a pervasive embrace. The same air in my lungs now will be in someone else's in a second, no matter if I am close to that person or not, if I like her or not, if I like this fact or not. This exchange is beyond my opinions and judgments about it. It is the air animals breathe, plants photosynthesize, the air that is moved in the most pleasant summer breeze and in devastating hurricanes. That carries the smell of slurry as well as the scent of flowers, and viruses. Therefore, it is not only poetically that the individual breath pulsates with the breath of the whole world, it is also physically very real. It is also not just a figure of speech to say that with every breath we change the world, even if infinitesimally. And every breath changes us too (Koppensteiner 2009: 93-4).

The acknowledgement of the power of breath and its mingling with peace is, nevertheless, not original. Interpretations of peace from different parts of the world and from peoples from different eras connected peace with breath or air, and related it to spirituality; even the semantic roots of the names of god in monotheistic religions derives from this connection (Dietrich 2012). The ungraspable and ubiquitous character of air is associated with the ineffability of spiritual experiences, as well as with its vital connection to life.

The resonance of the individual breath with the breath of the whole world has been approached by human beings with an energetic understanding through spirituality. This same resonance gains momentum again in a transrational understanding of peace, but now from a twisting of modern rationality infused with energetic flow. In this sense: "it defines a holon that transgresses the limits of rationality and trans-personal peaces, explores and experiences the spiritual sphere and is able to communicate it" (Dietrich 2011: 17).

Transrationality recognizes spirituality as an undeniable aspect of the experience of peaces, and therefore does not refrain from addressing it. It encourages dialogue about spiritual experiences while acknowledging that there is a limit to the grasp, understanding, and translation of such experiences into rational content. However, it also understands that communication does not happen only through rational arguments, but also through body, senses, emotion, and intuition. The interrelation of these aspects is, therefore, a very important aspect of peace, not only because of communication between individuals, but also because they are sources of knowledge and inform human experience in a more holistic way when interconnected.

But before going further into this topic, as I referred to a holon which transgresses rationality and explores spirituality, it is important to dedicate to it a further clarification. Ken Wilber is the source of this reference, and also the reference for the expression transrational. He inspired the way of the transpersonal within psychology and the very use of the word transrational to describe phenomena which go beyond rationality (1995 and 1993). Reality, according to Wilber, is not composed of things or processes, but of holons, a whole/part. In other words, a holon is always part of something else, and in turn, is the whole of other parts (1995: 54). With this concept, he questions any attempt of focusing on one aspect as a thing isolated from anything else, and reinforces the interdependence of reality. In this view, both wholism and atomism are undercut because there are only whole/parts (1995: 56).

This concept plays an important role in avoiding the dangers of total relativism of atomism, and of ideological end of wholism - totalitarism (1995: 58). This idea is applied to understand development and evolution, in the sense that "(…) hierarchy is simply a ranking of orders of events according to their holistic capacity. In any developmental sequence, what is whole at one stage becomes merely a part of a larger whole at the next stage". This understanding informs transrational peace philosophy and this discussion on the twisting of

rationality to approach spirituality. Wilber's point is that complexity accompanies the differentiation of the holons, expanding beyond and integrating the previous holons, in a way that there is never a final unity (Wilber 1993: 218).

The idea of holons facilitates the visualization of the relationship between the spiritual and rational realms in terms of their framework and the challenges of communication between them. Nevertheless, there is an interpretation in Wilber's approach to holons that distances transrational peace from it. Although affirming that hierarchy is a rank of order based on complexity, his approach implies a linear thread of evolution, considering this evolutionary development an arrow toward betterment. This linearity leads to the assumption that "the more holistic patterns appear later in development because they will have to wait the emergence of the parts that they will then integrate or unify, just as whole sentences emerge only after whole words" (Wilber 1993: 216).

Although drawing from Wilber's thoughts, the transrational peace philosophy, as explained by Dietrich, do not follow the evolutionist development of his ideas, and neither do I. More complex holons may evolve from and integrate less complex ones, but it does not necessarily lead toward betterment or progress, while it may more accurately be called an adaptation to the ever-changing context, or the unfoldment of a potential which already exists. Knowledge, then, derives from a potential accessed via experience, brought forth and worked on in relationality. As a consequence, "collective knowledge becomes ever greater, but not necessarily better" (Dietrich 2012: 63).

Nevertheless, it is important to highlight the connection as well as the differentiation between transrational peace and Wilber's perspective. First, because it motivates the integration of different approaches to visualize the connection of spirituality and rationality. Second, because it defines different lines of thought within humanistic psychology, which influence

their perspective on the body and the methods used by these schools to reach their strategies (as is seen in the subchapter on methods).

Another approach which sheds light upon the relation between the rational and spiritual dimensions is the idea of bootstrapping, a concept Capra borrowed from Geoffrey Chew and that questions the existence of an ultimate reference to an eternal law behind nature (2000). Understanding the universe as a dynamic web of interrelated events, it derives that in order to explain one phenomenon, it would be necessary to explain all phenomena. As it is impossible, bootstrapping allows understanding different aspects of nature without having to understand everything at once. It implies a sequence of consistent models, which approximates the phenomena but are not more fundamental than others (Capra 2000: 286). Echavarría, Ingruber and Koppensteiner used the idea of bootstrapping to understand the interconnection between spirituality and rationality, in a way that it implies accepting perspectives that overlap but not coincide entirely, or explanations which do not merge completely. Hence, "the corresponding descriptions of reality thus differ according to perspective. The spiritual might as well be expressed in terms of a systemic approach, in terms of deep-ecology, as the transpersonal or yet again the holistic" (2011: 604).

This understanding provides interesting lenses for the current discussion, because instead of nested holons, it offers an ensemble of lenses, which have overlaying parts but also parts which do not completely coincide. It disarms the temptation of putting aspects into a hierarchy of betterment, which is a very ingrained tendency in moral and modern peaces. In the same sense, it matches in a more consistent way my approach to the multiple ways of knowing and their non-hierarchical and plural contributions of varied complexity to knowledge. It also addresses the difficulty of translating experiences from one perception to another, and consequently the challenging, although not impossible, communication between them. That

happens exactly because, due to the non-merging edges in each lens, a full translation is not possible. In such a situation, the plurality of approaches reveals its richness.

This argument does not concur that an overview into complexity is not important. It takes a stand that the plurality of lenses helps to make sense of a complexity which otherwise is too difficult to grasp, although is possible of being beheld. Because it is this same plurality which composes complexity. Furthermore, the observer beholding it is never outside of it, but immersed in its threads as a participant in its dynamic and moving fabric. In this sense, the observer not only observes, but is necessary to bring about the properties and interconnections of the cosmic web in which it takes part (Capra 1982: 86-91). In terms of the discussion about spirituality and rationality, it means that one is not chosen over the other but they are integrated in a perception which may be sometimes contradictory and not coincident, but is certainly more holistic.

From the tension of beholding complexity while searching for simplicity emanates again the thread of energy. The plurality and the non-merging edges of different perspectives derive a great challenge to peace work, which needs to navigate between both complexity and simplicity emerging from this multiplicity. The shift from the worker as observer to the worker as participant allows a different perspective on the simplicity, which instead of a reductionism, becomes a source of energy (Lederach 2005: 33).

The context is complex, sustained by the relationships among the different actors, which in this snapshot are the simplicity. The connecting thread between simplicity and complexity, which channels energy through the system is therefore the relationality among the actors. A closed-up picture of these relationships offers nevertheless another level of complexity, which lies in the many layers communicating among and within the actors, which in turn, are still being informed by changes in the broader complexity. These different pictures offer a variety

of options of approaching the complexity through simpler (and they are classified as such according to perspective) entry points.

The interconnected characteristic of this system reveals yet another very important principle for transrational peace philosophy: correspondence. As each element is mingled with others through a web of energy, change in one specific connection changes the whole system. Here we meet again the pervasiveness of breath, from a different standpoint, which also resonates with the tantric principle of 'as above, so below': "by manipulating the mundane, it aims to effect changes on the spiritual level. By seeing the mundane as a reflection of the Enlightened, it imbues the world with a sacred quality. This has a transforming effect (…)" (Vessantara 1993: 217). In this account, Vessantara refers specifically to the relation between the material and the spiritual, but this correspondence can be extrapolated to the whole system. It reflects the interconnectedness of the layers, and their inter-penetrability.

Stretching Vessantara's definition of this tantric principle, it also implies saying that the deeper the work, the broader its impacts. This statement finds resonance also in Carl Rogers' argument that those things that are the most personal are the ones we share as humanity. He realized through his practice that "(…) what is most personal and unique in each one of us is probably the very element which would, if it were shared or expressed, speak most deeply to others" (1961: 26). This perception concurs with what was pointed out above in terms of the energy stemming from the individuals in the system, which bring about its dynamicity.

This individual is, nevertheless, also not a unique element, a complete thing in itself. A closer look reveals the complexity within human beings themselves. As discussed earlier, the individual in modernity was not seen as a complete unit, because mind was detached from the body. Nevertheless, there was still a belief in the wholeness of mind, the generator of reason, of the 'I' who thinks, following Descartes. This understanding has been questioned by different perspectives, which revealed the many layers which conforms human beings and the intricate

connection of body and mind. In what follows, these understandings will be approached, to help delineate a perspective on body and dance from a transrational stance.

In a process that resembles the layering of the atom and the exploration of its particles and waves in physics, science occupied itself with unpacking the mind in order to discover its intrinsic patterns. From a Western point of view, the trailblazer in this sense was Freud, who revealed the mechanisms of the ego, id and super ego. Jung also contributed to the debate with a lens on the unconscious and its potential, and then relating it also to the idea of the collective unconscious (Jung 1981: 3). He also debated the danger of repressing shadow aspects with the consequence of projecting it onto others. He urged for a healthy relationship with these aspects of the mind, pointing out that the mere recognition of their presence could be the beginning of the solution (Jung 1981:20-1 and Jung 2006:119). At this point, Jung had already been influenced by Eastern philosophies and their insightful perspectives on the ego and the spiritual, but his flirting with it was partial. He did not expect further developments in the tension between Eastern and Western approaches to psychology (Jung 1981).

It was then the following generations which engaged into addressing the complementarities and tensions between these schools, exploring new realms proportionated by that encounter. Humanistic psychology was founded, then, in the motivation of exploring the possibilities of mind in its manifold elements. Building upon the previous concepts and Eastern approaches, the attention was focused also in the interpersonal aspects of human relations. The transpersonal derived from the exploration of that boundary. This step also marked a shift from a pathological approach to an exploration of the potential. This implied studying not only dysfunctions of the mind, what was termed as diseases, but also states of joy, happiness, and peace (Kripal 2008).

The dialogue between East and West brought the attention to spiritual experiences and led to another differentiation between the transpersonal and the transrational. These shifts

derived a range of methods to approach this new realm of the mind, in which the body gained a prominence it did not have on modern approaches. One of the most influential perspectives in these debates was the chakra psychology of Yoga. This approach changes the focus from the head to the whole body. It identifies centers of energy throughout the human body, concentrating different aspects in each point. Besides, it also affirms the importance of balancing each of these centers of energy for a matter of health and spiritual unfolding (Kripal 2008, Dietrich 2012).

Due to the importance of this approach to the transrational peaces and to elicitive methods of conflict transformation, I briefly point out the main characteristics of each of the chakras. The first chakra is located at the base of the spine, and is related to basic human needs. The second is located at the level of the genitals, and is related to sexual drives and interpersonal relationships. The third is located at the level of the navel and is related to power drives and social identification. The fourth is located over the heart and is related to feelings of love and compassion. The fifth is located at the throat and is related to communication and expression. The sixth is located between the eyebrows and relates to mind and self-awareness. The seventh is located at the top of the head, and is related to spiritual experiences, or self-realization (Dychtwald 1986: 87-9, and Dietrich 2012: 236-41).

The understanding on how the activation of the chakras happens differs among the different traditions, and also in the interpretations made of it in psychology. In what Feuerstein called vertical traditions, chakras are hierarchical, with a prioritization of the upper chakras over the lower ones. In a critique to these approaches, Feuerstein argued that:

> For a long time psychologists sought to remedy this situation [split between body, mind and environment] by awareness-enhancing methods. More recently, they have come to recognize that something more is needed, because greater awareness does not automatically empower a person to make the necessary changes. Thus they have begun to focus on the body as a medium of behavioral change (1998: 143).

The activation of the chakras entails the liberation of energy contained as a potential in each of those centers, in a process of harmonizing instead of conquering. Integrating bodily health and spiritual experience, chakras are harmonized to vibrate in unison with the cosmic sound, coinciding also with the balanced functioning of body and mind (Feuerstein 1998: 150).

This perception leads to an approach to the human being and its relations, and therefore to peace, which is more holistic in terms of embracing its many layers. Mind and spirit are anchored in the body, which asks to be embraced in its multiple aspects to harmonize within and with the cosmos. The denial of any of the chakras would necessarily generate disharmony in the system. In this sense, following Tantra, energy and consciousness are different manifestations of same reality, different expressions of consciousness (Feuerstein 1998: 185). The consequences of such a shift are far-reaching, and influence deeply the methods for eliciting conflict transformation, because:

> "(…) if the body is not merely the sarcophagus of an immaterial soul but a vibrant, living reality suffused with the same Consciousness that also animates the mind, then we must cease to regard the body as an external object radically distinct from our conscious selves" (Feuerstein 1998: 185).

Studies on psychology and neuroscience echo the previous approach. The once widely accepted theory that neurons are not capable of regenerating and remain static until death is fading, as the concept of neuroplasticity is gaining popularity among researchers. Neuroplasticity has the understanding that patterns in the nervous system can be changed through determined practices (Fogel 2013: 185). Neuroscience and the Eastern practices overlap in their emphasis and inform transrationality on the importance of experience, with awareness on the whole organism, for transformation and peace.

Openness to experience with the whole organism allows one to become what one is, in an approximation to the truth of the moment. It does not mean that it is infallible, as Rogers highlighted, but that it can be checked in primary ways, and thus is open to verification and

correction. Moreover, this openness enables access to more information in the situation, and consequently fosters more options of action. The weighing and balancing of alternatives available influence the actions one could take in a particular direction to what is perceived as more probable in satisfying one's needs (Rogers 1961: 118). Considering life as a flowing process made of such experiences, Rogers affirmed that:

> In thus floating with the complex stream of my experiencing, and in trying to understand its ever-changing complexity, it should be evident that there are no fixed points. When I am thus able to be in process, it is clear that there can be no closed system of beliefs, no unchanging set of principles which I hold. Life is guided by a changing understanding of and interpretation of my experience. It is always in process of becoming (1961: 27).

It is in these processes of experience that peace unfolds, stemming from the navigation in the patterns of energy flowing in relationships. In a broader picture of the complexity of the system we observe, being it cosmos, or society, human beings and their relationships may be perceived as the simplicity through which it is possible to behold the complexity of the system. A complete picture, nevertheless, cannot be grasped intellectually, because the observer is part of the system and contributes to bring forth its patterns. At a closer look, nevertheless, the human being can be seen as the complexity, with its inner and relational layers offering an approach to the simplicity of understanding.

These layers do not follow a hierarchical order of importance or goodness, but are multiple platforms by which their integrated, as well as differentiated aspects offer alternative viewpoints, all embedded with consciousness and with potential to resonate with the vibration of the universe. While being different facets of the same truth, complexity is not simplicity magnified, but each guards its specificities. They are not opposed or irreconcilable either, requiring work on both large and small, inner and outer. It is through tapping into this potential that beholding complexity is made possible, because of the vibrations taking place within it.

"The discipline", Lederach argued, "is to hold complexity and simplicity together. The art is to capture both in an ah-hah image" (2005: 71).

Transrationality draws from the many perspectives discussed previously to inform and make sense of the interacting actors and layers in the complexities of the human relation to peace, identifying opportunities of beholding, as well as providing entry points to take action. It embraces the achievements of the interpretations of peace throughout history and culture (energetic, moral, modern, and postmodern) and twists them, emphasizing relationality and balance. Thus, transrationality integrates the transcendental experience from the energetic approach, in the moments of spirituality, intentionality, and inter-connectedness of everything, conforming the aesthetics of peaces. Truth, justice, and security are integrated in their referential, deflated of their absolute claim to an ultimate norm. As ethics of peaces, they refrain from dualistic exclusion and connect instead of bind (Dietrich 2012: 259-60).

Although ethics and aesthetics are integrated in transrationality, integration here does not mean fusion or static balance. The dynamic balance it tries to achieve recognizes the inherent tension between them, "which explains why pure ethics, morals, or modern understandings of peace fall just as short as the pure aesthetics of energetic and postmodern interpretations of peace" (Dietrich 2012: 263). Transrationality then continues the task of balancing dualities, while working with the tension of upholding them in flow as a source of energy and insight. This image takes us back to the flow of Dionysian and Apollonian forces, although in the transrational perspective the matter is not about tipping the balance in favor of one or another. It is also not about accommodating Dionysian energy unleashed into programmed escapes, which in turn justifies more Apollonian one-sidedness. It is about unconstrained flow and balance of their contributions, without a pre-defined norm of good or bad, but adaptation and regulation to place, culture, context and awareness of the harm a one-sided approach can do.

The need for harmonic flow can be conceptualized in Nietzsche's image of a lake, in which Apollonian one-sidedness would try to draw boundaries in the waves, in an attempt to bring them rest and calm. Through marking the course and extent of each wave, the movement of the lake ceases. A Dionysian flood-tide would then lift the boundaries and destroy the confinements of each wave (Nietzsche 1999: 50-1). In the lake, both the form of the waves and the energy of its movements generate its aliveness, its vitality. The same analogy can be done in the field of art and science, as Koppensteiner argued:

> It is through attempting to be only rational that science disengages itself from art and its Dionysian qualities. If, however, the Apollonian is to be once more related to the Dionysian, then the rational element in art cannot be denied either. It rather need to be included and given its own space. (…) the Apollonian and Dionysian – science and art – are so mutually transposed into each other and partially fused, performing an intimate dance of creation (2009: 86).

Creatively inspired by such images as that of a dance of creation between art and science, I have pondered over a kind of transrational dance - a dance that would incorporate in it the flow of energies, balancing Apollonian and Dionysian aspects. I realized, nevertheless, that there is not one dance of such kind, or, better said, that many different dances can be danced in such perspective. My first in-the-flow experience in dance was in a dance competition with a choreography to the rhythm of mambo. From the three to four minutes of dance, I did not see time passing, I do not remember the images I saw or thoughts in my head. I experienced connectedness dancing a modern jazz choreography in a group, when our movements would match in such a harmony guided by the deep bass of the drums that I did not need to actively look to perceive that they were in correspondence. In a dance to Beatles' *Yesterday* (Lennon and McCartney 1965) I felt my interconnectedness with the audience, which I could feel responding emotionally to the content of the lyrics and the feelings in my movements. In ballet classes, doing *adagio* - a slow sequence of movements, I realized I could prolong my awareness to my whole body, feeling each muscle contracting and releasing to execute the movement.

Spreading my awareness until the finger tips would blurry boundaries, expanding the intention of movement throughout the surroundings. In a circle dance to the sound of Pachebel (Pachelbel n.d.) I felt cradled by the earth. On a 5Rhythms dance floor I melted shame in sweat to regain power in authenticity, and experienced the beauty of each and every person in gratitude. In carnivals, I felt the complete release into a community vibe, and in parties, the ecstatic abandonment of my body to the rhythms, or the joy out of the deep connection with other people dancing.

Dances as an aesthetic experience reflect and influence the cultures of a time, as well as their perspectives on peace, as has been explored in the previous chapters. Nevertheless, they are also an experience in themselves for each person dancing anew, and as so, has the potential to provide insights, altered states of consciousness and experiences of peace. In this sense, I do not point to one practice as the representative of a transrational perspective on peace. There are other elements which influence the experience, like the context, the company, the music, the familiarity with people around, the environment, and the intentionality, to name a few.

However, I do concur that different practices contribute in different levels to feelings of peace, depending on the frame they provide and the awareness put into it. In carnival, for example, the Dionysian may be approached as something foreign, differentiated from the self in its everyday life. In this situation, masks disguise and do not connect that energy to the person. In dances following a moral or modern perspective, Dionysian energies may be repressed, their expression becoming a statement for Apollonian purity. In a postmodern approach, the Dionysian is acknowledged, but relying on the same modern techniques may empty the transformative potential of the experience.

A transrational shift in these dances implies a different approach to their practice, infused with awareness. This awareness informs both the initial intention and the regular practice, reflecting, feeling, and finding balance in each step. In this sense, the dancer's

dedication does not stem primarily from fear or an unchecked desire for acceptance or recognition, but from passion for movement and its benefits. There is a shift from straining to thriving, in which pushing gives place to an intentionality of transformation, coupled with discipline and deep respect for the body. Technique is practiced, in order to protect the body from injuries and to facilitate movement, not as an imposition to fit at any cost. Changes in the body intend to fortify muscles, align structure and adopt healthier routines, not to achieve a perfected ideal. Collective activity does not shatter or damage individuality, but infuses it with belonging and compassion. Teachers inspire and contribute to the process, and instead of punishment, stimulate the dancer's own expression and presence in the movement. Choice of practice is made based on a plurality of alternatives, not out of exclusion and depreciation of other forms. A transrational approach to dance points toward a practice which supports not the depletion of life, but its blooming – onstage, on the dance floor, in parties, on rituals, and in daily life.

However, there is not a final formula for that, and the assessment of the balance is done both by dancer and teacher individually and in relationship. What I see as a potential experience in dance from a transrational perspective is the possibility of celebrating the Dionysian in flow with the Apollonian in a variety of forms; also with no masks, unveiling the self in the mirror of the dance floor. Or even the possibility to transcend this self in ecstatic belonging, and then incorporating this flow into daily life. In this process, masks are worn not for disguise, but as exploration of boundaries or celebration of otherness. They can be worn with the consciousness that they can be taken off, that there is something behind the mask, or, from a different point of view, that there is nothing.

Furthermore, to wear masks in the sense that they can be chosen to be worn and how to be worn. It is a complete different picture than the situation presented in the poem Tobacco Shop from Alvaro de Campos (Portuguese poet Fernando Pessoa's homonym), in which the

person's mask ended up stuck on the face. A mask he did not choose to put on and, when finally taken off, revealed someone different, grown older, drunk, and unable to wear the fancy costume he had not taken off (Pessoa 1998: 102). In a transrational perspective, the mask is a playful element of the plurality of perspectives, and also a means to explore and express the self and the unknown.

As so, in a transrational approach to arts, I can be a ballerina or a grotesque figure as a celebration of life, of plurality, or as a way to explore the connection of its meaning to me, my surroundings, the society I live in, and the roles I play in it. But if it is just to reach an ideal or to mock others, it loses the full transformative potential and becomes harmful to self and others. Nevertheless, it is important to remark that this is not a state which is reached, but intentionality put into a process, which requires constant exploration for the experience of it to unfold and be felt as peaceful. How to provide a frame which allows such exploration? How to sustain that awareness? Which are the elements which contribute to offer auspicious conditions for the experience of peace and transformation? How to deal with shadows and potentially harmful dynamics in the patterns of energies? This is the exploration of the next chapters.

# 3 Elicitive Conflict Transformation

It was my third experience with the sweat lodge, a shamanic ritual of purification. The previous two had been as well in the context of the Master in Peace and Conflict Studies in the University of Innsbruck, as part of the training of elicitive conflict workers. My first two experiences had been amazing. The school where this specific training happens is located in the riverside of the Inn, a large river in Austria. We stayed one week each time, in teepees nestled in a gorgeous valley between two big hills. Nature was pulsating life, and in this beautiful location we did many trainings, like learning how to build shelter, how to get fire, learning about the medicine wheel, hiking, kayaking, and countless other meaningful experiences. The sweat lodge was usually scheduled for the end of the week, a milestone in the process of the exploration we underwent throughout the week.

I was excited for that last experience, confident and encouraging others to take part in it (because opting out is always an option). It had been very meaningful for me before, the preparation, the bonfire outside of it, entering the womb of Mother Earth, being there as a community, singing, thanking, sweating, observing the stones turning orange and sparkling from the heat, and giving us their heat as a gift and their form as a contribution to this experience, cracking open as they turned grey again. Also, bearing the heat, resisting the appeal to go outside, to get rid of the sense or fear of suffocation, trusting the guidance and giving in to the support of the group. The humbling of crawling inside, finding voice from the depth of my guts, connected to the soil below me, to the roots around me, the tress, the river, the hills, the forests, the fields, the oceans, to my family in Brazil, and circling back of the planet's surface.

Being one more presence in the net of life, pulsating and finding energy and power in that pulse. Gratefully leaving the lodge, standing by the bonfire, just watching the fire playing

around, feeling the continuous wave of heat coming from the playful flames. The sparks reaching up high, mingling with the stars in the dark and dense background of the night. Then walking down the path to the river with a couple of other beautiful beings to immerse myself in its waters. Washing away the sweat and mud, and everything else exuded from my body. The final step of the cleansing, being washed by fire and water. The cold penetrating deep into the bones, (one of those times was in winter), cleansing, purifying. When it felt appropriate, walking quietly back to the teepees, listening to the fulfilling silence beyond our steps in the grass.

This time, nevertheless, together with the pleasant expectations, I also had deep respect for the process, and a mix of fear and anxiety from what was going to happen, what the experience would be like. So, we got prepared, did all the steps. But this time I felt nauseated. I put my hands on my stomach, trying to hold down whatever was trying to come up. I succeeded in this time, for that night, although the feeling of nausea and awkwardness followed me to the night of sleep. In the morning, I was still not feeling well. I went to the river for a morning bath, ate lightly, seeking to relieve my stomach discomfort. After a circle of debrief in an open area, I could not hold it anymore and left to a corner to throw up.

Some people came to ask me if I was fine, I said I was feeling better. Someone mentioned that it might have been something I ate. But a dear friend told me something that was deeply insightful: 'Wow', she said in surprise, 'and that is after the sweat lodge'. Yes, after the sweat lodge, after this ritual that is purifying. And all of a sudden I had a thought about sharing a story and asking for forgiveness to a person I had hurt in the past. That was it, it was time to take responsibility over and face that situation, which had been subtly re-emerging here and there since the fact happened. Yes, you are right, this was the first phase of the process which led to the experience described in the beginning of this text, which years later I dealt with

in the dance floor. There it was about forgiving myself, or letting go of my own judgmental feelings of shame. Here it was about facing the situation and relating to the person I had hurt.

When time came, after hesitation, procrastination and fear of what would happen, I faced it. Sharing was painful, distressing, and scattering, but also relieving. Deep sadness and innumerous tears enabled me to access a still point which endless justifications in my head had prevented. That place felt whole yet scattered. Serene yet painful. Empty and light. For a while. Because afterwards I realized I still had to deal with my own judgments toward myself. Shame would still find its way into my consciousness from time to time, even though I was forgiven by the person I had hurt. The journey continued.

This experience in the sweat lodge taught me to be patient. It taught me the importance to hear my body with care and attention, not trying to get a fast justification and solution to what may be perceived as a symptom. I also realized that transformation is a process that takes time. Conflicts are not a one-time event, that can be erased, but a knot in a thread of relationships woven throughout life. If tied carefully, they may strengthen the fabric and pull it closer together. If undone, it may fit well again, become loose or the thread may keep the marks of the previous knot. Or the whole tissue can be pulled and worked on to absorb the loosened thread. It can also be cut, with the consequence of risking a bigger hole and endangering the cohesiveness of the entire fabric. The thread can be knitted together again, bringing the woven wound of the quilt together. The loops of thread can be hidden on the reverse side, the stitches can be knitted very closely in order to be imperceptible, or they can be exposed on the outer side as a new lace fashion. How to knit with those threads then?

Conflicts here are approached as knots on the threads of human interactions. No matter the conflict, the person is not the same after it, neither the relationship nor the social fabric. She has gone through the experience and it is a constitutive part of who she. It is not just a memory of a past situation, but its reverberances, joyful or sad (or often joyful and sad), are felt right

here and now. This chapter approaches the question of how to knit the threads of human fabric from the perspective of conflicts as occurrences in the web of relationships in which we human beings are part of. For that endeavor, I start with a perspective on conflict as a natural feature of human interrelations. This discussion approaches the shift from conflict resolution to conflict transformation, and addresses the elicitive character of that transformation. Finally, I discuss methods which facilitate eliciting this transformation from the parties involved.

## 3.1 Conflict Transformation

From the reflection on peace given in the beginning of the research derived the discussion on how many times, in our own way of feeling peace, we may generate tension in our relationship with other people. I like to meditate, but many times people told me they get uneasy even imagining themselves meditating. I also dance to live that peaceful experience, and dance can definitely generate feelings of discomfort for people who are not used to it. Sometimes I feel reactions to the very presence of other people, and can sense when my presence is also seen with uneasiness. I may not know why, there may be no apparent reasons for that, but the senses are indistinctly communicating something to me. It means that conflict may be generated even when trying to be in peace; even being. That says a lot about conflict being a natural feature in human relationships. If peaces are relational, as discussed previously, and conflicts are features of that very relationship, then conflict becomes not an opposite to peace, but a different vibration in those same interconnected chords. It can be said, thus, that within conflict rests a possibility to unfold peaces in the very process of its transformation.

Nevertheless, conflicts are still frequently seen as something bad that should be avoided. This perception stems from moral and modern perspectives on peace as a final and complete end state. Conflicts then could only be a problem in the otherwise perfectly functioning and predictable mechanical clockwork of the structures, which would lead to that peace in the bright future (Dietrich 2013). Following the modern reasoning and the division between the good and

bad, this problem would be caused by others, not by me, a complete and independent human being, whose rational faculties easily reach reasonable ways to mitigate differences.

I identify this assumption behind the question: 'conflicts, what conflicts?' which emerged when I suggested doing conflict work in so-called privileged spaces, meaning people with formal education and material possessions. What derives from that, therefore, is that those who have conflicts are the others, the ones who need help from experts. Consequently, if I am disturbed, it might also be their fault. The range of the occurrence of this scapegoating goes from schools where problematic kids are spotted, to international relations, and conflict work. In a common assumption of this area, the problematic field to intervene is usually somewhere else, specifically in the 'less developed' world, or, if within the 'developed world', then in the peripheries. This discussion is not to say that conflict work should or not be done here or there, but to highlight that, in a systemic approach as the one which inspires transrational peaces, there are no others. The features that characterize the system are held by all the participants in it, which leads to a shared responsibility in the perpetuation of patterns as well as a potential for transformation (Satir 1991).

As a consequence of the understanding that peace is a product, conflicts are seen as problems in the composition of this product, which enables them to be solved. Once the problem is solved, the situation is over, to the relief of the parties who apparently got rid of it. An expert on the mechanisms of the product peace could be called, then, to resolve the problem and restore the product to its mechanically functioning ways. In this vein, the expert of conflict resolution is a technician who knows how peace should work and the mechanisms behind it. There are rules and the expert not only knows them, but knows how to implement them (Dietrich 2013). The solution package is then prescribed as if without contraindications, envisioning a perfect functioning peace according to a defined reference in a brighter future, if steps are followed according to the booklet. The promise is tempting, and I relate to its appeal because I easily slip

into the character of the conflict avoider when unaware – and sometimes even when a certain degree of awareness is present. In my endeavor to engage in the appreciation and the attempt to uphold the tension of energies in a conflictive situation, I realized that it is definitely not easy. But, in my experience, the cost of 'getting rid' of a conflict is higher, so I try to keep that in mind when the context seems overwhelming.

If we take back the description of my conflict situation in the beginning of the chapter, a prescriptive approach would be, first of all, to solve the symptom. Stop the nausea, and the system goes back to what it was. That could have worked in the short term, but it would not change the cause, because the process was not a direct result of something that I ate, for example. It was not my body preventing the full development of my mind, it was my organism evidencing that the mental justifications I had been cultivating were not healthy. In that case, prematurely interfering with the symptom would also have prevented an important insight. Another prescription I had thought was to put myself together, stop whining, and be strong – that experience was in the past anyway and it was not worth it to let those memories undermine my future. Again, in the short term it could have worked, but the underlying patterns would still be there, as they had been for some time. A third way of action could be to detach the network and layers involved, limiting the solution to engaging with the person and clearing the situation up. A small-scale version of signing a 'peace treaty' and being expected to be happily ever after. That also did not quite corresponded to my experience.

This is one small-scale example of many which illustrate the insufficiency of an understanding of conflict as a problem to be solved via prescriptive means. At the international level, there are several cases of peace treaties designed to halt war with the stroke of a signature, just to be overruled in the short term, involving sometimes bursts of crude violence. From field experience and observation of vernacular ways of dealing with conflict emerged the need to relate to conflicts in a different manner. In order to acknowledge the systemic character of

human relationships among themselves and with their contexts, as well as their dynamicity, the term transformation was associated with conflict. In a sense, it recognizes the impacts of conflicts at different levels, having consequences beyond the sphere of external intervention. Its longer branches and roots would require a committed process instead of a one-time intervention. Most importantly, the conflicts themselves were not considered necessarily bad. A different approach to conflict as something dynamic therefore asked for a new term (Lederach 1995: 17).

Conflict transformation therefore is neither about extirpating conflict from life as something bad, nor about recognizing it as an unfortunate part of life, a heritage of our limbic system which evolution has not yet managed to overcome, and as so must be kept under control. This strategy has similarly been applied to emotions and also to the body, what justified the perspective on conflict as a barbaric, animal response to problems from people who were not able to stay rational. On a stretch of this reasoning, it is possible to relate Hobbes' nation state as a solution to the uncontrolled instincts of humanity which would lead inevitably to competition and dominance of one over the other. Conflict transformation perspectives, thus, question these modern views on conflicts, and differentiate them from violence or war. They approach human beings and their relationality from a standpoint which sees that: "compassion is not an ideal but a property of humankind and this insight, more than anything else unchains us from the modern ideology of competition in a ubiquitous and omnipresent natural war" (Dietrich 2011: 16).

In a transformative approach, there is no denial of conflict as bad or acceptance of it as an (still bad) omnipresence of uncontrolled instincts. It acknowledges human potential for violence and destruction, while sustaining also the notion that compassion is just as much a possibility as violence. From this understanding, it proceeds to creatively explore possible

changes, encouraging "(…) greater understanding of underlying relational and structural patterns while building creative solution that improve relationships" (Lederach 2003: 19).

In their comprehensive work in conflict resolution, Miall, Ramsbotham, and Woodhouse argued that transformation is actually a stage within the scope of conflict resolution rather than a different endeavor, and in this sense, criticize the mere change of names of the process while resting in the same foundational stone (2010). For them, it is a caricature of the field to say that conflict resolution is just content-centered, that it aims at immediate agreement, and is committed only to de-escalation. They conclude that "(…) conflict resolvers and conflict transformers are essentially engaged in the same enterprise" (2010: 9). I agree with them in what refers to the impatience with a simple change of form or names, if the essence remains the same. As they affirm that the essence remains and the field retains its coherence, there would be no need for a different name, because "(…) conflict resolution has from the start encompassed 'conflict settlement' at one end of the spectrum and 'conflict transformation' at the other" (2010: 10). This is a very important criticism and a reminder that the content needs to reflect the change in form, otherwise it is just a different label to the same content.

However, I agree with Lederach (2003: 33) that conflict transformation implies a shift of paradigm, a different way of seeing the world and oneself in it. In this sense, the terminology of transformation does refer to a content different from conflict resolution. It is also important to acknowledge that there are different approaches and applications to conflict transformation, which also changed throughout the years and in interaction with practice. It can be understood in a linear chronology, in which the transformative process takes something from one situation to another expected situation in the future. It can also be seen from an approach related to here and now transformation, just like the breath analogy detailed in transrational peace philosophy. So, keeping in mind the relevant critique of Miall, Ramsbotham, and Woodhouse (2010: 9), I

proceed to unpack how this paradigm shift affects the understanding of conflict and how it is understood in this research.

For that I refer to an exercise I learned in a meditation class, which afterwards I adapted to the context of conflict transformation. We, the participants, were in a circle, spaced from each other in a way that allowed movement. We were given one small ball, which we were told to throw to each other, trying not to let the ball fall. We started cautiously, monitoring our movements, directions, and the strength of our throws. In the beginning, there were some adjustments, the ball fell a couple of times, generating laughter and anxiety among the participants, but after a while there was more constancy in the rhythm of throwing.

At this point, a second ball was introduced in the circle, followed by the complaints of some of the participants. Having two balls being thrown at the same time made the task harder. The previous strategy of looking at the ball and at each participant while throwing became inadequate, because while making eye contact with one player, the rest of the circle is out of perspective. Inevitably, a couple of participants got hit by a ball coming from a non-surveyed corner. People started taking off coats and extra layers, a response to the increase of heat spread throughout the room, generated by anxiety. Some rolled up their sleeves, getting ready for a more challenging situation; I tied my hair.

Facing the new challenge, there was laughter, amusement, but also frustration and a sense of failure. People began to explore ways to cope with the situation, by inventing strategies like passing the ball clockwise from one to another in the circle, or throwing just one at a time. We felt smart cheating the norm, although after a while it got boring. We were reminded by the facilitator, nevertheless, that the flow had to continue, and we kept on figuring out ways how to better perform the role. In the midst of this process, we were told that the balls were not plastic anymore, but fire balls, that meant they burned our hands if held for too long, and hence should be thrown quickly. A wave of excitement chilled the room, while fun, excitement, fear

of failure, and memories of frustration from previous attempts in other circumstances mingled together and tension grew. Balls began to fly around, falling and hitting people in a very chaotic manner.

I breathed to catch up to the moment and realized, with some others, that body position helped in the process. Knees bent, feet apart, one slightly in front of the other to proportionate balance and readiness to move, back straight and hands in position in front of the body. Muscles not too relaxed, not too tense, but in a middle way of tonus that could be called attentive. My eyes could not follow two balls at the same time, so I adopted the strategy of focusing on the center of the circle, while keeping aware of my peripheral view, which included the whole circle in my visual field. This way I could watch the balls coming and going, catching one while not losing sight of the other. The speed was still the same, but the performance had a more harmonic feel to it, and the balls, although still balls of fire, would fly around graciously in between each drop. Interestingly, the same peripheral vision is used by Lederach to describe serendipity in social change as "(…) the capacity to situate oneself in a changing environment with a sense of direction and purpose and at the same time develop an ability to see and move with the unexpected" (Lederach 2005: 118).

Indeed, while practicing this peripheral vision accompanied by the body tonus, some of us were able to be more present in the flow of balls, and even to catch two balls coming from different corners at the same time. Despite these moments of flow, which allowed us a glimpse into the potentials and possibilities of presence, the balls were still dropping and we were still eventually getting hit by the balls. Nevertheless, strategies were at hand to provide enough confidence to manage the situation, while presence anchored in the moment allowed for response to the unknown element.

I like this exercise because it provokes - and therefore provides the chance to explore - reactions to changes similar to the ones I have had in real conflictive situations – excitement,

frustration, fear of failure, and the tendency of neutralizing or excluding those elements and people who were not following my perspective on the right way to perform. The introduction of changes as one ball, two balls, and fire balls, and my reactions to it showed how the conflictive situation influenced my perspective, intermingling impatience, judgment, pity, and compassion toward myself and others. Change is a constant in the system, but the way I interact and the intention that guides my participation in it may contribute to less or more understanding, and open the floor for further exploration.

On a different vein, the experience also enabled a trial of strategies. In the end, it was not about reaching a determined ideal posture, but coming up, trying and testing different responses to the varied changes introduced externally and internally by each person. I could also explore my participation in the system, where not only my catch but my throw influenced the rhythm, as well as the degree of expectation I placed in other people and the reaction when they dropped the ball. Keeping the balls flying became a commitment of the group, and the fall of one ball would be held by the whole group. Nevertheless, the nuisance generated by the drop of the ball could be felt very personally and triggered judgment toward self and others.

It was just a game, with absolutely no rewards; how could I feel fear of failure? Searching for an answer to that, I realized that being efficient and a 'winner' are characteristics which I like to be associated with. The expectation to perform in a specific way in order to get something or somewhere is part of my worldview, influenced by social and cultural factors. A shift in my perspective, on the way I stood, thought and acted, provided the possibility to see the situation in a different way and to explore different strategies. Or was it the change in the strategy that brought about the different perspective? Hard to establish the beginning point, but one unquestionably influenced the other. Changing my body posture provided a new tonus from where to engage, whereas acknowledging and letting go of the memories of previous failures

enabled a more refined concentration in the moment. At some point, the fun became figuring out strategies to the changes brought about in the circle.

This experience and the reflections derived from it lead me to concur with Virginia Satir when she said that conflicts are not the problem, but the way we cope with them (1991: 17). In the complexity of the human social system, in which beings are embedded and connected through the nets of relationships, this assumption implies a change of perspective and therefore a change in practice. Change is a core element in Satir's approach, which understands change as something neither good nor bad. It has a twofold characteristic of being essentially constant, but also allowing for a conscious engagement which can provide "(…) greater congruence, greater freedom of choice, and greater responsibility for one's inner process, not only one's behavior" (Satir 1991: 92). Although change is inevitable, it can be potential or latent, in the sense of being explored or not.

Satir affirmed that often responses seen as problematic are nothing else than reactions to dysfunctional systems. Paying attention to these dysfunctions may reveal unhealthy patterns and allow for healthier connections. This shift of focus from content to process implies that process is a major avenue for change. It means that working with relationships modifies the energy flow of one or more human beings in a way that more open, free, and healthy patterns emerge from a dysfunctional pattern. Change is thus affected by altering at least one element in the system, and consequently by their connectedness, it affects all the others, which are interlinked and respond to each other (Satir 1991: 157-73).

From this connectedness also derives that conflicts can be transformed through the net of relationships established here and now. Satir's method works on the de-enmeshment of the impact of the past from situations in the present (1991: 154). This reference to the here and now refers to that breath through which the system is changed right now. Because in the next breath, the context is already different, as is the person breathing, hence the strategy might need to be

different. This means that changes in the relationship of a group of people impact the whole system. Concurring with the principle of correspondence, changes in the intrapersonal layers, also influence the relationships from familial to global levels. In this sense, such a perspective on conflict invites one to get to know one's own characteristics, lights, shadows, and work with them in a way to elicit transformation from within, while at the same time considering also the social and cultural aspects influencing the situation.

As the problem is not the conflict, but how we relate and deal with them, it is worth to peruse this relation. I used to say that there can be two ways of dealing with conflicts, one that is dangerous and may lead to violence, and the other that is creatively transforming the energy of the conflict into a different pattern in the relationship, hopefully healthier than before. But I realized that this 'either or' option would create – in groups I worked with and in myself – an expectation that once I had chosen one way, I would get more distanced from the other way, meaning that no risk would be involved anymore. This betrays the dynamicity of relationships and its ever-changing characteristic and may easily slip into self-righteousness. It would also conform a delusive idea that just choice is sufficient for preventing violence. Choice is a big part of it, but it is not enough. First, it implies choosing each time according to the changes in the system, renovating the commitment to transform conflicts. Second, only choice alone does not guarantee that violence will not pop up from the range of possible outcomes.

Practice in this commitment is also necessary, and even so, violence is never excluded because with each decision new possibilities unfold and among them is violence. It is also never excluded from the landscape of conflict transformation because there is always an unknown aspect to each action, and consequences cannot be completely predicted. Furthermore, violence is an expression of energy, which cannot be eliminated but can be transformed. The unknown aspect of each action can be addressed as it appears. So, I have been trying to uphold in tension

the fact that conflict transformation involves risk anyway, and the possibility of violence to come up is not completely erased, although it can dwindle if given attention and worked on.

Concurring with the idea that transformation implies a change in perception, Curle affirmed that:

> Peacemaking is the science of perceiving that things which appear to be apart are one. It is the art of restoring love to a relationship from which it has been driven by fear and hatred. And one last definition: public peacemaking is what we do; private peacemaking is what we are, the two being interpenetrating (2016d: 178).

Conflict transformation then can be seen as an opportunity to gain more perspectives on an issue, an offer of love that springs from authenticity evoked in the congruence of what we do with what we are. It is a beautiful and a challenging endeavor, because it demands total involvement with words, actions, thoughts, and intention attuned with the changing environment. Many times, we are in a perceptively stable situation that nevertheless is not healthy. Due to stableness and fear, it can be difficult to address the situation. Sometimes it is even difficult to acknowledge that there are issues that need to be dealt with, or to be able to name whatever it is. Notwithstanding, even without our awareness or acknowledgment, the system continues to push for a different configuration because there are new elements and that stability does not correspond to the present configuration anymore.

A forced stability is kept at the expense of increasing loads of energy dragged from the parties involved. So, when conflict reaches a certain tension and the parties finally address it, there is this amazing opportunity to bring issues from under cover, or under the table, or into awareness. This is the moment where threat becomes most visible, palpable, because there is urgency to address issues, needs, narratives, relationships – and being in that place requires vulnerability. Transforming conflicts is both a gift and a risky endeavor, but the occurrence of violence can be reduced if attentiveness to the flow of energies is present.

There is another subtlety to the factor of risk in conflict transformation, which is the sparkle of change generated by being in the edge, being the transformative element in stable but unhealthy situations. It demands the courage to be authentic even when the concertation of power discourages openness. In this way, a person's own willingness to risk and expose her vulnerability can be one of her most important tools to become a partner in the process of change (Satir and Baldwin 1983: 228). Presence in vulnerability becomes a precious gift, one extremely valuable for conflict workers, in their task of empathizing with the parties, connecting, and inspiring them to change unhealthy patterns. The capacity to risk can then be understood as what enables transcendent change, and the conflict worker has an important role in it, because the further one delves into oneself, accepts and understands what is there, the larger is the impact on the capacity to change oneself and others in the process (Rogers 1961: 19).

Therefore, one important although risky aspect of the transformation of conflicts is to engage with the energies of a conflictive situation without suppressing them. While violence requires direct and quick action to prevent or halt its destructive manifestation, the energies may not be suppressed at the cost of disempowering the parties from life force. Just like the waves form and movement in the lake metaphor. However, concurring with the risk involved in such endeavor, it is also vital to emphasize that "conflicts are formed of complex interrelations at the epicenter of human relationships, and they can become violent if they persist in being dysfunctional over a long period" (Dietrich 2013: 7). The twofold and paradoxical potentiality of conflicts as a gift and as a risky endeavor reinforces the importance of not only the shift of perspectives but also of the strategies on how to deal with them. Not addressing them or shutting off symptoms before parties can understand the energies in tension increases the period of dysfunctionality and may increase suffering and tend toward violence.

Conflicts, when not addressed, may be subdued, but the concentration of locked energy ends up finding another avenue to emerge. In other words, when not addressed, dysfunctions

remain dysfunctional underneath, in a subtle manner, to appear again among a different constellation of people, space, and time. These appearances, which many times seem like outbursts detached from the context, do not come from anywhere, they are energies unleashed from dysfunctionalities. If attention is paid, transformation may happen. That does not mean that it is necessarily quick or spectacular. It simply means that intention is directed to transform it and to be aware of its influence on decisions, actions, and judgments.

In my case, the experience of having been through a situation where I did not feel I acted in an authentic way, causing harm to myself and others, influenced my daily life in spheres I resisted to acknowledge previously. It affected my confidence, the trust in my capacity to act out of authenticity. It also affected the way I reacted to social judgments, even if not directed at myself. Reading this account may sound dramatic, but the happenings were very subtle, although painful, because they kept bothering an open wound.

On the other hand, the process of going through the transformation opened space to look into the situation and its many layers, to strip off the shame still ingrained in myself, to be more compassionate to others, and to have a fresh commitment to a life based on relational truth. This does not mean that this experience should be taken as a model, neither that it is the right or best way to transform conflicts. It also does not mean that it is finished, because as I write about it, it gains new perspectives and participates in this moment in a new way, associated to a different context and content. I shared this account to illustrate how conflict transformation may happen in a way that reaffirms conviction that transformation sparks life.

Once I heard that peace without conflicts would be boring. At first, it sounded unfair to my ears, because conflictive situations may generate suffering to the parties, but as my understanding of conflict changed, this saying made gradually more sense. A professor once said, jocosely contemplating this image of a boring peace: 'nobody wants boredom, right?'. Conflicts exist, and they trigger transformation and inspire becoming in a process of living a

more fulfilled life. The same way as pain can be a signal of the body asking for attention, conflict can reveal dysfunctions, inviting to stop, listen, feel, think, and change. In this manner, it contributes to bring forth life, stirring change and keeping relationships honest and responsive (Rogers 1961). In the ever-changing scenario of human relationships, conflicts help to unfold authenticity in relation to the new conformations and expressions of possible connections, in a response that is as dynamic as human beings.

In the same vein of highlighting conflict as a trigger for transformation, Nietzsche also celebrated conflicts for being the creative force which inspires possibilities in life. He ascribed this creative force to the interplay between Dionysian and Apollonian forces, which:

> (…) exist side by side, mostly in open conflict, stimulating and provoking (…) one another to give birth to ever-new, more vigorous offspring in whom they perpetuate the conflict inherent in the opposition between them, an opposition only apparently bridged by the common term 'art' – until, by a metaphysical miracle of the Hellenic 'Will', they appear paired and, in this pairing, finally engender a work of art which is Dionysiac and Apolline in equal measure: Attic tragedy (Nietzsche 1999: 14).

Upholding the tension between apparent opposites fosters the pollination of contradictions, which in its turn triggers breakthroughs in the rigid boundaries to create something new. While the willingness to uphold this tension is intentional, the wonder of their merge is serendipitous – a miracle of Hellenic Will, as Nietzsche called it. In conflict work, this pattern appears as well, in the inevitable contradictions of the field, which relies on the no less serendipitous moments of envisioning new possibilities. Lederach pointed out that opposites appear in the paradoxes that populate practice, whose interplay creates an irreconcilable contradiction if held in an either/or frame. In such a frame, in which one has to be chosen over the other, there can be no pollination for nurturing new ways of becoming. Nevertheless, when upheld together, the energy of the ideas is enhanced, and embracing these contrary forces derives an enormous potential (Lederach 1995: 19).

This potential energy, generated by conflicts' tension, can then move into new combinations, establishing bridges that communicate their flow until the moment they connect in an expression of artistic pairing. In Nietzsche's perspective, this work of art is Attic tragedy; in the conflict field, it is the moment when the energies of the conflict move life into new possibilities. I have argued that change happens in its own flow, but it allows an intentional touch on how it happens. Therefore, conflict transformation implies the generation of possibilities, in a way that participants become aware of viable choices. Choice, nevertheless, is only rooted in freedom if it can be denied with equanimity: "a single choice offers no freedom, two choices represent a dilemma, and transformation becomes possible with a minimum of three available choices" (Dietrich 2013: 9). Upholding opposites in tension, providing a frame which goes beyond the either/or and engaging with paradoxes in freedom is not a superfluous additive. It is the essence of transformation itself.

Besides the number of choices, there is an extra element which qualify a transformation of a conflict into the work of art described by Nietzsche. The flow of Dionysian and Apollonian forces resides in the elements of the complex system themselves. In other words, the potential of their encounter rests in their emanation from those elements. The choices that qualify a transformation lose power if they are not suffused with this energetic distress and embrace of the opposites. This means that powerful, meaningful transformation has to derive from the people actually involved in the conflict. This is contained in the elicitive aspect that qualifies conflict transformation.

## 3.2 The Elicitive Approach

The term elicitive was coined by Lederach to illustrate a different approach he evolved from his experiences in facilitating peace and conflict training in multicultural environments (1995). Questioning the prescriptive methods used in the field, Lederach argued for a transformative way of dealing with conflicts which would acknowledge cultural and social

differences. Field work brought into evidence the existing plurality of approaches to peace, conflict and training, and also the crucial need to consider and value the knowledge shared by each person and community in their context, social fabric, and roots of conflictive situations. Influenced by Paulo Freire's approach to popular education, Lederach emphasized the need of considering cultural and ideological aspects present not only in the content, but also in the process of educational projects (1995: 26). Prescriptive ways of training replicated the banking education in terms of transferring knowledge from so-called experts to so-called clueless students, reinforcing the roles of oppressor and oppressed (Freire 2000). Banking education implies that knowledge is apolitical and accultured, in contrast to an education which recognizes and explores its political and cultural aspects for changing inequalities.

The elicitive approach then refers to a proposal of training and facilitation in peace and conflict that engages the knowledge already existing in the group, catalyzing it, and generating new analyses derived from discussion and combination between them and with external sources. It is important to highlight that this does not mean a glorification of local knowledge in contrast to external knowledge: "rather it is a trusting that participants have the capacity and creativity to identify, name, critique, create and recreate models that correspond to needs they experience and identify" (Lederach 1995: 57). It is not a blind trust in knowledge per se, but a trust in people's ability to work with this knowledge, combining, twisting, agreeing, and questioning. It implies a trust in human beings and in human potential, coinciding with perspectives shared by Freire, Satir, Curle, and Rogers.

Eliciting conflict transformation is not about educating others, but about contributing to shape the natural flow of change in a way that is healthier and more life-giving. This implies a wide amount of trust in what is already in the system, and awareness and care regarding what needs to be brought in to contribute to balance. Drawing from Satir's perspective on relationships, each part has the seed for wholeness and an intrinsic capacity to congruence. The

task in a conflictive situation is then not to take out or eliminating what is there, but to add to what already exists. The addition of awareness already ignites the process of change, in an offering which reveals care for oneself and others and can contribute to transform unhealthy patterns into a fuller sense of self. Awareness, then constitutes the first healing additive to a conflictive situation (Satir 1991: 163).

In order to be able to add awareness, the facilitator has to practice it herself, in order to offer it congruently based on experience. This work requires discipline and the help of others, in a collective effort which engenders awareness, and a continuous remembrance of oneself as sharing responsibility for the process. Thus, self-observation of the ways we act, talk, and think exerts an indispensable role in the exercise of awareness: "we must try to see ourselves as part of a network of human beings who comprise our family, friends, community, associates; we must, in a sense, locate ourselves in the universe" (Curle 2016c: 86).

This perspective impacts the role of the facilitator, who is not the only person entitled with knowledge anymore, but is seen as a professional with a set of technical and personal skills which contributes to setting the stage and pollinating the debate. However, her procedures and techniques are not the only thing at stake. Indeed, Rogers argued they are less important than her attitudes (1961: 45). Setting the stage gains then a broader dimension, encompassing not only the organization of the encounter and the vibe underlying it, but offering one's own depth as support for the parties. This depth derives from a life-long commitment to being real rather than rigidly consistent, providing a genuine reality, which inspires the others in the relationship to seek that reality too. This continuous process is essential because, in Rogers' words: "(…) the degree to which I can create relationships which facilitate the growth of others as separate persons is a measure of the growth I have achieved in myself" (1961: 56).

Consequently, the elicitive worker rejects the role of 'foreign expert' and enters the situation as supporter and sharer, whose task is, besides an appropriate use of techniques and

skills, to inspire parties' inner wisdom, courage and compassionate non-violence (Curle 2016a: 149-50). The relevance of this inner work, however, does not precede or exclude work on interpersonal, societal, and global levels. The two tasks are interdependent and inextricably interwoven, being indeed two facets of the same whole (Curle 2016b: 64).

In terms of the interpersonal action, this implies then that the elicitive worker facilitates processes in which knowledge existing in the community can be accessed and valued, then can be dialogued with external references and the knowledge of the facilitator, in a relational process which inspires awareness and commitment to genuine perceptions of reality. The hierarchy between facilitator and group is levelled, because neither is the group considered ignorant of the topic, nor is the facilitator neutral. From this dialogue, new possibilities emerge, which do not deny external knowledge, but also value local held knowledge derived from tradition, history, and personal experiences. It surely takes more time, and may be a demanding and often tiring process, but the alternatives of action derive from a vernacular perspective, more in touch with local realities and drawing from the agency of people to implement it.

This approach inspires a deep valorization of the people living the conflicts as sources of possibilities for transformation. For conflict transformation concerned with changing relationships, focusing on leaders is not enough, because the world, society, community, and relationships are made of people, and will only be peaceful insofar as the people involved are not driven by fear or violence (Curle 2016d: 169). Drawing from such perspectives to counter the top-down nature of interventions adopted by a prescriptive approach, Lederach detailed a pyramid of conflict addressing levels of leadership of the different actors involved in a conflictive situation. Top level, middle range, and grassroots leadership were located in the

pyramid according to the number of the population affected. The innovation of this approach was to acknowledge leadership and agency at all levels of society (1997: 39).

Some years later, Lederach reviewed the pyramid to highlight the importance of the relational aspect. He emphasized that the element which characterized the additional potential to the transformative role of the actors was their ability to build relationships with people on the different corners and levels. According to his observation and practice, "(…) people who come from different sides and locations within the space of the conflict transformed it by infusing the relational spaces with a new quality of interaction" (Lederach 2005: 98). This quality of interaction crosses through divisions and biases created by historical gaps and protracted violence. To illustrate it, a spider web was drawn over the pyramid, evidencing the importance of relationality in peace and conflict work and the contribution of all levels, especially grassroots and middle ranges, toward peace and conflict transformation.

This change of perspective is meaningful because it acknowledges the grassroots level as actors in the landscape of conflict and values the work developed at the grassroots as vital in contributing to the web of peace in the fabric of society. It restores agency back to the communities, which are not seen as an acquiescent mass to be maneuvered by powerful leaders, but as a complexity in itself with crucial roles in transforming conflicts, connecting the communal fabric, and emanating the energetic pulsation which keeps the system alive and changing. The approach on relationality changes the exclusive focus on material and palpable entities, like organizations, resources, or even individual people (at the top level), to include the less graspable and quantifiable aspect of the relationships and the energies flowing or stuck among them.

This shift of focus from the visible material to the less visible energy, of which the material is just another form of manifestation, implies an extensive change in the practice of conflict transformation and the strategies it adopts. Once seen as a form of energy in different

manifestations, the material loses its indestructibility, because energies can be transformed into another form of energy (Capra 1982: 90). In constant change, the transformation of energies points to movement and dynamicity, because energy is associated with activity and with processes. Therefore, physics hints at movement, process, and vibration as forms of transformation in a system, which is always already dynamic, orchestrated by "(…) the continuous dance of energy" (Capra 1982: 91). In elicitive conflict transformation, the question that follows this approach is then how to creatively tap the energy generated by conflictive situations and direct it into new life affirming possibilities.

From this change of perspective and motivation derives a call for a practice of conflict transformation which goes beyond the episode toward the epicenter. The first is the apparent cause of the conflict where the visible expression of the energy is, which by its more noticeable effects attracts attention and the efforts to change. The second is the web of relational patterns from where the stories seen at the episode unfold, from where the energy emanates. Due partially to its less palpable, less visible characteristics, it is more difficult to access the epicenter. Also, the episode has a space and time reference, while the epicenter cannot be attached to a one-time event. However, "the episode of conflict becomes an opportunity to address the epicenter of the conflict" where the force of movement is (Lederach 2003: 32). Considering the epicenter as a source of energy recognizes power in the human relational system, from where stems the frightful capacity for destruction, but also a force of transformation, which can be used elicitively to draw healthier configurations of individual and collective life.

Dietrich identified the elicitive approach as the framework for conflict transformation embedded in the transrational peace philosophy (2013). He took Lederach's pyramid and expanded it into a multidimensional model, with themes and layers that incorporate the complexity of human existence. He drew from his classification of the families of peaces

according to history and culture, with its correspondent main elements of harmony, justice, truth, and security, and established them in each quadrant at the base of the pyramid. Combining these elements with their correspondent internal/external expression derives the dimensions of personal harmony, relational security, structural justice, and cultural truth, which are interwoven in a conflict episode (Dietrich 2013: 201).

The episode was equated to the external border of the pyramid, the apparent element, while the epicenter is at the very center, providing the tridimensional figure the width and depth that encompasses human relations. The understanding of the episode as something that is apparent, but that is not the complete picture resembles Jung's approach to the persona as that which oneself and others believe is the reality, but is not (Jung 1981: 123). So, the border of the pyramid was equated to the episode of a conflict, the apparent causes of a conflictive situation, and to the persona, the apparent reality of the individual.

Acknowledging the depth of the pyramid, Dietrich located inside its border the layers that influence human conflictive behavior within the individual, based on the chakra philosophy of yoga, named sexual, socio-emotional, mental, and spiritual. Then he added the layers external to the persona, called family, community, society, policity, and global layers - terms applied in transpersonal psychology. This layout evidences the persona as a contact boundary between inner and outer layers, which contributes to constitute it (Dietrich 2013: 201-3).

The principles of correspondence, resonance, and balance, discussed in transrational peaces, apply in this system. In correspondence, work on an inner layer affects its correspondent outer layer and vice versa. It also sustains that the deeper the work the wider its impact, because the epicenter represents the source of energy where inner- and outermost layers meet. In balance the system resonates flexibly to internal and external changes, while imbalance in any of the layers affects the whole system and the episode. In this sense, "the ego dances of the personae

– the episodes – reveal a larger and deeper truth that is accessible to the senses and emanates from the episodes' epicenter" (Dietrich 2013: 201).

The porosity of the persona and the correspondence of the many layers in contact extend the understanding of conflict as blockages of life energy at the contact boundaries. The role of the conflict worker in this balance is to alleviate blockages of energy in the dysfunctional system through tuning his own layers in empathy with the contact boundaries of the conflict parties. From the diversity of perspectives revealed in the approach to layers, themes, and levels of the conflictive situation, a broader perspective can emerge and enable more possibilities.

What results from this complex structure is a map to facilitate the understanding of the different influences on human conflictive behavior, and the many layers to be considered while working in the peace and conflict field. For transformation to happen it is necessary to acknowledge our many layers, being aware of the multiplicity of influences we as human beings receive and interact with, and to be present in the moment, open to understand and interact with this plurality.

Facilitating such a process requires readiness for change and awareness of the present, of a person's own influence in the situation and the intertwined relations, finding a balance from where to act. Acknowledging her own layers in constant communication with the parties' layers, the conflict worker uses her dynamic balance to tune into the system's energies and become a change agent in the system (Satir and Baldwin 1983: 228). This implies willingness to take the risk of undergoing change as well, because that will happen inevitably. Furthermore, it implies a willingness to live with the ambiguity of a dynamic system, with varieties which come up during the process and go beyond the previously plan. The conflict worker needs to be able to shift gears in consonance with the process of change taking place. This may imply a balance between an attitude of providing safety, made clear by the conflict worker's centeredness and ability to take leadership and active intervention when destructive forces are

at work, with the willingness to expose her vulnerability as a contribution to the glimpse of new possibilities (Satir and Baldwin 1983: 228-9). The striking aspect of this assumption is that the deeper a person goes into the variety of the layers, unveiling aspects of the fragmented persona, the more her actions are congruent and come from a place of unity, which stems from the epicenter.

The elicitive conflict worker explores her many layers in an exercise of awareness of the self, of the surrounding world, of the shadows and biases influencing her behavior. She is aware of the influence of aspects of social, cultural, political, and spiritual background, as well as of the dynamics of power stemming from them. From this perception, it is possible to operate in the conflictive system from a position of authenticity to all her layers, but selectively choosing the aspects to focus on. This choice is based on the relevance of the topic for the situation, its potential for contributing to balance in the system, and its consonance with the context.

Permeability is a big part of this art, because willingness to convey one's own layer if adequate in the context is key for the empathy and trust required for transformative energies to be unblocked. This willingness derives from inner work, because it requires the elicitive worker to be comfortable with that topic within herself, that comes with attentive practice. By constantly acknowledging what is there, the conflict worker is more equipped to see, hear, and make decisions, to use those energies contributing to the balance in the system (Satir and Baldwin 1983: 231). It is a process of openness to change, but also about self-preservation when convenient, in an oscillation which requires constant awareness to be responsive to the context. Yet, the work within the individual and the work in the outer layers are two different sides of the same coin: "to understand yourself, in your deepest nature, is to understand the nature of the universe" (Vessantara 1993: 108). Working consciously on both may tend toward the dissolution of the apparent duality and generate a meaningful, deep, and wide transformation.

### 3.3 Elicitive Conflict Transformation Methods

Being present, aware of self and the surrounding context may sound simple. Suspicious of the simplicity of this assumption, Sarah, a very curious lady came to talk to me after a presentation I did about this research at Eastern Mennonite University. It was a conventional oral presentation with some participative questions. I would have enjoyed making it more active, but it was lunch break and people would be eating, so I decided to let them enjoy this happy nourishing moment of the day without having to move around. At the end, Sarah asked me: "So, in order to have peace we need to start with ourselves, work on our inner struggles, and consequently we will be more peaceful beings and a more peaceful presence in the world around us. Is it that simple, or did I lose something of your presentation?" I smiled, while in my mind her words echoed the call for being the change one want to see in the world. 'Yes – I said. You summarized it beautifully'. The intense gaze in her pressed eyes, as if still reflecting further revealed to me that she was still suspicious. Confirming my perception, she insisted: "But is that it? It sounds too simple. If it is so simple, why do we still have wars and violence?" Still catching my breath after the one-hour presentation, I confirmed that yes, the concept was simple. The matter is that it is difficult to implement, it requires awareness and practice; and that is what I think dance can proportionate. Courageous as she is – a characteristic that I realized afterwards – she responded to my somewhat unusual call, took the challenge and joined the research practice group on dance as method to elicit conflict transformation.

This is what this chapter is about: how to keep the flame of change lit, how to sustain the commitment to being present even when the situation may be perceived as overwhelming and disheartening. In the subchapter on energetic peaces, I mentioned that being a part of the same vibration of the universe, in consonance or dissonance, enables one's intention to harmonize to happen. Furthermore, I stated that it does not mean it becomes easier, though, but provides a simplicity – which Sarah perceived - into a complexity that is beyond grasp. The

same can be said at this point about the constant work on awareness of self. The task of promoting such awareness is a tough, life-long endeavor, which can, nevertheless, be exciting.

Being the change one want to see in the world, being more respectful to nature and to others, more grateful for existence, having spirituality trespassing and nurturing daily life; these intentions sound beautiful and inspiring. Yet, my question has always been 'how'. When I got in touch with the transrational peace philosophy and elicitive conflict transformation, this question became even more evidenced. How to tap creatively into the energy generated by conflictive situations in order to develop new dynamics of relationships? How to be a peaceful presence when the world seems to be tumbling down? How to be compassionate facing oppressive and horrific situations? How to unfold peace, a peace that is not an ideal but a potential available in every human being? I had and still have many 'how' questions. They motivated me to experience Sufi whirling, 5Rhythms, and meditation described previously. The structure of the dance sessions, which is detailed further on, was also developed to provide some answers. I had some insights and more questions. Yet, others were informed by practice in a way that I am struggling to articulate in words.

Nevertheless, before addressing this question directly, I refer broadly to different perspectives of practices, methods, and trainings applied to approach topics of body, mind, awareness, and peace and conflict transformation. This is not supposed to be an extensive list, but an overview of the main aspects of the practices and techniques which contribute to my understanding of dance as method for elicitive conflict transformation.

In the chapter about peaces, I addressed the *toré* and Sufi whirling as spiritual practices containing elements related to peace from an energetic and moral understanding. Guided by Nietzsche's Dionysian and Apollonian forces, I reflected upon different practices such as carnival, ballet, modern, and postmodern dance and their relation to understandings of peace. As analyzed, in modernity the spiritual element has been stripped of artistic practice, which

devoted itself then to the portrayal of beauty, ideal, and Apollonian semblance. Postmodernity, nevertheless, opened space for questioning the absolute truth and led to approximations with Dionysian ecstasy and non-modern approaches, which, in turn, led to attempts to approximate spiritual elements in dance.

Widening the focus on practices, this trajectory can be found in other body-mind approaches as well, sometimes with more intensity than that which became encircled in the dance field, which still bear the wounds of the close association with the one Beauty. In some cases, practices which attempted to innovate with movement avoided the name 'dance' to prevent misconception with the usual idea related to step and technique or social dance. 5Rhythms and circle dances can be cited as examples of practices that intend to bridge the gap between dance, body-mind practices (therapeutic or healing), and communal celebration.

As body-mind practices associated with peace and transformation have been explored in different realms, I take a look at some of those practices and main elements and characteristics that I see contributing to an approach to dance as method of conflict transformation. Some of them that have contributed directly to the theoretical and practical foundation of the dance sessions, as are described in the following chapter.

I engaged in my personal practice of yoga and meditation due to their combined approach to body, mind, health, and spiritual experience. Meditation, more specifically, made a significant contribution to my understanding of dance as a method to elicit conflict transformation. It takes innumerable forms in different traditions, but a basic distinction can be done between *shamatha* and *vipassana*. *Shamatha* aims to calm and concentrate the mind, enabling access to different states of consciousness, characterized by a sustained focus, a one-pointedness of mind (Vessantara 1993: 36). In different words, Hanh described s*hamatha* as stopping, connecting to the life energy available in the present moment. Through concentration, this practice aims at calming body, emotions, and mind through mindful breathing, walking and

sitting, in order to allow the practitioner to live deeply and touch the deepest level of his being. V*ipassana* is another aspect of meditation, which means looking deeply, in order to see the true nature of things, nourishing understanding (Hanh 1990: 210).

A third approach to meditation in Buddhism is the idea of *shunyata*, the wisdom of emptiness, or in other words, the suspension of focus into an oceanic meditation, an observation of the mind as container without the intention of capturing words, thoughts, or concepts (Vessantara 1993: 65-79). Many techniques derive from these three basic distinctions (Vessantara 1993; Hanh 1990; Kabat-Zinn 1990). For the facilitation of the dance experience, I was also inspired by the techniques of visualizations, which help the meditator to picture situations that contribute to changes of perspective and worldview (Vessantara 1993). Meditation contributes to this research because it stresses basic points which are important for an elicitive practice: presence in the here and now, getting in touch with the body and emotions, concentrating the mind, looking deeply, observing what is there, searching for understanding. And of course, the emphasis on the inseparable need of bringing this awareness to daily life.

Practices related to body-mind and spiritual experiences were also studied by humanistic psychology, in an attempt to infuse modern psychology with the tools and methods for exploring different states of consciousness and its links to joy, happiness, and healing. From a psychological perspective, this attempt can be depicted in Maslow's approach to self-actualization, described by him as pertaining to a hierarchy of needs, which includes physiological needs, safety, love and belonging, self-esteem, and self-actualization. Self-actualization relates to the self-fulfillment of human beings, which means to become what one potentially is, what one is capable of becoming (1970: 46).

In this vein, he coincides with the chakra philosophy detailed in the previous chapter in terms of the intrinsic potential in every human being. This is more than a coincidence, though, considering the influence on Western psychology by Eastern philosophies like Zen, Tao,

Buddhism and specially Tantra and Tantric worldviews stemming from these traditions (Kripal 2008: 18 and Dietrich 2012: 15). Nevertheless, aware of a possible tendency of generalizing this concept and specifically of the forms to self-actualize, Maslow alerted that: "The specific form that these needs will take will of course vary greatly from person to person" (Maslow 1970: 46).

The idea of a potential which could be tapped into and contribute to human self-actualization, joy, happiness, and spiritual experiences motivated researchers to engage in forms of exploring it. Kripal evaluates that:

> The more sophisticated writers of the human potential realize fully that the supernormal dimensions of consciousness and the body that they seek typically lie dormant or undeveloped and require specific cultural practices or beliefs (that is, cultural particularity) to be fully actualized and sustained. They also realize that, once stabilized in culture and the body, such practices tend to have permanent and long-lasting effects of future forms of experience (2008: 23).

From this engagement derived new applications of ancient practices, as well as the development of new ones. These practices reflect the split previously addressed in Western psychology, which at that point was argued with Wilber's theory of the holons. In what relates to the practices, on the one hand, there is the evolutionary understanding of the human journey, according to which human beings are getting prepared for the next turn of expanded consciousness. Dychtwald illustrated this approach with the image of human beings "(…) riding on the crest of the evolutionary wave that has been pushing onward throughout history" (1986: 262). On the other hand, is the understanding that these states are available for human beings as potential, not necessarily because of the betterment of the species. As has been argued previously, I concur with Dietrich in terms of seeing these practices as contributing to the unfoldment of a potential which is already available. In this sense, the practices do not necessarily lead toward a predetermined betterment or progress, while it may more accurately be called an adaptation to the ever-changing context (2012: 63).

Nevertheless, both currents concur on the importance of practices to unfold this potential, and on the body as an important means for that. Referring specifically to the Esalen Institute, which has been a hub for humanistic psychology, Kripal addressed this approach to the body: "Psychologically speaking, the healing practices of Esalen developed within an integral worldview that centers on the spiritualization of the flesh and turns to the union of "body" and "soul" as the most reliable source of wholeness and health" (2008: 228).

From their experimentation with traditional practices and incursions into the development of new approaches derived many body-mind techniques which also contributed to the discussion of peace. Details of these practices and techniques from different perspectives can be found in multiple sources (Kripal 2008, Dietrich 2013 and Dychtwald 1986), and as so they will not be repeated here. Among the many practices developed within the nest of humanistic movement – which includes Gestalt, Holotropic Breathwork, Open Encounter – I approach specifically 5Rhythms. In a nutshell, it can be said that a common thread of these practices, independently of the orientation, is that they rely on body and mind to explore consciousness in order to contribute to health, joy, happiness and awareness of the self. Gabrielle Roth's call for putting the mind in the motion of the body so it heals itself reflects such perspective (Roth 1998b: xvii).

An important approach to body-mind practices, which also deeply influenced Esalen, is the German *Gymnastik* movement, which began around the 1900. In contraposition to the Nazi education, it "(…) encouraged difference, spontaneous movement, and a kind of moving meditation that prized awareness and consciousness above all else" (Kripal 2008: 229). Kripal stated that the implicit political philosophy of the movement is that: "(…) freedom is quite literally a bodily state, and if you cannot move your body however you wish, then you are not free" (2008: 229). Many of the ways of its teachers and disciples have also crisscrossed with humanistic movement and Esalen (Johnson 1995: xv and Kripal 2008: 229). In this nexus of

bodily awareness and healing practices can be situated Elza Gindler, Marion Rosen, F.M. Alexander, Alexander Lowen, Moshe Feldenkrais, Charlotte Selver, and Ida Rolf (Johnson 1995: xi). With a strong focus on the body's abilities such as balance, coordination, movement, it can be said that the myriad of techniques evolving from these pioneers shares the focus on "(…) developing strategies for recovering the wisdom and creativity present in breathing, sensing, moving and touching" (Johnson 1995: ix).

Still in a therapeutic vein, but closer to dance, it is possible to locate Authentic Movement and Dance and Movement Therapy (DMT) in techniques which explore awareness of the self through body and movement. With a strong influence from Jungian psychology, Authentic Movement can be described as movement as a form of active imagination whose purpose is to offer "(…) the opportunity to develop a deep, self-sensing awareness – an attitude of inner listening" (Chodorow 1999: 257). Out of this inner listening, movement that is authentic can emerge, a movement which is "(…) an immediate expression of how the client feels at any given moment" (Adler 1999a: 122).

DMT also works with dance and therapy, but in a slightly different approach. Its aim is "(…) to work with people toward self-validation, resolution of past trauma, and to learn how to better relate and have positive interactions with others" (Chaiklin 2009: 8). The relation to movement is primarily on basic kinesthetic, emotional, and symbolic aspects (Wengrower 2009: 27). In terms of objectives, its intention is to "(…) expand movement repertoire so that it will lead to a wide variety of experiences and resources which allow us to accept, respect and understand different human feelings and ways of living in the world" (Fischman 2009: 45).

With meditation, humanistic movement practices, body-mind practices evolving from the *Gymnastiks* movement, Authentic Movement, and Dance and Movement Therapy, I have explored techniques with emphasis on body and mind. Some also have a spiritual component, while others are more oriented toward therapy. Now, I shift fields to approach the question of

techniques and practices from a peace and conflict studies perspective, which consequently have a more explicit aim toward conflict transformation. The ways of these approaches, nevertheless, cross more than once, making clear that rigid compartmentalization does not apply here.

Adam Curle is a pioneer in emphasizing inner work for peace and conflict workers, to develop the courage, empathy, and compassion he underlined as essential in establishing relationships with others, including those perceived as enemies. He recommended meditation, sitting quietly, and listening deeply as necessary tasks for the endeavor of conflict transformation, and highlighted the importance of such training for peace workers. Those practices would help to break the habit of being asleep, fostering the habit of being awake, aware of fears, biases, and barriers for the encounter of others as human beings (Curle 2016: 173d). Through the incorporation of such awareness, the conflict worker could tap into great springs of energy, allowing access to extraordinary knowledge and uniting in love those separated by fear and hatred (Curle 2016e: 208-9).

In his peacemaking philosophy, Martínez Guzmán called attention to the role of peace studies in the rehabilitation of the capacities for peacemaking in humans (2000: 88). In a broader approach to phenomenology, he argued that the field needed to investigate, explore, and practice theoretical and practical knowledge on the human capabilities for making peace. This would not imply a monopoly of this knowledge by peace and conflict workers as the ones who know how to make peace. Instead, they would contribute to restore capacities and powers of peacemaking, in order to restore also the plural and local narratives which generates knowledge (2000: 89).

Lederach also engaged in techniques related to peace and conflict, with a special focus to facilitate the elicitive aspect in his proposal of cross-cultural training. He analyzed language and metaphor as natural resources in conflict training, focusing specifically on images and

synonyms of conflict, everyday language, proverbs and storytelling, and suggested role plays as tools for discovery and creation (1995: 73-107). As a consequence of the emphasis on technique and analysis, Lederach emphasized that conflict workers failed to nurture the artist which rests within each person. Considering art as a form of love, of finding beauty and connection in even the small tasks, he suggested that the artistic aspect needed to be infused back in the conflict transformation endeavor, by the appreciation of imagination and creativity (2005: 65-74).

Noticing that artists are usually called to celebrations or grieving, but are rarely invited by political leaders to contribute creatively to social and political challenges, Lederach dared to ask: why not amplifying this participation? Why not calling artists when violence is about to be justified? Why not to help understand, from within artistic disciplines, the complexity of social and political realities? (2005: 176). This is an innovative call that questions the rigid roles established by the division between science and art, and proposes art as technique and soul of peace and conflict work. It inspires methods for conflict transformation which explore the artistic endeavor of eliciting love from within, to nurture the web-making of relationships.

Referring to the task of negotiators, Barry Hart (2015) and Galluccio and Safran (2015) also addressed the need for practices and techniques. In order to put into action what he called the dignity model of transformative negotiation, Hart emphasized the need to reassess the training of negotiators in more comprehensive ways. Among these new ways, he suggested deep listening and mindfulness. Through breathing and centering techniques, mindfulness in this case is expected to "(…) sharpen thinking (and feeling) patterns in preparation for the negotiation and provide cognitive and emotional agility during it (…)" (Hart 2015: 102).

Identifying the need for an interdisciplinary and articulated perspective from where negotiators can assess their own experience in the negotiation process, Galluccio and Safran also suggested new trainings. The objective would be "(…) to strengthen the cognitive-

emotional-behavioral resources and social abilities of negotiators, mediators, diplomats, and politicians in a structured way allowing for peaceful interpersonal relationships that may be assessed in realistic ways" (Galluccio and Safran 2015: 210). Such trainings would focus on the experiential and nonconceptual, using structured mindfulness exercises and awareness-oriented role-plays for the reflection of experience and for helping on the negotiation table (2015: 221).

The same need for different and more comprehensive approaches was addressed by Hugh Miall, in his approach to conflict transformation as a multi-dimensional task (2004). Acknowledging the impact of conflict not only in the parties but also in the conflict workers, he called for transforming the transformers, enhancing training programs, and offering opportunities for self-reflection and spirituality (2004: 85). Furthermore, inspired by Thich Nhat Hanh, he addressed smiling as a conflict transformation method. Based on the theory of interdependent co-origination, which states the interconnectedness of everything, Miall argued that smiling is part of the practice of engaged mindfulness, and that through the aware practice of smiling, the transformer transforms herself with deep awareness and affect a change also in the collective process of transformation (2004: 85-86).

Still, within the field of peace and conflict, but drawing from diverse fields, Dietrich extensively investigated the topic of practices and techniques (2013). In order to support the transrational process and the elicitive conflict transformation endeavor, he pointed out that practices are necessary to help the energies involved flow and the conflict to be transformed. His framework followed those faculties which can resonate - breath, voice, and movement - and therefore can be mobilized by human beings to enter in harmonious resonance with the macrocosm of the universe. In other words, techniques to experience peace. In this manner, the toolkit of applicable methods encompasses: "(…) techniques developed in the frame of

humanistic psychology, yoga, martial arts, dance, dynamic meditation, psychodrama, expressive theatre and more" (Dietrich 2014: 54-5).

Accordingly, in breath-oriented approaches to elicitive conflict transformation he detailed holotropic breathwork, vipassana and quantum light. Voice-oriented approaches, in his perspective, comprise Nonviolent Communication, theme-centered interaction, the psychology of interpersonal communication as detailed by Schulz von Thun, as well as prelinguistic methods such as music and mantra. In movement-oriented approaches to elicitive conflict transformation he pointed to 5Rhythms, butoh, aikido, political constellations, and theater work, with focus on Theatre of the Oppressed and Theatre for Living (Dietrich 2013: 54-151).

Elicitive conflict transformation methods provide a frame to safely explore alternative options of interaction, encouraging a conscious acknowledgment of the interplay of layers. This consciousness allows the conflict worker to be able to be in the moment, with a set of skills to assess self and the surrounding world, but also sustaining that creative openness to perceive and move with the unknown. In this sense, they are valuable tools in the training of peace and conflict workers, and can be used with the parties in conflict to find possibilities of action, according to convenience assessed contextually. Furthermore, these practices can also be used by people in their daily lives for exploring peace and transforming conflict.

Still in the peace and conflict field, practices and techniques are also approached by Koppensteiner, through the lenses of what he calls the Art of the Transpersonal Self. I look into his proposal in further detail, because it leads the transition into a discussion of aspects which are essential in elicitive conflict transformation methods and practices. Koppensteiner presented the possibility of turning one's own life into a work of art, through continuous transformative practice. In this sense, the Art of the Self consists in a daily practice, an affirmation of life that entails a possibility of becoming differently (Koppensteiner 2009: 89-90). Acknowledging that transformation happens regardless, his question is how to shape and influence this

transformation. He then analyzed Theatre of the Oppressed, systemic constellation work and holotropic breathwork as practices that offer the space for transformation to happen and the frame that enables a certain amount of influence and channeling of this becoming (2009: 152-182). In this sense, a practice of the self could be defined as: "(…) a technique which consciously takes the aesthetic and energetic elements of becoming into account" (Koppensteiner 2009: 156). What differentiates these methods from regular activities is the proposal of awareness, letting go of judgments and opening a space. They also twist the concept of individuality, by providing an experience of connectedness and interdependence.

It is important to emphasize that these practices do not have a strictly therapeutic objective, to be sought only in moments of difficulty and then quit when the situation changes. Difficulties are seen as part of the mosaic of life, and as so, are worked on as energies to keep the transformation in flux. Referring to such practices, Koppensteiner argued that: "rather than seeing them just as tools to help the injured and traumatized life, they additionally can also function as the affirmative practice for an active life" (2009: 175). Although many of these practices are used for therapeutic means, focusing on healing, they also have a wide role in affirming life in all its possibilities. That means that they are not understood in the result oriented vector of diagnosis, medicine, healing, but in the cycle of life celebrated in all its phases. And this celebration of life's multiple aspects has direct impacts on healing too.

The objective of these practices is not inaugurating a new self, overcoming a past image, nor erasing lived experiences. In a perspective of becoming, it is about integrating these experiences as part of a transforming self. They are seen as energetic grist for the mill of ever-changing force (2009: 169). The opportunity to influence one's becoming through this kind of practice, coupled with the unknown possibilities, mounts up to a belonging into the systemic fabric of life and nature, a reverberation with the cosmos which can be associated with spirituality. This possibility allows the development of a practice which is also a form of

spirituality, acknowledging transrational experiences (Koppensteiner 2009: 201). This leans toward a spirituality which is not somewhere else, but is infused in daily life, celebrated in self and others and in the possibilities of transformation.

However, the spiritual aspect in those practices is not something to be strived for. Striving for spirituality in the practice betrays the authenticity with which the beauty of its experience is revealed in the unfolding of transformation. Intentionality in the setting of the practice is motivational and maintain focus and discipline. Stepping onto the floor, nevertheless, requires letting go of expectations and desired results, because, if the unknown aspect is really honored, intentions are offered in the process as possibilities, which may happen or not.

This state of sustaining intentionality while letting go of expected results is also illustrated by the idea of the beginner's mind, which maintains the freshness of motivation, the commitment to the purpose, while maintaining humility regarding the accumulation of experience and knowledge. I also heard this same idea associated with the concept of unlearning. I was in a dance workshop, and in the break, I was talking to the musician, a man who lived many years in a *kibbutz* in Israel. Curious about life in such a community, I asked him details on the organization of life and work load. He told me that in the kibbutz they changed roles after some time. I rushed in to complement: 'of course, this way everybody learns to do everything!' He smiled and rectified: "actually, it is so everybody unlearns". My face might have portrayed my confusion, because he added: "this way the opportunity is laid so you can appreciate the small details of what you are doing with unbiased eyes. Having fresh and humble eyes, being present in the moment".

A different way of conveying the same message is illustrated by Albrech Mahr, quoted in *The Art of the Transpersonal Self*, referring to the serendipitous aspect in facilitating political constellations as not knowing. He emphasized the importance of relaying on knowledge and experience, but also of trusting that the knowing field will articulate one's abilities, without this

person controlling or knowing the result. He calls that a "knowing self-forgetfulness" (Koppensteiner 2009: 167). This perspective does not diminish knowledge, neither previous experiences, nor deep spiritual belief. It honors the contribution of all that in keeping intentionality, acknowledging that holding on to them may get in the way of the experience. Koppensteiner details this state of mind:

> What is necessary from the point of view of an Art of the Transpersonal Self is the active engagement with the chosen practice, suspending judgment and letting oneself be led towards the transrational moment of becoming. Belief is not required in this instant but, just like judgment, also disbelief needs to be suspended towards an attitude of taking the single moment for what it is, relinquishing rational control, letting the process unfold and a possible vector of transformation manifest itself (Koppensteiner 2009: 175).

Such a transformation may involve understanding experiences of the past with a new perspective, integrating the influence they exert in the present. It can also unfold in a fresh awareness of the relationality of one's existence. Active engagement means trusting in the process, trusting in the flow of energies, trusting in self, body, feet, and the dance floor. Believing or disbelieving in the spiritual element available in the process does not matter at that point, because it actually needs to be released from the grip with which they are often tightly held. In dance, this means to stop resisting or pushing and to give in to the rhythm.

The idea that the accumulation of knowledge does not necessarily take the person somewhere may sound very awkward to the ears of modern-oriented people, because in the modern understanding, knowledge is associated with privilege. In a transrational perspective, knowledge is not dismissed, and is deeply valued and honored. However, it is not a guarantee. Knowledge provides the frame with much needed support, but is detached from a linear expected result derived from its accumulation. Addressing these expectations, Dietrich affirmed that:

> This is a good place to remember that impatience is rooted in linear thinking, in modern ideas of redemption, and in the postmodern condition. Transrationality holds no promise of redemption. It expands the spectrum of choices of action and

offers a theoretical framework for elicitive methods. Such methods are unassuming and unspectacular (2013: 186-7).

From a transrational point of view, there is no redemption to strive for, neither a final product to be attained. This is true for practitioners as well as for facilitators. Considering the expansion of choices of action supported by the knowledge of the theoretical framework, I see practices for eliciting conflict transformation more as tools for learning than tools for teaching. Emphasizing the Freirean approach and the elicitive method, the practice is not offered in the expectation of a trap were people get caught, which evidences the misery of life previous to it while praising the brilliance of the proposal. Neither is it a contest for the most perfected practice. Tools for learning are then best described as a method that stimulates reflection based on one's own life experiences.

Continuing with the idea of a tool for life I shift the focus from techniques and methods described within the field of peace and conflict to contributions from the varied disciplines mentioned above. My objective is to highlight the potential of these practices when incorporated into daily life. The helpfulness of such tools to broaden the spectrum of choices available has been discussed in terms of relationality, but it is also reflected in an embodied way. In this sense, Feldenkrais coincided with that perspective when he affirmed that lack of choice makes strain habitual and generates a whole spam of consequences in the body structure and physiology: "(…) in the end nothing appears more natural than that to which he is accustomed, even if it is opposed to all reason or necessity" (1990: 84). Thus, the intent of a regular practice of the methods for conflict transformation does not propose to become a mechanic habit, but to cultivate awareness in a way that nurtures options and enjoyment of life.

The fact that transformation requires cultivating a plurality of options also emphasizes the understanding that methods intended to expand that range are unspectacular and do not work amazements by themselves. Undoing patterns and habits requires awareness and dedication. Furthermore, there is a plethora of variables playing in the situation that makes the experience

what it is. That is why it is a tool, a method; because without people willing to engage in them, to undergo the experience proposed, they are useless. Vessantara puts it quite bluntly when affirming that it is hard work which provides the parameters of your capacity to mobilize energies: "it demands a great deal of you. You really have to give yourself to it" (1993: 209). There is a critique here as to the phenomena observed in centers and studios, where people jump from one practice to another searching for the newest miraculous technique. There is nothing wrong in trying different experiences, but the expectation for a miraculous transformation gets in the way of the transformative process, detaches the experience from daily life, and may generate a lot of confusion. Furthermore, it prevents the effects of repetition in body, mind, and spirit.

Observing the effects of repetition, Kornfield pointed out that we get more prone to have reactions toward that which we practice, being it playing tennis, dancing or being angry. Repeated patterns are ingrained in our functions, and in the case of anger, for example, a slight insult may trigger our rage (2009: 258). What if we practice being peaceful and loving? Repetition makes us more prone to that as well. It means that with the practice of letting embodied awareness emerge, we are changing our nervous system, facilitating our ability to stay consciously longer in the present moment. Fogel details the physiological changes as follows:

> This practice effect happens because the brain learns from each experience of embodied self-awareness. Neural learning is reflected in physiological changes in the nerve cells and their connections. Practice leads to the growth of an increasing number of interconnecting fibers that can synapse between cells. The more synapses between adjoining cells, the more likely there will be a direct communication between them, and the stronger the neural network (2013: 61).

The relevance of relationality emphasized on transrational peace is also true for our neurons. These connections can be seen as an infinitesimal small version of stablishing and nurturing relationships so important in interrelational peace and conflict work. Practicing a

method of elicitive conflict transformation can be seen as making peace in the body. In this perspective, the analogy to the system as a fabric with overlapping and interconnected threads involving all parts is less a metaphor and more an actual physical structure. Creating opportunities for embodied self-awareness to emerge refers to that intentionality brought into practice coupled with an awareness of the present moment. Mechanical repetition has much less impact in the purpose of the practice than observing what is being done attentively (Feldenkrais 1990: 137).

This awareness is not related to strain or striving, but to observation. Awareness is what fits action to intention (Feldenkrais1990: 46), and put into the practice can contribute to long-term physical and behavioral changes, which may potentially become more than a mechanical habit but a conscious way of living:

> The growth of neural pathways through practice and repeated experience is called experience dependent brain development. These increasingly entrenched pathways make it easier for information to travel along the same routes in the future. This neural attractor for the pattern of activation and its link to the body's receptors and effectors is how we form memories and habits (Fogel 2013: 61).

This leads also to the rebounding effect of the practices, when done in a systematic way. It allows to observe the effects of the practice even when not practicing, sometimes by observing its sustained effects, other times by missing its effects or the impact in daily life of not practicing (Kabat-Zinn 1990: 430). Practice offers and models a frame through which it is possible to channel awareness into a determined intention, making it easier to sustain. It also provides the vessel through which transformative experiences can unfold. By structuring the frame, through repetition of embodied awareness, practice may increase the likelihood that transformative experiences happen, and it certainly increases the possibility of integrating the insights and learnings into everyday life (Amorok, Vieten and Schlitz 2007: 109). If sustained, practice can approximate speech and praxis.

In this sense, my journey into the aspects of dance and movement as methods of elicit conflict transformation follows the excitement with the possibilities of transformation and integration of insight and learning into a way of living. While acknowledging the possibility of increasing the likelihood of transformation to happen by intentionally sustaining a practice, it is important to bear in mind that it also brings forth the unknown. Moreover, transformation requires a constellation of elements which goes beyond the frame of the practice and reflects the complexity of human relations.

Practice allows for an enlivening of motivation, a nurturing of life-affirming possibilities, and is also the foundation for renewing energies, for caring about the world without becoming exhausted, something which is not uncommon in the peace and conflict field. Nevertheless, there are also elements which go beyond the practice itself and are important for the transformative process, as Gross highlighted:

> You need community and you need relationships with people who genuinely care about you. I found out much easier to flip struggle into cheerfulness when I was not only practicing but had an adequate container of relationship and community. (…) We understand that not only is formal practice absolutely necessary, but so is the support of a nurturing community (1997: 101).

Practice strengthens inner connections among neurons, but transformation also requires interrelational connections to be nurtured as well. If the very practice offers that possibility, the better. Anyhow, a community of practice or a community of friends not related to the practice are essential to support the processes of becoming. The inner frame created for transformation needs an outer frame which sustains it as well. Especially in modern individualistic societies, this need becomes even more urgent. Thich Nhat Hanh's vision that community is the next Buddha is ever more pertinent (2010).

From a transrational perspective, I concur with the call to engage with practices that Murphy called integral practices, which "(…) address the somatic, affective, cognitive, volitional, and transpersonal dimensions of human nature in a comprehensive way" (Murphy

1993: 171). He based this call on the observation that every practice values some aspects and neglect others, according to the worldview of the teacher. He argued that ascetic practices, for example, usually do not value the contribution of the body to the transformative process, as well as fall short on appreciation of interpersonal relationships, individuation, and creativity (Murphy 1993: 172).

I agree with Murphy's observation that different practices focus on different aspects, as well as with his conclusion that there is a need to balance, integrate, and express the plurality of each person (1993: 172). Nevertheless, this balance is different for each person, and dynamic in its relation to time and space. Although some practices may incorporate more aspects than others, or incorporate them in a more holistic manner, they are all related to the dynamic ever-changing context and are, therefore, relational. This brings me to an important statement regarding my approach to dance as a method: I do not think it is the best method ever, neither that it must be followed by everybody – although anybody can practice it; much less that it is the solution for a person's or the world's problems. I am also aware that it is not risk-free. Previously I argued about conflict and its twofold aspect of being risky and a gift. The same applies here. In the constant repetition of the dualities diving into one another, while there is the possibility of the ecstatic moment of the merging, there is also the presence of both in different combinations at each time and the tension of keeping them flowing in balance.

Following the Nietzschean insight on the repetition of this merging and flow, Koppensteiner argued that the purpose of repetition is not to imitate but to reactivate the transformative potentials in the movement of becoming. The experience, when perceived, is already gone, and requires reengagement. While no stable grounds are offered, repetition entails the process' beauty and uniqueness (Koppensteiner 2011: 541). This is one of the gifts of the practice.

The risky aspect appears when practice becomes a habit, a form of imprisonment, a strive for something pushing into unhealthy boundaries. (Kornfield 2009: 259). Nevertheless, this very risk is part of the flow which can be twisted in the next moment of becoming. It requires awareness, intentionality, repetition, and guidance, as Amorok, Vieten and Schlitz summarized the essential elements of transformative practices (2007: 93). Guidance here refers to the direct orientation of a teacher, and I also relate it to the internal guidance anchored in the ways of knowing of body, mind, intuition, senses, and spirituality.

The attention to the Apollonian and Dionysian flow, reinforcing the aspect of becoming, brings into perspective this risk. The risk is there, it is revealed each time, and can be twisted by the very act of becoming, flaring the flow of energies without generating harm or violence. Nevertheless, in the flow of energies, pain and suffering are not diverted with practice. In a transrational and elicitive approach, they are explored not only as clusters of energy to be released, but also as contents in themselves, which can be explored, bringing more knowledge about oneself. According to Roth, it implies turning oneself inside out, transforming suffering into art, art into awareness, and awareness into action (Ansell 2015: 94).

From all these experiences and reflections, the importance of elicitive conflict transformation methods to peaces and a more fully lived life becomes evident. In this panorama, how does dance contribute? LaMothe argued that dance can be a practice that makes us relearn our bodily becoming and dwell in the freedom of our creativity (2006: 223). Dance then could be a spiritual practice rooted in the body, with the intention of expanding awareness of the self in its constant becoming. Through the bodily knowledge, unfolded through movement, it becomes possible to enact a critique reviewing of our values, the many dogmas which we hold strong even without noticing.

Dance as practice allows moving biases, judgments, and limitations. It facilitates bringing attention to the here and now, refining our senses, feeling deeply inside and outside

the skin. Feeling pain, suffering, joy, compassion. Exploring the blockages and flow of energies, moving bones, muscles, fluids, building up and melting tensions. Relating to others, partnering in the dance, exploring resistance, boundaries, attraction, connection, sympathy, empathy, belonging. Tapping into power and creativity resting within. Finding patterns and habits in movement, behavior, emotion and reason, exploring their stories etched in the body, moving with them until they release their grasp on our lives. Shaking the ass, releasing the head, following the feet. Focusing, sustaining awareness, letting go and giving in. Opening up for experiences of peace and spiritual insight. Celebrating body, life, friendship, love, nature. Being grateful. Letting the dance move you.

For all of that, practice is required. And in all that, to acquire practice. Practice until being can be celebrated in its process of becoming, in the freedom of awareness to the plurality of choices and alternatives. Concurrently, it is necessary to choose making time for the practice, choose dedication and discipline which allows self-discovery and "(…) consciousness to the complex and conflicting rhythms of our deepest wisdom. We need practice in being a becoming" (LaMothe 2006: 232). And in this journey, we consciously embrace both the gift and the risk, and, in addition, we dance.

In this chapter, I have approached some practices which contribute to peace and conflict transformation. The general aims of those practices were presented in an effort to identify commonalities and differences. Furthermore, it was important to analyze what researchers from the field of peace and conflict studies have argued regarding practices that facilitate the challenging task and art of eliciting conflict transformation. This discussion evidences that the act of eliciting, with its characteristic of encompassing subtle aspects of humanity, as relationality, love and spirituality, requires an approach that goes beyond technical skills. They require methods that allow self-exploration, sustenance of awareness, nurturance of compassion, listening deeply and envisioning new alternatives. Due to their contribution to

peace, conflict transformation, and to the deepening of relationships, I argued also that these methods are useful not only in the training of conflict workers or in moments of hardship, but can also have a meaningful impact in inspiring daily life.

In the next chapter, the dialogue between different practices and peace and conflict will continue, contributing to delve into the different aspects which makes dance a method of elicitive conflict transformation. Because the very practice of dancing our conflicts can contribute to the unfoldment of peace within each person and also interrelationally, communally, and globally.

## 4 Dance as a Method to Elicit Conflict Transformation and Unfold Peaces

How does peace feel? What are the sensations which accompany the perception of a situation as peaceful? I had had this question in my mind for a while, and wanted to explore it. After dancing for hours, exploring fear and anger, in the end of the third day of workshop we sat down in partners to check-in how each person was feeling. In the trio I was part of, one lady said she was not in the mood for talking, to which I was grateful, because then we could just share our presence, and I could continue to explore the peaceful sensation I was experiencing. As I sat, my attention was caught by my relaxed forehead – usually tense to convey expression or concern, and I could feel the muscles of that part of my face loosen, extending this relaxation to my eyebrows and eyelids. Simultaneously, my eyes were relaxed, as if the muscles which coordinate its activity and direct its curiosity were resting. I was not searching for something to look outside, just receiving visual information.

From the moment I realized this, my attention was caught by a long exhalation, without pressure, which made me perceive how broadly air was pervading my nostrils. Its expansiveness inside my head revealed an emptiness of mind, as if air could touch the boundaries of my skull. This thought brought a light smile to my face, which made me notice the looseness of my jaw, providing the perfect space for my tongue to dwell in the space of my mouth. The muscles of my cheeks were not totally loosened such as a face void of any expression, but had a certain energetic quality, which made them feel light. My chin accommodated in a position perpendicular to my chest, alleviating the tension in the neck of too much computer and cell phone. The bones of the chest also felt released, achieving an expansion in the movement of the breath, which was not usual in daily chores. The belly accompanied these movements, providing a sensation of spaciousness and rootedness. Breath was unimpeded, effortless and pleasant.

As I lied down surrendering to gravity, I journeyed attentively throughout my body, and I could feel my whole being pulsating in unison, as one beating organism. The orchestration of breath and heartbeat was remarkable, and the observation of it released joy and contentment. People around me were talking, moving, and everything felt fine as it was. I just wanted to be there lost and found in my peacefulness. What I realized afterwards is that these body postures are conducive. When I want to relax, approach inner sources of knowledge, clear my mind or think straight, and if I remember to access those small elements and affect those changes, they contribute to an overall sense of calmness which improves presence, listening, and consequently response to inner and outer stimulus.

Movement of the body and dance has always been closely related to peace: it reflected and influenced changes in worldviews from different cultures regarding peace, conflict, community, individual, body, and movement. Having analyzed some of the implications of these different approaches in the ways people danced and the potential and limitations of each practice in parallel with the families of peace, I then discussed dance through transrational lenses. Following reflections on the elicitive approach to conflict transformation and methods which contribute to that, I focus at this point on elements which characterizes dance as a method of that kind.

If change happens anyway, how to engage this continuous change with transformative intentionality? I have argued before that dances have the potential for contributing to peace and conflict in different levels. In this chapter, my challenge is to delve into the different elements and the combination of them which contribute to transform conflicts and unfold peaces. In other words, I aim to explore potential ways in which frames can be provided, which set auspicious conditions for the experience of peace and conflict transformation to take place, be meaningful, and inspire daily life. Dance is the method which guides such exploration, and it is understood here in the broad sense of movement, of moving the body to a rhythm, which may follow music

or may unfold from oneself, without direct exterior reference. In the search for a meaningful embodied here and now moving experience, I trespass the limits of what is usually related to dance, and work also with theater, meditation, games, guided imagery, and breathing, in a movement-oriented and embodied approach to transformation. Acknowledging the movement element in all of them, I refer to the activities developed in the sessions as dance.

Exploring elements which contribute to the experience of peace and to elicitive conflict transformation through dance is the discussion of the following pages. Which are these elements, and how can they be explored on the dance floor in order to contribute to the experience? Besides that, what are the participants' responses to such a proposal? How does it resonate with different people? These were my main questions, which led me to theoretical and practical investigations. This chapter dialogues theories and written accounts of transformative practices with the experiences of the research/practice group on dance as a method to elicit conflict transformation. It communicates with the impressions and recounts of the experiences of the participants and my own experience as facilitator in feedback loops which inspire action and reflection, theory and practice.

In an attempt to preserve the textures of the experiences as closely as possible, I opted for dividing this chapter in seven subchapters according to the sessions of the research/practice group. The organization of the arch of the sessions was not ready from the beginning, but developed as the encounters took place. I wanted to start with the closest resources, which are body and breath, anchoring presence in these elements and establishing them as containers in which to find safety whenever needed. The third encounter approached textures of feelings as sensed in body, breath, and movement, to help get acquainted with feelings as they come and go in the flow of life. In the fourth meeting the objective was to bring context to the experience of feelings, and invite the mindful observation of a conflictive situation to the process of movement. Observing the dynamics of relationships with people in the room was then the

purpose of the fifth session, setting the floor to explore partnering and the forces of resistance, empathy, rejection, and compassion and the kinds of energetic powers that stem from them. The interplay of opposites and shadow aspects were the topic of the dance in the second to last meeting, in an exploration of the tensions created by this interplay and the gifts and risks of dealing with them in differentiation and integration. The last meeting was dedicated to exploring the contributions of movement to the art of becoming, to understand how dance could lend itself as a practice and a way of being in the world, transforming conflicts and unfolding peaces.

In the text, for a matter of structural clarity and understanding, I chose to present first the plan of each session and my observations, followed by the interviews of the participants and then the theoretical discussions. This structure, however, does not constitute a linear understanding of the facts in terms of practice first and reflection afterwards, or the other way around. The structure of the sessions was inspired beforehand by some of the ideas discussed in the reflection, while the theoretical debate was deeply influenced by the sessions and interviews, deriving from the experiences and observations on the dance floor or generously shared by the participants.

In this sense, the theoretical reflection does not attempt to analyze the session or the interviews, nor represent an argumentation of a hypothesis to be proven by the practice in a rigid way, but it was informed in its conception by those experiences. It is better understood as an effort to derive a coherent body of knowledge dialoguing theory and practice, based on experiences which were often felt very differently by the participants. At the same time, it attempts to honor this variety of experiences in their complementary and contradictory ways. Following this structure, the reader then can journey through the experience, following the prompts of the dance session and finding resonance or dissonance with the experiences shared

by the participants and myself, and derive his own impressions of the theoretical insights. The other way around may also be insightful, if preferred.

## 4.1 Body, Presence, and Time

### 4.1.1 First Session

When structuring the first session I was concerned with differences in the group in terms of familiarity with the dance floor. I was aware I needed to keep a balance of structure and freedom of movement, so I wouldn't abandon beginners to their own fate, and also would not suppress spontaneity of the ones who are more familiar with the dance floor and would appreciate more dance and movement. Some of the participants had attended the theoretical presentation about the research, and some had not. In the oral presentation, we did the peace and conflict exercises just mentally and without movement, so I decided to start the session with their moving version. This way it would be a bridge for the ones who were at the presentation, and an introduction for the ones who were there for the first time.

I was quite anxious for the first day of dancing. Months had passed since I began planning these activities, setting the whole proposal and organizing the details. Then I dedicated some days to set the meeting day and time convenient for most of the participants, who had signed up after the formal presentation I gave during their lunch break. I had a list of seventeen people, so I was expecting around ten people to show up. The meeting place was beautiful, a wooden hexagonal building on the top of a hill, close to the university, with big windows which revealed the gorgeous view of the valleys and mountains on both sides of the hill. Fortunately, I lived near the building and that made the preparations easier. I went down the hill to the facilities management office of university to pick up the key and to print the one-page, bulleted-point-plan for the day. I left one hour in advance, because I wanted to take some time before people arrived to sink in, concentrate, and dance in the space a little bit. I also wanted to

guarantee that all the technical and technological mechanisms were in place. When I arrived, I danced my expectations and anxiety, and explored the corners of the room, the carpeted floor, the wooden walls. I hoped dancing would also help me to be more focused and present as a facilitator.

Betraying the weather forecast, it started raining a few minutes before noon, at the same time the first dance session was scheduled on this Friday in October. My expectations dropped abruptly. Looking through the wet glass, the rain falling outside, no one in sight, I felt like a little child wondering if anybody would come to my birthday party. I danced one more time around the room, the music vibrating in the empty space, when I spotted a coat under an umbrella in the pathway coming up the hill. Chills of excitement ran up my spine, as I opened the door and welcomed the first participant. We chatted for a while, while other people arrived. Some seemed cheerful, others curious, others suspicious, others all of it at the same time. If I am not mistaken, they all knew that place, so this familiarity offered some comfort. Very excited to see that there was a nice number of people to work with, I invited them to leave coats, umbrellas, and shoes in a corner, and offered the snacks, which were placed on a table adjacent to the entrance. After a bureaucratic moment, of finding the best time for everybody who came (this first meeting was a tentative day) and filling in the forms, I invited them to form a circle and explained basic principles about the working of the sessions: you can opt out at any time, just let me know; you can follow the prompts as much as you feel comfortable to, and you are invited to dance your own dance. I wish I had told them to drink water as we went through the sessions, but I completely forgot. In agreement with them, we started.

That day we began with the presentation circle, in which each person would present his or her name and a movement expressing how they felt at that moment. My intention was to use this as an ice-breaking moment, while at the same time begin a connection to the body and gather impressions from their feelings to orient further steps. Some people moved their arms in

a dancing way, others showed tiredness, one participant kneeled on the floor and covered his head with his arms, which raised my concern in terms of comfort and holding a safe space. Then we continued with the circle of peace experiences, sharing how we usually feel peace (the exercised described in the beginning of the text). At this moment, there were still many questions about dos and don'ts. We discussed our ways of feeling peace and how even while doing that activity which brings us peace, conflicts may arise. With this link, we proceeded to the balls of fire exercise, also already described previously through my own experience of it. My main idea was that the attention that this exercise can promote provided the inner focus and unattachment to outside references necessary for engaging in movement in a group together for the first time.

As the balls crossed the air of the room, flying from one hand to another, I oriented the transition from balls of plastic to balls of fire and back to plastic. There was laughter, there were requests for turning on the lights, lowering the temperature, and for more details regarding the activity. A little bit warmed up, I got the balls back and invited them to observe that quality of presence: 'As we slowly move into dance, try to keep that presence. What is it? Notice body, temperature, heartbeat, breathing. Are there expectations, fears? Just observe and acknowledge them, allowing them to go as you feel the call for movement'. We danced for a while, exploring that presence and noticing what was going on within and around us. I joined the dance, in an intention to share the moment with them, and to offer my openness and vulnerability as invitation to tune to the beat and enjoy the movement. The idea was to bring movement to the body, releasing the insistent chatter of thoughts, which can be so strong in these moments, regarding self-consciousness and judgments of self and others. For that, the visceral drums in *Tribe* (Gabrielle Roth and The Mirrors 2000) were the beat leading the group into this first exploration. Inspired by a 5Rhythms exercise (Mahrer and Roth 2005), we went through the body parts, bringing attention to different parts of the body at a time, watching how each one

moved. Below I give an overall idea of the prompts given at that point of the session, for better understanding of the proposal and of the comments of the participants afterwards. This part of the session lasted for about thirty minutes, and I invite you to read my memory of the guidance, taking long pauses to reflect between each of them.

'Moving body parts. How do they ask to be moved? Is there a pattern? Are there different ways of moving this part? Head: let your head go, observe if there is any tension in your neck, move it around, front, back, explore potentialities of movement. Now find head and shoulders, explore this connection. Move just your shoulders; do you feel any stiffness, pressure, pain? Move lovingly with care for your body. Shoulders and elbows; elbows. How often have you paid attention to your elbows? See how many different ways they can move. Elbows and hands. Hands that can spread love and anger… that give and receive… upper body. Upper body and hips, hips. Each part holds stories… what are the stories of my hips? Hips and knees, knees, knees and feet. Feet, that carry us, that know their way. Trust your feet as we move all the parts together. How do we know we are moving? Right now, hairs on the arms and skin are informing movement and direction, muscles and tendons informing contraction and release, eyes see the space around, noise informing breath of other people in the room, the sound of their breath. The sound of your breath… Can you feel that quality of presence moving? Now let go of attention, just follow the rhythm… If you feel self-conscious, if you identify thoughts in your mind saying: 'You don't know how to dance! What are you doing here? This is weird, you are weird'… or even 'this is cool!' - just move them, give in to the rhythm. Follow your feet'.

While I was dancing around I sensed people moving in and out of the rhythm, looking at the walls, looking at the mountains outside, staring at the ceiling, smoothly dancing or intensely following the drums' beat. Toward the end, I sensed that some people were getting tired, trying to catch their breath. As the music waned, I invited them to slowly come to a circle

in the center, just to check in. If there was something that they wanted to share, this was a space for that. If not, it was fine as well. I thanked them for being there, and said that there were snacks and tea, as well as paper, crayons, and pens for notes or painting, if they wished. We stood in the circle for a while, there were some comments, and chats afterwards. It took some time until people left the room. I was glad to observe that: in a way that meant that the space felt comfortable.

I danced more after they left. My heart was full of gratitude and my spirit was glowing, although I was feeling very tired and had loose limbs due to the release of tension. The session was auspicious, I thought. I had planned to do reports after each session, but realized that it would take me some time until I could get into a mindset to do that. Right after the practices my awareness was more oceanic, my mind was floating, and I had a hard time getting to a one-pointed focus.

### 4.1.2 Interviews

Regarding this day's experience, I present below excerpts of the interview I did with Susan, a serene and compassionate lady from Southeast Asia. We met for lunch in a sunny but chilly day in early December, after our morning class on psychosocial trauma, dignity and identity. We went to a delightful place nearby with a very suggestive name: A Bowl of Good. She was my first interviewee for this project. She chose a Thai bowl, I got a Vietnamese one. Music from different parts of the world was playing, mingling with the sounds of forks and plates being moved, and people chatting at other tables. We talked about our future plans after that semester, and then began the interview. I hesitantly turned the recorder on, because even though she obviously agreed with it, I was concerned it could interfere too much with the spontaneity of the conversation. In the end, it did not.

I began by telling her that I did not have closed questions, that I wanted to hear how her experience was. She started recounting:

That was my first free dance session - free as not structured as Zumba. That was very much an honor to be there, with a lot of season free dancers, free style dancers. At first I was uncomfortable doing that, to be there, just not knowing what to expect. I was not sure how my body would react… like, like… 'Am I able to let go, to do stuff?' I appreciated your… not structure, but a degree of guidance. How you were like: 'Ok, try to Connect your shoulders with your elbows, try to concentrate your energy in this part of your body', so I appreciated those kinds of guidance. I felt like I was kind of being put on the spot in the beginning exercise, when we had to do some kind of movement in front of everybody in the middle of the circle… I was like 'Crap! This is not the way I would like to have it go!'

We laughed a lot at her exclamation! This was valuable feedback in terms of the structure of the first dance session and what expectations and needs people may have. While first sessions in general involve some degree of strangeness and adaptation, making the first moments more comfortable may allow for further deepening as it progresses and with each session. She continued describing the situation:

I just remembered thinking: 'Am I grasping the questions right, what am I supposed to do here?' This kind of stuff - it was interesting to see how people's body and movement reacted in comparison to mine, and I think I had to do some work in terms of not comparing. It's like: 'Oh, they can do their thing, I can interpret this thing differently and just be ok with that'. That was one of my challenges too, not letting others dictate my movements but letting that influence me naturally in ways that I consented to, that my body consented to.

I was amazed by her clarity and how she remembered so many details. I had to remind myself to eat, because I was so excited with her comments that I kept on forgetting my food – and this is something that very rarely happens!

She continued:

So, in the session where we threw balls at each other, I think that was like, structured enough where I see what the point is, and your questions helped guide that too. In terms of: 'Imagine that the ball is fire, this huge energy'. I can see that link a lot with the way we do transformation work, like knowing how to let this energy be coordinated amongst us, and to see the ball, but also to see the broader environment that we are part of. I think that was a good body exercise to link to our often very abstract conflict transformation work, so I appreciated that. Otherwise I also liked the balance of being able to think about peacebuilding, but then, being able to let our bodies do whatever they wanted to do (…) it is helpful for dance to be a means that we can feel our emotions without having to explain that (…). We could just let our body go free.

This is not the only time in which the pressure to analyze and explain everything that we feel and do is addressed, as well as the contribution of dance in letting go of that expectation. I was curious about more subtle sensations, specially referring to what she said about feeling emotions while moving and letting the body go free. I inquired about her comment, as to what she felt between the connection of emotions and movement.

> There were some movements that I thought more liberating than others, so sometimes that felt more liberated. Sometimes it depended on the energy of the person I was dancing with, with whom I was paired up. I mean, that could elicit different kinds of emotions and… even desire to dance or not to dance.

She paused, thought for a while, considering emotions. Then she followed: "Emotions… it was both dance and I think it was the guided words that you used in the session that brought things like, when we were dancing, it was either the song or maybe you who said, like…". She suddenly stops and her face lightens up as if she had had an insight: "or maybe it is my head! I don't know". We started laughing. She continued:

>  Like, just telling you are worth it, you know, don't… your dignity is not influenced by anything else… you are… whatever I was thinking it was like, you are worthy, don't let anything else fold you down. That kind of thing. I don't know who started it, maybe it was my head… I think it was both, the dance and the words, or the things that were presented throughout the dance session.

Trying to get more sensual impressions on the experience, I asked her how did it feel when she felt liberated, what was going on in terms of movement. "It was more free, and possibly more movement, or bigger movements". She pauses for a while, as if assessing and trying to get to the words to explain. Curiously, the next sentence came in the present tense: "I feel relieved and I have a better inner sense of peace… I think, that's what it was… like inner peace", she hesitated, and then said, convinced of the words she had chosen, "even though, you know, it is a semester, I'm sure everybody goes through this stress, but… during that session I was able to… just create that system, that subspace of… peace". In a quieter voice, she confirms: "yeah".

To be honest I did not see that coming. Surprised, I came up with the following question, wanting to dig deeper into that space: Do you find that system in other practices?

I think what comes close is physical body work, like high intensity interval training [hiit] for instance. My endorphins were kicking in after our session last night, I was happy, I was ending my professional emails with love and peace! [laughter], love and peace to you all, my boss [laughter]. You know, it has to do with that, but the nice thing with dance is that you are able do things at your own pace, (…) it is more… evocative in terms of letting you feel stuff. Hiit channels your anger and your frustration [laughter]… you know, but there is more space in the dance. I also like structure, so Zumba makes me happy, (…) I also like massage, reflexology, but that gets more at the physical, and not necessarily in the dignity part, being worthy… that kind of conversation I had in my had.

Willing to get more information about the texture of that feeling, I asked how it was to feel worthy. "It felt good!" She said with conviction. "It… made me feel content, made me feel like, I don't… whatever things that are thrown at me it will be ok, whatever things I was going through was going to be ok". Her semblance conveyed the tranquility of her words. She continued: "I was not more than others, not less than others, it just made me feel human. Like: 'I am content, in being who I am'". Did that feeling also included your body? - I asked, to what she answered: "Yeah, my body was definitely more relaxed, I feel better about myself having moved a lot, a little sweat… a lot of sweat!" We laughed together: "my body felt like it was one with my mind, they were… in sync" she affirmed, having a thoughtful face of having found the right word.

I continued, asking about moments of self-consciousness, if she had experienced that feeling. Her expression answered my question: she raised her eyebrows and the muscles of her face moved in a way that sounded like 'of course!'. I laughed while asking how that felt and how she moved through or with it, because I remembered she kept on dancing. She narrated, again in present tense: "I turn my back to the people, I see the mountain, I do my own thing". We laughed; I commented I had noticed some people doing that at different points, but I could

not tell if they were self-conscious, shy, bored, connected, or just amazed by the beauty of the

view outside. Perhaps a little bit of all.

> It is great that people are dancing with me, but at some moments I just needed to work things myself and not… and to focus on myself, maybe it's that. And maybe even changing my movements so that is the opposite of what people are doing, in order for me to fully be with myself. Yeah, I think posture, whatever dance posture... trying to help me to work through self-consciousness.

And was there a moment when self-consciousness was not there? "A little bit of that is

actually looking at other people and seeing how they are working. I can see the expression on

their faces, how they are working through that, and then I think: 'oh, yeah, actually everybody

is kind of in the same book', so that gave me encouragement also". I resonated with her

comment and added: It is like 'oh, they are doing weird things too', to what she laughed and

added: "Oh yeah, we are all weird, it's fine, it's fine, all cool. Solidarity in being weird".

I was getting concerned about the amount of time left, so I jumped right into the next

question about the space, how she felt it, did it feel safe, what was there in a safe space that

made it such a thing?

> It was the people and the demeanor of the people. They are all united in a purpose, to let oneself go and engage with the dance process. It was nice that I knew people's intentions… I think the setup, the setup was very nice, you know… welcoming... and then introducing what we were going to do a little bit, and then there were snacks, which is very inviting.

We laughed again about the snacks, especially after I told her that it was the suggestion

of a professor, to what she answered with mockery: "we are so predictable!". Unquestionably,

sharing food unites. She continued about the safe space:

> The flexibility to do whatever you want, within the parameters of your instructions. But the instructions were almost liberating instructions (…) it is like jazz, no one writes the notes for jazz, but people still have enough structures that they know how to play with each other, but they still get to improv so much, so I think in a way that correlates with the space that you set up, because you were able to do what you want, within the bounds of the set up you created for us. I think… there was a nice dance, a nice balance.

To my question about how the session ended, she answered that it was a good time to finish, that her process was finished, and she had said previously that she was tired as well. It felt good, she evaluated "(…) my endorphins were back again, I felt serenity, I felt serene… so it felt really good". I wanted to tackle the question about the following sessions, because this was the only session that she joined, and I wanted to understand why without giving the impression of demanding an explanation. She answered: "hum… with me and physical activities, it is always this thing of, 'I just want to be a cat, I don't want to do anything, I just want a nap'. This hasn't changed, I am sorry". I rushed to say that there was no need to be sorry, it was just curiosity. She added: "I know that I would have enjoyed having gone, but it is still a struggle for me. Cause there is so much vulnerability involved... and that is a part to it. Do I feel like being vulnerable today? Do I feel like being vulnerable ever?" She chuckles. "So, that's a challenge".

The same topic about vulnerability was touched upon by Jen, a very active and efficient woman, who is dedicated in body, mind, and energy to justice and transformation. She is that kind of loyal and lively person you want to be on a team with. We talked over lunch, while decorating Christmas gingerbread cookies in the university cafeteria. She commented how seeing others doing things that she would not call dancing while seeming comfortable anyway helped her feeling safe in the environment. Although the first time she said she did not go "(…) because of discomfort, or fear of how I would feel, or how I would expose myself, but after that it was just like, I really enjoyed the first time I came, but there were so many other things that I also had to do".

As I admired her ability to decorate her pink and green striped gingerbread cookie, she highlighted the beneficial aspects of the exercises per se, as one of the main reasons for joining and coming back to the dance floor:

I want to exert myself in some way, I think, grad school has felt so much like, we are sitting in a seat all the time, talking about stuff, it's so in your head, your body doesn't move while any of that is happening (…) I mean, part of it was just, I wanted to move, I wanted to move (…). I remember that day in particular feeling like, I am getting tired, and I felt really happy feeling of getting tired. So, part of it is just like the movement, the physicality of it, the exertion that I like, the feeling that I am sweating, fatiguing, and feeling that after this maybe I want to lie in the floor, and lie there and being there for a while, doing nothing, so I think that was what took me back for a while…

For Jen, safety in the sessions, on the floor, has to do with meeting expectations, if they are there, or when there are no expectations and that is how it is supposed to be:

I like feeling competent in a space, so if it is a space that purpose is about incompetence, then that's ok, but if it's a space where there is a level of competence you should achieve and I am not achieving it then I don't feel safe. And I think in a safe space I don't feel defensive - like, (…) I need to protect myself in some way - so I feel accepted in a safe space.

As a reflection, she shared an experience which did not feel safe. I felt honored by her openness and honesty. She recounted the situation straight away, then analyzed that it felt unsafe because "there was no way to deal with the power dynamics". She went on comparing that example with dance:

The benefit of the dancing space and why it feels safe in part is that there is no real power dynamics, obviously you are leading or facilitating it in some way, and there might be people who are better dancers, like, skill wise, or something technically speaking, but it is a kind of space where it doesn't matter… so I felt safer there, like, I felt I could tell other people if they did not like to dance, 'just come and be in that space, it's fine', you know…

I remember at this point recognizing her comment as a good indicator of safety, because recommending something to someone else is a beacon of trust. Especially if they do not like to dance, because enjoying dance, movement, or body-mind practices was a common motivator for the participants at that point. I did not stop her to think this, though, and she continued:

I also felt though, you were like challenging us like, go beyond safety, or beyond what felt easy, and to go into vulnerable spaces, so don't stay in one space, move around, or interact with other people, or try to occupy other spaces in the room, or keep moving… I don't know if you have ever said this directly, 'don't look outside, but look to the center', but I felt like I should look to the center, at some point, and not focus so much in the trees, the leaves, everything outside, because

doing that was sort of a way to like, feel less self-conscious for me, so looking at other people, being aware, like, this is a communal space, it was challenging, but not necessarily unsafe per se.

I had no idea if I had said that it was better to look to the center. As I talked to people, I was amazed by the recurrent references to sentences uttered during the sessions, which neither them nor I knew from where they came from exactly. While I realized that many times I said things which I had not planned, generally I do not remember exactly the structure of what I said. Gabrielle Roth said that sometimes sentences come out of intuition. Perhaps this was an example. Perhaps it was Jen's own motivation to deal with her vulnerability. Anyway, she continued reflecting on vulnerability:

> I think there were moments where I felt more vulnerable, like, 'oh no! Now I have to interact with people', and, I think the most vulnerable was… hum… when we had to dance with other people, not so much once it started, more so before, when we were kind of choosing partners, and I had this feeling of, 'oh no! what if no one wants to dance with me, or, what if they dance with me and then never again, because she was awful' [laughter] or something like that. That was the feeling that I had before, it turned out ok, but… and I feel like, with those people, not even with the people that I did the two by two, or the one people at a time, but with all the people that I participated with at some point, I feel like there was some kind of connection… I don't wanna say it is mystical per se, but there is a vague connection that I don't know necessarily how to describe, but I feel differently toward Tony then I did before when he was just some guy who did CJP at some point.

I resonate with her worry about not finding a partner, and the expectation that raises in these encounters. In my case, partnering demands energy, and sometimes it is an energy that I am not quite willing to invest, especially if I am tired or in pain. Because this topic of partnering is so provoking, I inquired her further on this topic:

> The partnering, what makes it challenging? Well I think just for that very reason that, there is a vulnerability because you are exposing yourself to someone else, and they are watching you doing what you are doing, and they are validating it, or not, in part, especially when we need to, like mimic or mirror what the other person is doing, or complement it in some way, what they are doing, then work with them. You are not two people that happened to be dancing for some time, there is an element of your dancing together, you are looking at each other,

whatever… you are creating something together, so in that there is a vulnerability
of presenting something of yourself in particular…

I am mesmerized by the clarity with which she delineated vulnerability… perhaps it is

because I have such a trouble to find words for that. At this point we engaged on a more direct

dialogue, which I present in the form of dialogue below:

Jen: You know, it is different, because if it is just a piece of art that I drew, or something, then
it is something I created but it is separated from me, but my body is always a part of me, so it
is… presenting something I am physically doing feels more vulnerable.
Me: hum.. and do you think…. is there anything related to the thing that while moving, you
don't necessarily have a form, because when you paint, it is kind a product?
Jen: That is like something visible that is essentially created, essentially, like a product, or a
thing?
Me: yes, or this thing is changing, I don't know…
Jen: that is an interesting point...
Me: I mean, comparing it to painting…
Jen: I think the thing with painting is that all the things that you do become… In the painting,
you do preliminary things, but the idea is that at the end you can look at it and decide whether
or not, you can choose whether you want to present it or not, but with dance there is a feeling
of… from the beginning, even the awkward parts, the little mistakes, it is part of it, there is not
a way to go back and erase anything you've done, or say: 'I don't like that, let's do it again'. It
is a performance, it is different, in this kind of thing, you don't get to choose what parts you
can keep and what parts you take out.
Why are you smiling?

She caught me off guard, I did not realize I was smiling, and I did not intend to cut her

flow of conversation. But her description of dance felt so deeply true, and at the same time

succeeded to reveal all the vulnerability in it.

Me: That's amazing… like, it's very interesting…
Jen: Ok, [laughing]I think it is too.

I paused for a while, acknowledging the beautiful picture Jen had conjured up regarding

painting versus dancing, then asked if there was any difference between the different people

partnering, and she was clear about it and about the reasons:

Yes, definitely. I felt safer, like, for example, hum… Lenore and I have walked
together up the hill, one time, and in the room when we were dancing, I felt safer
with her than with anyone else that particular day, because we had the connection.
I felt less safe with Silvia, because she is a good dancer already, I felt less safe
with Sho, because he is a good-looking guy, even if I am not personally, like, 'I

hope he likes me or something like that' (…) I felt safer with Tony, because I could tell he felt awkward too, so that made me feel safer [laughter]. That's all!

Contact boundaries are at work, even when we are not aware of them, or sometimes do not want to be aware of them. It is fantastic to observe how they play, and it is so important for peace and conflict work to be aware of their responses as we resonate with others. She had kept on moving with that person in that session, so I asked her how she moved through awkwardness, to what she answered:

> I think part of it was… to be honest, I think part of it was, 'I know this is going to end at some point, and I can stop dancing with [this person] and I can move on to the next person, or whatever it is'. And also because, even with people that I felt less immediately safe with, I knew they were nonjudgmental people… so that helped. I mean I don't know how this would have been if it was with a different group of people that I didn't know, (…) I think those things would make a difference for me, because I feel self-conscious, in general... (…) Sorry, what was… ok, how did I work through… I think I just did it, and it wasn't as bad as I thought it would be, it is never as bad as I feared it would be, so that helped.

This impression appeared once or twice again in interviews with other participants: "it is never as bad or as hard as I feared it would be", and every time I heard it I resonated with it. In the dance floor, as in many occasions in life, the ability of our projection of fear may surpass by far the actual danger or challenge in the situation. Being present in the moment, that is what stuck in my mind as we continued talking and decorating our gingerbread cookies.

**4.1.3 Reflections**

In the chapter on transrational peace philosophy, I have argued that the split between body and mind derived from a modern perspective justified copious amounts of violence toward the body. I have also argued that body and mind are not split or hierarchical, but different manifestations of energy. Acknowledging with Gabrielle Roth that "between the head and the feet of every person is a billion miles of unexplored territory" (Ansell 2015: 93), at this point I delve deeper into perspectives on body and mind as the territory to explore peace and conflict transformation.

In a methodological note, it is important to detail the nomenclature which is going to be used. Addressing the need for a non-split approach to body and mind, different approaches have been suggested. Navigating between body-mind (Feuerstein 1998), bodymind (Dychtwald 1986), I follow 5Rhythms's mandala of body, heart, mind, soul, and spirit, because it provides a detailed map of practical exploration. At the same time, Roth also poetically encourages twisting these same concepts by putting "(…) your mind in your feet and your body in the beat" (Ansell 2015: 93).

Moreover, I found very helpful the distinction made by Fogel between conceptual self-awareness and embodied self-awareness, because it touches upon the intricacies of body and mind and the actual indivisibleness of both. As these terms are referred to more than once, I present the detail of their meaning as described by Fogel:

> What people generally mean when they say "mind" is what I call conceptual self-awareness, while "body" is for me embodied self-awareness. To avoid misconceptions, it is important to realize that both of these forms of self-awareness depend on connections between the brain and the rest of the body, and as we shall see, utilize similar neural processes. Both of these are forms of awareness and thus are equally "mental" but also equally "embodied" (2013: 43).

Conceptual self-awareness then is based in linguistic and symbolic forms of expression, is rational, logical, and explanatory and refers to the abstract – it transcends the present moment. Embodied self-awareness is based in sensing, feeling and acting, is spontaneous, creative and open to change, and refers to the concrete - it is lived in the present moment (Fogel 2013: 31). Yet, aware of the possibility that these terms slip again into hierarchy, Fogel emphasized that "conceptual self-awareness informed by embodied self-awareness is the best source for making decisions beneficial to both self and others" (2013: 97).

Therefore, I embrace the paradox of body and mind being the same energy manifested differently, while referring to them as differentiated although interconnected 'things'. In this paradox, I recognize the play of language that Nietzsche addressed in Zarathustra's message to

the "despisers of the body", when he plays with the linear construction of subject, action, and object in grammar by saying "body am I". In this sense, he emphasized that the body's reason (which in modern thinking is a paradox in itself): "(…) does not say 'I', but does 'I'" (2005: 30). With this play of words, Nietzsche pointed at language's limitedness to cover the range of human experience, while at the same time anchors the Self in the body, a Self which is the body (2005: 30).

In their interconnection, body and mind also bring different forms of insight to the transformation process, and here we arrive again at the previously discussed multiplicity of ways of knowing. Dance as a method to elicitive conflict transformation approaches the body not only from the perspective of functional movement, "(…) but how our psyche and emotions are affected by our thinking and how movement itself effects change within them" (Chaiklin 2009: 5). In the intricacy of our existence, in the interplay of layers, a view into the complexity of the human being is indispensable. Promoting ways of exploring insights from the multiple ways of knowing and their entanglement allows for a more grounded flourishing of alternatives, since insights rooted in experience require less effort of remembrance or continuous affirmation (Todres 2007: 97).

This can be said in the personal as well as the communitarian level. Adler referred to this process of knowing in the body and how it involves also the embeddedness into a collective body, derived from bodily awareness of our belonging to a shared life energy. This knowing through the body permit realizing a body-felt connectedness among people, engendered by our common humanity and related to all living beings in the earthbody. "Becoming conscious of our part in the whole through direct experience of membership allows exploration of the relationship between the personal body and the collective body (Adler 1999d: 193).

Through explorations of the body, through assessing body's knowledge via awareness and movement, it is possible to get insights also into the other ways of knowing, and the other

layers of the human subsystem, and in the interrelational aspect as well. As with peace, these insights cannot be provoked through pre-stablished steps, but conditions can be put into place in order to intentionally create the space for the serendipitous aspect of the unknown to take place. In this learning process, the key "(…) is to highlight the appropriate body parts and how they feel, and then let the neurodevelopmental process of self-awareness and self-discovery take root" (Fogel 2013: 208). In a simplistic manner, it can be translated by bringing intention and trusting the body.

For embodied learning to take place, the split between body and mind has to be bridged, and this is a long-term gap with deep implications which has to be patiently worked on. The body has long been treated as a fearful rogue to be contained, repressed, molded, or overcome. Roth argued that in the split of spirit and flesh, we lost contact with and respect for our bodies, and in forgetting its sacredness we desecrated it (1998a: 3). Concurring with her view, the body here is neither seen as a means for mental elucubration nor as a spiritual trampoline. Furthermore, it is recognized in its ancestral state, as a form benefitting from energies previously existing and honoring the ones to come, such as a "(…) way station as these qualities, energies, and shapes continue their journey into the next generation" (Roth 2004: 28).

In this sense, the body can be seen as an instrument, but not as an instrument to get somewhere or to achieve something, as a mere means that later can be dismissed. Yet, it can be understood as a musical instrument, which offers its capabilities to transform the existing conditions of air, vibration, and human will into music. According to LaMothe:

> Body is an "instrument" in relation to currents of energy coursing through the universe. As an "instrument" a body is capable of sensing and amplifying – of being played by – the smallest movement impulses arising within its field of physical consciousness. As an instrument, in other words, a body embodies its own intelligence; it knows how to translate energy into art; it is the process of this transformation (2006: 132).

As a musical instrument, the body is a necessary element in the dances of transformation, in the process of ever-changing becoming. In this process, "dancing embodies an alternate mode of valuation by being the medium in which we resist and recreate our relationship to our bodily being" (LaMothe 2006: 160). Body assumes its place as source, resource, and divine, together with mind, heart, soul, and spirit.

This is not a romanticized approach to the body though, in the sense of seeing it as an ideal structure which does not have problems. Problems, as much as conflicts, are seen as part of the body's system. Nevertheless, a non-romanticized perspective on the body does not prevent from finding poetry in the very organization of the body and its complexity, which goes beyond the external form and includes a whole interconnectedness which allows survival and flourishment of life. This interconnection is detailed by Cohen in the organization of the multiple mechanisms of the body:

> The vestibular mechanism located in the inner ear receives information from the proprioceptors, interoceptors, and kinesthetic receptors throughout the body and from gravity, space and time. The proprioceptors and kinesthetic receptors in the bones, joints, ligaments, muscles, and fascia, tell us where each part is in relation to the other parts, where each part is in space, and their quality of rest and activity. The interoceptors in the organs, glands, blood vessels, and nerves tell us where the organs, glands, vessels, and nerves are and their state of rest and activity. Each cell experiences its own life process – it breathes, ingests, digests, excretes, moves, and receives feedback from itself and from all the other cells of the body (Cohen, B. 1995b: 198).

All these activities happen without the need of a mental control or decision making interference. This is possible because these connections and mechanisms are in place and take care of whole body through feedback loops of regulation and adjustment without the need of an external control when a person is healthy. These feedback loops preserve internal balance, the homeostasis of the living organism in its internal and external relations. However, when the system is out of balance, it requests attention and special care in the form of pain. In other

words, "the restoring of health requires some attention to reestablish connectedness" (Kabat-Zinn 1990: 230-4).

Pain and difficulty are acknowledged as parts of the body system as well, although not from a perspective of blame or punishment. It has already been argued that pain is part of the self-protective system of the body, and it is taken as an occurrence deserving attention and care. Furthermore, it is understood as a signal of imbalance of the system as a whole, which can take many forms, once body is not the only source of suffering. "Emotional pain, the pain in our hearts and minds, is far more widespread and just as likely to be debilitating as physical pain. This pain can take many forms" (Kabat-Zinn 1990: 319). Among these forms are self-condemnation, anxiety, worry, fear, terror, guilt, self-blame, remorse, embarrassment, despair, hopelessness.

Addressing the pain sensed in the body, Fogel described the biological process of sensing pain in the nervous system as "(…) an emergent state of embodied self-awareness across the entire threat and interoceptive neural networks (…)" (2013: 163). What follows is that pain is not necessarily a thing which is concrete, but a state, and as so it can be altered. While the same signal might be arriving at the brain, it is possible to change how we feel and relate to it by adding awareness.

Reading that pain is not a concrete thing may sound cruel and disregarding of the very real distress we as human beings undergo when in pain. However, in no way this means that pain does not exist, but rather that it is not a 'thing' which can be extracted. It is a real response of the system, and because of that, liable to be worked with. Buddhism has developed a very clear body of knowledge to address this same point. It differentiates between pain, which is a natural experience in life, from suffering, which are projections, thoughts, and emotions that compose a person's response to it. While also being natural, suffering is not the only response to pain (Kabat-Zinn 1990: 285).

Pain is therefore a signal of the body to indicate that the homeostatic regulation is out of balance. This stimulus brings into self-awareness an alert that calls us to act toward healthier ways. In this sense, "the neural pathways for embodied self-awareness are directly linked to the pathways for homeostasis" (Fogel 2013: 14). Nevertheless, as a principle of balance, there is a limit to this regulation, beyond which the system is pulled out of balance and requires reorganization. In the body, this implies that "even with elaborate repair capabilities and built-in protective and purifying systems, the body can take only so much abuse before it is overwhelmed" (Kabat-Zinn 1990: 245).

One of the built-in protective systems can be seen in the example of feeling unable to breath. This situation may lead to panic, which loops into more difficulty breathing. The continuity of such a situation could be very harmful, and the body puts into place a reaction to stop it, which is passing out. Kabat-Zinn explains that "when you pass out, your breathing returns to normal on its own. If you are unable to get your breathing under control, your body will do it for you, if necessary by short-circuiting your consciousness for a while" (1990: 49).

Passing out is then a capacity in place to reorganize the homeostatic regulation of bodily functions. The same can be said about the flight, fight or freeze reactions. In the face of threat or unpredictable situations, these responses are in place to increase the possibility of survival. Although seen many times as a weakness by the rational mind, it is not weak or strong per se, it is simply a capacity installed to protect life from threats. In this situation:

> The fight-or-flight reaction involves a very rapid cascade of nervous-system firings and release of stress hormones, (…). This leads to heightened sense perceptions so that we can take in as much relevant information as possible as quickly as possible: the pupils of our eyes dilate to let in more light, the hair in our body stands erect so that we are more sensitive to vibrations. (…). The output of the heart jumps by a factor of four or five by increasing the heart rate and the strength of the heart-muscle contractions (and thereby the blood pressure) so that more blood and therefore more energy can be delivered to the large muscles of the arms and legs, which will be called upon if we are to fight or run (Kabat-Zinn 1990: 251).

As a reflex of the complexity of body's interconnectedness, this response involves many reactions all over the body and brain system. On the one hand, the system favors more alertness, to capture more information from the surroundings. On the other hand, it prepares for action if required. In case of the threat being identified as concrete, the capacity is built up for dealing with the danger and act toward survival.

If the threat does not concretize, the system coregulates the discharge of nervous signals and the secretion of hormones triggered by the situation to return to a state of usual awareness (Kabat-Zinn 1990: 252). However, threatening situations and the consequent body responses can have a debilitating impact on life, when a loss of embodied self-referent awareness occurs. This implies a state of things which goes beyond the self-regulatory ability of the body and mind system. Fogel detailed that this happens when internal or external stimulus exceed the body's capacity of auto-regulation in tracking the significance of the stimulus for the self, situation experienced as trauma. He explained further that:

> During physical assaults and violent attacks (…) the body's self-referent, self-protective, and self-regulatory circuits are incapacitated. The brain goes on autopilot, invoking some of our basic biobehavioral responses to threat – fight, flight, freeze, or faint – that, (…) fundamentally and perhaps permanently alter the person. Memory, movement, and sensation become impaired and the boundaries of the self shrink to a small sphere of perceived control. So also, the small and persistent insults of our family, work, and school lives can accrue and create over time a similar kind of self-numbing (Fogel 2013: 14).

In such scenario, these biobehavioral responses lose their protective capacity and become problematic when triggered in situations which are not necessarily life threatening (Kabat-Zinn 1990: 253). When the fight or flight reaction is activated in a situation, which is not a direct threat, for example in traffic, at work, or at home, the body begins to accumulate more tension than it is able to process, with no feedback loop to return to a usual state (Borysenko 1989: 191). If this becomes a way of life without healthy ways of processing this tension, there is a possibility of drifting into "(…) a perpetual state of chronic hyperarousal

from which we rarely get any break and that we might even come to think of as 'normal'" (Kabat-Zinn 1990: 256).

The pretense-normality makes it difficult to access and deal with the tension generated by them, creating pockets of locked energy which in turn prevent further flow. Under traumatic situations or even under this state of chronic hyperarousal, defense mechanisms may be put in place to avoid feeling pain or threat, resulting in a shrinking of sensations to reduce the arrival of painful information in the nervous system. However, as pain is blocked, also feelings are disconnected from perception, including pleasure (Fischman 2009: 38).

This kind of suppression of the information coming from the sense prevents the person under such situations from finding resources, slowing down, and coregulating with another person (Fogel 2013: 68). The way toward feeling again is via the same thread in the body, reestablishing the cut connection with the perceptive channels, which implies feeling the pain and the fear. Addressing the resistance to such an idea, Fogel affirmed that:

> It may seem counterintuitive since pain is not a very pleasant sensation, but feeling one's pain or fear in the subjective emotional present activates the homeostatic recovery system of the body so that it has the opportunity to take care of itself. In humans, this could mean not only rest and self-care but also knowing whether to contact a loved one, a psychotherapist, an embodied self-awareness practitioner, or a physician (2013: 161).

In other words, it can be said that trusting your feet, a common call on the spontaneous dance floor, relates to this effect of trusting the body's ability to regulate and take care of itself. This means that recovery may be done physiologically, but also that this regulation implies accessing resources which can promote pleasure and a sense of safety. Resources to restore embodied self-awareness are interpersonal relationships, in a sense that responds to needs of belonging to a community, promoting comfort, care, trust, and many other sensations important for feeling safe and whole. Furthermore, interpersonal relationships may work in a more subtle level, in a sense that this kind of reinvigorating relationship promotes resonance, including

physically vibrating resonance which "(…) works its mysterious way into the body tissues and the breath and the words that come when there is no suppression" (Fogel 2013: 267).

Being able to feel pain, staying with it in the present moment and sensing its presence with body senses, allows the homeostatic system to be at work again. Through this connection, restoration becomes possible by allowing the discovery of resources needed (Fogel 2013: 161). When in contact with whatever is being felt at the moment, resistance is softened and barriers to transformation are upheld. A sense of appropriate action derives from this deep awareness, being this action the realization of the need to rest, to move, to search for friends or professional support. In this process, the body and awareness of the body have a fundamental role, because "embodiment implies revitalizing the body, reestablishing the enactive sensoriperceptive connection and recovering the possibility of accessing the emotional wealth present in the unfolding of life" (Fischman 2009: 38).

Embodiment and the exploration of movement widens the capacity of being in the present moment and of being in touch with resources through awareness, diminishing the blockages to access them and nurturing healthier responses. The resources for reestablishing sensory awareness are multiple and involve physiological and interrelational aspects. Besides, these aspects do not relate only to that specific moment of pain but are connected to emotional and psychological health as well, in all aspects of life. It has been said previously that these resources promote a sense of pleasure, which derives from the awareness of the unfolding life, and from a sense of safety.

This sense of safety naturally relates to survival in case of threat, but also to accessing potentialities immanent to the flow of vitality, energizing body and mind. When contacting those resources, they not only provide protection, but also a sense of space where the truth of the inner observation can be experienced, beheld or talked about. It has to do with agency and power, but also with the acknowledgment of the lack of control over the circumstances. It has

to do with being transparent, being true to that painful or joyful source without fear of judgment or inadequacy. Safety here is comfort which comes from the trust that whatever comes up will be fine. It is acknowledging that "(…) the body can't lie; put it in motion and the truth kicks in" (Roth 1998a: xxi), and even so to remain engaged into letting these truths get exposed in movement. Because there is a body which has abilities to take care of it, there is awareness which provides clarity and a sense of action, and there is a community which supports the process.

This safety is therefore intimately connected to vulnerability. It requires a lot of trust and resonance, in a way that a person is allowed to be deep, sad, joyful, painful, and ecstatic. Furthermore, it is important to let these feelings and emotions flow in authenticity, without the pressure to cover, control, or even fake them. In other words, it means to be authentic to the natural unfolding of what is coming up without feeling compelled to disguise or justify it. From an embodied perspective, Fogel described this process in which embodied feelings appear into awareness:

> The emergence of a neural process into awareness is sudden and spontaneous. (…) There is not a gradual transformation from thinking and talking into an embodied feeling of sadness, but rather an abrupt and surprising shift. This suddenness is typical of our experience in the subjective emotional present. Put another way, when we lurch into the subjective emotional present of embodied self-awareness, we no longer have the ability to control what we feel. Spontaneity, nonpredictability, and even uncertainty – what has been called chaos – reign in this subjective world; quite the opposite of the relatively "safer" world of felt control and logical progressions in conceptual self-awareness (2013: 65).

The ability to sense, feel, and observe the body implies vulnerability in terms of lack of control or letting go of one's expectations to outcomes of direct causes and consequent actions in the world. In other words, it means awareness in the subjective emotional present, the here and now moment, where these sensations and feelings are actually happening. There is no absolute control of the content which is being experienced, nor is there control on results,

progressions, because the moment of observation is present. It implies vulnerability because only the acceptance of the present moment, as it is, open ways for change and healing.

This vulnerability does not equate weakness, nevertheless, because it is through the experiencing of whatever feelings or sensations are there that new possibilities unfold as options in the present moment (Kabat-Zinn 1990: 90). Awareness to the present moment trains the suspension of judgment, because judgment is attached to comparisons and skewed by past memories or a future ideal. When awareness in the present moment is being cultivated, negative mental states then lose their referential and consequently their negative label. Because in this light they are not situated in an either/or, good/bad frame. When a person is embodying peace and aware of the moment judgement fails to maintain its grip: "Your concentrated awareness serves as a crucible in which negative mental states can be contained and then transmuted" (Kabat-Zinn 1990: 351).

This same perspective on time is argued in transrationality, which considers the here and now as the nexus in which action is possible. I cannot change the past, cannot control the future, but the here and now is where I exist, where I breath, and where I can experience peace, transform a conflict and be a peaceful presence. When perception of the here and now is not informing thinking and consciousness, that which is experienced is "(…) the memory of past perceptions that are gone as facts, but determine consciousness as memory, either as a fear of or desire for repetition (…)" (Dietrich 2012: 224). While worries about the past attach actions to fear or desire for repetition, a result oriented expectation toward an ideal future perverts the perceived reality right now, conforming it to a molded idea and overlooking other possibilities contained in the moment. Therefore, the present is the reference which reveals itself as bearing peace.

Lederach laid out a concurring perception of past, present, and future as multiple realities lived simultaneously in the present (2010: 9). In this perspective, a metaphor of change

in time does not imply a sequential movement understood as progress, but a flow of simultaneous and multilayered experiences, attaching perceptions of time to different perspectives and upholding the need to respect these multilayered views (2010: 200). From this multiplicity derives a need of "(…) respect for the center and the edges of time and space, where the deep past and the horizon of our future are sewn together, creating a circle of time" (Lederach 2005: 147). A circle of time which spawns from the present and is realized in the present moment, in the motion of deep past and potential future. In this image, there is nowhere to go in the past to fix it, nor to plan for a future which exists independently somewhere else. The motion of change is grounded in the person and its perception in the here and now, dwelling in a creative space imbued with the unexpected (Lederach 2005: 149).

Awareness in the here and now implies acknowledging the past, because experiences constitute us (Rogers 1961), and a past which is not restricted to the one lived by the person but which involves generations and how these experiences are laid down via societal structures, cultural traditions, and epigenetics. However, these past experiences are embraced as they are perceived in the here and now (Satir 1991). On the other hand, it understands future as a potential in the present, which does not exist involuntarily as a separate reality, but is created by human mind in imagination, anchored in the here and now. Past and future are not obliviated, but embedded in the cyclical time of nature, which in turn is related to the perception of the observer in the here and now. Holding both perspectives in tension, beheld by an awareness of our experience in the present moment, allows for a glimpse into the gateway to infinity which resides between two micro-moments: "it is not that one moment leads to the next moment; the moment arises out of infinity, merges into infinity, then the next moment arises spontaneously" (Swami Veda Bharati 2013: 60).

The previous discussion touches upon the different perceptions and implications of time, the impacts of attaching one's perceptions to past and future, and the potential of the present as

a bearer of the unknow. In terms of the embodied perspective, this shift has a significant impact. Abram poetically described this process:

> By letting past and future dissolve into the present moment, I have opened the way for their gradual rediscovery – no longer as autonomous, mental realms, but now as aspects of the corporeal present, of this capacious terrain that bodily enfolds me. And so now I crouch in the midst of this eternity, my naked toes hugging the soil and my eyes drinking the distances, trying to discern where, in this living landscape, the past and the future might reside (1996: 206-7)

Past and future dissolved in the present enfold body and presence in what then becomes a landscape of infinitude, infused by a spiritual element. If, in between two-moments lies this potential, present is also the time of spirituality. Roth shared this same insight from a different point of view, while arriving at the same understanding: presence. Observing that the division of real time and spiritual time, just as that of body and soul, generates misconceptions, she affirmed that: "all time is spiritual time. It's up to us to honor that. And how do we honor this? By paying attention, being present in every moment" (Roth 2004: 128). Presence enables perception of spiritual infinity while also allows one to play with the rediscovery of past and future, in the moment, in the presence, in the body.

When dancing, being present in the here and now, oftentimes unwanted feelings may arise: pain, tension, stress, suffering, sadness. All those things one have worked hard to cover, to bury deep down so they were ripped out of one's consciousness resurge. This is scary, and may generate resistance from diving into that vulnerability. Nevertheless, presence is vulnerable. If it is not, it is not full presence, it is a struggle to keep together what is fragmented: "Superficiality is safe and sane, a good place to hide our insecurity and fear. Because deep down aren't we all afraid that someone is going to discover that we don't have our shit together (…)" (Roth 2004: 104).

Referring back to the layers of conflict work, being present means to be willing to expose myself in my personality, being permeable in all my layers. For that, having visited

those places, having explored those layers is essential. It implies knowing that place of playing with past and future, while patiently waiting for the potential in the present to unfold and reveal alternatives. It is presence which gives the impression of wholeness, when anchored in awareness. Because, even though presence can reveal pain and suffering, it also "(…) brings comfort of a certain kind even in the midst of suffering" (Kabat-Zinn 1990: 273). And this comfort can be accessed as a resource by embodied self-awareness, in a present which enfolds past and future to reveal potential. In the process of becoming, the body is home. Not a static home, but a dynamic home which draws its comfort from that meeting place "(…) where heart and lungs gather, where breath meet blood (…)" (Lederach 2005: 166). The body can be home, if we are not waging a war against it. These were the philosophical elements which inspired the proposal of the first session of the research/practice group, and in turn have been nurtured by the experiences of that session.

## 4.2 Breath, Senses, and Space

### 4.2.1 Second Session

In our second meeting, my aim was to continue exploring the body and presence as ways to ground awareness in the moment, adding breath as a connector, while acknowledging the porosity of our boundaries and its connection to space and others. Also, to practice assessing the body as a source of information, connection, wisdom, home. I was quite anxious for the second session, wondering if people would come back, if enough people would come to form a meaningful group to work with. What if just a few people came? I arrived early to dance off this insecurity, letting go of my worry of self-assertion, whether they liked it or not, whether they liked me not. In each step, I tried to give in to the floor, trusting that everything would be fine.

The circular room was bright, the big windows revealing the outdoor landscape covered in mountains. The topic of the day was breath and space, with moving exercises inspired by theater and focused meditation. For this topic and the activities, I was inspired by an experience I previously had at a silent retreat. After hours of sitting meditation and what felt like another half an hour of walking meditation, we were invited to explore the terrain, a beautiful location on the top of a hill with a home garden and paths amidst vegetation. The task was to focus first on looking and the information that vision provided. A bush called my attention. Firstly, its round and solid format gave me the impression of a dense mass. Staying with it a little bit more, I could differentiate branches, leaves, space within. An uncomfortable feeling of having been tricked mixed with a satisfying increase in curiosity. I held my attention, resisting the impetus of searching for a different stimulus. As if responding to my insistence tiny insects began to distinguish themselves. A couple, and then many… ants, flies, ladybugs. Life revealing itself, where at first there was a dense bush with just empty space between branches and leaves. Particles of dust began to shine with the sunlight, while some leaves were moving to an invisible wind, attesting the presence of moving air, which only then I could perceive through my skin as a light subtle breeze. It was a surprising and refreshing experience in which I realized how sustaining presence can reveal life, even where it is difficult to see at first, and how the movement of the leaves brought a gust of awareness to my own sensation of the breeze. Also, how this sensing can be fulfilling and uplifting. So, that experience informed the organization of the second dance session.

People started arriving, and in the end, there was a significant number to work with. I started by inviting them to arrive at that place, getting there from wherever they were coming from. Connecting to that moment, that room, those people who were there. Move, stretch, listen to the music, which was an inspiring combination of overtone and mantra singing, very

grounding, with an earthly touch to it. And then we proceeded to the session with the prompt that follows.

'Find a place to lay down. At some point, I will come to you and give you a small stone to interact with[7]. When getting the stone, with eyes closed, touch, smell, sense the stone, feel texture, form, weight, temperature. How much information can you get from that interaction? Do you touch the stone or does the stone touch you? Place the stone in different parts of your body: belly, hands, forehead… feel the weight of it and the response of your body… observe if you can feel the pulse of your heartbeat, if you can feel breath in the place where the stone is. In the end, breathing and circulation are one; circulation is the breath of the cells. As I collect the stones, notice if you can feel the impression it left on your body. Is there any difference from the parts which touched the stone, which resisted its weight, to others? With eyes open, slowly gather in the center where all the stones are. See if you can find your stone. You can access all the sources of information to do that. Perhaps you close your eyes, try touching, sensing that stone. If someone else has taken what you think is your stone, negotiate with them. If you do not find your stone, that is fine too. Now as we leave the stones in the basket, find a space in the room, moving with the impressions left in your body by the interaction with the stone. With that quality of presence, we will move air throughout our whole bodies. Inhaling, as if air were coming in my right leg, exhaling as if it was leaving through my left arm. Inhaling through my right leg and exhaling through my head. Dance as this air moves in and out your body. Go through all the body parts, breathing each muscle. Feel air inside, air outside you. Move as if the air was embracing you… as a lover… loving you for being. The same air that is in you now was a second ago in somebody else's lungs. How does it feel? How do you feel? Does that change your relation to it?'

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[7] I adapted this exercise from one learned in a course on Concentration and Meditative Practices at Palas Athena Association with Lia Diskin. The way it is displayed here is my own interpretation and responsibility.

At this point the music had already changed to different rhythms, from Enya's *Storms in Africa* (Enya and Ryan 1989) to tropical house with sax to New Orleans style jazz and piano jazz and some other songs in between. The focus shifted to air outside and between us. 'Air is pervasive, it occupies space inside you, space around you, around us. Is this space empty? Slow down your movements, but keep moving. Look around – do you see space? Find empty spaces. But you can't be there for long... As soon as you are there, it is not empty anymore. Keep searching. Faster… faster. Slow down. Now there are magnets around us, and they are repelling us from anything that is in the space (people, objects). Faster… faster. Now, magnets have changed polarity. They are attracting you to people. Keep moving'[8].

At this point, as we got glued together in a stack, though movement was restricted, we kept pulsating while breathing intensely because of the movement. It felt like a big beating heart made of layers of people. As music was building up tension, I told them in advance that in a moment magnets would be gone, and we would be able to move wherever we wanted to in the space. At this point, too much togetherness was already creating heat and tension, which we held until the beat of the music reached a climax. Then, magnets were gone and people seemed to fly, jumping and swirling all around the room. Freedom and space meant more after holding close contact with each other. A percussion song provided the beat for this last dance.

'Find an empty space. Keep moving. What is an empty space? Contact air again. Breathe. This air now that has been exchanged so many times, that carries so much of each of us… in and around us. How can we move honoring that embrace?'. Music slowed down to the rhythm of The Hollies and their *The Air that I Breathe* (Hammond and Hazlewood 1974). 'What does empty mean? Find a partner. Let this partner go, dance with yourself. Has that encounter changed your rhythm? Changed you? Now I invite you to go around, look at the

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[8] Magnets exercise inspired in the Theater of the Oppressed game: The Magnet – positive and negative (Boal 2005:119).

people in the room which whom you exchanged energy, air, presence'. Pachebel's *Canon in D* (Pachelbel n.d.) - yes, again, I really appreciate that piece - created a whimsical aura in the room. I noticed gratitude floating around and in eyes of people as they went around and our eyes crossed in the space. In the notebook of the sessions, a participant wrote how he "was filled with strong gratefulness for people in the room". It was also noted a reference to "the intersections, blending of masculine and feminine energies we all have".

As people went away, I stayed in the room for a while. That day I was feeling very grateful for the opportunity of being in that place, having those wonderful people to work with, in that incredible space with such a beautiful view and the availability of beautiful songs that would take our bodies in such joyous journeys. My skin was sensitive to any breeze that would come by. I went back home and laid in my bed. Feeling breath, breathing. At some point, I decided that my stillness was becoming inertia, and gathered my energies to write. Breathing is pervasive – it comes in, flows through all my body. It feels like going through all my limbs, my whole body is touched by breath, I feel present. Wherever air touches, it evidences space. It reveals emptiness. This thought made me scared. I searched for something to fill me – food, music, social networks. Aware of the impulse, I held back. 'Breathe' – I thought. Exhalation brought in sadness, or an overflood of sadness took the place where air was. I looked at the window, rain drops began to fall, and in the farther distance I saw grey and purple clouds. Sadness turned into melancholia. 'Perhaps I should do something. Hum, no, stay there a little longer, observe'. Melancholia melted, giving in to astounding presence. Presence longing for being, just being. Inner layers touched by breath got confused with outer ones felt by skin and the view of the window, and the clouds far away. I looked alternatively to the trees on the landscape and to the glass blurred by the rain drops. I think again about the beautiful human beings who joined the dance session, in gratitude for our dance.

**4.2.2 Interviews**

Tony is a guy who owns his voice. He looks determined and smart and is very articulate in his speech. He had not had much experience with dance when he first came, curious and interested in the nexus of peace, conflict and dance, because he is also a poet. He had told me more than once that the exercise with the stone had been meaningful for him, and I was curious about his impressions on that experience. We met in an afternoon at his office, after his working hours, and before a session on Journey Dance that was being offered by our dancing partner Katie, who also danced in the sessions with us. Asked about the experience with the stone exercise, he shared that:

> (…) it was probably [meaningful] because it was like a meditative exercise… when you are asked to get into the breath, and to hold this stone, and sit with it… maybe what it did was externalize my focus a little bit in a way that was centering and did help me to connect with the breath better. Sometimes I struggle, especially if it is in the middle of a workday, to sit down and completely clear my mind, so I felt it was like a good bridge activity, to connect with the stone and get into the space, I really liked how we came back together, we had to try to find the stone and see if each one is each. It was really cool to see the feelings, components, characteristics and traits of the stone you were experiencing.

His curiosity with the multiple aspects contained in the experience of the stone then was extrapolated to a more abstract reflection, which seemed to connect to his previous readings and experiences. He detailed that:

> Maybe you got acquainted with it [the stone] enough that you were able to find your stone, maybe not, but it felt like a really good metaphor that by being mindful and trying to pursue wellness and do things like dance or whatever it might be, (…) you can find the characteristics and traits of things we are trying to look for in our lives. Instead of having a six-point plan on how I'm gonna be a success and how I'm gonna be this or do that, be in the moment and pay attention to those things, and honor those things as an important practice to cultivate. I think that was kind of what stood out for me in that exercise. It was not in a way that was judgmental, you know, not like 'whoever gets the stone gets the candy!' [laughter] Obviously, that's not the point, but the embodied mindfulness in a way that it can be integrated every day in how we work, and how we do our relationships in our lives. This was a key piece of that for me.

I was impressed with how much meaning he derived from the exercise of the stone, and how clearly articulated those connections were with their applicability in daily life. A simple object, one might say, just like the sunset. But when looked through curious eyes in a propitious setting, how revealing such usual things can be! The same extrapolation of the impressions of the exercise could be observed in the closing circle, in which people could speak if there is something to be said or just hold silence for a while. Lenore shared that she thought about breathing the same air of her ancestors, of people who lived there in that place, grandmas, grandpas, past generations, natives, and how that felt encompassing and implied a different dimension on breath. In a later moment, Sarah also told me that she realized that it is possible to hug people, to share appreciation, through the space that is in between them, that it can emanate from one person and be felt by another. What stood out for me of what she said is that space can carry and transmit hugs, and love.

Another comment in the circle came from Sho, a sympathetic guy with an incredibly diverse background and very engaged in social transformation, whom I interviewed by videoconference. He was talking from sunny and warm Florida, and I was in snowy and cold Michigan, and this geographical context led us to a long weather talk and my not disguised envy of the golden sunlight shining through his window. He told me how he thought that in breathing we are not only getting the air of our friends, but also that of our enemies. In a further conversation about this topic, he detailed that:

> I guess because of the frame you brought as peacebuilding I think a lot about my own context, you know, I think about how Israelis and Palestinians… yeah, usually that is the context I think about. The structures are set up in a way that it is very hard not to be resentful of the other, like, people are people, but because of the situation that they live in it is very natural to become enemies, but at least for me I don't think enemy is a static thing. So I guess when we were dancing I was imagining what is this collective dancing about… I was thinking about someone in this room I could metaphorically say is my enemy and… even though we are not partnering or friends, they are still here, and they are still dancing, and I can see them, even if they are in the distance, I can see them, and we are breathing

the same air, so there is some sort of interaction, even if it is not direct, there is some sort of connectedness…

His thoughts reminded me of the interplay of energies, and how even in situations which implies exclusion, as frequently happens in moral and modern worldviews, the Dionysian aspect is still there, in the inevitability of connectedness through the air people breathe, through the existence they share on this planet, and often also in the tragic consequences of exclusion. Making a parallel with being a peacebuilder and the need to understand other people's reasons and motivations, even though not agreeing with them, Sho compared it to dance and the intrinsic need to respect everybody's dances. He continued:

> Everybody is dancing on a certain way, they have their own life, and even if my life cannot come very close to your life, because there are barriers, I can still see you from a distance…and we are still breathing the same air. I think awareness of interconnectedness is a good foundation to build peace… because if you think you are totally separated, well then you are probably not going to invest anything in making that connectedness better… so, awareness.

Awareness of interconnectedness as a foundation for peace, perceived through the air we breathe and the diversity of dances we experience in the same rhythm, despite the walls that try to separate humankind. Indeed, a breathtaking analogy to peace. Trina also shared her reflections on space. She is a courageous and strong woman, worker, student, mother, and social activist. I admire her ability to do all that and still have the engagement that she showed in the dance sessions. We talked at the in-campus Common Grounds Coffeehouse, in a cold afternoon in December. The place was cozy, with dimmed lights, sofas, and students hanging around, decompressing from the tension of the finals. We met a few minutes past two, and talked for almost two hours until we were gently informed by the waiter that the place was about to close. We sat on a sofa in a corner, with a lampshade by our side and a focused undergrad reading with earplugs on the sofa in front of us.

Trina began talking about how, despite best intentions and the many interests people have, "half of things either people do one time or they don't do at all, because it is not set...". She continued:

> (…) and you came in, (…), as an outsider, and said I am scheduling this, come join, and a couple times later I realized what a benefit… how fun it was, how good it was, then it became routine, then it was a lifesaving routine… ok, if I can make it until Friday, then when I enter this space, it is a container that has already been created, you walk in, by the time, the last couple of times, we just kind of walked in and the… I need to find better vocabulary for it, but the feeling around what was going to happen just kind of appeared, it was set, we didn't have to work very hard to settle in, I don't quite know how to say it well… there was something that you, you and we have worked together, you have brought the framework, and we have entered into it, and then we built something , and by the time, the last couple of times, all we had to do was get our clothes and walk in, and almost immediately, it was like… 'oh!, this is what it feels like to be in this, and this is what I expect to happen', so it is almost like a self-fulfilling prophecy too.

I appreciated how Trina so accurately described the encounter of the facilitator and the group. Each come in with intentions, expectations, and willingness, and there is a building up together in which we share our ideas, our joy and our suffering, in the co-creation of a space which we, in different levels, become responsible for. Because of this collective nurturance, each group is different, and each encounter is different, relying on what has been built and what each person is bringing to that specific encounter.

Another curious point was that, at first, hearing the analogy of a self-fulfilling prophecy was disconcerting, because the previous times I had heard this expression it was related to something negative, and the general idea I was hearing was of a healthy environment. Interesting how easily concepts fall in the dichotomy of good and bad, how ingrained this tendency is. After coping with the dissonance generated by my understanding, I pondered that a self-fulfilling prophecy may be related to the process of befriending. The atmosphere of the space, the container, seems to get imprinted with our visits to it. Somedays when I entered the room I felt it had kept the vibrations, the tone of our previous encounters, and it was interesting to observe the process of tuning the energy I brought, with the energy I encountered in the room.

Curious about it, I asked Trina about the transition into the space, how was that feeling, if it already started when walking up the hill, to what she answered that she drove, and we laughed. She detailed:

> It started for me when I walked the door… or, actually when I was downstairs putting my clothes on, cause when I was at the door usually I was still like… grrr… but when I was downstairs, changing my clothes, it acted like, putting on this new self. then I walked upstairs and then I was like… ok… here I hear the music, the music setting that space, the stage, then no matter what the music was…it is an expectation, the self-fulfilling prophecy, and then for the next one hour and a half, or two, it felt like it got longer, as we went on, and I felt grateful for that… I would even have liked to go even longer than we did, (…) even though often I was not feeling well, or was in pain, (…), but I didn't want to miss it, I wanted to go on and on and on, and those effects then lasted throughout the weekend until the next week, there is something, really… it had a longevity to it…

In my experience, the longevity that sometimes accompanies the moments, hours, or days after dancing is refreshing. It generates a degree of awareness in which simple acts like eating or moving get full of refined perceptions. Once, after a whole weekend dancing in a workshop, I had to wait for an hour and a half at an empty airport in a small town in Virginia. In a different moment that could have bored me deeply, but my senses were so alive that eating carrots was the most interesting thing. The consistence, the smell, the texture, the flavor, the sound of chewing, so many things to observe and be present to.

Lenore is a warm-hearted and brave woman who combines fight for justice and kindness in an admirable way. She is interested in arts, theater, and the power of voice in conflict transformation. In our videocall I asked her about what was there in dance that in her perspective contributed to wellbeing, because she really enjoyed dancing. After considering the question for a while, she commented:

> I think I feel more connected with my body when I do structured or semi-structured dances... dance experiences, and I feel joy… I guess it makes me more able to… it's a framework in the specific time that gives me permission, gives me an occasion to slip into my body, and connect me with things that bring… connect me to life. In a way that I don't also do in sort of normal, everyday, walking alone… experiences of life.

When asked about why she kept on coming to the dance sessions, Lenore commented that:

> Well, I committed to it, so obviously that, and also it was just so lifegiving, very life-giving experience. (…) I felt very welcomed and not judged, while I was there, I think I would not have kept coming if I felt like too much like a subject, or a… I don't know; anyway, it was very nonjudgmental, very welcoming, and also really enjoyed the physical exercise of it, and it felt important to make time for it. Even when I had other obligations, like academic obligations.

Indeed, as Rogers affirmed, a nonjudgmental posture connects and binds, independently if it is in a conflict situation, in a therapeutic setting or in the dance floor. It enables less defensive and more authentic expressions of self and relational contact that contribute to pollinate possibilities. Later in our conversation I asked Lenore about the space, what made that a comfortable space, or a space that favored the experience, or a safe space, if that was what it felt at all. She pointed out that she had previous experiences there, that were all very positive ones, including ones with body movement. Also, the presence of the mountains in the horizon, her favorite thing because the Blue Ridge mountains are very attached to a sense of home which was comfortable. Then, regarding the building, she added:

> And it is round, which I really like…. Well, it is not completely round, but it feels round… I don't know why I like that so much, but it feels special. I definitely think it would have been … I think the space actually is shouting at you... like: 'this is a separate space, and it is safe, and special, and is for reflection, and you have permission to be different', you know, in this space, you have permission to reflect and to be more profound, like a retreat, you know, a retreat space… I think a retreat space is needed to do those sorts of things.

A retreat space; where there is no judgment, where we can be different. Be different being ourselves; just being. A place where it is possible to connect to this flow of being, and let it inform our thoughts, feelings, and actions, to a more authentic life in daily chores, diminishing that difference between the daily self and the retreated self. What if we could make the dance floor our retreat space? Or the body our retreat space?

**4.2.3 Reflections**

The split that has severed mind and body was also reflected in different spheres as time and space, spiritual and material, 'I' and the 'other'. Scientific research is leading to a review of the assumptions that based this split, once the physiology and functions of brain and body are deeply interconnected and, after all, the brain is ultimately part of the body. Practices have also been working on the connection between body and mind, as a way of being more present, more aware and more fully alive. In the previous chapter, I pointed out how body awareness is related to presence and therefore to time, in a here and now perceived by a presence in and through the body. In this subchapter, I approach two other aspects which intermingle in this nexus of presence, which are breath and space.

Even though there is no effective separation of body and mind, the judgmental segregation exists and methods and practices are required to tackle it. Breath is an essential aspect of it, because while it is sensed continuously by the body's senses, in its continuous movement, it can also be observed and until a certain point, influenced mindfully. When these two actions come together, presence unfolds: "our mind is often thinking about one thing while our body is doing another. (…). When we concentrate on our breathing, we bring body and mind back together and become whole again" (Hanh 1999: 59).

Concentrating on breathing makes it possible to imbue mind in the body, bringing awareness to this pulsating being, to its aliveness. It is also possible to focus on specific parts and, breathing into them, infusing vitality in their numbness. Breath is also essential in the difficult journey of staying with pain, as previously discussed. While bringing awareness to pain, being it physical or emotional, etched in the muscles, tension may result out of defensive reaction. Breathing allows this tension to melt into the depths of air motion, releasing stiffness and allowing flow, and therefore connectedness, in the area. Observing this phenomenon, Roth suggested the following exercise: "maybe there is no movement in a shoulder or in your pelvis;

no movement means no breath. Focus on this part of you, breath into it, and let go of whatever it is holding. Every part of us needs breath to catalyze its function" (Roth 1998a: 31). Breath carries not only oxygen, but also awareness, which can become a caring presence in our bodies.

According to LaMothe, breathing taps into bodily wisdom, accessing pockets of untapped energy which then floods into body and consciousness, generating movements with a greater range and elasticity, entailing less pain and more presence: "we find ourselves responding to challenges with additional resilience and resources. We feel joy" (2006: 228).

Differently from sitting meditation, in which breath is used to still, calm the body (Hanh 1999: 210), dance may take a different route. Instead of calming the body, it uses breath to impel body movement, circulate that energy and explore inner and outer spaces. It engages the mind and thought into the discovery of alternatives, and finally it stills the mind through bodily movement. This sense of breath as impeller of movement is found by LaMothe in Graham's vision of dance, inspired by her dialogue with Nietzsche and Duncan. She described this process as follows:

> A person listens to her breathing and recreates patterns of her breathing in order to discover new movement possibilities. She actively engages the muscular, mental pathways of energy that breathing takes and uses these patterns as the material, the rhythmic substance of her art, with which she discovers what her body can do (2006: 225).

Body and breath are spaces in which the dancer dwells, creating and waiting for the unfolding of new possibilities of movement and breath. By shifting from one to another, alternatives multiply and pollinize the next moment pregnant with possibilities, stretching zones of comfort, visiting the edges to know better the core of continual change:

> The movements of the body and the rhythms of the breath push and pull each other into new shapes – kinetic images that are relative to an individual's body, level of facility, degrees of attention, honesty, and vulnerability. Dance is this push and pull between movement and breathe (Lamothe 2006: 225).

This dialogue between breath and movement brings forth forms related to the present condition, transforming it in the process and impelling the constant becoming. Furthermore, concentrating on breathing, it is possible to imbue body in the mind, rooting the mind into flesh, grounding thoughts when they seem to spin around in exasperation, dig the past in remorse or spoil the future in anxiety. Taking a deep breath is a way of releasing worries, stopping mind trips, a practical action to accomplish the wish behind the saying "stop the world that I want to get off".

Either when awareness is focused into sensing, in the case of threat or also in concentrated exploration, or when worries are occupying the mind, respiration is shallowed, retarded, because that retards the fluids as Bonnie Bainbridge Cohen described it: "All of a sudden someone will take a deep breath and you know the fluids have been released. The fluids are the internal respiration as compared to external respiration, the air, which we normally think of as breathing" (1995a: 191). Breath and blood, lungs and heart, working together to ensure life. Breathing into body parts becomes less of a metaphor in this sense.

The intimacy of breath is undeniable. It dives into the depths of our beings, nourishes our vulnerable small and vital functions, recollects the secrets of our disposals in the cells, and spreads our mysteries into the world. Its pervasiveness leads to the question of beginning and ending, as contemplated by Koppensteiner:

> With each breath we become porous and blur around the edges: where does the *pneuma* exhaled stop being a part of us and at which point in the respiratory process can the air inhaled no longer be separated from us and becomes a part of ourselves? Through this inhaling and exhaling a small, perhaps infinitesimal small – but still unavoidable – *change* takes place. Our breath transforms us (2009: 93-4).

In a self-protective intent of safety, not the one that relies on trust, but the safety that suspects, that isolates itself in the belief of individuality, breath becomes shallow. It becomes superficial as if giving in as little as possible to the unavoidability of change and connectedness,

to the inexorable aspect of vulnerability. In this situation, a deep breath is revolutionary. It puts the fluids in motion, brings clarity to the mind, vitality to the body, and ravish us again into the pulsation of existence.

By breathing, it is not only our inner secrets which are revealed into the world, we also take in those from others, regardless of our will. Roth compares breath with a promiscuous lover, because "the breath you just took was in someone else a moment ago, and when you let go, it'll move on and become part of someone else. Breath keeps everything moving; without it, there can be no dance" (1998a: 30). As a lover, a bearer of vitality, a carrier of our deepest mysteries and potentials, breath unquestionably deserves our awareness. It relays our pieces and our connectedness, our belonging to the whole.

Wholeness through breath refers not only to the individual realms of mind and body. Through the motion of the air in and out, it also presents the possibility of spreading awareness to space, the landscape in which the human being is embedded and connected with every other being in the planet. It can also be the mechanism through which we become aware of that in between two micro-moments which unveils infinity (Swami Veda Bharati 2013: 60). Presenting the Navajo approach, Abram illustrated the encompassing possibilities that air may grant:

> For the Navajo, then, the Air – particularly in its capacity to provide awareness, thought, and speech – has properties that European, alphabetic civilization has traditionally ascribed to an interior, individual human "mind" or psyque". Yet by attributing these powers to the Air, and by insisting that the "Winds within us" are thoroughly continuous with the Wind at large – with the invisible medium in which we are immersed – the Navajo elders suggest that that which we call the "mind" is not ours, is not a human possession. Rather, mind as Wind is a property of the encompassing world, in which humans – like all other beings – participate (1996: 237).

Following this perspective on the Winds within and around us, it derives that what we perceive as an individual awareness is part of a broader mindscape, or *windscape*, a landscape of the winds, an ensemble of the air in and around us and others. A windscape contemplates the same view of the landscape, but instead of focusing on the forms distributed on the space, it

beholds the space in between and inside the forms. With this shift, the observer is inevitably imbibed into the scene with his breath. It derives that "(…) one's own intelligence is assumed, from the start, to be entirely participant with the swirling psyque of the land" (Abram 1996: 237). The inevitable and often ignored consequence is that harm inflicted on the land directly affect human awareness. Human health and balance is interconnected with the balance and wellbeing of the earth (Abram 1996: 237). Thus, there is no way of throwing anything away, because there is no away. In the same vein, war affects us independently of our nationality. The impact of the suffering they cause does not respect imagined boundaries of nation-states, but permeates the air that we breath (Roth 2004: 116).

The Navajo perspective on mind as Winds also implies another distinguished difference from the modern perspective: while in the later awareness is seen as what differentiates human beings from the other animals and the rest of nature, the windscape in which humans participate connects them to animals, trees, and mountains. It is "(…) the unseen but common medium of their existence" (Abram 1996: 238). If landscape is perceived by view, and soundscape by hearing, how is this unseen windscape perceived? Skin and hairs identify air in motion, the movement of our ribs unravels air in motion, heartbeat indicates air in motion, the bending of trees shows air in motion, as well as their cycles. The same applies to our cycles, our lives. All the senses contribute to perceive that, and Adler suggested still one extra sense related to the mystical which she calls nameless (1999c: 166). That is the sense that kicks in - that awareness which is not only individual, but also collective, when you are not dancing anymore, but being danced. Roth described it as disappearing inside the dance, dancing "(…) till there was nothing left of me but the rhythms of my breath. And in the rhythms of my breath I felt totally connected, body and soul. I finally realized what holy communion was all about" (Roth 1998a: xxiii).

However, the retreat from the senses stimulated by the modern perspective and the split between body and mind make it difficult to engage in such an exploration as described by Adler

and Roth. Refraining from sensual perception wanes the possibility of glimpsing into the sparks of that extra sense, hindering contact with its knowledge and inspiration. Nietzsche refers to this process as desensualization, meaning the exercise of the intellect which leads to a retraction of the senses. In other words, it turns them into eyes and ears capable of thought, which search for reason and meaning, not being able to perceive a thing as it is. Consequently, "pleasure is transferred to the brain" (1996: 100). In this transference, it becomes proud of its causal logic, but does not grasp into the pleasure that arise from sensual contemplation, from feeling connected and flamed by nature. We lose sight of the windscapes of life.

As a consequence of not being seen and felt, these connections are ignored or forgotten. The air that keeps us alive is taken for granted, as is the space in which we dwell. Eyes retracted into reasoning fail to see the windscape, and treat it as mere empty space, whose invisibility does not evoke mystery and invite attention but enables neglect: "lacking all sacredness, stripped of all spiritual significance, the air is today little more than a conveniently forgotten dump site for a host of gaseous effluents and industrial pollutants" (Abram 1996: 258).

By retreating from the external spaces, not seen and - in a causal logic - therefore not existent, the style of embodiment also changed. Curtailed from the belonging to the landscape, now human beings have to thrive and try to make sense in the shuffle of cut threads all inside the compact space of the body. Klein argued that we have become smaller, in the sense that:

> Our connection with nature has been so curtailed that, instead of inhabiting an entire landscape and allowing it to carry some of our feelings – (…) all these feelings, as well as our sense of the self that holds them are felt to be contained simply with the narrow parameters of our own physical form (1997: 139).

Stray in the congestion of the loose ends of the previous threads through which connection used to take place, the risk of isolation increases, in the same proportion as the amount of information and data to be contained in the seemingly narrow body. Disconnected, we lose touch with the memory of millions of years stored in the body, as well as with the

complexity from which stems our consciousness. Klein concluded that "no wonder we often feel swamped, exasperated that things are "too much" (1997: 142).

Connected through transportation, cables and technology, space became conquered. However, its importance has diminished. While there is a sense of connection, there is also a sense of foreignness in one's own space, because no time is dedicated to nurture presence in it. In a future-oriented society striving for a rigid ideal or perfection, the fugacity of time is oppressive. And time would be the key to convert this feeling of foreignness into a sense of comfort, of home, because it is necessary to seed space with awareness for it to reveal its aliveness. This aliveness can be perceived in the wisdom field that stems from space when cultivated, in which unexpected combinations spark alternatives[9].

The cultivation of such space requires going beyond torpor and irritation instigated by the lack of external stimulus. Reliance on external stimulus is widespread and pursued restlessly, for two main reasons. On the one hand, it distracts a person's gaze from the messy dump of loose ends of the threads which once connected her to others and nature. One strategy often relied on is to continue stuffing this space so these things are buried deep down so they remain unseen and far from consciousness. On the other hand, there is fear of the emptiness of that space, often considered a vacuum, a negative force. Perceiving it as void, an emptiness that generates anxiety, "we try to stuff this black hole instead of realizing that we are the black hole and that its emptiness is actually a fathomless freedom", loaded with potential. (Roth 2004: 47-8).

Aware of this fear of the space in and outside, movement can help shift that perception. Instead of beating or conquering space, beyond fighting for it, the insight is to celebrate space

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[9] These reflections are based on personal notes taken during Lia Diskin's lecture on the retreat Fecundity of Silence, (*fecundidade do silêncio*) promoted by Association Palas Athena at the *Casa de Encontros Emaús, Convento Maria Imaculada* on 12-14 February 2016.

and surrender to it, to embrace the life it offers and realizing that actually "(…) all we are is space" (Roth 2004: 26). In this sense, dance can help in the often-daunting task of befriending space and emptiness. Befriending space demands the same dedication as that given to friends – nurturance, presence, care.

Disentanglement from the initial irritation caused by emptiness deepens this relationship, making it possible to observe the textures of the internal space, whose intriguing aliveness and spontaneity leads to a slow relinquishment of crystalized truths and solid convictions, opening avenues for the unexpected[10]. The creative act, in the birthing of the unexpected, requires the sustenance of space. In other words, a practice in the suspension of judgments and plays of ego, while also nurturing trust in the creative process. Calling this nurturance of trust a discipline in the provision of space, Lederach argued that it is needed for the creative act to emerge: "providing space requires a predisposition, a kind of attitude and perspective that opens up, even invokes, the spirit and belief that creativity is humanly possible" (2005: 38).

If space is already there, and creativity is a potential, why is it difficult to tap into that potential? In previous chapters the plays of the ego were presented as veiling this availability. The seduction of the ego instill fear in the emptiness of space because there it does not survive; it loses its grip beyond the ego-layers (Dietrich 2013). The mental architecture of justifications and arguments developed by the ego makes such intent easy prey to convenience. There are many interpretations and practices on how to manage the ego's grip, some which may even cause harm. I resonate with Vessantara's suggestion that to calm ego's turmoil it is necessary "(…) simply to give the ego an assignment which is too big for it". The ego seems so dominant because attention in daily life is directed mainly to the layers in which it transits, meaning the

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10 Idem.

sexual, socio-emotional and mental. When asked to undertake a task that is beyond its abilities, ego shrinks facing its own limitations: "eventually it is only too happy to retire, and pass the job over to those deeper parts of the psyche that can respond to the challenge with enthusiasm (Vessantara 1993: 142). The same perspective was adopted by Roth, who said that the characters of the ego meet some necessary functions in daily life, enabling the play of different social roles. The key, however, is to know when and how to step out of them, and not lose contact with authenticity (Roth 1998b: 171).

For being able to step out of roles and dissolve the ego's mental architecture of justifications, which tends to convenience, practice and discipline are crucial. Support is needed in the practice of sustaining the space in which creativity can spark new alternatives. Ferrer refers to training as the masculine aspect that complements the feminine creation of spaces, and that facilitates the unfolding of potential (2003). It resembles also the interplay of Apollo and Dionysus, in which Apollo provides the frame which helps sustain awareness in the energetic flow of Dionysian powers, and then facilitates the processes of dissociation and integration. In other words, Koppensteiner emphasizes that such processes which involve spirituality require discipline to practice and openness to be transformed by them. The combination of both discipline and attentive flexibility enables a person "(…) to let go of old believes held dear and rational certainties that no longer fit the current conditions" (2009: 63).

The support needed to sustain space in this exercise of discipline and attentive flexibility can be breath, feet, body, movement, mantra, prayer, sound. Discipline implies repetition, not a mechanical repetition, as has been argued previously, but a repetition that Lederach compared to the vibration of the Tibetan bowl, which with each circling of the stick becomes more resonant to the vibration of sound in its frame. With the image of the bowl, he suggested a container as a metaphor of the provision of space. In this sense, a container surrounds a space

and provides depth, holding safety, and permitting change at the same time (Lederach 2010: 199).

The container, that can be body, breath, movement and community, are supports to suspend ego tricks, contact authenticity and dive into the exploration of deeper realms of self, textures of space, and glimpses into infinity. The lack of this kind of support does not prevent access to these states, but when they are not in place, a person may experience the change process as distant and untrustworthy, as well as harder to integrate into daily life (Lederach 2010: 199).

When I get trapped in ego's mental architecture of convenience, I question my intention to do the practice, and sometimes even the meaning of it and the impact it has on my life. 'It is too complicated, why bother?' I ask myself. Nevertheless, as Katie - a participant in the research/practice group and a long-term dancer of different practices, specially Journey Dance - said, "I dance to keep my candle lit". Or as Roth described, "rhythm depends as much on the lull between the beats as it does on the beat itself. The world is one field of energy where everything rocks to rhythm" (Roth 2004: 132). Without the sustenance of space there may be no tension, but there is also no music.

The same play of space and beat which reveals music can also unveil silence. One of the participants of the research/practice registered: "I heard music, I listened to silence", adding a translation to Spanish in the following lines: "*Oigo música, escucho silencio*". Perhaps it is the enveloping character of music, which fills the surrounding space often felt as empty, or the resonance on the senses. In any case, music as container alludes to enfoldment:

> The sensation of being surrounded creates space of feeling the potential and perhaps the reality of being accepted, the presence of unconditional love, which can be described as being held, feeling safe, experiencing a sensation of 'at-homeness'. We feel the 'silence'. Music permits us to feel more fully human in our very being (Lederach 2010: 142).

These same characteristics may stem from family and community. Being able to let down defenses, because being held by space and others in a loving way permits diving deep into silence, space. It also provides motivation to the discipline of sustaining that presence and intention, and provide the comfort of knowing oneself as part of a web of connections which can nurture exploration. We become more fully human also in being together. This togetherness found in family and community envelopes in unconditional love through a space which contains, in the windscape of air in motion, past and future, and also bear consciousness of ancestors and that which will unfold in next generations. The feeling of at-homeness generated by experiencing togetherness may be healing in the sense that we can find the threads of our connection to others and space, weaving them back again in communal nurturance.

## 4.3 Pain, Feelings, and Observation

### 4.3.1 Third session

The first two sessions focused on body and breath as elements of a person's life, her connection to herself and others, and space and time. Bringing awareness to body and breath is elementary and always a way of qualifying presence. In this sense, they are also resources that may provide the support needed in times of difficulty, pain, ego struggles, or suffering. Having moved body and breath all around, they are more present in daily life and more easily accessible. Body and breath together connect the vitality of life. Comparing the types of meditation presented earlier, I approximate the characteristics of these two first sessions with *shamatha*, which in dance resembles to settling presence in body and breath, here and now. In the third session, the idea was to begin a transition to *vipassana*, looking deeply.

I was willing to experiment a transitioning space of sensing feelings in the body, how they manifest in limbs, heartbeat, breath, touching upon subtler energies as sensations of heaviness, lightness, disposition, dragging, warmth, cold. Putting awareness into how I feel in

my body when I feel sad, happy, angry, just to get acquainted with it. The challenge was to observe judgments of good or bad toward the feelings, and try to drop these judgments to explore textures, layers, levels of comfort, proximity, and frequency.

I struggled to figure out the music for this exercise, because music – rhythms, instruments used, bass and treble, lyrics – all influences the responses. For the first exploration, I searched for something more neutral, which could allow the expression of different feelings without necessarily stirring a specific mood. For that I chose a reflective song with sounds of water, flute, and birds. For the second, I opted for the reverse strategy, choosing songs that more directly influence certain moods.

In this third session I was not so anxious about the number of participants anymore, and I was very excited with the songs that composed the playlists of the day. My main concern was providing a safe space to set the tone for the exploration of feelings. Lenore has experience with Playback Theatre and voice exercises, and in the previous meeting she had suggested an exercise, which I invited her to facilitate on this day. The proposal was interesting, fit the intentionality of the day, and could help people be present with body, breath, mind, and intention.

The exercise is called Angels and Demons, and as I see it, it is a group exercise aimed at sustaining resonance and dissonance through voice. We gathered in a circle, standing up. She started and we followed, articulating 'ah', or 'oh', or 'ih', or whatever combination we wanted to do. It was interesting to feel the reverberations of the sound in the body, chest, throat, face muscles. Additionally, to feel the harmony of the voices and also the disharmony when a dissonant tone was introduced in the web of voices connected in the circle. A third factor I could observe was my willingness to harmonize or disharmonize, and how when harmony was sustained for some time it could be calming but also numbing, and sparkled restlessness and

desire to intervene with dissonance. Also, the initiative to disharmonize required an extra effort of confronting fears of nonacceptance and judgment.

After the exercise, we sat in a circle, for a short debrief. Usually we would do that just at the end, but the idea was to give Lenore space to hear how the exercise was for others. The participants commented how it was different to use the voice, some of them were not used to engaging with their voices. Lenore afterwards commented on how interesting it was, to compare her experience with the ones of other people who do not necessarily like singing, and "enjoyed the reminder in hearing how it was like from other people's perspectives".

Still sitting in a circle, I explained the following exercise which was with raisins (Kabat-Zinn 1990). I invited them to try the exercise even if they did not like raisins, and nobody opted out. The orientation went as follows: 'Get a raisin, and remember to observe the experience. Touch, smell, look. Be aware of reactions to it, and judgments. Acknowledge them, let them go. Put the raisin in the mouth, sense taste and texture. Do not bite it yet. Notice how your mouth reacts to it, in terms of salivation. Notice if the raisin has changed size and texture, from creases to plain. Bite it, sustaining your attention to it. Feel flavor, juices bursting out of the breached peel, and the responses of the taste buds to them. Observe how the tongue moves it from one side to the other. Watch the movements to swallow it. Sense until which point you can follow it… Throat, stomach? Sense the traces and impressions left by it'.

Acknowledging the attentive concentration which they gathered to focus on the raisin, I invited them to keep that focus getting up and moving, stretching while we transitioned to the following exercise. I refer to the following exercise as corners of feelings. In my adaptation of the exercise I resorted to the feelings of the 5Rhythms mandala: anger, joy, sadness, fear and compassion, each hosted by a corner of the room. This is how it goes: 'Each corner in the room hosts a feeling. We will circle through them, observing textures, reactions in our bodies, differences in breath, heat, heartbeat. Just like we did with the raisin, we will observe if

judgments come up, acknowledge them and let them go - feelings are not inherently bad or good, they just are. Walk through them, experience the feeling of it in the body. As you walk to the following corner, let it go. Observe feelings of wanting to stay, wanting to hurry, or to avoid. We all know those places, we have felt each of these feelings'.

I was very attentive during this exercise to the participation of the group and concerned about the intensity of the proposal. But the vibe in the room felt fine as we danced around. Some people stood longer in some corners, others were flowing round and round. As this exercise came to its end, I wanted to check in once more, and in the circle, everything seemed fine. Then we proceeded to the last exercise, in which we went across the room in waves, sometimes alone in a line, sometimes partnering, sometimes in two lines facing each other. Dancing, we explored a diversity of moods, such as flowing and easy-going with one of my favorite songs, *Orinoco Flow*, from Enya (Enya and Ryan 1988); sexy with the tango of *Sway* (Demetrio and Gimbel 2004); determined and clear with the incredible *Don't Stop Me Now*, from Queen (Mercury 1979); heavy, shadowy, and confused with the rock *A Dança das Borboletas* featuring Zé Ramalho and Sepultura (Ramalho and Valença 1977); playful with the *Pata Pata* with Miriam Makeba (Masuka 1967); grateful with *I Say a Little Prayer* with Aretha Franklin (Bacharach and David 1967); and stillness with Camille Saint-Saens' *Swan* (1886), with which we broke the pattern of crossing the room to move all around.

This last exercise was a lot of fun. It was fast, the music was vibrating. Because of my concern with the gravity of the corners of feelings, I wanted to end the meeting with an increasingly high energetic practice, in order to make a smoother transition from a deep reflective place to their daily errands after the session. We left the room that day with excitement, and I kept listening to *Don't Stop Me Now* as I cleaned my room in the afternoon, a task previously scheduled for the following Sunday. It is incredible how much energy can be released from dancing with feelings and emotions.

**4.3.2 Interviews**

In the interviews, I realized that one of the participants actually did not like raisins: Silvia, a joyful, smiley and easy-going young woman from Spain who studied criminology before conflict transformation. We met at the library, with the intention of going to a cozier place for our conversation, but the low temperature outside was not appealing for us and hindered our plans. We found ourselves back at the library and, although it was not ideal, we decided to stay in a very small study room for convenience. Silvia had a lot of experience with dance, from ballet to a (as she described it) drastic change over to funk and hip hop. Answering to my curiosity, she explained the change:

> Oh, because it was just a hobby, and they wanted… the teacher wanted us to be like professionals, so, I was like: 'oh, no!' we ended up, in the last three years, going to rehearsals every day in the week, so there was a lot of pressure for something that I didn't want to be professional in, so we just… we - two friends of mine and me - we were like really… blocked, you cannot do it anymore because of too much… and we decided to leave that. And I have always enjoyed hip hop, seeing people, how they move, and they enjoyed it a lot, while ballet was more like suffering, the pressure and the exams and this and that, so I decided just to enjoy. (…) It was nice at the same time, but it was just a lot of pressure.

Recalling one of the exams she took, she commented that "one of the things that happened is that one of the judges said to my teacher: 'ok, next time, next year, if you want to come, make sure that this girl is thinner…'. Silvia's body structure is already thin, and I could not contain my surprise, mixed with a feeling of anguish for the harm that such attitudes may cause, including abandoning dance, low self-esteem, hatred of the body, and eating disorders.

I wondered how she felt about the practice space after having previous experience with different styles, and she answered that after eight years without dancing, it felt different: "(…) no pressure on you, no one is looking at you, judging you… no: 'you need to do this step, or keep straight', so it was much better". I inquired about the different feelings she experienced during each session, and she pondered:

It was different… it depended on what we did. The day we did the emotions, sadness, happiness, and then we were dancing in a line, that was really funny. I remember saying, 'oh, this is really cool!' yeah, it depends… they were always good feelings but different intensities. I think it depends as well on how you are doing that day… in overall.

Following up on her comment, I asked about how it was intentionally mixing feelings and dance, how that felt for her:

(…) focusing on the feeling… it was good, because you don't realize it but it is really connected, how you are feeling and how you dance… even if you are dancing the happiest song ever, sometimes you are sad… it was good, I had never experienced that before… I think, maybe when I was doing hip hop they want you to be more active, the music is more energetic, they try to make you feel energetic… but it is not the same, because you are not thinking, it is the music… it's nice, to realize that you can dance differently if you feel differently. That's something I have been thinking about…

At some point in our conversation, I asked her if she had any other comments about the sessions, if there was any moment that was different, brought an insight, or was uncomfortable.

Then I found out about the raisins:

It was cool, the exercise with the rock… that was nice… That reminded me of meditation, like: 'send your breath to the toe', or whatever, and you really feel that, it was interesting. I thought that was a really good idea. And the raisins exercise, I hate raisins! [laughter] but it is true that the way we did it, it was ok, I didn't suffer. I usually don't eat them, it was interesting to see how if you pay attention to what you are eating you feel it better… it tastes better. (…) It felt good, being conscious of eating consciously. It isn't a disgusting thing, it isn't that I hate them, but if I have the chance of leaving them apart I would do that. It was interesting. When we had to swallow the raising, having to feel it, and it is true, to feel it going down the stomach… it was interesting.

As the interviews went by, I realized that words like good, bad, and interesting are summarizing. In the beginning, I was picky on them, because I wanted to hear more, but I started to locate them as signposts of further reflections. I realized I say the word 'interesting' a lot, and became self-conscious when I use it. This observation motivated me to try to unfold further the content of my impressions. Therefore, having perceived that signal, I rushed to ask why it was interesting. She continued:

> Because in your daily life we just eat, we don't pay attention to how it goes down, you just pay attention to the taste, and sometimes not even that. It helps you realize or be conscious of texture, taste. It makes you eat slower, and that is something that would be good, because I eat very fast and I know it is bad. And it is another way of tasting food… it is like with wine, they make you smell first, and then try just a little bit, and then drink…

As she described the wine tasting steps, the image that came to my mind was that we were exploring feelings and emotions as wine tasting, searching for textures, identifying responses to different stimuli, sensing layers related to geographical, bodily regions. What if exploration of feelings and emotions becomes as valuable and respected as wine tasting is in some cultures, like in France or Spain?

I had heard from Lenore that the exercise of the corners of feelings had been insightful, so when I asked her about moments in the dance sessions that were different, meaningful, or uncomfortable, it did not surprise me that she pointed out that one. I was excited to hear her experience of it:

> Yes, I was just telling (…) [my partner] about it. The five corners exercise with the emotions was remarkable for me, because I think of myself as being pretty in touch with my feelings, and he doesn't, so I was telling him, oh, you should have been there, because you are saying you have troubles finding out what you are feeling in any given time! So, for me, although I feel I am pretty good at that, it was nice to explore the different elements that bring me into those emotions, and to feel, to understand, (…) it was a new way to understand that there are some feelings that come more naturally to me, that are easier to slip into, and other ones that I need to access them through an experience, or interaction with somebody else, or some other state of mind…

Her comment has remarkable similarities to what Silvia and Jen commented, how some feelings are easier to access without necessarily a motto, and others do not come easily, or are related to other people. I wondered if it is related to the socialization process, the ones that are socially more accepted in society are more readily at hand, the ones that are not are harder to connect with. But I hurried back to concentrate on what she was saying:

> so the two corners that I remember were most revelatory… one was fear, (…) I think a lot of the experience in this dance series with you built on revelations that I have been having, exploring in other ways too, maybe through therapy, or my

studies, or the retreat, but accessed them in a completely different way, so they surfaced and came to my mind  differently… so it was not that it was a completely new revelation, but it was coming .. it was new in the way it came to me… voilá!

Lenore speaks French, and lived in France for a while, so her speech is punctuated with a couple of French words which in my language-lover ears sounds very charming. I particularly enjoy when words from different languages are woven together, as if one language is not enough to translate the fullness of human experience. Lenore continued:

> So yeah, the fear corner, I have just been talking with a therapist the previous year, just a tiny bit about anxiety and procrastination, and about difficulty having attention on something, and I described this feeling like having this glass wall, like in an aquarium, around something that I was scared to do, and like, I am trying to swim at it, so I can do the thing, like a paper, or something, and instead of swimming at it, my mind just put like this glass wall and fliish…  right around, so I slip around… and then it is gone, so I don't concentrate on it, don't think about it, and have a lot of trouble thinking about it, so... and he was talking about theories about that thing that creates those barriers, because you are afraid of your self-perception changing, or feeling some unpleasant emotions, so your fear of feeling unpleasant emotions keep you from wanting to go into that thing.

I deeply resonate with her description of procrastination and anxiety, and how I postpone doing things near the deadline. It feels like deadlines squeeze my ideas out of numbness. The theory that she points out about fear of changing and of feeling unpleasant reminded me of a saying quoted by Amorok, Schlitz and Vieten: "change is what happens when the pain of remaining the same becomes greater than the pain of changing" (2007: 35). When the anxiety of the deadline reaches a certain stress level, then I get more direct and ramble less, but it is a painful process. Lenore continued describing the experience of the corners:

> So, it was a really good practice, I went to that corner, the fear corner, and I made myself step into it fully, and just sort of sit there, because at that point the wall was gone, you just stepped into it, and that is the worst thing that can happen, feeling the fear, and it wasn't that bad, so I just let myself sort of fully feel it. And I thought 'huum, I wanna carry this with me', with experiences that I am so afraid of feeling bad things that I avoid them. And then that create much worse things in my life that if I had gone there and sat in those bad things. So maybe the next time I have that, I will think of the corner exercise, I hope so… I think I will… think of the corner exercise and tell myself just to sit in there.

I wanted to get more details on the texture of that experience, as her description felt so palpable. Regarding the question of how sitting in that corner felt, bodily speaking, she answered: "I deliberately put my body into a feeling of fear, so I had an elevated heartrate, was breathing fast, muscles tense, that is how it felt". Then I asked about the transition, how was moving from the corner of fear to the next one. She said that "I think it felt fine, I wasn't in a hurry, I wanted to stay longer, to prove to myself that I could… Yeah". I then questioned her about how the bodily feelings arose, if it was from relating to a previous experience, putting intention into it, like tensing the muscles, or if it was from the anticipation of entering that space. She pondered:

> It came from going into that space… so fear was the space, (…) the first round I went through it, the second round I told myself, I remembered the conversation with the therapist about all these protective behaviors that I do to avoid feeling bad feelings, and I told myself, ok, in the corner, right there, is the heart of fear, or the core of fear, so I sort of visualized going into it, so putting my body into it was the thing that made me feel the fear. Whereas joy, I couldn't just feel joy… I had to look outside, look at the beautiful tree, the mountain, (…) in order to access joy... I couldn't just remember what joy feels, like: 'oh! I am joyful!' It didn't work…And afterwards, the exercise dancing across the floor, so much joy in that by the way, I remember when you said: 'ok, now dance sexy across the floor', and I was like: 'ok, I don't really do that, but all right', that was great! And that was fun to do that in a group, and I remember accessing joy then was easy, spontaneous, the most accessible emotion, whereas in the floor accessing anger, and fear and compassion had been the easiest. But by myself, without any stimulation… I think that is what dance does for me, the active dance… it frees my body to feel more joyful emotions.

Lenore's comments reminded me of the participant's reactions to each of the prompts. It had been so interesting to observe how the process went, from getting the prompt, to listening to the music, to finding a partner to go across the room, and identifying the movements related to the emotion. The sexy dance was definitely the one which arouse more chuckles and surprised faces. I remember seeing some faces like 'ugh! what?' and people were shyer. Facing their hesitation, I motivated them to dance sexy, not necessarily a mainstream sexy, but to play with the many ways of being sexy, and without a second thought I jumped in to do my own

dance which has since escaped me. It might have been funny, because tension eased a little bit, and sexy then appeared beautifully in manifold variations as feisty sexy, comical sexy, flirtatious sexy, grave sexy, rock-and-roll sexy.

We have already met Jen, and she also had interesting observations about this session. She arrived a bit late to this one, so I asked her to wait while we finished the corners of feelings; because it would be difficult to jump in at the end of it and could be disruptive for the rest of the group. As we moved to the following exercise, crossing the room, she joined the group. She described that experience as follows:

> I remember one thing that we did that I enjoyed, although I thought I would not enjoy it… ok, I say before that, what I found to be more challenging was dancing with a partner, like mirroring them is one thing, but I thought like: 'oh no! now they are gonna watch me, and see what I am doing, and it might be stupid, I don't know', that fear… that made me more nervous. I remember we had to like… go across the room and dance angry, and dance imagining you are feeling free, or life, or imagine like sexy dance… and initially I thought: 'oh no! I will be uncomfortable' but actually I liked it! [laughter] which surprised me, and I think also because I felt like, I remember you said, not to do the way, especially with dancing in a sexy way, not in the way it is done, that seems sexy, but what makes you feel that way. (…)

The sexy dance topic during the session made me think about the power of mainstream reference in regard to curtailing the exploration or acknowledgment of different possibilities. Both the efforts of integral adherence or total resistance get trapped in opposites and restrain the perception of other alternatives. That is why a choice between just two options is a dilemma and not a real choice, because in one of the corners the same reference of the non-option is still kept, to which the second option is intrinsically related to. More than three alternatives, thus, break the oppositional polarity into plurality. Jen and I kept talking about the experience of that day:

> I realized it is something I do not think very often, particularly about like, certain emotions, I have them on my own, without other people, I can feel happy and free on my own, I can feel sad on my own, but like, feeling sexy in particular, I feel like it is a relational feeling for me, or has been, and… or… it's interesting, or so, it was probably the one more intriguing or mind opening moments where I felt

like, 'oh, I am learning something about myself'. I don't know, those are my thoughts…

I was curious to know more about the experience, how it felt, and what were her reflections in the meantime. Therefore, I asked her how it was to actually dance it after having thought about that. She described it as follows:

> Well, initially nervous (laughter) but then, after a while, I think I felt like, I think because there was time in each one to do it for a while… (…) basically, the amount of time that you gave us was three minutes, the first minute was uncomfortable, the second minute was when I felt comfortable, the third minute I was again like: 'ok, I am doing the same things over and over, is there anything else that I can do to feel whatever these emotions were?' (…). And I mean it also helped knowing, no one in the room knew that I am not really a dancer. And there were other people in the room who seemed self-conscious at different points, and I felt better, maybe that is mean to say, but I felt better knowing I wasn't the only one who felt like: 'nananan, am I making a fool of myself here?'

We laughed out loud at this last comment. The conversation took other directions, but when we were talking about feeling vulnerable, and I tried to get more information on how vulnerability felt in the body, this topic of dancing sexy came up again:

> Ahn… how did it feel, in my body?... I think, I don't remember, really, if I felt anything… like I know what anxiety feels like, I don't think I felt those things, I felt … [thinking] Just probably not relaxed, not at ease. (…) When we were doing like, feeling silly, something that was happier, fun, goofier, something like that, (…) Something I could just jump around, ahn… So, like the things that required more exertion actually dissipated the feelings of nervousness or tension, or like tightness or whatever, more, things that I had to not force, or train my body to move more smoothly, which I feel that sexy dancing feels smooth to me, or that is the word or feeling I associate with it. (…) But you know like (…) it felt a relief or whatever to be able to move all my body parts in an exuberant manner, it felt like: 'ok, I am getting something out of jitters', or something, or I can feel freer to move around as I please.

Sho had a similar perspective on the range of movements. For him, bigger movements felt more freeing, while smoother or small movements generated a degree of discomfort. While it is natural that each person finds more comfort in one rhythm or another, fast or slow, Jen and Sho's comments made me reflect upon the textures of vulnerability and discomfort, and how it

may be felt, interpreted, and dealt differently. Referred to ways of dealing with moments of discomfort, Sho added:

> I don't know how I feel, so let me just dance through it, like… like you would say, let me move, ok, it might be awkward, or it might be challenging, but there are certain avenues to move through and see how it feels, don't just define… the reason I came and tried to keep dancing is because… just because I am feeling hesitant in the beginning doesn't mean I will feel the same way in the end… (…) I just keep either dancing through it or keep moving in some way, you know, maybe something would shift over time…

As one keeps moving, breathing and dancing, something will shift, the rhythms will vary, new perspectives may appear, even if not seen at first. Putting energy in motion is the beginning of the healing process. This means that one does not necessarily have to get things as one perceives them right now, but can give them the chance and honor of a dance.

### 4.3.3 Reflections

Visiting inner and outer spaces brings forth the unexpected, and it can be unexpected in multiple ways. The discipline and the container offers a frame for the experience, facilitating the sustenance of presence to remain in the here and now of time and space with whatever comes up. Although the description of these spaces as pregnant with possibilities and creativity may at first glance seem like a positive experience, it does not mean it is always pleasurable, or that joy evolves exponentially. As practice deepens awareness, joy may derive from the simple fact of sustaining presence and the spiritual aspects that can stem from that. Nevertheless, it does not mean that it prevents one from feeling. On the contrary, presence in the here and now opens channels of feelings which might have been short-circuited, revealing emotions which were not consciously recognized until then.

Fear of feeling pain or suffering derived from painful experiences may motivate a person to search for spiritual or body-mind practices. There is however, at times a misunderstanding in which transcendence has been equated to a detachment from feelings or pain and suffering. Recognizing this trend in some people searching for meditation as a spiritual practice, Kornfield

observed that they are afraid of feeling: "They hope meditation will help them to transcend the messiness of the world and leave them invulnerable to difficult feelings. But this is a false transcendence, a denial of life. It is fear masquerading as wisdom" (Kornfield 2009: 129).

Gabrielle Roth pointed out the same tendency in associating enlightenment or self-mastery to transcending so-called negative emotions. Countering such tendency, she reinforced her conviction that "(…) such transcending is simply a path to illusive equanimity that will be blown apart as soon as any real life challenge arises" (1998b: 57). Feelings are part of life, and can protect as well as cause harm. Therefore, the same perception to conflict applies here: the problem is not feelings, but the way a person relates to them. Befriending feelings allows the beneficial flow of their protective aspects, while reducing the potential harm of an unhealthy relation to them.

Befriending feelings requires a degree of openness, as discussed above when referring to space. It requires presence, space for the unfolding, and time to get acquaintance and care. This openness also implies dropping judgments and protective barriers, which liberates for a revelation of vulnerability in its presence, a willingness to feel and resonate in one's multiple layers. Dropping judgments implies encountering feelings as simply feelings, without the conditions of good or bad, which, in the end, are just judgments imposed by oneself or others on one's feelings (Kabat-Zinn 1990: 377). This kind of judgment may lead to a denial of feelings considered bad and a strive for feelings considered good, or to suppress all of them at once, preventing a person from being real and accessing resources vital to survival and wellbeing. Just as pain is a signpost requiring attention, emotions also surface to bring up elements that demand attention into our awareness. In this sense, they can be seen as part of the homeostatic apparatus for intra and interpersonal processes.

Looking at the intrapersonal aspect of feelings and emotions, Fogel pointed out that if every regulatory action in our bodies had to be in our awareness, it would be overwhelming. In this sense, he affirmed that:

> We need a way to select, out of all the possible homeostatic tasks which are mostly handled without our self-awareness, which ones actually require our attention. Fortunately, we have a very effective method for sorting internal sensations into order of importance for deciding how to allocate awareness. This method has a long evolutionary history across different vertebrate species and appears to have evolved specifically because it gets our attention. This method is our emotions, our sense of whether something is good or bad for us and the accompanying motivation or urge to approach or avoid (2013: 55-6).

In this approach, feelings stand for the sensations experienced, such as tingly, warm, soft, while emotions are the evaluations the body describes as good or bad and according to how it feels. This evaluation is always accompanied by an urge to act, being it by embracing the sensation or cringing from it. It does not necessarily imply action, but there is always a tendency to act in relation to that which is calling our attention and seems to be the generator of the emotion (Fogel 2013: 39).

When there is a strong emotion and this tendency to act is prevented in a way that the body cannot respond appropriately, as in a traumatic experience, for example, "(…) the memory of the urge to act in relation to the fear or anger (…) is preserved along with any visual or auditory imagery" (Fogel 2013: 260). This memory may keep the state of arousal and tension stored in muscles and body parts, such as arms, legs, throat, and chest, thereby draining the body's energy. In this sense, "trauma memory is as much in the sensory receptors, in the skin and in the muscles as it is in the brain" (2013: 259).

In the same process described in the fight or flight reaction, the suppression of feelings may be a protective response to overwhelming emotions, which may take some time to be processed. The continued suppression, nevertheless, may develop patterns of avoidance, preventing feelings from reaching awareness and distancing the person from an embodied

presence in the here and now. In this process, our muscles contract to hold ourselves together, shifting attention to conceptual self-awareness (Fogel 2013: 102).

The same tension may happen when a free flow of these feelings and emotions is seen as inadequate. A burst of anger is inadequate if unchecked and harmful to oneself and others. On the other hand, anger may signal when violations happen and is a motivation to act, being a regrettable loss if suppressed. Both denial of feelings or being overwhelmed by them can have problematic consequences. Besides that, expressing feelings in general is not very welcomed in modern societies, and being emotional is undervalued as a mere loss of control or weakness.

The repression of these feelings and the physical arousal that accompany them get stored inside of the body, but add stress to the regulatory system, which in turn flares up. Although behaving in accordance to social rules, fear, resent, and anger are still present: "we still have the stress hormones and neurotransmitters clearing the decks for fight or flight. Our blood pressure is rising, our heart is pounding, our muscles are tense, our stomach is churning" (Kabat-Zinn 1990: 255). Lacking support and ways of dealing with these reactions, a person disguises them and pretend everything is fine. She dissimulates the external expression of the reaction, but keep on carrying the internal effects inside. Although put aside, the feelings and the bodily sensations are still there, burning the stomach and causing gastritis, or manifesting itself as a headache, nausea or other chronic ailment. They may also leak in the form of reactions and behaviors unacceptable to society, which are potentially harmful to self and others.

These reflections inevitably lead to the question of how to deal with feelings, emotions and reactions in a way that is not harmful. In an immediate threat, running or fighting would at least release the built-up tension and allow the body to regulate itself after a stressful situation is encountered, allowing a state of rest to be reached: "your blood pressure and heart rate return to baseline, your blood flow readjusts, your muscles relax, and you move toward a state of

recovery and recuperation" (Kabat-Zinn 1990: 255). Nevertheless, running or fighting are not always an option, and moreover, may not be a solution.

Dance can be a movement to aid in regulating the body, through motion, sweat and endorphins. I am not saying a person should dance in the face of danger, but that dance, as a practice, may very well be helpful for the regulation of bodily functions. Dancing with feelings and emotions allows, through movement, a reorganization of the regulatory system, in terms of releasing tensions, melting blockages, and stimulating recovery and recuperation. Movement has a healing characteristic by itself. Moreover, dancing with feelings and emotions allows a person to practice acquaintance to the bodily reactions related to each kind of feeling and the elements that trigger such reactions.

LaMothe argued that pain emerges when "(…) our desire to breathe collides with the bodily memories of past suffering" (2006: 226), indicating those dimensions which need an opportunity for becoming. This alludes to getting to know oneself better in the process of becoming who one is. Movement may also allow befriending those feelings as part of the lived experience, as part of being alive. Besides, it may also elicit different perspectives of the feeling, emotion, or conflict by relying on multiple ways of knowing – bodily, intuition, spiritual, sensual, and intellectual. Movement may also help open and sustain that space of creativity and openness to the unknown.

Feelings are real and cannot be muted. This means that relating to them with approaches such as 'settle down', 'collect yourself' or 'swallow your tears' is simply masking the episode. Unfortunately, and frequently, maintaining an unaffected expression is taken at a higher stance than recognizing the implosion happening within. It is also a dismissal of the flow of energy which they represent. Reiterating the mantra that feelings are neither good nor bad, Roth reassured that they are forces of life energy with different characteristics and associated to different functions. "Essentially, fear protects, anger defends, sadness releases, joy uplifts,

compassion unites" (1998b: 60). If we are to be present in the here and now, it is important to acknowledge the flow of their energy, as well as the danger of their unchecked bursts and the gift of their presence.

Freely flowing energies from feelings does not mean to be lost in blind rage when anger comes up, or to drown in sadness, but to allow feelings to emerge authentically, in a spontaneity grounded in wisdom; and one which acknowledges the presence of feelings without being lost in their intensity (Kornfield 2009: 127). Cultivating awareness of feelings as energies with different characteristics, and getting acquainted to those characteristics, allows a person to get to know her power in a way that guides a healthy and effective response. It enables her to change the pattern of mechanic reactions, which may be stuck in passivity or attack, and ride their waves without falling into automatic reactivity. In this way, it is possible to "(…) have them flowing in our life so that we fear what really threatens us, get angry at what invades our integrity, cry when we get hurt, smile when it all goes right, and care about the real needs of others" (Roth 1998b: 59). Befriending feelings provides the confidence to let them take care of ourselves, responding to life with authenticity and out of spontaneous responses stemming from wisdom and experience.

## 4.4 Suffering, Emotions, and Nonjudgment

### 4.4.1 Fourth session

The fourth session happened on a Tuesday evening, around six in the afternoon, due to travel arrangements I had the following Friday. It was elections day in the US. Anxiety could be felt like a hair ball in the throat. As animosities in the presidential debate were reflected into various life instances, I thought this could be an appropriate occasion to start working with feelings and emotions, bringing context to the dance floor. Whatever the result of the elections, these abilities would be pertinent in the following days. Because of all the concerns and

heightened energies around and in myself, I anticipated it would be difficult to jump right into the dance, or to focus on a quieter exercise to begin with. Unlike the previous meetings where I was anxious, yet focused, this time I was rattled and dispersed. I even pondered if it was a good idea to facilitate from such place, but I acknowledged these energies and went on with it anyway, reminding myself that it is important in peace and conflict work to we start from where we are, acknowledging what is present.

I began with something to pump up the group's energies, an adaptation of the West Side Story game from Theater of the Oppressed (Boal 2005: 98). The same structure was used, the group was divided into two lines facing each other, one person at a time would take the lead and come up with a tactic comprised of a combination of sound and movement designed to push the other line back. The only difference was that the participants could engage in actual interaction, to test reactions to each of the tactics. No necessarily right or wrong, just testing responses and sensations to each of the tactics. We played from stepping on each other's toes to nonviolently rolling around people in an attempt to carry them behind the line. We changed leaders until everybody had a chance. When moving to the following exercise, a participant told the group about a collective non-partisan meditation being organized all over the US to elevate the vote, and asked if we could join. I consulted the group and suggested that we joined in moving meditation. Everybody agreed and we switched to a ten-minute dance focusing our intentions on the elections.

Then we practiced the aikido exercise suggested in Kabat-Zinn (1990: 371), which in turn was adapted from George Leonard. Basically, there is always one attacker, which moves in the direction of another person with the intent to run her over. The person under attack tries a handful of tactics: the first one is saying it`s ok, you are right, I am the one to blame. The second is to assume a posture of 'it is not my fault, someone else did it'. Then, the third is to resist saying the attacker is wrong, and the person under attack is right. The fourth is slipping

out of contact, avoiding interaction. The fifth, and last one, is trying an aikido entering, centering breath and energy, with a willingness to encounter but not be run over. The idea of the aikido entering is not to control, but to blend energy, offering contact, yet, being flexible to see the attacker's perspective, while also maintaining one's integrity and communicating one's point of view.

The insights generated by the exercise were informative, some styles felt more adequate in different settings for different people. Nevertheless, I felt that there was a lack of flow and blending, and during the interviews other people commented on this as well. I approach this aspect later. Continuing with the activities of the day, we turned to the following exercise which I call the island of support. This is an adaptation of a *vipassana* exercise I learned in my meditation practice. In this exercise, which begins with anchoring presence through focused breathing, a person imagines a situation that she wants to understand better, a conflict which triggers diverse feelings. To begin with, it is adequate to start with a conflict with someone who is not too close, because it is easier to sustain observation without judgment in this case. While sustaining the view of the situation, she identifies feelings, reactions to it, and detaches them from the scene, bringing it to another corner of visualization, just to get acquainted with them, understanding what is there. After some time of that exploration, the next step is to bring attention to the center, recalling the situation, but trying to see it without the extra projections. Ideas of responding to that situation alternatively may emerge. Or maybe not, but the intent is just to observe if there is any difference in the image of the situation before and after observing the feelings involved.

In my meditative practice, this exercise has been very useful and insightful, helping me see beyond my initial judgments and defensive reactions toward the conflict situation I found myself in. My idea was to adapt this exercise to dance, because it could benefit a lot from

movement. An important thing to keep in mind while doing this exercise is having a solid reservoir of resources available in case of getting lost in mind trips.

With the dance element added to the exercise, this is how it turned out: 'find a comfortable place in the room. Set it up as a place where you can be exactly as you are, where you are seen in all of your colors and diversity, in your power and in your vulnerability, with your strength and weaknesses, with your achievements and mistakes, and you are loved. A place where your heart can be open and safe. Set your island. Put in it whatever grounds and supports you - people, things, beliefs. Identify an experience that brought you different, contradictory feelings. A situation you want to explore. Not too personal. Start slow. The feelings of that experience are flowing in a river around your island. Watch them flow. Dance their flow. You can dip your toe in the water, you can touch it if you feel like it. If not, just be aware of the flow'.

It was a journey in itself to find a song for this exploration. Going through many styles, I decided for *The Moldau*, from the composer Smetana (1874). What called my attention in this song is the invitation as in a journey, because it sounded like an adventure, with loud and low tones. Later on, I found out that the music recounts the trajectory of the Moldau River. Very appropriate, indeed. The exercise continued, and the idea was to merge islands into a continent that holds all their supportive resources. 'In this continent, keep moving and bring into consciousness the situation which you associated with conflictive feelings. Hold the situation for a while, with the acquaintance with the feelings explored in the dance. Observe. Perhaps the situation seems clearer, perhaps different perspectives arise, maybe new courses of action reveal themselves'. *La Valse d'Amelie* from Yann Tiersen (2001) was the song providing the rhythms to this experience, and his *Comptine d'Un Autre Été* (2001) followed, to guide the last step of the exercise, which was inviting the person involved in the situation to dance. For this part, an important emphasis was on the invitational aspect of it. 'Check with the best of your knowledge

if she or he would be ok with joining you. If yes, dance with him or her. If not, respectfully thank this person, and move with the situation. How does this dance go?'. When the exercise was over, there were fewer minutes left in the session than I would have liked, to simply dance around without a focused attention. It is important just to flow with the sensations, feelings, and impressions which might have arisen, integrating them with the presence called upon by music, body, movement, and breath. I delayed the end of the session for several minutes to guarantee adequate time was given to this unfocused dance.

Despite the somewhat bumpy development of the entire session, in the end, I felt that it was an insightful experience and worth reflection.

### 4.4.2 Interviews

In accordance with my impression of bumpiness, Katie and Tony also addressed this session in our conversation, pointing out two main aspects: firstly, how uneasy it felt to think about a conflict situation while dancing, and secondly, how difficult it was to grasp the directions.

I have introduced Katie previously, but it is important to mention also that she has a vibrant and captivating energy and gives in to the rhythms in a way that provides a comfortable and friendly connection, while partnering on the dance floor. This has been noticed not only by me but also by other participants. She combines dance, movement, and expressive arts with her work in trauma healing. In our conversation, in a different couch at the same in-campus coffeehouse, she commented on the conflict generated by suggesting a different exercise – the meditation on the elections, with the overall plan of the day, and the negotiation of doing it or not - and how to integrate both. She pointed out that: "I sort of remember feeling this disconnection that night, both appreciating your openness of going with what people wanted, but that we kind of interrupted the process that you designed".

Negotiating that moment was an interesting exercise for me as facilitator. While I saw much value in the proposal and the benefits of it, I was concerned with the impact in the group dynamics. So, I first tried to understand the idea and to adapt it to what I had previously planned. I suggested we participated with a dancing meditation, to what the group agreed and we joined the activity. Choosing the music for that moment was hard, because I wanted something in between the meditative mood of the proposal and the kind of more confrontational exercises we were engaging on. In the end, the song I picked was not very conducive, but somehow reflected the feelings of the moment. Joining a mobilization virtually and energetically with people all over the country felt comfortable and empowering, and in my case, also helped channel my concerns and wishes, leaving me a bit more organized. However, it was also a challenge to bridge the disconnection created by the negotiation, to which the group was very supportive.

Katie also detailed her impressions in terms of the instructions:

> (…) yeah, I think for me there was a moment when there was so much instruction that I didn't hear at all, because I have challenges with trying to follow rules too well. With that it would be like: 'I don't know the rules, I didn't hear the rules', you know, so those were times of just… mind chatter…

In this vein, she also commented about the cues and the language used to propose them, in terms of how they can inadvertently conduct to a more mind-oriented practice. I concur with her comment on how important the cues are, because depending on how the exercise is proposed, it may generate disorientation and disconnection from body and breath. In the case of the exercises of this day, the prompts need to be more refined. She continued:

> I think there were sometimes when you would say like, 'identify this', or 'think that'… or 'think about', or… and for me those thinking cues were like…argh… partly because of some training and partly because I just wanted to feel, and the idea of, identify, or think, or those kinds of cues felt like a mismatch for me.

It is a continuous challenge to balance the prompts, as well as the invitation to access different sources of knowledge. Enough time has to be dedicated so that the different sources

can be tapped in a way that they flourish to their potential. If time needed to sink in and sustain

space for insights to unfold is not available, the experience may become a juxtaposition of

fragments that do not dialogue among them and do not inform or inspire life. Tony's

observations concurred with some of Katie's points:

> I think the one session I struggled with was the session that we did where we were thinking about a conflict with someone that was not too deeply felt, or vulnerable, or painful, but also not superficial. It was hard for me (…). But when I think of transition within the session, that particular session felt not as natural for me to move through that. It was still meaningful, I still got a lot out of the exercise, but in terms of transitions themselves it felt a little bit more punky.

It is interesting to observe the interplay of the different layers in the system. On the one

hand, it is natural that the anxiety in the system influences the experience. On the other hand, it

was also curious to notice how the dissonant energies generated by my worries regarding the

macro context impacted my facilitation style and the group dynamics, as well as the experience

of each person. I anticipated that there would be more anxiety in the group and myself because

of the societal context - and I planned ways to engage with it. However, I did not consider my

own confusion as a source of energy to be named, tapped into and offered in this experience.

As we talked, I asked Tony more details on his experience with this exercise, how it

unfolded regarding the difficulty to get into the idea.

> Yeah, I think… it might have been... hum… I think for me it was like, I understood when you gave the prompt that it was not necessarily with a family member or a loved one, that is something super deep, but something that does matter and have some sort of importance to it. I think for me I kept racing in my head through things, and I think a lot of it has to do with my own personal conflicts and life experiences, because it tends to be… Most of what I struggle with is with people that I am really close with and care about. And the kind of everyday, superficial, like 'someone took my yogurt from the work fridge' doesn't usually bother me, and if I let that bother me I go crazy.

His description reminded me when I first engaged on this activity in its sitting meditation

format, and I could resonate with the anxiety generated by the exercise. The facilitator

emphasized not starting with a situation too personal. The closer the situation or the person, the

harder it is to keep the ego occupied and not rambling around in justifications. So, in the first experiences, the suggestion is to start with someone not so close, maybe someone in the line of a cashier, or the bus driver who sped up before you could get stabilized on the bus, or even in traffic jams. While these situations may not flare up big reactions, many times they repeatedly come up and occupy the mind, and contribute minimally but cumulatively to stress load. As practice goes, the muscles of awareness strengthen to allow exploration with people in closer relationships. Tony continued:

> So, it was hard to find something in between. I think, I started to maybe, trying to think too quickly, or analyze too much, and I was trying to do that while trying to keep moving, and keep engaged. Had I been in a different space that day, maybe I would have tried to be more mindful, focus on the breath, and try to let something come to me, that would be a good… you know, conflict example for that case. But for a lot of probably personal reasons and for my own personal conflict landscapes in my life it was hard to find something. And normally when people say, you know, 'think of a time when x y z happened', I'm like: 'oh, I got one!', normally that is not hard for me. So, when it was difficult I was like: 'oh, shit, what am I gonna do?', [laughter], and then I started to get tripped up on that.

Hearing in the interviews how hard it was to spot a conflict situation with someone who was not so close surprised me. Facing the very divisive and challenging discussions in the electoral debates at the national and local levels, I thought that this situation would make itself an evident reference for the exercise. Nevertheless, I decided not to give any examples to prevent influencing their experience. This was a great challenge in terms of the balance needed in regard to how much prompt to give. Perhaps one or two examples would have helped, or not. Perhaps, what I assumed would be a distant situation was felt very personally, because of the context. Perhaps, openly addressing my concerns and the anxieties in the room would have been beneficial, or even to focus directly on movement to get to understand better what those feelings were. Tony continued describing his experience:

> But I did end up focusing on one kind of a conflict experience or landscape with a loved one that I have known for a long time. And it wasn't something, you know, since it was scoped out a little bit, and accounted for multiple factors, and scenarios, and different people; it didn't feel that it was so close to me that I would

break down and cry in the middle of the space. But it did feel that it was relevant and distant enough that I was able to get something out of it, but it took me quite a while to get to that space in that particular activity. And I think the other thing that maybe I was feeling is that it seemed that some other people in the group had similar issues in finding a good case (…).

I remember that when I first did this exercise, I also did not quite follow the orientation, and started right away with a situation with a fellow coworker - a topic which felt close at that time. And my experience was very transformative, so I trusted the situation would work out, and trusted the resources of body and breath, addressed in previous encounters, to support and ground the experience.

So, yeah, I would say that was probably why it was difficult for me (…). I understood the prompt, I knew it, I got it, I wasn't able to find something in a way that I thought was quick enough… right, and then instead of staying like: 'ok', and keeping the movement and going with that and hoping for something to just arise, I went into analysis and thinking too deeply. And I think that was probably why that activity was a little bit more difficult or didn't necessarily go the way I would have maybe imagined.

I wanted to understand how Tony's process was in terms of getting out of the thinking to actually moving with the topic, so I queried him about that part of the experience, to what he explained:

I think… it's a good question… if I am remembering correctly the idea was 'think of yourself as an island, and you are here, this is your space and you're safe here and this is where it is good for you'. Ahn… I think at some point I decided: 'ok, I have this idea of a conflict that, you know, it is a series of things over time, not one person is at fault. But kind of focus on a relationship with a loved one, that I am familiar with, I wanna make the most out of this time here, and get the most out of the space, and if I can take myself to stop agonizing over what to focus on… just choose it and focus on it, maybe I am going to get there'. And I think I did, once I have decided this is the thing I am gonna hold in my mind, I was able to sink a little bit more into the activity, focus on my breath and stop thinking about: 'is this the right topic for an analysis paper' [laughter], you know, instead of just like: 'is this something that I can hold in my heart and in my head and that I can make it useful for this session?'

'Let an image of a conflictive situation surface in your awareness, something you can hold in your heart and in your head and that resonates with you at this moment'. Perhaps this is

a more polished way to introduce this exercise, acknowledging that we usually pick those things

that are in our minds anyway, regardless of the orientation on how close or far the relationship should be. This way it invites a more open attitude which relies on authenticity rather than mental judgment.

I then asked Tony how was the rest of the exercise, whether it was of any help to invite that person to dance or not. He described:

> I think so, it helped me think a little bit more broadly. Like I said, I was thinking about my life experiences with this person, you know, my sister actually, and a lot of the different dynamics and things around that. And allowing that to occupy the space of my mind and my heart, in a way that was attempting to be inclusive of many good, bad, whatever you wanna call that, different things, facets, hum… left me feeling ultimately pretty ok with how that relationship and that conflict has played out in my life. Like, it gave me a reminder that as difficult and as many facets as I might have of this person, they might have just as many for me, I remember kind of going through the exercise and thinking about the invitation to that person to dance, it felt really good. It felt that for me it was a meaningful way of crystalizing in my head that this person is these many things and have these many facets, and rather than focusing on three or four of them, holding them in my mind and in my heart acknowledging them as a full person, hum… in the same way I'd hope they would do that for me.

My heart was beating faster following his recount. What a beautiful and respectful process, acknowledging someone's multiple facets beyond biases. I then asked him how it was afterwards, off the dance floor, to think about the experience and the relationship. He commented that:

> That felt good, and I think my, every now and then when I do talk to my sister, that session comes up, and it helped me to reframe a little bit how I see her and how I interact, and how our relationship looks like. You know, if sometimes people comment like: 'oh, you are really close with a lot of other people in your life, why aren't you close to your sister?' Instead of letting that make me mad or make me angry or frustrated about what is or is not included in that relationship, that memory of that session will trigger and I will like: 'oh well, you don't know the whole story, there is a whole facet, a whole bucket of things there with that person, and being able to hold all of these things in my hands and say like: 'not only do I have to not judge myself necessarily for closeness or intimacy with this person that people in society say I should actually be very close and intimate with, I don't have to buy into the value judgment from other people'… I guess, which feels very good, but it is also an empowerment and a reminder that you do have the power to invite this person to dance, and you do have the power to make the engagements that you have good, so, yeah, ultimately that felt really good (…).

A person has the power to invite another one to dance, and in the dance, explore their many facets, biases and joys, their hardships and gifts. In the dance, they can negotiate standpoints and take perspective from different worldviews. In the dance, they can reaffirm the commitment to keep the flow of the relationship despite differences as well as because of them. In the movement of their differences, find different possibilities of interaction. Regarding this exercise, he added another remark:

> I remember there were two or three people that were doing the activity near me, on the other side of the room, and they started laughing, and I was really, almost like crying a little bit, and immediately I was like, 'oh, shut up! I am getting so mad', and I was like, 'wait a minute!', this is an activity for everybody, and like, if they are getting laughter and joy out of whatever it is that is happening for them, that is good for them, I can stay over here in my space and do my thing as well. That felt an instant trigger reaction, and almost as an instant, like: 'hold on, wait a minute, take a step back, one person's joy in a moment in a space doesn't detract from or negate your, not necessarily sorrow but your emotional experience as well', if that makes sense.

Yes, it made sense. It resonated deeply. His openness struck a chord with me, and I was deeply grateful and honored he shared that experience and his life stories. Sho also shared his experience with dancing a conflict, or inviting someone to dance. I asked if there were opportunities in the dance sessions in which he could explore emotions. He answered, "yes", and said:

> Sure! (…) maybe cause (…) different challenges that come up in your life, it is very stressful, or it can give you anxiety, (…) but at least with dance I can feel that it is something that does something to me, I can transform the anxiety, or at least relieve it, or temporarily block it, or not block, that is not … it is like, not the main thing right now, cause there is dance… also I forgot… I really forgot which day… but I was thinking about a person in the past, and something about how... you have probably been in sort of a relationship in which that person sets the tone, the direction, and then when they are done with you, they just shift direction, and that is like, (…) I don't know, I still carry that, and I am like, sometimes it comes up for me, so I remember some time in dance that was the main thing I was dancing, trying to liberate myself from those memories, not… just transform it right, (…) it is like, yeah, figuring out how I want to relate to these memories, like, I know that there were some things that I wish I could talk about, but because of the distance, or because things have changed... words will not take us there... so I was: 'ok' - in that moment, 'dance will help me', maybe…

Figuring out how to relate to a memory in dance – each interview reveals powerful opportunities on the process of dancing with awareness, and I am thrilled by the insights as they appear. Commenting on the process of acknowledging these feelings and emotions, and how to relate to them, Sho continued:

> It felt pretty good, because like I said, I feel certain comfort, or certain familiarity when I dance, so you regain a sense of agency, so this makes me feel these ways, but through dance… something that I am doing, that is shifting a little bit, like, ok, these feelings may come back, but I am not those feelings, I am not just those feelings… and dance helped me… yeah, just like, regain that agency, regain some sort of power even if it is momentary, temporary, even if it is just in that moment, it is still helpful…

I asked him then how was the feeling at that moment of the interview, while talking about the experience, how it has or hasn't shifted:

> Hum… I know we will see each other again one day, so it is like, I think… like, if I gave myself some opportunities, rather if it is dance or something else to manage my emotions, like, I will learn more about myself or why that is affecting me in some ways, I think it helps us prepare… it helps me prepare for the time we will see each other again, and I don't really have certain kinds of hopes in terms of our relationship, but I do hope that there is some sort of understanding… like, you behaved in these ways, and I behaved in these ways, and I think there were some sorts of disharmony … but now hopefully we understand each other better, so I think dance and several other things can help you get... help you manage the emotions, understand what the emotions are.

Perceiving present emotions is a first step in promoting understanding in a relationship and is already a demanding and courageous step. Silvia shared a somewhat similar experience when asked about this session and about getting someone to dance with: "yes, it was interesting, just imagining it makes you think in another way, more calm, or you get your frustration out of that. I will try to do that when I am angry with someone: 'Ok, imagine dancing with that person!". Later, talking about meeting the person in a regular situation, she added that it was: "interesting, because you see the other person differently, from other perspective. My frustration with the person went away…".

Trina shared a very impacting description of her experience with the island exercise, one of her favorites, according to her. She talked about how she loves to dance, and I asked her if and how dance contributed to her experience of peace. She answered that yes, and explained with the following anecdote:

> I pictured a conflict I have, and I put someone I had a pretty significant interpersonal conflict with, and it is an embarrassment, I had a hard time even acknowledging it to other people, because it is a colleague, I am supposed to get along with, I should be able to get along with this. So, I didn't have to verbalize, I could just picture it in my head, and walk through your progression of, I forget how it worked… I just remember, sticking my feet one at a time, off the island and into the ocean, trying to get to the … what I saw on the other side, trying a whole bunch of things, you know, that didn't work, ok, let me try something else, ok, that didn't work, and eventually, by the end, I just went, and while this person I have not reconciled, again, it was, like: 'ok, it is an acceptance'. What I have noticed is that this... the framework you bring has really helped to usher an acceptance, self-acceptance, acceptance of others, acceptance of self and of others, acceptance of situations. Cause there were multiple times, (…) there was something little about each time that felt like: 'ok, I accept this about myself now, or I accept this about my situation, and this is what I can do to maybe try to shift it'.

One of the aspects that I really enjoyed in the interviews was that they offered me perspectives on the framework and facilitation which I had not yet seen or formulated in words. Sometimes the insights were right to the point, other times they were quite different from my initial plan or intention. But all of them left me with seeds to reflect upon. The dynamic and aliveness of the interactive system is surprising. In this case, Trina summarized it beautifully, observation of what is there and alternatives of action. She continued her recount:

> I liked that island metaphor, the island prompt, because you were trying to shift it, but you couldn't just walk in and say, you need to try to think differently about this, it was over an hour and a half, almost two hours long, of the whole progression, but it was inch by inch, brick by brick, building something, till I maybe can finally do something symbolic. That changes something in you, that's what I think peace is, it is a gradual shift in thinking, a gradual shift in action, a gradual shift in narrative, a gradual shift in ways that you can vision or conceptualize the future, and all those things take a very long time, and so the thing that I say about being a peacebuilder (…), you learn to play the long game, you learn to be very very patient, you have to, because quick fixes, quick actions,

not though out actions, not strategic actions, un-strategic actions do more harm and have more unintended consequences than I would like in it.

Trina's reflections on peacebuilding and how important it is to play the long game patiently reminded me of the description of elicitive conflict transformation methods as unassuming and unspectacular. A patient process of gardening one's inner being and nurturing relationships:

> In some of the actions that we did, if I would have just jumped out of the island to the ocean, I would have drowned, but I had built, you kind of led us to a build up of vision, almost, you had us kind of build up a vision of what could be and then we were able to step off into it, and then all of a sudden I am swimming, but I would, I mean, if you had said, jump in, the way I felt, about the conflict, just… I would have drowned. But by the end I swam to the resolve… that is peacebuilding, but it is slow, and it is strategic, and it builds instrumentally with other people, although I didn't have to have other people helping me, like, we are supposed to have, in real life, you are supposed to be on teams, so this was a personal, an interpersonal thing, but still, that is peace to me, so I hope that answers your question…

To swim to the resolve, crossing the layers of emotions, mental projections, to get closer to the epicenter. This is what it means to embrace the gift and the risk of peace work, to swim in the waves of energy flowing around, with proper preparation and openness. Later in our conversation, I asked her if she had the chance to meet the person involved in the conflictive situation she had worked with in the island exercise, and how it was. I wanted to understand better which implications this experience might have in daily life, in terms of the shifts promoted. She confirmed and described:

> I did, I actually did, now, here is what is interesting too, so, nothing has changed, between my colleague and I, (…) nothing has changed between us, it is as bad as it was, but I have let go of some of the anger toward this person, I've let go of the competitiveness, the hitting of horns. We still don't like each other, she … really does not like me, I don't know why (…). And not being able to fix it, so I am still pissed about it. But the next time I saw her, I really thought 'well, you swam in the ocean to get to the other side, through this conflict', and I was able to, I have being able to greet her kindly, now, I don't do anything else past that... we don't speak, she doesn't engage with me at all, and we will never be friends, but I would not have it eat me, like it had, it had eaten me up, and I won't do that, I will not let it eat me up anymore, I am…

I felt the description of conflicts 'eating me up' very physically, and I could sense my body's memory of rejection toward that image. The amount of power conflicts generate is such that it feels alive, and hungry for attention. Trying to starve it in my experience does not work, but with genuine attention it has gradually lost its grip and teeth.

> The exercise also helped me … I am getting there yet, but I am also getting to the point where I can say to her, I don't like how you treat me, it is not professional, and I am not there yet, but I am getting there… (…) so yes, that came to my head immediately, it did not change anything about the situation, but that changed me, which does change the situation, maybe not perceptibly, to where it is… you know, words helped kind of transform conflict, and again, these things are strategic, and they are slow. And you have to be patient and play the long game.

A change in the perception changes the situation, although many times slowly and imperceptibly. Patience is unquestionably key in peace and conflict transformation. This exercise also came up in my conversation with Sarah, the curious lady who attended my presentation and who does not come from the peace and conflict field, in terms of profession. We also met at the Common Grounds Coffeehouse, in another cold December afternoon. We were talking about triggers for insights or discomfort in the dance sessions, and she mentioned this experience. For her, it had a special nuance, because the music of Smetana is very dear to her: "so that was a very clear trigger… you know, when you invited us to the island and negotiate with others, and played the music that was so dear to me, and again, it was a pure coincidence of things, but that was one of the great ones". It was indeed a great coincidence, I did not know, as she explained to me, that the music referred to the journey of the Moldau River from the source to its merging with the Elbe River in Czech Republic.

> I asked her what happened in the exercise, why it was a trigger, to what she commented:

> I guess I have been negotiating my understanding of where I am in respect to the world, so you invited us to say… all right, here is an island which feels very safe, and that's why I am on the inside, and there is water in the outside, and there are people and relationships, or that was what I understood, there is water which represents relationships, and …

At this point she looked at me, I guess searching for a confirmation that that was the prompt given, but I do not remember exactly the words I have used in the exercise, and each person also understands the prompts in her own way. Besides that, I did not want to interrupt her story, so I did not confirm nor disconfirm it. Facing my probably undefined expression, she said: "all right", and laughed before saying:

> At least this was what I understood…. And then you invited us to think of not necessarily a close relationship or a relationship that we struggle with, that we have some tension to work with… and I tried to think of a relationship, but I couldn't find something that would fit me in that moment, and I turned it into me thinking in the island that is me, and the sea or water… it was a sea for me, the sea being the world around me… and the music that you played is just very dear to me, because I have listened to it many times, and it is connected to my home country, connected with a river that I have seen so many times, and I thought about this process… so the music describes the process of the river flow from the spring, to yang, fast flowing waters, in between the meadows and forests, and then flowing into the capital which is super old and super majestic, and super beautiful, and there is this sort of majesty, not pride, but history and richness to it when the river flows through the capital, and then the river is just this big majestic mama, and then it encounters another river which is almost, like, it has a male name, so it is almost like this confluence of male and female, but she is…

For a while I thought she had finished her sentence, so I launched a question, but ended up interrupting her, to my discontentment. I asked her for the name of the river, to gain a more contextual idea of what she was describing. She answered and continued, to my relief:

> So, the river this composition is about is Vltava, Moldau in English, and it encounters this different river which has a more male pronounced, and it is bigger, and there is this very violent place where these rivers are just… I feel gigantic waves, and you know… sort of uncontrolled stream of very strong currents as these two big rivers are meeting, and then it ends with this very surprising... and then it disappears…. And after this very violent and very sort of… energy contained piece it disappears, and that is just so… oh, wow… it just happened... And I just love that anyway, I just realized… I heard the composition so many times…

After this very impressive description of the music and the landscapes of Czech Republic, she continued describing her experience that day:

> So somehow, I really connected with the piece… I had no idea what was happening in the room, I was just completely in my own head, and I was basically going through this negotiation… it started with… I am on this island, completely

isolated from the world, and the world … here is the line between the island and the world, and I don't know how to interact with the world, I don't know how to be in the world. And I think partially is because I have been doing science for so long, and in sciences we sort of pride ourselves for being isolated because we are the better, and smarter, and we have it all figured out, you know, those folks they can stand out there, and we are in this sort of glass tower, yeah, the smart ones…

For a moment, I felt thrown back to my college years and the unending discussions about what we called the ivory tower, a kind of worship of academia and disregard of the community in which the university was inserted. Sarah's description of the tower highlights an irrevocable consequence of towers and walls: the isolation of those inside it.

So, I think it is sort of the mental idea I am coming from, but now I am kind of struggling with it because… I feel very isolated… I don't know how to be in the world in a way that would be meaningful… that I would feel like I am meaningfully engaged in the world, and that is why I am struggling with it, I mean, how do I find my space in the world in a way that… because with science I *thought* I am useful… but I actually never *felt* I was useful... and now I am looking for a space in which I feel, intensely feel my life is meaningful and I don't know how to do it, so this is my space where I am saying, I don't know how to get into the world, how to be part of the world, so that I feel my presence is meaningful, so this …

I have often heard of this need to feel, and identified it in myself as well. That is one of the reasons why people say dance attracts them: to be able to feel more intensely, instead of just isolated thinking. Or perhaps to bridge the dissonance between what is being thought with what is being felt. Being it in the form of the split of mind over body, rational over feelings and sensations, or science over vernacular knowledge, divisiveness is kept with a high energetic cost. But back to the island:

I had this struggle of feeling the border between the island and the water, and me not knowing how to get into the water, and sort of me trying to understand how to break this wall, somehow... and I didn't know how the process was, somehow the water ended up flooding the island and with that violent sort of… part of the composition, I had been like, almost dying in these very strong currents of the water, and just trying to swim, and not being able to sort of feeling that… so really feeling that I may get suffocate, just so much worry… and I don't know how to navigate it, and then just letting it go, just saying 'all right, maybe that is what needs to happen, maybe I just need to accept the world, sweeping, and coming into my life in a way that is not controlled, in a way that I can find how to swim

in that water, that maybe it feels that I am not going to make it, that it is too much, and I am going to die, but then figuring out how I am going to swim in it'.

I could not prevent being concerned with how her story unfolded, and caught myself trying to sense if there were any possible harmful aspects in the exercise. I definitely did not want to induce anybody to a drowning or suffocating feeling. On the other hand, I also often had to be aware of my tendency to overprotect and try to make people feel good about the experience, which could prevent the exploration of important insights. This idea of holding a safe space, while allowing room for exploration is a key aspect of a facilitation experience, and a continuous learning in the practice, with people. Sarah continued:

> So it ended very peac… basically I discovered that maybe what it takes to get into the world is to let the waves come and fight them in a way, fight them in a way of learning how to swim in them, accepting them for their force and celebrating them for their force, because that is life at the end, right, so it ended up… I almost discovered... 'hum, maybe I am just too self-protective, maybe I just need to have these waves come in, not be afraid of them, and welcome them, maybe that is the way how to become part of the world…' and so it ended up in this very peaceful place where I suddenly was swimming in the water, and  I was very happy, and the island suddenly disappeared, and I was part of the water, and I could swim, so it ended up 'all right, that is where I want to be', and maybe so I found the place where I want to be.

Welcoming the waves, celebrating their force and learning how to swim in their waters until becoming part of it; what a journey! She concluded, concurring with my thoughts:

> And I went through this crazy process, of like, getting there, and the point was that through the …discovery was like, letting water in…  being afraid of letting water in maybe is preventing me from discovering how to find what I am looking for… that I am sort of …I am looking for but am also protecting myself at the same time, … it was just crazy… it just happened… it was really meaningful… and it was unexpected… and that is the interesting part, right… I went beyond what I ever thought about, I went beyond what I… of the internal experience, I went through in full full force (…).

I had goosebumps from her account, grateful for having been part of the beautiful experiences recounted by the participants and amazed by the many ways in which their experiences unfolded. Sarah continued reflecting that waves are nice, but pondering how to

implement what was learned from the dance that could be applied in the outside world. This rendered another powerful reflection that is presented further on.

### 4.4.3 Reflections

Previously I referred to emotions as the way the body uses to select, among all the functions happening that gives us life, those homeostatic tasks which require our awareness. Said differently, emotions are evaluations of the sensations, which accumulate as memory for future uses, aiming at survival and wellbeing. Basically, if a cut on my finger hurts, hopefully I will be more careful when chopping vegetables or using a sharp object in the future. And this intensified attention does not come only from a mental resolution, but also from a tingle in my finger and a light shiver in the spine when I engage in that action for the first time after the cut. It becomes problematic, nevertheless, when this memory gains a proportion that evokes a hampering fear, preventing me from using any sharp tools out of fear of being hurt. This may happen when the past memory overwhelms the awareness of the present moment. In the same vein, Dietrich differentiated feelings and emotions as follows:

> In the moment of threat fear is a feeling, but it is an emotion if it is fed by the memory of a past threat. Transformation does not occur via the suppression of fear and lust, but through the differentiation between the triggering emotions referring to the past and the feelings related to the present, which enable a situational resonance and calmness (2012: 241).

In other words, it is important that a person allows the memories represented by emotions to teach her, but not solely control her reactions. The differentiation between the memory of the past and the situation in the present is a key element for eliciting conflict transformation, and occurs via balance and attention, and not suppression. In the case of a cut and in the case of a conflictive situation, the homeostatic principle reflected in balance between self-preservation and change can be found again. In self-preservation one may find saturation, tranquility, and security; if I do not engage with sharp objects I will not get cut. However, I may also not be able to prepare a tasty meal. Whereas in change there is movement, risk, and

development; then I can prepare a tasty meal, and even learn new cutting techniques, but may risk new cuts as well. Self-preservation without change lead to stagnation, and change without a sense of self-preservation may lead to extinction (Dietrich 2013: 32). The point being that remaining in any of these extremes defies the tendency for natural homeostasis to occur and can only be maintained with a huge drain of energy. Managing the balance, however, is a challenging and continuous task as well.

In the process of navigating between these currents, needs appear as a reflex of the tension implied in a dynamic balance. When unmet, these needs may push the tension in the homeostatic system in the pursuit to being met. This maneuver generates disturbances, also called conflicts, which are part of the dynamic process. This situation becomes problematic when the strategies a person resorts to in order to meet her needs are inadequate, clumsy, and violent. In Nonviolent Communication, Rosenberg identified judgments, criticisms, diagnoses, and interpretations of others as alienated expressions of needs (2005: 52). Therefore, when a person's need related to self-preservation collides with someone else's need related to change, and they do not know how to address them, justifications and criticisms distance them from their needs and from each other. Needs are in the roots of feelings, which in turn are colored by memories of past experiences. If we follow Rosenberg's line of thinking that a person is not in touch with her needs, and take her emotions by her feelings, expressing them with judgments and criticisms, there is no way this equation can lead to understanding, satisfaction of needs, or homeostatic balance.

The key here is again awareness. According to Rosenberg, "when we focus on clarifying what is being observed, felt, and needed rather than on diagnosing and judging, we discover the depth of our own compassion" (2005: 3-4). It does not eliminate tension, because tension is a natural feature of the dynamic balance of homeostatic regulations, but it upholds the tension

and the energy behind it opening space for clear perspectives and actions, which are connected to needs and feelings and stem from compassion.

Buddhism has extensively reflected upon the problem of attachment, on centering action in compassion and on nurturing awareness. In the same vein discussed above, Kornfield pointed out the importance of knowing the difference between healthy and unhealthy desires, and the possibility of tapping into the freedom that lies in their midst (2009: 187). Identification or aversion, different reactions to desire, result when the emotions related to past experiences overwhelm the present awareness. This kind of attachment, thereby, sums up to the distraction from presence. When associated with pain, physical or emotional, or even pain caused by the struggle between self-preservation and change, identification or aversion amounts to suffering.

The difference between pain and suffering has already been addressed previously, but at this point the focus is on suffering and ways to deal with it. It is important to emphasize that suffering is not only personal, as in cases of anxiety, depression, anger, frustration, and fear. Kornfield also talks about a collective suffering, which includes war, racism, unnecessary hunger, and sickness, which human beings are called upon to understand and transform (2009: 242). This understanding and transformation, as has already been pointed out, implies observation and awareness, because observing feelings in times of emotional suffering nurtures healing (Kabat-Zinn 1990: 320). In other words, directing attention toward suffering enables a person to recognize the suffering, identify causes, and ways to address them. Furthermore, looking deeply at the situation may reveal the potential for happiness (Hanh 1999).

Sustaining this observation of feelings in times of emotional suffering requires a good understanding in what has been identified as the resources for centering one's concentration, such as breath and body. Looking through layers of judgments also demands a lot of effort. It is easy to get lost in criticisms, diagnoses, and interpretations. Kornfield described a practice for this process, which encompasses bringing in an area of suffering to one's conscious mind,

and examining the roots of the suffering, where it is felt in the body, what images and beliefs are associated with it (2009: 163-4).

The personal practice described by Kornfield accounts for the second aspect of meditation, *vipassana*, which means looking deeply. Hanh suggested doing *vipassana* also with other people, being it loved ones or people whose actions were identified as triggers to our suffering. The idea is to look into the kinds of suffering or difficulty this person has, what aspirations the person holds (1999: 210). Acknowledging suffering and aspirations in others makes enmity and bitterness wane, and allows the spring of the compassionate mind to flow (Hanh 1990: 84).

The practice of looking deeply into oneself and others, the loved and the resented ones, promotes a change in the self and consequently in relationships. This change has a potential of moving relationships from fear, mutual recrimination, and violence to love, mutual respect, and proactive engagement - what Lederach called constructive social change (2005: 42). According to him, for rebuilding relationships, and approaching the core of conflict in divided societies, "(…) we must develop innovative ways of providing space within which the emotional and psychological aspects of the conflict can be addressed" (Lederach 1997: 152). Superficially addressing conflicts, remaining only on the episode, prevents deepening observation and understanding of the dynamics happening in the present moment. Consequently, it prevents a person from reaching layers beyond the episode, and misses the potential for touching the healing and connectedness that may stem from this process.

Dietrich concurred with the potential of looking deeply into oneself and others, and emphasized the power inherent in doing that through the lenses of compassion. Such opening may generate a crisis, which in turn can be healing: "familiarizing ourselves with what we think of as bad, frightening, or threatening holds surprisingly powerful potential for inner and outer peace" (2013: 126).

Opening oneself to what one opposes may indeed be a healing experience. But before exploring this in more detail, it is essential to make it clear that this perspective neither implies making oneself passive to threat or violence, nor ignores the depth of one's and other people's suffering (Kornfield 2009: 13). The reflections debated above do not concur with an assumption that if someone is suffering, it is possible to 'just get over it', inferring a lack of ability or even blaming to the person who is suffering. The process is not instantaneous in the sense that as soon as attention is given, suffering disappears and problems are over. But practicing and sustaining this attention changes the patterns of reactivity and inertia, putting in motion the energy to break through automatism and respond from an authentic place (Kornfield 2009: 180). This energy fuels life and connects a person to others as they engage in social change through reestablishing relationships. It is an energy whose flow is ignited by change and, in turn, supports transformation.

On a different vein, this perspective also does not imply inert acceptance of conditions as they are presented. There is a difference between acknowledging and accepting the present situation, while engaging in transforming the conditions, and apathic acceptance of conditions as they are. Sutherland, sharing her experience with the practice of meditation with an illness, pointed out the risk of slipping into resignation:

> In this mindful attention to my illness, though, I was also a little too ready to be okay with things as they were. Every practice has its shadow side, and I've come to see that this kind of Zen, at least the way I held it, had an aura of resignation about it. There is something noble about doing a hard thing gracefully, but there's something equally noble about seeking transformation with a white-hot desire and a willingness to risk everything (1997: 5).

A similar perspective can be argued in cases of great pain, poverty, exclusion, or being cast out: the acceptance of the situation means acknowledgment of what is in the here and now, and from a deep look into the situation to identify the causes and ways to deal with them (Warner 1997: 111). It does not imply conformism.

On the other side of the spectrum, nevertheless, it is also important to recognize when witnessing is all a person can do. Witnessing in honor, love, and compassion may be transformative in itself. In some cases, response may follow and be necessary after witnessing (Kornfield 2009: 246). In either case, it is essential to honor suffering, as well as to recognize the potential for healing and fullness of life.

Honoring both suffering and life is crucial regarding any practice, and specially referring to methods for eliciting conflict transformation. While there is no quick fix model how to stablish parameters of reference, a permanent reflection and continuous balancing are vital, and need to consider all parties involved with their agency, especially the ones suffering. Observing a similar situation through peacebuilding lens, Prendergast criticized a tendency in generalizing the diagnosis of trauma to people in situations of conflict:

> By focusing solely on PTSD (post-traumatic stress disorder) responses, NGOs and other intervenors are likely to address only the victimization and wounds of affected individuals, and to ignore their resilience. Such an approach reinforces the passivity of the "victim" and the knowledge of the "expert". Encouragingly, however, lessons are being learned in the field and programming is being adjusted accordingly (Lederach 1997: 174).

This can be exemplified by repeatedly inquiring about the suffering and harshness, while never honoring the efforts, creativity and passion that underlie thriving in adverse conditions. Pathologizing may also flatten functional responses to a dysfunctional system, preventing homeostatic adjustments toward change and perpetuating an unhealthy normalcy, whose patterns of reference do not correspond to the felt reality. Forcing an adaptation to such patterns may cause even more harm. Dietrich also highlighted that unintended shifts of consciousness may be immediate expressions of conflict, and that pathologizing them may drain and numb the potential of using that energy for transformation. In this sense, he emphasized that knowing non-ordinary states of consciousness through personal experience is an asset for peace workers (2013: 62).

As a label, diagnoses may be used to de-politicize people, justifying subtler forms of dominance. Its generalization overlooks a range of expressions that may not necessarily be unhealthy, and may contain seeds of transformation. While unhealed trauma may perpetuate harm for oneself and others, the process of healing may bring realizations of possible contributions to transform traumatogenic sources in intra and interpersonal, social, and cultural fields. This potential can be explored when people are not de-politicized, but honored in their suffering and also in their thriving and resilience.

In this sense, healing is approached in a way that contributes to fuel life, to feel beauty in existence, to feel belonging to nature and part of humanity. It is not a linear journey to get to a healed state, or to a situation called wellness (Cohen, D. 1997: 13). In my conversations with Trina, she said that she did not like to think of herself as a dancer, but as dancing. At first, I thought that her resistance referred to the fact that the word 'dancer' is often applied to professional dancers, which would make other people not worthy of that designation. Therefore, I pondered that it was important to appropriate the role of dancer and give it back to people. However, in a further conversation, I understood that her resistance to the term referred less to the role per se, but to the static characteristic of the term. Dropping labels, we are not dancers or healed or even healers; we are dancing, and healing, in the process of ever-becoming.

What is thought-provoking in this play of words is that the roles of healed and healer merge into the process of healing. This perspective honors the healing power latent in each of us, the built-in healing mechanisms of the body and stemming from communitarian bonds and spiritual surrender. In this sense, healing is not necessarily associated with cure or elimination of a disease, but involves recognizing "(…) your intrinsic wholeness and, simultaneously, your connectedness to everything else" (Kabat-Zinn 1990: 184).

Healing in this perspective is neither a linear endeavor of getting rid of something, nor a rewind function to get back to a previous situation. It can be seen as a "(…) falling in love

with the poignancy of being alive" (Sutherland 1997: 3). But it involves looking into the current experience of memories derived from past facts, identifying what is there, acknowledging their presence, and investing intentionality in their transformation. Referring to healing in scenarios of conflict, engulfed by wave after wave of violence, Lederach argued that:

> Healing in this landscape requires ways of locating oneself and the creative act of naming what has been experienced in a context in which words do not adequately touch the depth of the lived experience. These are the places that, as human beings, require *feeling* as much as, perhaps more than *explaining*. This is a mystery. A mystery we all face (2010: 144).

Approaching the act of naming is processual. Meanings unpack from the sensory experience, which may be identified right away or may unfold in nonlinear and serendipitous ways. That is why going round and round, repeating, keeping on moving is essential. It creates space for feeling, and the auspicious conditions for the creative act of naming what has been experienced, in a process that involves mental attributions, but not only. Keeping on moving develops a spatial narrative which enables making-senses of the experience, while at the same time not getting stuck in it. Hence, it also allows going beyond, acknowledging the lived experience in the ensemble of what makes a human being, in a process that unveils her becoming: experiences make her, but she is not defined by those experiences, because the process fuels continuous transformation.

In the same vein, LaMothe described how the contents revealed through the encounter of breath and movement in tensioned areas of the body may be a source of energy, impelling a person to create beyond herself. She argued that "in providing us with a physical consciousness of our own vitality, dancing gives us a perspective of strength from which to engage and test our desires, discern their value, and follow the wisdom they represent" (2006: 229).

Instead of dismissal or clinging, acknowledging, feeling, and naming experiences allows honoring, learning from and letting go. It means letting go of identification and judgment, while retaining the energy which instills love for life. In this healing process, which stirs all the ways

of knowing: sensing, intuiting, feeling, thinking, and spiritual; explanations inevitably fall short. Repetition then does not correspond simply to a cognitive process, but gains an aura of mystery, stemming from the meeting place where the body senses the freshness of breath touching the sacred depths of our beings. Calling it a regeneration of our vulnerability to experience, LaMothe affirmed that: "we heal ourselves by participating in the creative becoming of our bodily selves and transforming whatever happens to us into an occasion for knowledge, love, in a word, bodily movement" (2006: 227).

By turning the body into the very container which provides touch and depth, and holds the fertile space in between, dance enables the embodiment of the experience of transformation. Repetition in the sense of keep moving inscribes its ways in the muscles and channels of the nervous system, in a healing litany which, by touching deep within reaches out, rooting trust and spreading love. After days of dancing for hours, movement becomes easy, healing sprouts from the muscles. Pain sometimes is still there, suffering may be as well, but they do not dominate the scene, they do not hinder the dance. Instead, they inspire it.

## 4.5 Energy, Power, and Partnering

### 4.5.1 Fifth session

In previous closing circles and extra-session conversations, I had heard some participants commenting on how partnering was challenging. The comments focused on how partnering required getting out of one's own bubble, or own world, to interact with others, and that sometimes it was not very welcomed. Some observations were also made on how it was different partnering with different persons, that it could switch from discomfort and self-consciousness to pleasurable and joyful.

I had had those same questions in mind for some time as well. It is amazing how unexpected and revelatory the experience of partnering can be. Dancing with another person,

not even mirroring, imitating steps, or intentionally creating a joint dance, but just being in the presence of another person flares up a bunch of sensations, feelings, and thoughts. Jen accurately voiced how the mere fact of having to partner generates anxieties in terms of our sense of self-worth and likability. In my own experience, I observed partnering being influenced by as many factors as sex, gender, age, attractiveness, nationality, style, skills and abilities, intensity of eye contact, energetic level of the movements, closeness, comfort in the body and on the dance floor, and proximity and distance that the person keeps from you. But what I also observed is that mainly my mood determined my curiosity and willingness to share a space on the dance floor. When I was happy, excited, feeling good, or even neutral, I was ready to partner. When in pain, suffering, introspective, sad or uncomfortable, I dragged my foot to get to a partner, and did not sustain the interaction for long. I could even create my own bubble in the interaction, trying to filter what comes in and out, or avoid a person if I feel discomfort.

It was then an enticing call to participate in a 5Rhythms workshop which explored exactly the contact with oneself and one's body in the way of meeting others. What follows is my reflection of the topic and the practices done that weekend. Anchoring oneself in flowing, it is possible to find inwards what is so eagerly searched outside. Because when a person is not at home, in contact with herself, her relationships with other people leave a feeling of incompleteness, an unsatisfied longing for something which although not clear, weighs in the heart. By searching in others what can only be found within, a person ends up messing up her relationships. In this never-ending process of contact with oneself, staccato also unveils its presence, through the aspect of being clear, being true to oneself. Being there as one is, showing up with vulnerability, which is at the same time one's own power – the uniqueness of each person which sets boundaries anchored in the flowing that grounds and connects. It is possible to partner from that space, there is no need to stay up to what the other is doing.

I was avoiding people with energies that were too different from mine, because I did not want to change my own rhythm to meet them wherever they were, or where I supposed I was expected to be. There was a resistance to different energetic levels, I wanted to stay in my movement, at maximum with people in a pace comfortable for me. 'Meet the other in your own flow'; I would say to myself. For that I had to find my own flow, being true to myself. At the same time, or maybe exactly because of that, being open for learning from the interaction, allowing myself to be transformed by the experience. Recognizing boundaries, connections, resistances, the eager to compete, or to step up. I tried to put myself in a position which I thought was necessary for exchange, but that was energy draining and dissatisfactory, for both partners I could guess. For me for sure. Impressive how the realization of this building up to meet others and the awareness of the pointless of it released tensions of protective concern, barriers, avoidance. When I am not connected with myself, I have difficulties connecting. I would be dancing with someone, and did not pay attention to their movement, their flow. After this realization, partnering became much more satisfying, fluid, with less tension and constraint. However, this is a continuous exercise; partnering unequivocally triggers new feelings and insights, making each time anew.

The memory and learnings from this experience inspired my plan to address partnering in the fifth session. Also, the idea was that participants could explore the observation of feelings in relation to someone else, practiced in the fourth meeting, in person. Identifying uneasiness or resistance can release barriers and allow tapping into the energy stirred by observation and getting in contact with the spring of love, in a process that impels one to keep on dancing.

What inspired me to tap into the energy contained in pain was an experience I also had on the dance floor. I had menstrual cramps. This pain usually drags me down. I stuff it with chocolate, lots of chocolate, and coffee, admonishing my uterus and the fact of being a woman, and try to keep on doing whatever I am doing until that redemptive moment I can lay in my

bed, hold a blanket and cry for the pain in the world reverberating in my guts. I started to look into it with a different perspective when in sitting meditation, because I would not be able to focus on my breath. After fighting against it and failing, I released and meditated on the waves of energy that ebb and flow through my body, a bonfire with flames dancing relentlessly. However, that day on the dance floor the pain did not resemble a bonfire. I felt more like an iceberg, cold, heavy, limbs cringing from my pitiful condition. I wanted home, but I was there on a dance floor, in a different city with no familiar faces. 'Ok', I thought to myself, 'let's move, if not through it, at least with it'. And through movement, carefully rocking myself through the rhythms, power flourished from the seat of pain. But this is different from the power derived from influencing or oppressing others. There is a different quality to this power, as a strength that comes from within. It resembles anger, and it unfolds in the same course as anger does. It originates somewhere in the center, deep down in the guts, and unfolds, liberating energy that ride through my veins, feeling like concentrated waves of strength. Strength that is not tension; there is no excessive contraction in the muscles, but a strength that comes from giving in, from riding with pain. Like anger, this power also leads to action, but it is less abrupt, it is not aggressive. It spreads through the limbs, reaching hands and feet, leaning to movement that is joined with awareness. It feels empowering, gives confidence. As it spreads through the limbs and hands, it also roots firmly in the ground. It spreads with love, a grounded love – a balance between compassion and equanimity, generating energy that moves beyond the restriction of pain.

With inspirations from these experiences, I planned this fifth session, which took place on a Monday, because the following week would be Thanksgiving break, and some people had travelling plans. Besides that, people were also really occupied with exams and deadlines. This meeting was held in a different room, a theater hall, because the other room was booked for a different activity. This place was a black box, with a high ceiling and ropes pending from it.

Handcrafted outfits for an upcoming presentation were arranged in the corners. The first person to arrive was Caitlin, a classmate from conflict studies, who had showed interest in the meetings, but who could not join on Fridays. We waited for a while, to see if other people would come, and Lenore and Trina arrived. Trina arrived and quit because she was not feeling very well, and later on Sho joined as well. I was concerned if the plan for the day would work, because we were four, including me. So, we were just two partners and I would need to simultaneously coordinate the music and time. We started late. I trusted Ravel's *Bolero* (1928) and Bach's *Cello Suite number one* (n.d.) would resonate with the energy of the room and our particular dynamics.

We started laying down, 'feeling gravity, feeling the weight of the body. Breathing in, feeling the resistance of the floor against our backs, breathing out, giving in to earth's force of attraction. Slowly scanning the body, checking in with each part, feeling if there was some tension, constriction, stiffness or pain. To those parts you encounter with pain, bring your loving attention, and feel it. Notice if you can slowly move that part, massage it with your own body. Take your time to be with it. Now identify if there is any source of movement, in that part… in other parts. Follow that source, moving your body gently, stretching, spreading vitality to the whole body'.

After moving freely for a while, we divided in partners to explore relationality with an exercise of following hands based on Theatre of the Oppressed, which Boal called Colombian Hypnosis (Boal 2005: 51). Basically, one person moves a hand in front of other person, who follows the guidance of her partner's hand. The proposal is to explore movements in the vertical, horizontal, laterality, going on the ground, and the many facets of movement. Also, speed, distance, command, response, leadership, following, taking care, and challenging. Both partners took a turn leading.

We changed partners to do the dancing touch exercise. I learned this exercise many years ago in a modern dance workshop - one person, the dancer, stands with her eyes closed, and the other person is the choreographer, whose gentle touches in the body of the dancer are stimulus for movement. The dancer feels pressure, intensity, speed, and direction, and responds accordingly. The choreographer gently explores different possibilities of commands and movement, very gently and slowly in the beginning, and a bit faster as the duo progresses, in a way that creates a dance. After changing roles, we moved to the last exercise, an adaptation from Boal's sequence of sculptor and model called Modelling (Boal 2005: 136). Basically, one person is the clay, the other is the sculptor. The sculptor thinks of a recent situation that generated unpleasant feelings, and sculpts that feeling with the clay, by showing the posture and the facial expression through the clay by gentle manipulation. The clay holds the position. When the sculptor is finished with the clay, she looks attentively to it and feels how it resonates. After that, she gives the clay a sound, a word, or a sentence, which the clay will say when touched. 'Touch the clay and hear to the sound while observing the posture, paying attention to the sensual and emotional responses it generates. Walk around the room and see and hear other clays. Thank your clay, clays shake their bodies and stretch possible soreness'. After changing roles, I invited them to observe their bodies, and feel if there was any pain, discomfort, stiffness, or any sign of emotional response, like stomach churning, grinding teeth or clenched fists. 'In this last round of moving freely, move with this sensation, feeling, or emotion. Let it guide your movements, dance with it, and then let it go'.

### 4.5.2 Interviews

In this part, I bring comments related to partnering from different participants, even though some of them were not there this specific day. Nevertheless, their comments regarding the partnering theme throughout the semester shed light on some of the aspects related to this session. Sho shared his impressions of partnering, saying that:

> I think in general I like to interact when I dance, in some way, but sometimes it is not clear if that person wants their own reality, I don't want to disturb what they are creating for themselves. Although I think I enjoy the connection when it happens, but I don't necessarily wanna disturb (…), so I mean, but the nice thing with dance is that you can kind of see if there is openness to interact, and if no you just keep dancing, and that is sort of a dance on its own… like seeing what is going on in your surroundings… I don't know if that makes sense…

We laughed at his image, and it made sense. I keep on thinking about this image of the many dances – each individual dance, the partners' dance, the collective dance of the group. Meanwhile, he continued:

> That reminds me what kind of body of water are you right now [an exercise we did on a different session], and trying to interact with them… try not to lose a sense of what you are, so it is kind of like that, how much do you interact, how you interact, how does that feel for you, how does that interaction feel for you… I guess if I am interacting with somebody and I can see that I am making them less of what they want to be that doesn't make me feel good, so I feel like partnering is great and fun, but there is a time and a place to partner…

There is a time and a place to partner; and it can be a very vivid sensation when you grasp willingness of the person next to you to partner or not. When asked about moments of discomfort, comfort, or insight, Sho commented the sculpting exercise and how that was an insightful experience for him:

> Well remember the time it was only me, and you, and Caitlin, and Lenore (…) I sculpted Caitlin… she had her hands on her face, and she was saying 'oh my god, not you!' that was what I told her to say… 'not you, not you… you too, you too, not you…' basically it was (…) [a situation in which] I felt powerless, I felt… I don't know if I was betrayed, or shocked, I don't know what that was… and for me to be like: 'Paula, (…), I am so shocked, I am so powerless', you know, at least for me in that moment it was not something I could talk about…

Some experiences are difficult to name, understand, talk about. This process is a journey, which needs also to be felt and sensed. Other participants also commented on how not having to name or explain the experience from the beginning helped them to dive deeper into its meanings. Expressing it through the body helps give it a form, which can then inform and be transformed:

But she in the sculpture, when she was doing it, I was: 'ok, now I can see myself in you, and that is enough… I understood how I felt, I have seen myself in you, period, let's move on!'… whereas if I was like: 'oh, Paula, can we talk about how (…) [I felt betrayed]'… you know… there is not much more we can talk about… there is not depth to it, cause we are shocked, period. You know… but like the way Caitlin did it, it was nice, because I see it in an image, I see the image of it, it helps me understand myself better, and let's move on, let's keep going.

I followed his description of the scene remembering lively the position in which he modelled Caitlin, and how my body resonated with that. At that moment, the sculpture made me feel lost, aghast. I interpreted her covered eyes as avoidance to see something that is expected to be overwhelming. When I touched her and heard the sentence, I felt frustrated and powerless, which I sensed as a coldness in the chest. That was the sensation I took to the dance floor afterwards. Hearing his account on it during our conversation, I could still feel it there.

Lenore also shared how dancing with a new person was both exciting and challenging, because "her skill was a challenge to me to be more conscious about how I move my body and more intentional, so, there was self-consciousness but it wasn't bad". She detailed that it was actually, "stimulating, it was very stimulating to dance with a new partner, because I couldn't anticipate what her reactions would be, had sort of to figure out from her body what she was thinking, not from what I knew about her, as expressed through her body, so it was another… within the spirit of the exercise too". Referring to the hands exercise, she commented that "(…) that whole session stretched me the most, because of being conscious of my body because other people were there, so I think I wanted to do my movements more dance-like".

Lenore's description reminded me of my experience on the dance floor with partnering, described above, regarding the willingness to bring my energy or mood to a different level based on what I imagined the expectations would be. This energy is not good or bad per se, as Lenore said, it can be stimulating, insightful, encouraging to try different things and have a different approach. It is draining, however, when the shift to something supposedly more likable

is simply a mask to conceal what one does not want to share. So, the impact of these energies depends on how one engages with them, and it is different in each encounter, in each moment.

Tony and I were talking about how wellbeing feels, when he detailed how dance contributed to his sense of wellbeing throughout the semester, and pointed out several aspects of partnering:

> Thinking about the sessions and the activities pushed me to reflect and to connect with myself in ways that were largely independent of the other people in the room. You know, every now and then it would be like: 'find a partner, and do this'. But a lot of it would be just internal embodiment and the reminder that, in terms of physical presence, that we carry our own selves. We do have the power to do things like separate observation and judgment, to be aware of feelings and emotions and to sit with then, and not necessarily label them as good, bad otherwise. I think it was those types of threads and the design throughout the semester that were meaningful to me, and reminded me that my sense of wellbeing and sense of wellness of being happy, sad, feeling whatever I might be feeling is real, authentic, it's my own. And that in most kind of everyday situations I do have the agency and the power to choose how I react, you know, to other people.

The understanding of the present moment provided by deep observation becomes a great source of power. Power to be vulnerable, to see different perspectives, to choose how to react. As I listened to Tony, I thought of the freedom which stems from that source. He continued:

> So I think wellbeing for me felt like looking in the mirror and seeing myself during sessions and saying: 'ok, today you're really tired, and you almost did not make it, and that's ok', or saying: 'today feels a lot of joy', and part of it is internal for you and part of it is the experience with other people, and that is great and it will happen here, and hopefully will happen again, but a sense of non-attachment to those and knowing that these feelings and states will come and go, felt like a meaningful part of the whole experience, I suppose.

Feeling what it feels was also pointed out by Katie as a commitment she had, in an especially challenging year for her. Not necessarily pursuing happiness as a goal, but experiencing emotions as they come and engaging the body rigorously in that – that was the challenge. "So, to be able to be in that courageous circle of people who were willing to go into

that exploration was really a gift". While partnering may be challenging sometimes, the support

of the group is extremely important as we dive into the depths of our vulnerability.

Silvia commented that the partnering was:

> Nice, because you could feel the connection and disconnection, when you said
> like, imagine that you need to be attracted to someone, and you repulse to
> someone, you could almost feel that, like the group together… and then look for
> a partner, at the beginning it is weird because you are not used to that person, or
> something, but then it ends up… because everyone is doing it, so you end up
> connecting with the person, so it was … the group was… I didn't expect that
> group, (…) I thought it would be the opposite, more first years than second years
> (…) it was good, I think, we connected in the dance, because of dance, so it was
> cool.

I then pointed out that other people commented on how it was different dancing with

different people, and asked her if she shared that experience. She answered that:

> Yeah, the good thing about the group was that we were really different, that is
> why maybe I didn't imagine that, so we all dance in a really different way, and
> this way you learn from people as well, you know how they are feeling, even if
> they dance differently than you or… yeah. (…) I think that connects us because
> we are all in the same level, we are all here dancing, and that is all we have… so…
> it was good.

We are all here dancing, regardless of style, body shape, ability, skills, memories,

history. And that is all we have. That sounded freeing, and daunting at the same time. Silvia

continued:

> (…) The thing that we didn't have any directions like steps we had to follow,
> dancing, because we were all really used to that, you go a class and that means,
> a,b,c… you can feel maybe vulnerable because of that, you don't have any
> direction, just follow your rhythms, and it may get people nervous… and it is true,
> sometimes I felt awkward, like what will they think if I do this step, but then you
> see the faces of everyone and we are all thinking the same, [laughter] you can feel
> that, that was what I was saying, we were all in the same level, so, that was good,
> because you felt awkward but you feel everyone is feeling the same, so…

Susan's words echoed in my mind: "solidarity in being weird". Solidarity in being

different, in supporting each other in being ourselves. Asked about safety and vulnerability, she

commented that what helped her to reconnect to the dance after a moment of self-consciousness

was "(…) to see others dancing, realizing that we are all humans and we all dance, it doesn't matter how…"

Another interesting reflection on the energies of partnering was shared by Sarah, who observed the manifold reactions to different people on the dance floor:

> Sometimes it happened; I would dance with someone, and they would draw out of me something… I don't know from where, like… 'oh! what just happened?' I would just start to dance… you know… part of me that I didn't expect, or I didn't plan on, and suddenly it came out, and we both were surprised, but it was one of these discoveries: 'oh!' You know, dance is really powerful, and it can do things that you completely don't expect, and it is beautiful!' In the sense that this interaction is really active, and goes really deep, and is very different from our daily dialogue…

I asked her if she remembered details in the bodily sensations provoked by partnering, to what she described:

> Yeah, it is like a wave, these moments when I was drawn out it was like a wave, a wave of emotions, or sensations, a wave of something that came from within, and my body spoke it into the space, and the person knew that there is an intense interaction, there that was my reaction to the person, that the person somehow did something that triggered this wave in me and I sort of… bringing it into the space and it was... you know… acting something crazy, or happy, or doing some fun things, but it was a dialogue, it was a reaction to that person… hum… and that was sort of... completely new, and I was more and more comfortable dancing with more people, there was still people, I don't know… (…) For example, once you had us going in pairs, and we kept alternating pairs and going across different expression. And what was interesting about that to me was that because I was changing partners all the time I could sense the difference while I was interacting with different people, and it was like, how I had this wall with some people, and there was nothing, and with some people, there is a flow of energy, and with some people there is complete connection, and with some people there is just from here and there, something comes across.

The body speaks into the space, in a dialogue of continuous waves of interpenetrating energies and meanings. My experience is that this kind of spontaneous dance tricks our filters. Like Jen observed, I cannot really decide or choose what I am going to expose as it is all already there, even if I try to fake it, or to create my own bubble. The many levels in which dialogue takes place - movement, energy, intention, eye contact, vibe – reveal more than the ego can

sensor, and the different vibrations may generate connections or disconnections, or varied combinations of those, depending on the day.

> So, it was really interesting sort of watching these differences, and I don't understand what it depends on … I am pretty sure that it depends on the state of the relationship, but I don't think it is necessarily the most important part… I think it is just the feel, I don't know what it is… (…) as if you had a third or sixth sense for barriers, or protection, or… (…) yeah… that was interesting, on its own... how it can go from feeling empty to completely connecting with the person and completely sharing, and yeah, and once it happened to me that I danced, (…) there was an instruction of 'share with the person something of your life, a memory of yours', something about those lines, and I shared, and I started to cry… and again that was the first time ever when an emotion so strong came because I was dancing out my life… and that was like: 'oh my goodness, what just happened?' You know, and tears suddenly come out… and I think… and I just… that was something reciprocal, we sort of danced very seriously, this is where I am in my life (…)

This is where I am in my life, with my joys and my sorrows, with all the complexity a fully lived life has. And it is from this place and in this moving body that I can engage with my emotions, transform my conflicts, and unfold peaces.

> Later on in our conversation, Sarah added in a general remark to the partnering:

> You know… I just appreciated that state of heart when you are not afraid and you are there in the moment with that person, and you just listen, and you don't judge, and you are in the moment… and then move on. You know, almost this is closest to true life that it gets, and it is amazing to share it with people and experience it! So going to it I had no idea dance could do it, I had no idea that dance can create that space, and I experienced it as really amazing! and it is hard to explain it to anyone, it is really hard to convey to friends, and I was even wondering… (…) I think I struggle with the idea of… it is so valuable and precious, but it may look crazy from the outside, that it may be hard for people who enter that space because it looks crazy, I struggle with that. I don't know, yeah, I don't know where that is coming from… you know, because it is a barrier to very precious space… anyway…

Her comment about how crazy we may look dancing distracted me to Sarajevo, but the Sarajevo in my head, because I have never been to the actual city. The Sarajevo in my head is the place of the story of Vedran Smailovic, an internationally renowned cellist who had refused to leave Sarajevo during the war, recounted by Lederach in his book, *The Moral Imagination* (2005). As the story unfolds, Smailovic was playing his cello at the site of a massacre, and when

inquired if he was crazy, he answered: "Playing music is not crazy. Why don't you go and ask those people if they are not crazy, shelling Sarajevo while I sit here playing my cello" (Lederach 2005: 156). This story repeats often in my head, almost like a mantra, because some people think, and sometimes they almost convince me, that this combination of dance, peace, and conflict is crazy. But this kind of experience, as shared in these lines by the participants, enlightens my way, confirming that dance is transformative. Anyway, too much normalcy is also boring.

### 4.5.3 Reflections

Exploring the realms of body and mind allows a deeper understanding of the different energies flowing in us. Delving into them also evidences that their differentiation is more of a pedagogical approach than a sensual reality: I can find awareness in my fingers, my guts can reveal memories, insights can spark from the space created through breath, which also reveals perception of ancestry, belonging to the earth, and spiritual connections. Though I may think and feel all these, it cannot be proved as a thing in itself. It is only by communicating it to other people that it may be cognitively apprehended.

Nevertheless, it just makes senses, in its meaning of enlivening the senses, if experienced. The way to touch it is direct experience, since "whatever surfaces on the exterior is an expression of this inner energy of thought or feeling, never the thought or feeling itself" (Dietrich 2012: 254). It is an expression of this energy, which is also sensed by others, not only thought of or analyzed. The communication of these energies happens in diverse ways, and may be sensed differently. I can identify some of the qualities of the energies of a relationship in myself, by looking into them, and even invite that person to a dance in order to refine my perception and move with it. In the discussion about phenomenology, it has also been argued about the inescapable affiliation between one's body and others, and how the observance of other's movements resonates with one's own, creating associative empathy (Abram 1996: 37).

It is not by chance that shifts in perspective change the situation, as Trina and Tony observed. When body and mind are not dissociated, and a change in perspective stems from a place of truth rooted in the body, it is communicated, even if not directly in words. As Abram described, "the gesture is spontaneous and immediate. It is not an arbitrary sign that we mentally attach to a particular emotion or feeling; rather, the gesture is the bodying-forth of that emotion into the world (…)" (Abram 1996: 74).

How does the expression of the energies of thought and emotion play in direct encounter? How is the dynamic of the energies that stem from the relationships in daily life or on the dance floor, like? Participants commented on how the people present were important for a sense of safety and support, and also how the energies circulating between them had different textures in different moments, and triggered different responses. The concept of mirror neurons may shed light on these impressions: "when humans perceive actions made by other people, it automatically activates the same brain regions that regulate one's own similar actions (…)" (Fogel 2013: 207). These neurons that get activated are called mirror neurons, and fire upon observation. "That neural activity will in turn generate efferent signals to the muscles that lead us to make similar, imitative movements" (Fogel 2013: 207).

Practice, then, helps creating "experience dependent neural pathways" that are incorporated in the person's own body schema self-awareness (Fogel 2013: 208). In dance classes, this resembles the moment the 'dance enters the body': that freeing moment when I do not copy or think about the choreography or what I am doing anymore, but movements become my own. Curiously, this is the moment when breath aligns with movement, which becomes more spontaneous and feelings stem from the motion. That moment when you enjoy each step and can be present in the vibe. This is also when I can start sensing others and the space around, because until then, my attention is focused and not peripheric. It is only when attention shifts

to oceanic perception that I can sense the waves of energies of people dancing around me, and if on stage, also from the audience.

Through knowing the inner flow of energy and the interrelational aspect emphasized by the mirror neurons, it is possible to explore in a broader sense our responsivity:

> As we practice exercising the creative tension between breathing and bodily movement, we feel our own capacity to respond to cues, whether internal or external, with movements of our own making. Sensing our own difference provides us with resources for discerning and responding to differences in and among others. We know that we can find responses by moving differently – by imitating gestures, and recreating in our physical consciousness the shapes of thoughts and emotions as they appear to us (LaMothe 2006: 229).

Tapping into what makes us similar and what makes us different through movement highlights our ability of re-creation, of inspiring our energetic flow with the rippled waves received, generating something else than what was before. Difference does not make less of us, it enriches our creation of alternatives and therefore our processes of ever-becoming. This reveals also the social implications that derive from the concept of mirror neurons, related to the aspect of empathy: "(…) through our mirror neurons, we actually feel the emotions, movements, and intentions of others. Researchers describe this natural empathy as part of the social brain, a neural circuitry that connects us intimately in every human encounter" (Kornfield 2009: 26).

Connected in each encounter as we are, through all our senses, breath, bodies, neurons, and minds, our presence gives the encounter a completely different quality. When not aware of the flow of energies in which each of these senses take part, or when this flow is confused by projections, memories, and expectations, the encounter becomes habit and the touch, mechanic. In this sense, an inner connection and presence qualifies relationships, because the more centered and in contact with oneself, the more aware of interconnectedness to others and the easier it is to tune-in and refine these relationships (Kabat-Zinn 1990: 223).

It is important to emphasize that this centeredness is a place of authenticity, and not a place of righteousness or a deceptive certainty that life is settled. It can be from a place of our different centers, even from scatter, if it is mindful and responsive, not reactive. But what is interesting is that this interaction works in feedback loops, or better said, as the interpenetration of concentric circles in water, emanating and receiving at the same moment. With presence and empathy, this process may inspire in a way that connection to others touches deeper our own authenticity. Being open to those waves of empathetic exchange requires acknowledging that it is not only comfort that derives from the encounter of the waves, but also tension between identification and differentiation: "Identification basically connects, binds, reflects, or resounds. Differentiation brings novelty, uniqueness, otherness, distance, separation, strangeness (…)" (Fischman 2009: 48).

The deeper one goes into exploring one's layers and feeling in one's own body, the more open and resonant these layers become, revealing the energetic vibration in what may seem rigid and solid boundaries when untapped. The perspective on the persona as a constellation of energy (Dietrich 2012: 242), allows then a twofold approach to empathy. On one perspective, empathy may be understood as putting oneself in another person's shoes, as the saying goes. It means, recognizing her feelings as one's own. On another, as energetic communication flowing and being acknowledged:

> If you see things in terms of fixed entities, then you have to reject some experiences. If you see the world as energy, then at worst you will see energy temporarily locked into limiting or negative patterns. However, you will see that energy as a resource, a potential which can be liberated (Vessantara 1993: 212).

In this sense, violence can be understood as an unskillful use of that energy, which has been stuck and locked. When unbridled and engaged based on hatred, it causes harm, destruction, and deprives of freedom. When that energy is tapped from a place of love and authenticity, its enormous potential has the power to generate impactful and deep changes,

invigorating the senses for energetic resonance and undergirding relationship ties. The quality

of the skill used to tap into those pockets of energy depends on the awareness of the moment

and the practice of touching these energies derived from repeated experience. In other words,

from the permanent experience of knowing and feeling oneself in the ever-unfolding present:

> Only somebody who consciously feels herself/himself, can be conscious about the
> suffering of others and will not do violence to them. It is not about a moral or
> ascetic suppression of those affects deemed negative or uncivilized, but about a
> conscious and acknowledged balance that is perceived as love, empathy, charity,
> or Agape (Dietrich 2012: 241).

Conscious feeling makes it possible to identify a concentration of energies and also

places where energy is lacking, and redirect them in order to have a more balanced flow.

Balance also applies to the exchange of energy, and knowing a healthy dynamic between

receiving and giving. Furthermore, drawing from Roth, it also relates to the textures of energies,

balancing anger, fear, joy, sadness, and compassion and their qualities of defense, protection,

uplifting, release, and unity. Balance implies unattachment, being able to let go of something

when it does not correspond to the moment anymore. And "movement is the antidote to

attachment" (Roth 1998a: 189). Dancing can be a practice of unattachment, because it impels

transformation. It taps into the spring of energy, enabling continuous inspiration. In LaMothe's

words:

> Dancing builds energy in us. It builds the sense of vitality and power that provides
> us with a perspective from which to reflect critically and creatively on all aspects
> of culture. Dancing develops in us the energy needed to 'make room in our hearts
> for every kind of understanding' – in short, the energy needed to love (2006: 99).

Channeling this energy into movement and through movement clears the pathways

toward action and passion, tapping into sources of energy, which floods body, mind, feelings,

and emotions and blooms in love - love of self, love of life. This love of becoming, which is

not static, but changing and open, impels a power which does not stem from solidity, but from

vulnerability. It is important to differentiate power and its application. Power can be used to

perpetuate the same situation in time, solidifying it, and constraining flow. In turn, power which stems from vulnerability derives its force from the alternatives of becoming. In this sense, the first one rests upon domination and violence, the second one rests upon freedom (Koppensteiner 2009: 110). This power bred from the flow of energy cast by movement, deriving from vulnerability, from being open to ever-becoming, offers the freedom to change ourselves into as many possibilities as the moment presents, increased by the pollination of the encounter.

## 4.6 Opposites, Shadow, and Tension

### 4.6.1 Sixth session

This was already the second-to-last session and I could not believe it. Although the tiredness of the semester was already showing its accumulated effects, time had passed so fast. At the same time, it felt as a proper time for closing that cycle. It was also time to use the songs I had previously asked them for during the semester. I had planned to do an exercise with likes and dislikes. My intent was manifold: to provide a space to acknowledge our likes and dislikes, to understand the reasons for liking or disliking something, and to have a second chance to experiment with what we dislike and to see if those feelings changed with movement. On the other hand, I also wanted to play around the dualisms of liking and disliking, observing attachments and the relativity of them, exploring the possibility of upholding them in tension.

Moreover, I also wanted to observe understanding and empathy. Music is not only personal, but also social and cultural, and the reasons for the irritation it causes can be explored through those lenses as well. I had asked myself how it would be to prepare for a peacebuilding mission in a different region, for example, by getting acquainted and dancing to the diverse music production of that country and region, from traditional to the latest trend. And this can be experienced not only in an analytical level, but also the bodily level. I have always been

curious about the different musical tastes of different generations, why some songs speak to the soul of some people and others do not.

For that, I asked each participant to indicate a song they liked and a song they disliked. They were curious with what would be the application of that, but I still did not know at that point how I would frame the exercise. All I knew is that we would possibly dance to the songs' rhythms. I thought of different approaches, always taking care to identify if enough respect was being paid for the element brought to the dance floor. The idea was not to execrate the songs, but to offer a space to sense our likes and dislikes more profoundly, going beyond the initial resistance to observe how that resistance is sensed, how it plays in the body, feelings, and thoughts, and also getting a sense of why it plays the way it does. From there, people could take either statement they felt was convenient, being it keeping their aversion to the song, being neutral to it, or even liking it, but the important element is that the causes where known and the statement was conscious and personal.

To my surprise, some people had difficulties indicating songs they disliked, or picking just one. Two participants indicated heavy metal as their disliked style in general. When I started checking the songs to prepare the playlist and draw a final plan for the day, I had the challenge of choosing one song of heavy metal to include in the dislike list. I am not the biggest fan of this style, but the songs I knew I particularly liked. I decided to twist my approach then: to enter the universe of likes and dislikes through the dichotomy between shadow and light. And heavy metal songs are great for exploring the shadow. So, this may sound quite odd for some, but the playlist of that day was composed of the instrumental Orchestra version of *No Leaf Clover*, by Metallica (Hetfield and Ulrich 1999), *Fear of the Dark*, by Iron Maiden (Harris 1992), *Enter Sandman* by Metallica (Hetfield Ulrich and Hammett 1991), and *Aerials* by System of a Down (Malakian and Tankian 2002). We started on the floor, laying down. As the end of the semester approached, I sensed people were getting more tired and imagined it would

take longer to become present in the here and now moment. So, this was a way of getting really grounded. 'Inhale, exhale. The next time you inhale, hold your breath and tense your body. Tense your hands, face, toes, limbs. Then release the air and the tension. Give your tension into the floor'. We did that three times, and from there started moving, stretching.

From there, I invited them to 'observe your state today… now… are you light or shadow? Embody that feeling, explore texture and senses of that state… Find a partner, explore the energies, rhythms, and movements of each opposite… Thank your partner… now by yourself, explore if you are yes or if you are no. Find a partner which is the opposite of what you chose. Explore, feel resistance, feel proximity, feel what happens. Acknowledge and take responsibility for your feelings, while observing how it interacts, if it morphs or shifts with interaction. What happens?'. This exercise was inspired in an activity described by Lyon (1981: 49). We continued: 'Light, dark, yes, no, like, dislike… Keeping that quality of presence, that observation, we will enter into the songs that the group does not like. I invite you to observe how it feels, notice the sensations, the responses to the triggers, explore whatever is there in your dislike. Maybe you even like the song the other dislike. Or they like the song you dislike. Whatever comes up, move with it'. In this playlist, there was, among others, a Brazilian funk, Drake *Hotline Bling* (Graham, Jefferies, and Thomas 2015), Justin Bieber's *Sorry* (Bieber et al. 2015) and *Love Yourself* (Bieber, Sheeran, and Blanco 2015). Then we moved to the songs the group liked. The invitation was to 'keep that same quality of presence… sense what comes up, feel reactions and responses'. At some point, we just let go of attention and joined the rhythm.

Dancing to the heavy metal songs was powerful. We had explored this kind of beat just once before this meeting, with one song in the third session. While the lyrics repeated about dark and fear, there was an element of release and freedom in delving into it, which - coupled with the highly energetic beat of the drums - was regenerative.

**4.6.2 Interviews**

In our conversation, Lenore and I were talking about partnering, and the insights that come from that, when I asked her about her experience that day. She was very curious beforehand on how the songs would be used, and I kept it secret – also because I still did not have it clear. So, she shared her impressions on the exercise of opposites:

> Oh, yeah, the music that I chose was 'you used to call me on my cell phone' [*Hotline Bling*] from Drake, and I chose it because to me that message gets on my nerves so much, because to me it is this whinny man who used to know someone when she was a certain way, and now she is finding out who she is outside of him, and with other people, that are not the people he approves… it is not like: 'I love you and I miss you', it is like: 'you used to be a good girl, and now you are not a good girl'. It is very judgmental, and I always listen to it and I think: 'oh, I hate that song!'. And Trina and I danced together ... making fun of the lyrics, hum… not making fun, but like, he would say something that we found offensive, and we would make gestures like rejecting what he was saying, and that felt really good to me, to be able to resist.

In the beginning of the 'dislike' playlist, I felt a dragging on the dance floor, a resistance to engage with the songs, or a disconnect – it seemed the songs could not incite movement. Perhaps both were happening simultaneously, mounting to an apathy, a boredom, a lack of will. At some point, however, discomfort had escalated to a point that started to generate sparks of energy here and there. It also coincided with some encounters on the dance floor. Regarding the ability to resist, Lenore affirmed:

> And I think I couldn't, I can't imagine doing that when the song came up in a club... or something… not that I go club dancing, but in a party (…), randomly; just me... (…), dancing my dislike for that song, and everybody around me was… you know, kind into it, or seemingly into it. But the framework gave permission to sort of having resistance to the message of the song, and kind of was facilitating me finding Trina… well, I knew Trina too, I knew she probably didn't like that song too, but facilitated me finding Trina and sort of doing that resistance together.

Her comment kept me thinking that community as container not only enfolds in love, but also provides the depth to find collective voice. In that depth, it is also possible to find the power to express resistance toward what is seen as inadequate or unhealthy. And from the

stream of voice and power, from the establishment of a dialogue, compassion flows. Lenore continued:

> Once I have been able to sort of dance off my frustration and anger, once I danced off my rejection of him saying those things, I was able to have compassion for maybe some of the hurt that was behind it. So, by rejecting, through dance, the actual, literal messages of he saying: 'you were a good girl, and now you are not a good girl', and saying 'no! this is an illegitimate message, and we are not accepting it!' And I think also because we have chosen, like I chose that, so I knew it was going to be played, it was a consent act - so again, in a party, and it comes on, and we are supposed to like it, right… so because I think I chose and entered the space with it, and I knew it was coming, and I knew I disagreed with it and it was ok to disagree with it.

I kept following her thread with the idea of voice and power. Tapping into voice and the power to establish boundaries while engaging in dialogue provides a depth into which the other can be seen and can see herself, which in turn may offer a deeper look into oneself as well. In attentive dialogue, our mirroring capacities lay the floor for empathy to arise:

> I could then, and then I was expressing my disagreement with his messages, and I could kind of start hearing his hurt, well, the character's hurt behind the things he was saying. Like, he is not really saying 'you are a bad girl', he is saying: 'I really miss you, you used to call me and now I see you doing things with other people, and you don't need me anymore, and that sucks for me'. So, I don't know, being a mediator, or, not really a mediator, because I felt I was in the conflict, he is talking to me, right, so finally being able to listen with more compassion to the underlying human needs or whatever behind the song… and yeah, so I think it was a good exercise because it lets you kind of… but I think it was important, I couldn't have gotten there first, I needed to shake off the nastiness of the song first. I think there was another song too, another guy who was whining about something...

The playlist was still fresh in my memory, what allowed me to imagine the song she was referring to. I took a guess: 'Justin Bieber?', she nodded her head, confirming:

> And I think I was able to hear that too, I think I said this after… how I as a woman, and other women, are expected to form the emotional labor of listening to men's aggrieved of entitled feelings about women with compassion, without being able to express first what I feel about it, or to say: 'this part is illegitimate, of what you say. You can't expect a person to give up their personhood! But, I hear you about this other part…'. It is oft-times, when you do the emotional labor of hearing, you are not expected to… I am not expected to give my opinion, I am expected to just take it and sort of nod and give empathy. And that's hard, and I think then when you have music all around, that was also – I think - asking women to do the same

thing, to listen with compassion to this man's feeling about this woman, without this woman having a voice, or ability to say anything, so we were kind of… I enjoyed pushing back by having a voice, the voice of the other side of it… like: 'yeah, I am going out, and I am having fun, bye!'.

I resonated with her account on expectations in terms of providing empathy. It is often understood – and expected, especially from women – that this listening is completely absorbent and coalescing. But that is not being authentic if there are aspects of the dialogue that generate dissonance. Avoidance of addressing difference can be as harmful as relentlessly emphasizing it. The question that comes up then is how to own that voice in a way that is compassionate while sustaining disagreement. Lenore addressed this question as she proceeded her reflection:

> And then it opens up a space to make it a little bit less draining, of making the emotional labor of listening. It is not that the emotional labor of listening is a bad thing, it is a good think, but I sort of brought back home the idea that we need to create boundaries for ourselves when we are doing that emotional labor. And it is better when you choose to enter into it, and it is better also when I also have outlets for my own voice, including an adversarial voice. Not just the listening, or accepting receiving self, but also the voicing, disagreeing self too, because oft-times me as a woman and as peacebuilder have practiced listening, listening and listening - and I am good at it, but I think I have been building more healthy boundaries this year and practicing using my voice, and realizing that peacebuilding is not only receiving and listening, it is also using my voice for justice.

I was amazed by her image of finding outlets for an adversarial voice, and using voice for justice. It made me think that, in my case, the challenge of finding voice entails also allowing that voice to stand out and accessing energy to sustain it in dialogue. She paused to ask if I had any point or question about that part, because there was a point she wanted to make about the whole experience. So, before she moved on, I asked how was dancing to the songs the group liked.

> Oh, it was good! I didn't like some of them, [laughter], some would have been songs that I dislike, but it felt ok, I felt like, because I think that all goes back to the framing, again, which was… this was not just a party when music comes on and I am just dancing to my individual likes and dislikes. So just as the song being put in the dislike session, gave me kind of permission to find other people who disliked it too and to express my dislike of it, where that would not have felt comfortable or as comfortable if it would have been in a party. So, listening to the

like session gave me encouragement to find what I appreciated about the song, and listen to that, so, it was fine.

Her comment made me think about the importance of the frame. Others have also addressed how the frame allows and disallows. By inviting to an activity, it necessarily put boundaries to it, while the attitude which conducts it sets the pace for the exploration. Some of the reflections shared in the interviews emphasized for me how palpable the responsibility of the facilitator is in holding a safe space for exploration.

Trina also commented on their partnering, responding to the expectations raised by the songs. We were talking about the transitioning from the space of the dance back to the errands of everyday life, when she linked that to this exercise.

> I loved, loved the day we did the music we like and the music that we didn't like…I loved! Now, I hate to listen to music that I don't like, it physically hurts! Except that the way that Lenore and I were able to do together… (…) she and I engaged that one song, in a way that was so empowering and restorative, on a personal but also on an interpersonal, and almost on a restorative way. So, the song was Drake's song [*Hotline Bling*], and we just feeling like… so disempowered, and she and I just took back that power together over the song… It was so healing and restorative, and we were like screaming obscenities at the song… it was so freeing, it was just fun, also fun, and fun is also important, but past fun, it is freeing and transforming actually, and I loved it!

It was fun indeed. And empowering. I wondered if the feeling of restoration was related to the waves of energetic power striding through the body bringing warmth and intention to numbness. So, I asked her how this power made itself perceptible, to what she answered:

> Well, in this case it was because both of us were experiencing it in the same time, and I knew it because we were together, we were interacting with it together… I could see what she was doing, I don't know if we were pairing up, or no, we just found each other, because the both of us just hate that song so much… Hum… and so it is perceptible because I knew I wasn't alone, and this was exception, because we shared this thing, we shared this response to an outside stimulus, almost, and our response was so similar, and yet, mine was mine and hers was hers, but it was so shared, that it was able to come together. And a shared response that was also the response to the unwanted stimulus… and it was empowering, because then I could say: "I don't need to be that one in that song, and I reject you being… you telling me how I am supposed to feel about you, I reject that!' and I

could do that because I had somebody with me…. Yeah… and I feel like somebody else was with me too, but I don't remember who it was…

I was the one who at some point joined them for a while. Her not remembering it was an interesting reminder how the dance floor has this element of playing with power dynamics when in spontaneous dance. I would expect that my presence as a facilitator could hinder their dance somehow. It does hamper sometimes and it is an aspect to be always aware of, but at that moment, it was not an interference. Instead of feeling injury to my pride, as I sometimes do in situations when I am not remembered, I felt relief and trust. Relief for not centralizing unrestricted control over the experience, for being supported by the dance floor, by the music (even if disliked music), by the group, by the space. Also, because facilitating in such setting then seems to be less about being someone else, an ideal role model to be copied, or an authority to be obeyed, and more about being deeply and authentically myself. This is very challenging as well, but in a more fulfilling way. Jen and Silvia also commented on that, how, due to not having steps to copy, they felt more vulnerable, but at the same time more equal.

I asked Trina then how that power felt in terms of bodily responses. She took some time to reflect, and commented: "I don't… the only thing that I remember is lightness… trying to think now what the actual feeling was … yeah, it was a freeing of a weight that was either coming off here or here", indicating belly and chest, if I remember correctly. Then she continued:

> When I hear those songs about men who put their expectations on women, but then we respond back, it is almost like the stones that they have put on - the stone of expectation - we helped each other to take them off and through them away… and not throw away the man, because Lenore even said: 'I felt sorry for him, I had compassion on him, I felt pity for him' and that can come about when you can get rid of the stone. So, I think it is an empathy building exercise, that particular prompt, because I felt that about Justin Bieber, [laughter] I really did! (…) And in that I could hear… I could hear… and I know it sounds like funny, but it is a human being that sings that song, so I could hear the kind of plead behind the words, and then behind that is insecurity and sadness, and guilt and shame, and... yeah, sadness, sorrow, all those things, are behind especially those Bieber songs.

I really appreciated the image of getting rid of the stones each of us carry – which may represent expectation, biases, to be able to go through the initial complete rejection. Trina continued: "when you get over the 'oh!, I hate that song', to really get the presence of mind, the necessity to hear it, you can hear that, and that brings empathy towards him as a person". So, getting rid of the stones, shifting from a self-defensive mood to an inquiring interrelatedness may sparkle empathy. She continued:

> I really, really liked that exercise a lot, and even the act of 'arrgh', I hate this song so much!', it's fun, it's fun! There is something about being bombarded with something you absolutely hate and yet finding the humor and almost the joy in it. That is… I don't know, (…) I wonder if it is a resiliency building exercise. But it has to have those pieces of mindfulness added to it, I believe. That is the act of just sitting in acceptance (…) you sit in it without it hurting you, but you have to have those pieces added into it. You can't just put people  and say … here I am going to put some music you hate, and just deal with it, without tools, and you had very skillfully, and I don't actually remember what you did now, but at the time I thought it was very skillful, started the process of acceptance, and I had added some pieces of mindfulness that I have learned  from other places, but you can add those pieces to it… yeah, I loved that one, I could go a long time talking about it…

Trina's reference to finding humor in something that is bothering made me think of situations when I underwent that same process, and how that humor unfolded. For me, sometimes at first this humor is cynical, dualistic, and carries a negative image of what I am resisting to identify with. However, sometimes the joke breaks through self-righteous seriousness, and what begins with a lopsided smile accompanied with a short exhalation of rebuke and superiority becomes a hearty and exhilarating laughter. It is tragic, and comic, because it encompasses me and the other, and our human condition. This laughter disarms my biases and defenses, and unravels connectedness. These experiences remind me of Satir's cosmic joke, that "(…) moment when we see the ridiculous or humorous aspect in what we had taken so seriously, namely ourselves in a situation we approached with a life-or-death attitude" (1991: 110). Bakhtin addressed the world's comic aspect, an all-in laughter which would make fun of the entire condition of humanity in its contradictions (1984). Duncan expresses the

Dionysian surrender by releasing the head backwards (1928), which is so characteristic of that kind of laughter. In the times when there was laughter in the dance sessions, including the expressions of people dancing that day we played with the songs we liked or disliked, I could also sense this process, in its many variations. Indeed, as Trina argued, there is something about finding humor and joy in that which is challenging and annoying, and it is something powerful.

Now, I have to make a confession. When I was organizing the songs, I decided to put also songs that I liked and disliked, as an offering of my vulnerability. Kay Pranis argued that a facilitator of a circle process, when talking about difficult issues, could share first, because she sets the tone and provides safety by offering her vulnerability. On the other hand, when sharing strengths, celebrations, or in decision making rounds, she could go last, in order not to influence the group from the power position which, although diminished by the frame, is still there (Pranis 2005). I followed this orientation because it feels very coherent to the proposal of the space I intended to create. Every now and then I would join the dances, whenever I felt the group was safely supported by the community, the space, the frame, and the music was resonating. I would also join to avoid the position of supervision, to really join the vibe and also be able to feel better the energies flowing or not in the dance floor. In general, it has been very rewarding, but this one exercise provoked within me some trouble and reflections.

There is a Brazilian funk that really bothers me in many levels: I think the sound is disruptive, just as aggressive as the lyrics. The lyrics allude to sexual violence against women, it is disrespectful. I feel shame, anger, indignation. Furthermore, it is the kind of music that get stuck and keep on playing in the head, even if I resist it, even if I desire nothing more than it to go away. I had that experience in a silence retreat. As silence grew bigger around me, the beats of the song would get stronger in my head, while the lyrics were on non-stop replay. Nearly a self-imposed torture. Hence, this song would definitely be my choice for a dislike song, because

it gave me a hard time trying to figure out ways to cope with it. Moreover, it was a hit in Brazil and for my bewilderment and outrage it would bring people to dance in parties.

Nevertheless, I was caught in a dilemma: if I wanted to be authentic and honest with the group, it would be important to engage with the song. On the other hand, as a facilitator I felt I had a pledge to alleviate them from this torture. The dialogue between these two positions went more or less like this:

- The lyrics are violent, it would be irresponsible to put the participants under such a situation.

- The lyrics are in Portuguese, as far as I know they do not speak it and even for the Spanish speakers it would be difficult to understand because of slang. Moreover, some of the songs they have chosen are also disrespectful, specially to women, and that was actually the reason why they chose them.

- Yes, they are violent by the image of what a convenient behavior for a woman should be. This one instigates sexual violence, though. Adding to that, playing a song disseminates it and that is a contribution I would not be proud of.

- Isn't this resistance just a way to escape from dealing with the song? You are cheating.

- It may be, yes. I acknowledge that. But in this case my responsibility as facilitator carries more weight. Moreover, if I play the song it will be stuck in my head again and I do not want that.

As a way through the dilemma, I chose an electronic version of the song, without any lyrics, but with the same beat as the foundation. During the session, I confess the rhythm was even interesting. Dancing to it was sassy, because I would go from anger to an ironic feeling of still cheating the exercise I proposed myself, to relief for having spared the participants from the torture of the real song. I saw this situation as a practical application of the selective authenticity, and it was interesting to observe the process of pondering the pros and cons,

making a decision, and sticking to it, very attentive to its impacts, but I cannot affirm categorically it was completely right. But, I feel confident that I made use of the best of my understanding at that moment. Anyway, that song still plays in my head sometimes.

### 4.6.3 Reflections

The realization of the power to change derived from the acceptance of vulnerability allows the exploration of textures of feelings, emotions, and thoughts from a loving standpoint. Surrendering to the flow, deeper knots of energy become noticeable, because they are tapped with this loving flow of power. Dancing contributes to vitality by engaging with these tensioned pockets, clearing the channels and pathways for power to ride, tapping into locked energies, and harnessing them into the transformative process. From a Vajrayana point of view, the most potent energies are found in craving and aversion, weighing specifically in the areas of sex and death. It uses then imagery and techniques to transmute the powers locked within them (Vessantara 1993: 212).

Those things which scare a person the most are the ones she invests more energy to bury, contain, and hide. Therefore, locating and working with them unlocks a lot of power which can be invested in the practice of becoming. It does not mean it is a process of perfecting, or betterment, or resolving according to outside references. It is more of integration and stylization, of realizing the connection of what already is, in constant change (Koppensteiner 2009: 124). As I stated earlier, the deeper one ventures, the broader one reaches, and this implies visiting one's own shadows, facing contradictions, acknowledging and owning them. They are ultimately one's vulnerability as human being, connecting to the windscape of life: "by connecting intimately with the darkness inside ourselves, it will connect us to everything and everyone around us. Once we know the darkness, every moment can be a meditation" (Roth 2004: 54).

This process is daunting for the mind, because it implies embracing contradictions, upholding opposites in creative tension, and at some point, letting go of the cause and consequence logic, allowing the different ways of knowing to complement their forces to engender understanding. This means that the rational mind has to withdraw from its dominance, opening space for exploring the unconscious content as well, in a process that is not of explaining but of exploring in the search for understanding. In the play of opposites, their duality is revealed, together with the whole range of in-betweens and potential combinations. Ultimately, it reveals the energetic nature of the system and its dependence on the tension of opposites (Jung 1981: 269), facilitating unattachment, loosening of the grip in one or another, and the upholding of this tension. Denying one or another lead to harmful delusion. It is in this sense that tantric practice uses sex and death as means to tap into energy locked in fear. The same can be said of violence:

> Violence is created via egoic-attachments and identifications, as well as mental defilements like anger and desire. In tantric practice those defilements, however, are not suppressed or rejected, but on the contrary acknowledged and actively used in the process of awareness (Echavarría, Ingruber and Koppensteiner 2011: 599).

Denying the existence of violence as ego formation is as dangerous as opting overtly for its use out of anger. The last leads to direct violence, the previous, to projecting evil onto others, leading to social and cultural violence in the forms of racism, misogyny, xenophobia, and many other derivations, which, in turn, often end up in direct violence. Furthermore, in what contributes to a catastrophic combination, this denial and lack of insight gets in the way of the ability to deal with what is seen as evil (Jung 2006: 108-9). On the other hand, exploring the whole range of potentialities in the combination of shadow and light deepens knowledge about oneself and ways of dealing with the energies available.

Jung called shadow those rejected parts of the personality, those which the ego does not identify with or recognize as itself. He defined it as "(…) that hidden, repressed, for the most

part inferior and guilt-laden personality whose ultimate ramifications reach back into the realm

of our animal ancestors and so comprise the whole historical aspect of the unconscious" (Jung

1959: 266). By projecting them outside and denying them as part of human potentiality,

shadows are disconnected from the collective and personalized in the form of guilt. What once

was openly addressed in carnival as a reminder of the personal shadow as part of a collective

shadow, now becomes individually punished in an intent of extirpation, perpetuating the fallacy

of all goodness (Jung 1981: 262). On the contrary, meeting our own shadows reveals human

imperfections and limitedness, leading to the admittance of lack of control or solution for

everything. Hence:

> Such an admission has the advantage of being honest, truthful and in accord with
> reality, and this prepares the ground for a compensatory reaction from the
> collective unconscious: you are now more inclined to give heed to a helpful idea
> or intuition, or to notice thoughts which had not been allowed voice themselves
> before (Jung 1981: 20-1).

By acknowledging that shadows are our own, as well as recognizing a field of collective

share of human tragedy, their potential becomes available for fostering action. The expression

of this potential is of responsibility of each and every person, in which freedom bestows itself

in as many alternatives as the combinations of opposites. In coherence with that freedom, "(…)

it depends entirely on the preparedness and attitude of the conscious mind whether the irruption

of these forces and the images and ideas associated with them will tend towards construction

or catastrophe" (Jung 2006: 119). This fact does not exempt the caveat that one never eliminates

the potentiality of the other, because they are different expressions of energies.

Shadows are part of human experience, and as so cannot be cast out or rationalized into

harmlessness. Roth suggested then that "the trick is to meet our shady ego characters in the

darkness and dance them into the light" (Roth 2004: 59). She shared that through dancing and

acknowledging them in their full expression, it is possible to diffuse their power. This

acknowledgment can happen through movement or stillness, not exclusively one or the other,

but the interlace of them in a way that it is "(…) movement in the stillness and the stillness in all motion" (Roth 2004: 60).

It is not easy though. Neither simple nor prescriptive. Although its approach sometimes is recognizable, it cannot be forced, willed, or rationalized. It requires surrender to exert its healing function. Cohen shared a beautiful recount on the healing potential that surrendering to this process can have, but at the same time how hard and provocative of resistance:

> (…) my healing comes from my bitterness itself, my despair, my terror. It comes from the shadow. I dip down into that muck again and again and am flooded with its healing energy. Despite the renewal and vitality it gives me to face my deepest fears, I don't go willingly when they call. I've been around that wheel a million times: first I feel the despair, but I deny it for a few days; then, its tugs become more insistent in proportion to my resistance; and finally it overwhelms me and pulls me down, kicking and screaming all the way. It's clear I am caught, so at last I give up to this reunion with the dark aspect of my adjustment to pain and loss. Immediately the release begins: first peace and then the flood of vitality and healing energy. I can never just give up to it when I first feel it stir. (…) I always resist. It's staring defeat and annihilation in the face that's so terrifying; I must resist until it overwhelms me. But I've come to trust it deeply. It's enriched my life, informed my work, and taught me not to fear the dark (Cohen, D. 1997: 17).

It is a process that, in order to truly happen, cannot be faked. Sometimes when I identify anger, I try to speed up the process and get to sadness soon, so I can release and feel happy. Unsurprisingly, my attempt fails. It is a process that cannot be forced. Trying to force it just evinces the lack of control over it, and how defective this intervention can be. Then after dragging my wrecks for a while, anger and sadness flood in, while I resist the temptation of stuffing it and distracting myself with something else. Only then the process unfolds and takes over, allowing the charge of energetic power to change. That is what I like about dancing, its characteristic of being a limpid mirror: it reveals what is there, no matter how fearful, but at the same time it takes whatever you bring to it, allowing to go deep into the dark because it is sustained by the acknowledgment of the collective human tragedy. It reveals uniqueness, and at the same time how humans are just another wave in the ocean of existence. For that, it requires uncompromising honesty.

How then to bring oneself completely if this image is ever-changing? One answer would be to bring the changing aspect altogether, without trying to attach a permanent form to it. Roth suggested the idea of the shapeshifter as a reminder of the inconstancy of the form. The shapeshifter is an interesting concept because, while emphasizing the importance of form, it also reaffirms its mobility. Nevertheless, the fear of looking into the shadow leads to the shadow aspect of the shapeshifter, which is copying someone else or hiding. This implies attachment to solidity and denial of the fluidity, while "the trick is to identify with the shifting, not the shape, the process, not the product" (Roth 1998a: 163).

This implies being responsible for what comes up, but not guilty, in the sense discussed above with Jung, and also relying on the power unleashed by the process to keep on shifting. It is possible to keep on moving, to respond in more adequate and authentic ways to the ever-unfolding present. It allows perceiving the uniqueness of the wave, and at the same time the equanimity with other waves and belonging to the sea. In the change of forms, it is possible to explore our identities and fears: "in my dance I discovered that if I gave physical expression to a particular fear (…), the fear lost its hold on me" (Roth 1998a: 163).

Being able to give a physical expression, a shape, or a name to a feeling releases the weight of its grip exerted onto attentiveness. The more one looks away, the tighter it grips, and the more energy is locked up in this process. Hanh also described a similar process in meditation: "If we call a pleasant, unpleasant, or neutral feeling by its name, we identify it clearly and recognize it more deeply. Our attitude of not clinging to or rejecting our feelings is the attitude of letting go (…)" (1990: 61). By identifying it and giving it a name, it can finally be given in to the dance floor, or to the collective support. Fogel addressed the same process in therapeutic context, identifying how finding the link between pain and behavior and naming it allowed the person to bring pain into the orbit of self-regulation and accessing resources, as the reengagement with self and others, or the search for professional support (2013: 268).

Shapeshifting helps bring shape to the energetic flow, facilitating understanding. It offers through a shape that opportunity of beholding the energetic flow, while at the same time letting go of expectations of grasping its entirety, and, even less, of shaping it into a form liable of being explained. The bootstrapping concept discussed previously applies here as well, in terms of overlaying lenses which enable communication, but not complete translation or final understanding. In this sense, the use of images, being it with one's own body shape or mental imagery to guide exploration, may "(…) serve as a grounding, a bridge between movement and understanding" (Adler 1999b: 137). Shapes and images, can provide the frame through which to align overlapping lenses, allowing different energetic patterns to dialogue. Probably the understanding, but certainly the descriptions generated by this dialogue depends, nevertheless, on the perspective taken, and on how that frame is explored by each person. The frame can be borrowed, it means, the understanding can be described, but the energetic flow it facilitates to be understood can only be experienced.

Referring to the communication between the overlaying lenses and the effort of describing that understanding into a different set of forms, Zimmer affirmed that: "a profound truth, even though comprehended by the most penetrating intellect and expressed in accurate terms, will be read in conflicting fashions during subsequent periods" (1951: 22). And this is not a problem of the experience itself, or necessarily of the frame, but a matter of the plural perspectives which are linked indelibly to the present moment of each person. He continued, describing in different words this process of aligning through framing, capturing a sense of that energetic flow, and putting that understanding into words, with the added challenge of words not being sufficient:

> What cannot be formulated in the current words or symbols of the given tradition does not exist in current thinking. And it requires, therefore, a specific creative effort on the part of a bold, fervent mind to break through to what is not being said – to view it at all; and then another effort to bring it back into the field of language by coining a term. Unknown, unnamed, non-existing as it were, and yet existing

verily, the truth must be won to, found, and carried back through the brain into speech – where, inevitably, it will again be immediately mislaid (Zimmer 1951: 23).

Concurring with Zimmer, I would say it requires efforts from many and different minds and bodies to capture that which, although existing, has not yet been named. Or has been renamed in a manner that does not correspond to the present experience anymore. So besides creating new words to address the experience, it is also necessary to link this word to the existing ensemble of symbols in a way that what is being communicated can be grasped. But perhaps the major challenge is to communicate with words which resonate not only with the conceptual awareness of it, but also with the embodied awareness. In other words, it works to move the listener to an embodied experience:

> Language (…) can evoke, sustain, and amplify embodied self-awareness even though it cannot fully describe the experience. This occurs when words are chosen to be expressive about felt experience; this is called evocative language. When words describe a category, explanations, or judgement, we remain in the world of conceptual self-awareness (Fogel 2013: 32).

Important to emphasize that there is nothing wrong with concepts, but in this transitioning between different textures of energies, congealing them in their own realm does not facilitate the communication of that dialogue. Furthermore, as has been discussed previously, concepts detached from senses, emotion, intuition, and spirit can lead to tragic outcomes. It is in the sense of anchoring concepts in a way that can stem from and contribute to understand reality that Hanh invited one to: "look deeply and try to overcome the gap between your concept of reality and reality itself" (1999: 130). Getting entangled in concepts and congealing their permanence clouds reality, that changing present, which may not correspond vividly to the concept anymore. Furthermore, shaping reality to adequate to a concept is deceptive.

When language acquires that evocative aspect, it helps understanding, making sense, and clarifying alternatives of action. Therefore, on the one hand naming releases the weight of

fears, allowing identification and differentiation, and access to resources on how to deal with them. On the other hand, naming and languaging also provide a sense of safety because they juxtapose personal stories, repetitive patterns, and shadows into the background of a shared meaning within human history. Les Todres talked about an aesthetic quality that is satisfactory when words fit experiences (2007: 71). This satisfaction "(…) has to do with the sense of mastery that comes with the distance of perspective" (2007: 82).

Distance, as referred here, can be associated with the previously referred processes of disentangling oneself from the engulfment into egoic defilements and projections. The sense of mastery derives from the flooding of energetic power which expresses itself as action, as framing alternatives into plausible options. Les Todres affirmed that such interembodied understanding engenders an ability of bringing senses to language, deriving a quality of flow rather than conclusiveness to the conversation. Truth is then found in this resonance and the flow which derives from ongoing conversation rather than in a dichotomous 'true or false': "languaging and embodying is thus a procedure in which it's 'doing' produces more intricate possibilities for knowing" (2007: 39). In the productive tension generated between the lived experience and language, the body becomes the intersecting element capable of enlivening language, connecting and contrasting it with experience (2007: 20).

Enlivening language encourages one to take a step back and daring not only to know, but to let go of knowledge, as Koppensteiner puts it: "not from a position of ignorance but in order to open a window of possibility towards that which the own knowledge has blocked us from. Basking in the radiance of the Apollonian sun also blinds!" (Koppensteiner 2009: 77). Naming therefore is essential in the process of understanding and giving form to alternatives which are plausible to be worked on, to give form and direction (Koppensteiner 2009: 85). Nevertheless, at some point it is necessary to step back from explaining and conceptualizing, to

open space to that which has been left unsaid, to bring forth new inspiration to gain new meaning.

In this sense, dance is explored as a lived experience of the moment, but also as a process of naming, of giving form and expression to that which exists but remains unsaid. Just to then engage in the ongoing process of melting form into dance again, in a process of integrating understanding into the energetic pathways of the body. When reduced to either of them, it loses power. Graham, as many artists, resisted to explain her dances, saying they communicated more than words could portray; they were kind of ancestral footsteps difficult to be put into words (Graham 1991: 13). LaMothe attributed Graham's resistance to reduce dances to interpretations to "a desire to open a space between word and body so as to disclose a conflicted interdependence between writing and dancing at work in the creation of both dances and texts" (2006: 195).

It is in the ongoing dive into each other that richness is found, and contributes to an understanding which involves reasoning, but goes beyond it, being sensed also in the guts, muscles and bones, in a momentary alignment of thinking, feeling and sensing into what is being languaged and is kept unsaid, but is sensed and shared. This can be communicated through sigh, relieving smile, releasing tension, tingling in the skin and/or goosebumps, in a flooding of power which allows a vulnerable let go of defenses and to trust the process of ongoing change.

## 4.7 Dancing as a Way of Living

### 4.7.1 Seventh Session

I was very unsure about this last session. What to touch upon? First, I had more ideas than I could fit in a proper and harmonious session of one hour and a half. Second, I had to be very attentive to a sneaky desire to make an impacting closure, a 'spectacular ending which

would change participants' lives and make them love me forever'. 'What?', I would ask myself: 'Where is this coming from?' I danced with this pretentious feeling to try to understand it better, beyond labelling it as a clingy need for self-affirmation. As serendipitous as the dance floor is, I did not get much insight onto the background of that, but I did get an idea on how to organize the last meeting. If peace is a potential in every moment; conflicts can be transformed by awareness and by being present in the here and now; and dance can be a tool for reminding us of all of that; the more meaningful way of ending is addressing dancing as a way of being, a way of living. There is no secret but to dance, dance, dance, and meaningful or ecstatic moments are facilitated by daily practice. Furthermore, if the energy and power mobilized and channeled by dance do not hit the streets, do not get integrated into daily life, it loses transformative momentum. A much less spectacular conclusion indeed, but it felt coherent and authentic to the proposal.

The third challenge was how to plan the encounter in a way that this intention was brought to the dance floor. I reviewed my list of collected exercises, searched for ideas. From the casual conversation with the participants, I heard that the topic of partnering was still challenging. So, I wanted to address this somehow, because it is very helpful in daily life, and relationships are the vehicle through which power out of vulnerability fosters transformation. It also seemed adequate because in the day that we addressed partnering more openly there were only two participants from the regular group. So, I found an exercise of bodies of water in Lyon (1981: 51) that seemed suitable. Furthermore, I perused my memories searching for activities and exercises which have been more meaningful in terms of illuminating daily life issues. I came across an exercise on labyrinths from my meditation practice that addressed common traps to awareness. Rambling, justifications, judgment, and victimization are common labyrinths in which one can get lost in the practice of awareness.

Here is how the session took form: 'find a space, laying down or moving. Connect to this place, your body, your breath, this room, the top of this mountain. Take some moments to be aware of your vitality… your mind… the quality of your awareness. How are you feeling today? Think of water manifestations. A drop, spring, lake, stream, river, calm ocean, tormented ocean, rain. Find a manifestation that feels comfortable for you right now. Notice the intensity of the body of water you have chosen. Explore the movements that come up from that association. Now, while keeping your movement, go around the room and see what the other waters are doing. See if you can keep your quality while moving around. Now find a partner. Observe if you change your rhythm while approaching your partner. If you change, observe how you change. Change partners again. Much of the tension in partnering is that we expect to match the other person's energy level. Often, we expect to meet people in determined places where we are not. Observe if these dynamics are playing right now in you. Thank your partner, and continue your dance. Find a rhythm you are comfortable with in this moment. Relax your face, drop your masks. They are fine for some social interactions in daily life. But here we don't need them. There is nobody here to please. Check if you can meet people just as you are. Your presence is a gift… and it is enough. Now let your movements take you to a partner. Observe if there is anxiety to find someone. Let it go. Contact your presence. Interact with your partner. Maybe your rhythms sync. Maybe not. Either way is ok. Share your presence'.

From this exchange, we moved on to the second part of the session, the exploration of the traps to awareness. As we began with the bodies of water, I decided to keep on with the water theme, adapting the labyrinths to swirls, and rocks. This strategy benefited from the suggestive name of river of life, borrowed from a drawing exercise with same name. The second part of the session went approximately as follows: 'Connect again to your water quality. Whatever form you are now, find your way to a river. If you are already a river, just flow as you encounter the other rivers. In this river, you find aspects of your history. Rhythms,

intensities, calmness. Ride your river of life. In a moment, there will be a swirl. It's a swirl of rambling. Sometimes we get stuck there. Rambling disqualify presence. How do you get out of it? Find your way to the stream again. The second swirl is a swirl of justification. We also get stuck there sometimes, in endless arguments. How do you get out of it? Find your way back to the stream of water. Enjoy the ride. The third obstacle to awareness reveals itself in the horizon, there are rocks of judgment. Judgment of oneself and others. How do you get out of it? Find your way to the waves. There is another swirl that appears sometimes. The swirl of victimization. That one when we don't feel appreciated in what we do or what we are. How do you get out of it? Find your flow, ride the waves of your river'.

This session evolved to the sound of instrumental music with oriental tones, specifically Indian elements, which gave rhythm and flow not automatically associated with sad or happy feelings. After a while riding the waves of the river, I invited the participants to keep the quality of the flow and ride of the river exercise, but let go of focused concentration, giving in to the rhythms in a celebration for life. In this final moment, I wanted to offer a gift out of deep gratitude for their participation, presence, openness, for their being and sharing with me, for enriching my research, my practice and my life. After considering multiple alternatives, I decided to close the last dance of unfocused concentration sharing a bit of my soundscape, Brazilian music, to which I chose the beat of *maracatu* drums. In the end, it was exhilarating.

### 4.7.2 Interview

Lenore and I were talking about confidence, when I asked her how confidence portrays, or is felt. She reflected:

> So, this is the big aha for me in this dance… (…) For me this year has been a journey about strengthening my voice and my ability to provoke and my comfort with being seen as me even if I am in opposition, if other people aren't comfortable with that, or I am wrong. I think in general I am more comfortable in being out there, and seen, and possibly judged, and possibly making people feel bad, because I am pointing things about injustice, saying things that may be controversial... and I am much more comfortable doing that now, and I can't

pinpoint … there is no one reason for it… (…), but I think a lot of it does come from dance.

She told me that her partner had perceived this change of attitude, and commented with her how she seemed more confident. I was very excited with that, because such a situation illustrates those subtle ways in which practice informs daily life, as Sarah had put it. I asked for more details, to what she added:

> So (…) he said: "I just noticed you are more confident, you are more comfortable in your body, and more comfortable in expressing opinion about something, if you think someone is doing something wrong, before you would be diplomatic and wouldn't really say anything, but now you say your opinion", and I said: 'yeah, and I think it has a lot to do with the dance series that we have been doing with Paula and my classmates, because I am just practicing being out there'. I don't know exactly why, but just being comfortable with my body and moving it in ways that are about me, and it is not about anybody else, but me, and it gave me confidence connecting whatever it is inside me with my exterior expression of that, whether or not there is anybody watching it, and then also gave me confidence with people watching whatever the exterior expression of that thing is.

Courage is needed to dance like no one is watching, and it is liberating and joyful. But fathomless freedom resides in dancing like you feel, whether people are watching it or not. If it is a solo in the kitchen, it can be resounding. If it is a group dance, it can be powerfully collective. If there is an audience, it can become an insightful dialogue. Lenore continued:

> But I think, maybe before I always thought that you have to have more technical expertise to dance in front of other people, and not feel uncomfortable about it, and now I kind of think that you just have to have an authentic connection between whatever you are trying, whatever it is in you that you want to express - or not even to express - I don't know, whatever is in you, and the movements of the body, and then if that is authentic, that authenticity is enough, it does not have to be technically proficient. I mean, it is great if there is technical proficiency, but, yeah, I think before maybe some of the lack of confidence… (…) I thought it was more about technical proficiency but I think it is actually more about …. Not necessarily knowing what inside was driving it… So, not necessarily not being confident, I think you have to know about it first, in order, like, to be in touch with it first, in order to then be confident in it.

To my mesmerized expression listening to her words, Lenore complemented: "yeah, it feels good, and that is a great gift". I asked then what were the variables observed by her partner that identified confidence. She pointed out that definitely being verbally more likely to say what

she thought. Reflecting upon what could have portrayed that confidence physically, she reflected on two experiences in a different dance setting: one in which a friend pulled her to dance together in front of people, to which she pondered that in the past she probably would not be okay with that, but then it was fine, she could convey feelings, appreciation. The second experience she shared was doing an aesthetic response to the music Alleluia:

> I think it is because of this practice connecting inner to the body, and allowing the body to be seen, and yeah, it just felt good, I don't know how to describe it Paula... cause it might be normal to some people, but it kind of felt normal… it felt like a normal way of expressing oneself... like I am talking right... you know, talking is normal… dancing should be normal too. Embodying movement in a way that expresses something that… about what is going on inside, that should be normal, but it is not, and I think it feels much more normal now, I think that is probably what I am talking about, it is a language, maybe, and I think I am more proficient in it [laughter].

Yes, I agree it could be natural, but unfortunately, it is not. Sometimes listening to music in the subway or on the street I could not refrain from moving, and I immediately felt the weight of eyes looking at me as if it was extremely surprising, unexpected and inadequate. In this sense, I am thankful for Roth's writings which motivated me to dance frequently, no matter where. In other words, to not ultimately depend on things to dance: a nice and spacious room, a teacher, a group. All this is great, but the absence of them do not have to hinder dancing. I asked Lenore how the exercise of the bodies of water and the river felt, because she had said previously that it was an interesting experience. She commented:

> I loved that! (…) I enjoyed embodying water, it is fun to do it with your body, and not something people really ask you to be a lot…. 'Be a river'… [laughter], and also, that actually, is one thing that I really appreciated about it, it wasn't just dance, to me, when you asked us to be a river, that is not, you don't have to be aesthetically pleasing while being a river, you can just be the best river that you embody with your body. It does not have to be always the technically proficient beautiful body movements that taking a modern dance class, or a jazz dance class would ask... so that was fun and liberating, cause it was about embodying something, not about being a great dancer…

Being the best river you can embody. Indeed, in my opinion, a great dancer is the one who can do that in a way that enlivens the juices of the people around with her embodiment of a river.

> So, (…) I imagined that I was like a small river joining another river, maintaining my color for a little while, and then, kind of going into it, I just loved playing with… this is one of the feelings I am having recently, of managing being my own self while being part of a community, and sometimes being different than the community, sometimes in opposition to some people in the community, and sometimes just wanting to be completely part of it. But there is a danger of losing yourself when … in a group… so I just loved the exercise of self-maintenance and integration into the larger whole… It was great!

I asked how was meeting the swirls, the obstacles, as a river, to what she asked: "you are right…. Was it first the swirls, and the rocks, and then being trapped in the rocks?", to which I could just answer that 'I didn't remember exactly the order, there were four… but they represented rambling, justification, judging and victimization. Those were the four traps represented by the swirls'. Lenore continued:

> It was excellent! Cause I think I had just gone through a hard conversation with somebody that I… again practicing being in opposition when I think something is wrong, but it was hard, and it wasn't… but I think it allowed me to sit... again, just like the corner… it allowed me to sit with the problem, and then let go, let go… and go somewhere else, which is such a gift, I wish I could do that every week, just sit with the thing, and consider the different angles through the body and then go because it really allows, to… and with the Drake song too, sit with the thing…like: 'oh, it sucks!' and then relax and keep listening, it is just perfect. I think that was the greatest gift, that and connecting more with my confidence, were the two biggest gifts for me, but… opportunities to reflect on things that were happening through this, and the larger self-building…

To sit or move with something, to consider the different angles of it through the body, and then let it go, and keep moving, enriched by that encounter. But not getting stuck into it. The exercises gain a deeper dimension through the experiences of it.

> But to go back to the rocks, I really liked the physicality of it, I would imagine actual rocks, and at one point, I don't remember exactly what the... maybe it was judgment, but there were rocks all around me, and I would start hurling myself against them, trying to get out, and then figure out a way to let the water arise, first, above the rocks, and then I could sort of float away. Just felt great, hurling my body, how often do we get to do that? … you cannot possibly just go around

dancing, hurling your body against rocks, that is not socially acceptable! [laughter] So, it was just really liberatory and awesome, and got out some of my anger, it is just to exercise, some of that... feeling, that feels like when you are hurling against rocks. And then sort of finding a solution to float up and go away, and I remember sort of recreating then, in the last round, when we were sort of free dancing, I remember going through all them again cause I just enjoyed it so much [laughter]… (…) oh!, one of them was lying in a very shallow river, (…) there was sun, and then the rocks were warm, and then there was the temptation, I don't know what it was, but the temptation of not moving anymore, and just sit and stay there, and that was nice to just kind of feel it, and yeah, sometimes you don't want to get up and do anything, and sat with that for a while, like indulge in that feeling for a while, and then: 'ow, time to stop indulging and move on'! Man, if I could do that one exercise every week I would be happy!

In between the rocks and swirls of conflict transformation work, to find the restful ponds in which to tune in, get warmth and nurtured, before joining the tide again. Dance as a way of being is also celebration, rest, connectedness.

As we moved toward the end, I asked Lenore if she had any other comment or question, to what she asked me what it was I was hoping for with the dance sessions. I resumed that 'one of the things I tried was not to have rigid expectation about products, because that kind of betrays the proposal, so the idea was to offer the space to try dance as a method of conflict transformation, accessing body, breath, feelings, being more connected, and then stepping into getting more context and being able to deal with more context, and deal with body, breath, and feeling, with this knowledge that we have been practicing, and how that work can help us to flow more … flow through difficulties, conflicts, to actually being able to experience peace more frequently. That was the exploration, but I tried not to have rigid expectations, because each experience is different for each person, so the idea was to open the space. Obviously, I had an overall idea of an outcome, but that was not necessarily mandatory…'. Reflecting on what I said, Lenore added:

> I can see that - what you described, as coming through in what we did, and I think there were more and other things to me too. For example, the word peace didn't really come to mind as much, it was the word voice, because that had been a huge part of my personal exploration. But as Diana always quote from *The Moral Imagination* [Lederach 2005], there is a sense in which all of peacebuilding is

about voice. So, I think it still is getting at the peace through a different angle as well…

Indeed, each experience is unique, and in the overlapping and divergent aspects of each narrative I could see different layers of meaning, elements that needed to be changed, and new applications unfolded. Trina also commented on the exercise of the bodies of water and the river of life, giving a beautiful account of her experience. I asked if - and if yes, how - dance contributed in any way to her experience of peace, to what she answered that:

> Yes, I do, and let me try to figure out a way to say it well… I'll do that by telling you a story about your last session… (…) I hardly remember how you lead us into this (…) ah! Ok, so one of your suggestions (…) was to figure out how to get around barriers that were put up for you… (…) it was the one where you had to figure out a way to move either over or around the stumbling block, the barrier. And I had been feeling for a while like I was carrying something that was really unhealthy in me, and carrying burdens for myself and for other people that were too heavy and too unhealthy to continue carrying. And at one point, and I do not remember if it came from you or from me… (…) I think it was a prompt where you said: 'figure out if there was a way that you can rid yourself of this barrier' (…). I just remember it acted, I physically did this motion, [showing with her hands, opening something in her chest], etched in, and pulled open like a door, and said: you gotta go… and I could feel and I just said: I just release this, I give this permission to go, and I felt that was like energy gathering, and fuuuu… and just went, and I literary closed the door back up. And that was due to the prompt. I wanted to do something like that for a while, but not really knowing how, and so kind of being led into that, and it wouldn't have been just walk in and do that, there was a buildup, (…) it is a thought-out progression to get to that spot, and it probably helped that we have been doing that for weeks (…).

The importance of practice appears again, highlighted by the steps taken, the strengthening of the relation to the resources and the deepening of the container, which happens with repetition. Also, the importance of the prompts and the resonance of the proposal with the safety which has been created throughout the many encounters. She concluded, answering to my initial question about peace:

> So when that went, I felt at peace, I felt personal peace… (…) that was an example of personal, interpersonal peace, that I was able to achieve, even for a short amount of time… so that the bulk of that feeling has not come back, since I have let it go, pieces of that have, and I continued to have to trash it, you know, but the bulk of it has really flown away.

Trina's description left me in awe, and brought a lightness to my chest, followed by a sigh that came as a jolt of freedom. It feels so freeing to let go of those things which are tightly held. She proceeded with her reflections about it:

> So in that moment, of letting something go, you feel at one time, both exhilaration for the ability to rid yourself of something, really that feels good, that feels like: 'bye bye'… you feel exhilarated, it is a very good feeling. You feel also at the same time - literally at the same time – very, very sad, because a piece of you, even pieces that you don't like, they have lived with you for a long time, and they are part of you, even the ones you wish they go away... when they go, there is this 'wow! there goes a piece of me'. Or if you are holding a person too tightly, I mean... here [indicating the chest] you let that person go, and that has a lot of sadness and grief to it. So, I remember feeling exactly at the same time, completely entangled, a feeling of pretty severe sadness, mixed with completely (…) with overwhelming joy, of fuuu... those two were just intermingled, completely, that is the height of the emotion. So when that settles in, you can just kind of feel blank, you can kind of … feel neutral, which sometimes feels really good, actually, cause when you are used to feel really heightened, to feel neutral feels really strange. But can feel good too, because we are used to having all sorts of strong emotions, like, the height or the depth… sometimes just being normal feels really amazing.

I shared my amazement to her story saying that 'that is an amazing image!'. Peace felt through the emptiness left by diving deep and going through the intermingling of a lot of joy and intense grief. "Yeah, that was an amazing day!" was her answer, and we laughed.

These recounts by Lenore and Trina were specifically related to the last session and the exercises of the bodies of water and the river of life. Below I bring general accounts related to dance as a way of living, and also how to integrate the learnings and insights from the dance floor into daily life. Trina and I talked a little bit about this topic, when she told me that there was a longevity to the feeling and general state after the dance, that informed the rest of the week. I asked for more details on the transitions, stepping out of the class, and she stated:

> Ow, when you are done to the next thing, you mean? Not great… yeah, not great… you know, that is a very interesting question… well, number one, it is 2.30 and I haven't eaten lunch yet, I am dripping and sweaty, and like, red-faced, hungry, but I am drained (…), and I don't know how to do that. I would really love to have some transition… that is interesting! … what it look like to be able to articulate embodied, to bodily articulate moving from the sacred space back into life… cause it is almost like... we are in this… revival almost… (…) what would it be like to have a kind of stepping in, so it quite… doesn't feel quite like a whiplash,

as it really does, like a whiplash…maybe not for other people, but it certainly does for me… where I don't know… from feeling all out, to going back, and it's not that I have to go all the way back, cause that stillness changes the way you live. But you still have a bit of a, there is a bit of a, flexion, expansion … it is almost like an expansion of you, then shrinking back to what you were, but just a little bit more then, and the next time just a little bit more, but it is though still shrinking…

I told her I had felt that way as well. It feels like dance sessions are a separate, precious time, and there are the rituals of entering, and stretching, a preparation for opening up, for letting barriers down. And stepping out of that space feels also interesting and strange, because at the same time you feel divine, - "yes", Trina agreed -  you kind of reprotect yourself and establish protective boundaries, and you get your masks back, because you need to function socially, but I kind of do not want to do that. Sometimes people are so divinely moving, and then the person says something and that idea of divinity shatters - or, better said, my expectation of what divinity looks like shatters. "Yeah, it goes puff", Trina added, and continued:

> Yes, and to integrate, to merge the two, yeah, and … absolutely… because this should give you skills for normal life… it does, but not if you get smacked with normal life right away, you have to come eventually into it. Maybe then you are better equipped to handle the bubble popping that happens every time…

That is a rich terrain to explore, the transitions, the reencounter with ego. How to work with it in a way that provide more skills for daily life, in a way that enrich routine with freshness and appreciation of others, while keeping healthy boundaries. Maybe this integration and the delight of seeing beyond judgments was what one participant was referring to when she left the following note on the group's notebook: "moving toward a place where I can appreciate everyone's dancing styles, their convictions, life-affirming ones… May have fear and trauma stuck in their broken but beautiful dancing".

The topic of stepping in and out of the dance sessions was also touched upon in my conversation with Tony, when asked about what kept him coming to the sessions:

> That's a good question. There were certain days where I think if I showed up…and allowed myself to… I think I really liked the meditative exercises because they

helped me getting to a space of breathing and not thinking a lot about being self-conscious or having a lot of judgment for myself or for the space, for what we were doing. So on those days when I was able to sink into myself, and into that space, I thought like I was able to enjoy the activities more, get more out of them, it felt more embodied, it was more… I was dancing and moving in a way that gave me a sense of joy and meaning that wasn't pre-calculated… I wasn't trying to mirror other people's moves, or worry about: 'oh, does this looks stupid?' or whatever… the days when that happened... which were probably the ones that happened more than not happened, those days kept me coming back.

That is an important acknowledgment regarding the practice: sometimes it is not necessarily pleasant, or insightful. Sometimes it is just mind talk. But it is persistence in the practice that provides those joyful or meaningful days. He then shared a funny anecdote regarding the transitions:

So I was able to leave at what, two, two thirty, and feel refreshed, like I got something embodied and meaningful out of the activity, that was good for my wellbeing, but it was also, you know, the next week would come, and I maybe would be busy, and I would think: 'oh, maybe I just skip dance this time…there are things I've gotta do' but then part of my mind, in the back of my head would say: 'no! last time you thought that, and you went, and it was really good, you left feeling a lot more refreshed and a lot better'. Yeah, and it's funny, I have a coworker that is not into the embodied experiences, you know - the touchy feely stuff, he is not good with, and sometimes he would poke fun of me, like: 'haha, you do your dance'... and we have been friends for years and years… and it's fun, because I would be back sometimes and I would be like: 'ok, I am doing this, and that', and you know, 'we will meet and talk about what we have to do for the rest of the day', and he would say: 'you know, you seem way more energized than you were when we were meeting this morning', and I was: 'yeah! that's because I went to dance!'.

We laughed at this story right then and there, and while writing in this instance it jumps to my eyes how more than one participant commented that people external to the group began to notice some changes. Perhaps in the level of energy, in the intensity of confidence, and owning of voice, or just through the presence. It is beautiful how practice overflows into daily life - even if unintended. I asked Tony to detail the feelings of embodiment and freshness, how that felt physically. He added:

Yeah, ahnn, that is a really good question… I think that for me, the nature of my work, (…) I spend a lot of time generating ideas and working with information up here [showing his head] … and a lot of time typing, and a lot of my stress and

tension get stored in either my head, in my shoulder, my hands. And I think connecting with the rest of the body through the different activities, and trying to breathe life into the pieces of me that are not always engaged by my everyday operations helped with feeling fresher, helped with feeling good. (…) in the debriefs that you do towards the end of each session, (…) hearing that it was meaningful for other people as well, I think that helped me feeling fresh, helped me to feel that I was engaging in something that was bigger than me feeling good about myself, [laughter] (…) it was a collective thing. So I think that helped with the freshness, being able to pinpoint some different connections between… like the activities we did with emotions, joy, sadness, anger, compassion, and... being able to connect those different places in my body and put time aside for thinking about those things, and working through them was really good.

Freshness derived from breathing, from body, from community, from feeling connections. Movement contributes to throwing one back into the rhythms of interconnectedness, stirring aliveness into habits. And in this shift from mechanical reaction to authentic response, daily life can be enriched. Tony complemented his idea:

And every now and then, in between sessions, from Friday to Friday, if I got some bad news, or something difficult happened, I would be like: 'Hold on! Let me observe this as a feeling, let me stand up and go for a walk, or do some pushups or some sit-ups, and get the blood back into my body in a way that helps to manage that, to be aware and be less critical or less judgmental, more kind of holistic in that kind of approach'. These are some of the ways that feeling of freshness kind of happened partially due to the activities, partially due to the shared experiences, and partially due to the take-aways in between sessions. Like: 'hum, if I were trying to put this as part of my body as an emotion or observation, how would I do if I were in Paula's dance'…

I was so thankful for hearing that, thankful for the dance, for the opportunity of facilitating that experience and being with this group. Elicitive methods are unspectacular; sometimes they just help one to take a step back and breathe, or bringing awareness in order to have more clarity – and yet, sometimes that is all that is needed. As I was one of the people who had a hard time going back to work after our sessions, I was curious about his experience of returning to the office. He shared that:

On the good days, that felt really good in terms of freshness, in terms of focus, in terms of being able to direct myself into what I was doing, and the time that I spent away from my normal routine was really well spent, hum… (…) This past week we had a session, and I had a big presentation at 5pm, like really important. (…) it was a really long stressful week, and I was really worried about it, I worked

several days into the evening, and I was like: 'I am gonna get everything done, because I wanna be able to get to dance on Friday, because it is the last dance, it really matters', and I knew that if I made myself do that the payoff of being away for that one hour and a half - which is not that much time, right? And I did return feeling more refreshed, and even though it had been a long week, I had a sense of clarity which I would not have otherwise, which was good.

I felt honored for his persistence in coming to the dance, and glad that it contributed to more clarity for his meeting. He complemented, though, that he would have enjoyed more time to debrief, or more communal gathering like a lunch afterwards:

> But on the other hand, it was also nice that there wasn't an expectation that it had to happen. (…) So, transitioning into the space, you know, as long as I made myself get there, self-consciousness, worry, and frustration would kind of melt away a little bit, and transitioning out of the space would pump me up to the remainder of my work week. And with the occasional caveat of wishing to have more time with people either to debrief or more time to talk or share that experience together.

Balancing the time for each process is unquestionably an ongoing challenge, and Tony's suggestion emphasizes the importance of nurturing community inside and also outside the sessions. When asked about any other insights regarding the dance practice, especially any that inspired direct action, Jen commented that:

> I think one thing that I didn't actually do but wish I could have done, is embodied writing afterwards... I was thinking about how there is much pressure to interpret what things mean versus just to have the feeling and experience and say what they are, and I wish I had actually done it. (…) I see how that could have been beneficial, just have the emotion and be in it, and not understand it, but to… let the knowledge that I gain in that moment to be a value in itself. I think I did feel that, though, I like the idea of being able just to do it, and that's it. I don't need to understand or make sense of it afterwards, that the experience was enough… there was something refreshing about that.

I resonated with her comment, it feels freeing not having the pressure to rationalize and explain every little thing we do. Perhaps that is also one reason why it is difficult to formulate opinion about dancing. Usually the comments are: it makes me happy, it feels nice, pleasant. That is also where the potential of embodied writing lies, it allows integration, a certain degree of language, of understanding which stems from the whole experience and not from judgment

solely. At the same time, it honors the experience for what it is, reducing the bubble popping effect described earlier, which may happen when egoic masks and roles are taken back.

Transitioning and integrating the experiences on the dance floor into daily life was a topic also in my conversation with Sarah. She was reflecting about her experience with the island exercise:

> This is great, waves are nice, but how do I implement it in my world, how do I make it real? (…) how do I take it into the world, how do I link the two? That became really important, cause I never… I didn't go into the dance, thinking I would learn something in the dance that I would take into my life… so, that sort of examples, that this space was so precious, you know… discovering how people can share, discovering that… it seems impossible, and then there is this space, and then appreciating that I can be part of it, and then having these experiences that I didn't expected, and see that I can learn something while dancing, I absolutely didn't expect that …so.. in my way that is an answer to your original question... how can we achieve this with dancing…

Addressing my original question, she was referring to the research question on dance as a method to elicit conflict transformation, which we discussed in my oral presentation earlier in the semester. She proceeded reflecting upon how the practices could make an impact on daily life:

> So now I am sort of starting to see it… I think it would take longer than a semester in order to get there, but I am definitely starting to see how it is possible that you can deepen the understanding of who you are in the world through dance, so that is something I didn't… I was basically sort of questioning, after your talk, and I am leaving after this semester saying 'yeah! I can see it, I definitely can see', I supposedly experienced it and I don't have an answer of the implementation step, because it is a beautifully changing place, right, how do I, I just carry this image with me, and look in the space, in the world, there are the waves, how can I sort of let them in… and then… so this is one thing that has been hugely impactful, hugely important … I truly appreciated it, I am just so grateful for. The other thing I am grateful for is just realizing …like for example yesterday it was the first time when I was really surprised… I think it happened other times as well, but I was really conscious of the fact that I can take an idea that I have a hard time having empathy with, that I have a hard time feeling, and I can start to feel it though dancing…

I asked if she was referring to the bird, to what she confirmed, and added "I would never think it was even possible…". She was referring to an experience in a Journey Dance session

the previous night, in which another participant had drawn a bird, in an expression of her angst with the war in Syria. It was a beautiful and heartbreaking piece, to which we dedicated time to a conversation afterwards. At some point, Sarah asked if she could dance the bird. I was surprised. Such a beautiful idea… to dance the bird. In our conversation, I asked her where that idea came from:

> I don't know…because… I don't know…I have no idea ... I just felt I had a hard time to identify with, I had a hard time … I knew I was looking at the image, I knew there was lots behind it, I knew I could not access it… and it felt like the only thing I could do… I don't know what was going to happen, I felt I... the only thing that I could… it was incredibly… I was thinking of it as I was biking this morning… how can it be that … and I really... I was dancing with the idea, I had the image in front of me, and in front of my mind… I was thinking of the image, I just let my body go, and that brought emotions… I would never think that was possible… I always thought it goes the other way, first you have emotion and then you express it through dance, but this was the exact opposite process. (…) And that is the space of it, right, you feel you can do what you need to do and that's the beauty of that space, that is why it is so unique, amazing, valuable, that space that we share, yeah, that was pretty amazing… as a discovery, you know… yeah, it fascinates me a lot, I have no idea what the process on the inside was…

With this last remark she anticipated my question, which was exactly what were the sensations and feelings of that experience, if she remembered how that happened. She was quick to add:

> No.. I just remember the image in my mind, and then I remember nothing else… just because I was just looking, almost as when you have a piece of art, you know, you keep watching it, and sort of trying to fill it out, and that was what I was doing, watching the bird, trying to fill it out, and then I wasn't thinking about what I was doing… and then I started thinking, wait a minute… my body is really dancing a bird, and you know, I was surprised because it felt… what I felt from the image is this combination of being hurt and being hopeful… that was the sort of interesting contrast.. and I think that was what my body was expressing, right, there is pain, and hurt, heaviness, but there is also hope, and they were sort of catching each other, interacting with each other, and the movement helped me to feel it, and access it, but only later I realized that those were the emotions my body was doing. I started with no... I didn't think of what my body was doing at all. I just had this image in front of my mind, and that was what I was watching.

Earlier on she referred to dance something you are having difficulty to feel empathy to, and I was curious about that empathic recognition: "And how did you recognize the empathy?". Sarah answered:

> Because I started to feel it… I was looking at the image, and I started to feel like: 'hey, there is a lot… I know there is a lot at that, but in my heart I couldn't feel it', I felt I couldn't feel it, I thought I couldn't feel it, and then as I was dancing I was feeling it, I started to feel it because of the dance, and I could access it more and more… and once I started to feel it I started to feel satisfied so I knew I was starting to feel… in a way I was struggling and this was my solution to the struggle, and I just used the tool that was available, and, anyway, that was amazing… it was pretty amazing…

This account reminded me of another moment, in a different dance group, when she said, "let's not brainstorm, let's dance storm!" I loved that analogy, it made total sense to me. Surprising how changing the name of it delivers a different expectation of the process. I imagined being in a business meeting, in a difficult or challenging situation, and being able to say: 'I don't know, let's dance storm'. It sounds hilarious, and very promising. Why not dance storming? Asking her about that expression, she commented:

> Yes… I super meant it… because I realized you can dance storm… you can figure out things by dancing… you can be creative, in your own growth and understanding of who you are through dancing, and that really is the discover that you allowed me to understand, I would never have thought it was possible. So, you see it, like you have the consequence… three people now are saying: 'let me try, let me be part of this', because it seems to be very meaningful, it is really important (…). I hope to keep this as a part of my life, and if I can… I mean… there is this struggle that not everyone is sort of comfortable in this space, right, and the question is how much dance background you need to be comfortable, I am not really sure (…) how generalizable this is, because it feels that in the end this is a pretty unique group of people that already had that kind of association, but I think if you can have someone who never tried it, and bring them to that space, and have them appreciate it, I think that would be incredible… you know… for me it is transformative (…).

Near the end of the sessions, some of the participants who would be in town the following semester (others would graduate and leave), began to talk about continuing the dance encounters the following semester, and Sarah was among them. They were excited not only to

dance, but also to facilitate. I was elated with their initiative, and motivated them intensely to do that. Sarah was planning even for a broader venture, as she detailed:

> I am trying to sort of… I realized I lived for a long time thinking and knowing I am being meaningful, but not feeling I am being meaningful, and now I want to find something I really feel I am being meaningful. And being a counselor, or being in that space of helping people (…), If I can touch someone, or walk someone through learning this, that feels I can't do anything more meaningful than helping people to access themselves, that would feel very meaningful for me, helping people to achieve that in life, and doing it in such a dancing space, if that is the way of doing it at least with some people, I would love that. Right, so again, it feels sort of a different medium of how to get there…

Yes, I completely agreed with her, dance is one more way, among many, of journeying into that exploration. And what a joyful and meaningful way! Sarah pointed to a book she was reading, of letters between Jung and White:

> It is like these two guys, they are talking about psyche from two different perspectives, so it is very obvious that not the same perspective works for everybody, so there are multiple perspectives, just seeing what works for different people, dance works for some, and drawing for some other, and so on... but having it as a tool, as a way how to help people to access themselves, because I discovered I can do it for myself in a way that is very different from what I have ever experienced, and it has such a huge potential, that's really unique, so I think I would really appreciate [to do] that through dance…

Our conversation took different directions, and by the end I asked her if there was any other moment in which movement brought forth stories, or insights. She gave an example from an insight she had dancing:

> I realized … that I am very comfortable being at home with myself, but that there is an option that I never considered which is being at home with other people…. and that to me… I would have never thought of that as an option, or possibility, or space. I just would never… this idea never crossed my mind, (…). Could I have accessed it with the same people, under different conditions? yeah, you know, maybe… but this is just a beautiful way! yeah… so I don't want to say dance is the only way, but I think it lends itself beautifully to this process, of having new concepts coming into your mind, out of nowhere, just because of this process… (…) yes, this would be an example of new insight or concept or idea that I was struck really sort of to the core struck, like, being at home with people, that sounds really interesting… and I would never have thought of it otherwise, because it is such a frame concept for me…

Dance is not the only way, but as Sarah put it, it lends itself beautifully to the process. I continued asking: 'And how was … integrating these spaces into the main frame of your life?'

> Yeah, so that is the difficult part… I don't know how to do that yet… I sort of get these ideas that I carry with me in life, but I'm still learning and figuring out how to integrate it, (…). And in a way I trust that I am going to implement it because they felt so important… (…) I took them as absolutely crucial and… I deeply respect them, and I want them to be part of me (…). But either implementing them… I don't, but I keep on processing them later, (…) just like this morning I was looking through the lenses of that concept, how does the world look like when I am at home with people, how does it feel? What does it bring, what would it mean? What does it mean? How different suddenly the world looks like, how do I see differently in myself, so I think that is as far as I went so far, but I think that is definitely important that I hold onto those concepts and it's substantial, like really important, because otherwise it loses all the meaning the space in its own adds…

My last question, because the alarm clock had sounded and she had another appointment was about how was adding this dance piece to her life. She said she loved it, because it connected to aspects that she appreciates, which is getting to know people with different life stories, and second:

> I had this sort of almost dry broken bench in my life which was dance, right, because I knew that I enjoyed moving my body, but I would never make use of it, because I didn't have space. (…) So this really nicely married two of my needs and brought them together, so I felt like (…), I am at home here, so sort of, unified me internally. (…) The theoretical concept sounds sort of meaningful, and if I get to dance on the top of it, it is great! It just connected a little more than what I expected. And it was… ended up more meaningful than I expected (…). Almost really feels like I am a tree that has this very dry almost half broken limb, which is dancing, and all of a sudden it starts to flourish and have green leaves and be meaningful, and life giving, so that is really huge, and it sort of connected to everything else, because so far it was like this dry bench that grew out when I was a kid, and then it was useless, and no one cared for it, so it dried, but it was still there, right, and now it is sort of connecting back to everything else, so in that sense, thank you very much!

What a breathtaking image! I was fascinated by her analogy with the tree flourishing, enlivening all its branches, in an exuberance of green leaves which is life-giving and lends meaning to the journey, connecting back to everything else. And I agree with Sarah, if I can contribute to this process, walk together in this journey of flourishing, enlivening my own

branches, and deepening my roots as we go, that feels tremendously meaningful. I am deeply honored and grateful for having worked with this group, these beautiful and courageous human beings, and thankful for their life-long contributions to my work, my research, and my being.

### 4.7.3 Reflections

Dancing opposites can be revealing, enabling one to get acquainted with them to the point of being able to name them and recognize that there is a range of colors in between. Their combination, the plurality of combinations, of alternatives that stem from this dance fuels life. In the flirt of Apollonian and Dionysian forces, possibilities of becoming unfold, in a way that is not just inevitable, but that allows creative engagement, a participation with that energetic power of giving a certain temporary frame, style, and texture to the process.

Dancing, tapping into knowledge pouring from body, intuition, senses, emotions, and rationality, allows accessing, becoming conscious of the flow of energy pervading oneself and connecting to everything and everyone else. Searching for an understanding that aligns pieces of knowledges which are not completely translatable, it informs a living which may be contradictory at times, but makes sense, enlivens the senses, sparks intuition, and challenges the intellect.

Through opening my vulnerability, dancing may shatter my ego, but the dance floor holds my pieces; and in movement I am able to let go and unfold my peaces. This implies a deep surrender, to the unknown, to the darkness and to the empty space, but it does not imply conformity. There is a window of intentionality which I can bring to each practice, to each dance and to each breath, and through awareness, it imbues my willingness in the transformative process. Intentionality in coming to practice, in dancing, being aware of energy flow, and tapping into energetic pockets, fears, and tensions, allows for participation – not control – in shaping and channeling this energy toward further transformations.

This participation asks for intentionality, awareness, and cognitive engagement, but not only. As Koppensteiner detailed it:

> A life-affirming and transformative practice of the self thus consists in shaping the flow of power, channeling energy through certain constellations of discourse and practices and conversely using the energetic to partially change the effects of discourse and influence practices (2009: 121).

This process involves a theoretical effort and an experiential practice which mingles both aesthetic and energic aspects. It is a flow of power that does not belong to me in terms of possession, but which rides pervasively through my body. Through this flow, power is shaped by my being and can be channeled through discourse and practice, influencing both, bringing them closer to the becoming self that I am in this present moment. In this sense, dance as a way of living not only implies to 'walk your talk', approximating actions and behaviors from what one preaches, but also to refresh the talk with the walk. In the vulnerable space of the dance floor, convictions that do not correspond to the becoming and to the present moment portray as disconnection, awkwardness, unease. From this perception, they can then be loosened, revisited or dropped. On the other hand, convictions that feel life-giving can be anchored or strengthened. In other words, it implies being the change you want to see in the world, hence changing the world with your becoming.

If transformation, change, and becoming takes place in any case, the question that follows, is "how one can shape this procedural becoming in its Apollonian-Dionysian entanglement?" (Koppensteiner 2009: 95). I have been approaching this question from different angles, and at this point this perspective may benefit from retrieving the idea of home. Earlier on it was discussed about the body as home, a place where we can dwell and be nurtured. It was also pointed out how the idea of home alludes to the safety derived from the familiarity and nonjudgmental characteristics of the container. In this sense, it was argued that being at home with inner and outer space and emptiness enables the creative tension which generates insights

and alternatives. Home provides comfort, but in the shaping of becoming it needs to be coupled with adventure, which brings forth potential and risk:

> In adventure one is both excited and scared of entering the unknown – one is widened and stands in wonder. At its edge is our own finitude – of giving up what we have embodied. One is called by otherness and difference to respond as faithfully as possible – to honour the possibilities that stand out, and to care for the possibilities of phenomena in an attitude of letting-be-ness (Todres 2007: 16).

Nevertheless, as changes in perspective change the world, home also changes due to the adventure, being informed by the elements met on the journey. In this perspective, home is not a place of sameness, but a place of nurturance, to which one returns to be connected to flowing energy, to give in to the flowing energy. It is a place to lay down barriers. Associating home and adventure with the process of understanding, Les Todres argued that "the one from home is transformed by this adventure, as such a 'self' is never self-enclosed but always in the openness of relationships" (2007: 16). It means there is always a relational aspect to the adventure, to the understanding process in the exchange with otherness. Furthermore, home is transformed because seen through lenses of adventure, which in turn gives home perspective, in the same way that the elements of home influence the very definition of otherness.

In the process of transgression from home and the further appropriation of what has been transgressed, there is a range of possibilities in between, which are negotiated not only with oneself but also with the relationships and the shared world of culture and language in which one is embedded. There is a productive tension, in which the levels of transgressing and appropriating, of changing and being changed are negotiated, played and effected. Moving with this tension, dwelling in that creative space allows for an expansion of home and an at-homeness in adventure. This process enables appropriation of that which is given to one as one's own, and transgression with one's own into adventure. "Implicit in all this is how a home-world is also a we-world – it is intersubjectively co-constituted" (Todres 2007: 16).

Dwelling in tension is a source of power, energetic power, which allows intentional participation in shaping discourses and practices, with the caveat that home is going to be changed as well because a we-world is based on relationality. This relationality shapes the process of subjectivation: "One is thus constantly engaged in a process of polyvalent transmission and reception along aesthetic/energetic lines. In this process the self is shaped just as it shapes others in turn embedded in a sphere of energetic power" (Koppensteiner 2009: 116).

Looking at this relationality and its role in co-constitution of the we-world from embodied lenses reveals manifold ramifications. Human physiological development responds to engagement, which spurs cellular growth and inter-neuronal connections:

> We develop in and through relationships. Each new relationship experience presents another opportunity to move, sense, and feel in deeper, more creative, and more fulfilling ways. Or, the opposite: to limit ourselves so that we do not hurt or get hurt by another person. Our brain is nourished by engagement, knows how to recognize safety and threat, and knows how to metabolize these nutrients and grow differently in response to each (Fogel 2013: 19).

Relationships thus influence behavior and physiological development not only in terms of awareness, but also suppression. Experiences of social encounters "(…) create lasting impressions not only in mental imagery and autobiographical memory and narrative, but more fundamentally in the flesh" (Fogel 2013: 226). Contacting, touching, and moving, as well as being contacted, touched, and moved stimulate embodied self-awareness and a sense of connection or distance to others. This process of adjustments which responds to the presence and energies at place is called coregulation, "(…) the ability to be and move with another individual in relation to a shared set of interoceptive sensations and emotions and in relation to the linkages and boundaries of each person's body schema" (Fogel 2013: 75).

In the same manner that touch and movement influences the body and the embodied awareness, trauma and violence are also perceived very ingrainedly in flesh, senses, emotions, not only in an individual manner but also in coregulatory interaction. "This also opens the door

to, for example, inter-generational transmissions as residual aesthetic/energetic traces may linger on and continue to exert influence even if the concrete lives have already faded away". (Koppensteiner 2009: 118). The possibility of intergenerational trauma is worrisome, raising concerns about the consequences of dreadful episodes such as wars and slavery, to cite just a few, in the current and in future generations. On the other hand, acknowledging its occurrence opens ways to recognize its existence, honor the suffering of ancestors, and engage in ways to influence, to some extent, how energetic and aesthetic traces impact the system in the present moment. Furthermore, as energies keep moving in the system, not only traumatic experiences might exert influence, but also ancestors' resilience and thriving.

Lederach described resilience as a quality needed to thrive in difficult conditions, while retaining a capacity to find a way back to a sense of being and purpose (Lederach 2010: 68). Finding a way back implies having first connected to this sense, and then being able to find the tracks that lead one back there. In this process, repetition in this track is helpful, because it inscribes the way, deepening and amplifying it. Referring to the role of prayers and meditation as instruments of this kind, he emphasized that opposed to being characterized as one-time events with a specific finality, "(…) these activities require the creation and re-creation of spacemoments that touch the deeper journey of human experience, provide meaningful location and the presence of the transcendent (…)". (Lederach 2010: 128).

As traces of trauma, violence and also joy and resilience are etched in the body schema, activities of this kind offer ways of contacting, transforming, and healing. Gabrielle Roth identified the feet as carriers in such a journey, which according to her leads to ecstasy, a place of egolessness, and surrender:

> The key to entering this place is some radical form of surrender, a ritual shattering. For me this has taken place on countless dance floors, when the music was really pumping and I stopped caring about what anybody else thought of my dance, my hairdo, my brain or my butt. Through dancing I navigated the badlands of endless

headtrips and found my way back to the stomping ground of my own two feet (1998b: xvii).

Roth's maps to ecstasy are found via dancing, via moving. In the ecstatic moment there is no more two, but one. Communion precedes and follows that moment, in the celebration of life shared with other beings. Referring to these kinds of experience as peak experiences, Maslow identified that they share various traits, like endless horizons, feelings of power and powerless, dissolution of barriers, feeling of ecstasy, awe and wonder, and loss of space and time track. He stated that they may have such an impact in the person to the point of generating transformation even in daily life (1970: 164). This transformative force, revealed in moments of peak experiences, may also be realized in everyday life (Koppensteiner 2009: 187-8), through practices that cultivate the circling in the path to the depths of human experience.

While these moments can fuel daily life with their re-significance of love, creativity, spirituality, and being, there is an accompanying subtler work of integrating these realizations into one's daily routine. The challenge is to twist that experience, not as a pursuit to be taken into rapture, but as infusing daily life and one's presence with the love and creativity which reverberates from that experience (Amorok, Schlitz and Vieten 2007: 61). It nurtures the cultivation of a quality which evokes a healing element in the seamlessness of spirituality and daily life (Lederach 2010: 142). In the interplay of the aesthetic and energetic sphere, the encounter can be realized both in the macro and micro: "In the flow within the aesthetic and energetic sphere one encounters something that is connecting the self to possibly all other living beings, yet is at the same time strangely local and contingent" (Koppensteiner 2009: 185).

The infusion of everyday life with those elements of love, awe, wonder, and connection is a great challenge in terms of transformative practices. The extraordinary aspect of the peak experience can generate dependency and self-centering. It can also be channeled to inform a daily practice which sustains the opening of spaces for creative alternatives. Yet, it can resonate further, beyond oneself, providing the outward vibration of the transformative power, which is

amplified in being of service to others. A service which is motivated by the pulsation of the vital power, and not necessarily by applause or appreciation by others. A service which stems from gratitude for being served and nurtured by life force, just joining the current of availability and openness of which we are part.

A concomitant approach on how to infuse daily life with this power is taken by Vaughan and Walsh, who suggest extending a peak experience into a plateau experience (1993: 113). Maslow described a plateau experience as eliciting the same awe and wonder, but in a more sustained form without the peak and the valley. He characterized the plateau experience as a witnessing of reality, seeing the symbolic, mythic, poetic, and transcendental which are present in the world (Krippner 1972: 115). It means being aware of the flow of vital energy as it spurs life into everything. The witnessing attitude described by Maslow provides an interesting image in terms of beholding the complexities of life.

Nevertheless, in order to contemplate a more relational aspect and the challenges of conflict transformation, I digress from Maslow's plateau to a different plateau, the one proposed by Bateson as opposed to climax or culmination point (1987:121) and re-signified by Deleuze and Guattari as "(…) a continuous, self-vibrating region of intensities whose development avoids any orientation toward a culmination point or external end" (1987: 22). In this sense, a plateau would vibrate an intensity which nonetheless does not mount up to a climax, a war, an ideal. They argued that "it is a regrettable characteristic of the Western mind to relate expressions and actions to exterior or transcendent ends, instead of evaluating them on a plane of consistency on the basis of their intrinsic value" (1987: 22). In this sense, the ecstatic surrender described by Roth is not the final destination, but is honored and celebrated as one of the expressions of life's exuberance in the balancing nature of the flow of energies.

Lederach observed a similar dismissal of the existent vibration while heading to a climax in the field of peace and conflict. He criticized the gearing of certain intensities toward a

pinnacle and posterior ditching them in the name of a culmination point, which reveals itself unsustainable. In this case, the solutions generated by relational platforms are taken as the preciosity, while the creative responsive processes are dropped as unnecessary or useful for a short period of time. There is a clinging to the climax, in the form of a result expected to be permanent, but is unavoidably temporary, because of the ever-changing reality. The implications of clinging to ephemeral results complicate an already delicate scenario, leading to what Lederach called an authenticity gap. This gap happens when people are led to believe that miraculous solutions are necessary to change the situation, while intuitively they disbelieve in the efficacy of signed papers. "And their intuition is correct: signed papers do not make a difference, and the agreements collapse unless the deeper processes of genuine engagement are created" (Lederach 2005: 49).

In this sense, platforms resemble Deleuze and Guattari's plateaus in their vibrant intensity, not geared to a solution, but to an infusion of intentionality, energetic power, and life exuberance into relationalities: "In peacebuilding, a platform is best understood in the idea of relational spaces, the ability to keep sets of people in creative interaction" (Lederach 2005: 85). And this again is a process: solutions can be identified among alternatives elicited from the relational space, but they are not taken as the ecstatic key. Instead, the connections pervading the space itself, the vibrant platforms, are celebrated as the transformational element. Moreover, it is not easy: the resonance that inspires viable alternatives may last for moments, but the power that stems from life's vital force can be intentionally infused in changing oneself and creating other possibilities. It also animates the sustenance of awareness in oneself and in relationships, in a posture not of outcomes, but of vibrant availability: "what can last and remain more permanently available are the elements that permit the creating and re-creating of meaningful conversation, the bases from which resonance may rise, alongside with other experiences of dissonance and silence" (Lederach 2010: 207).

The availability of these elements reflects a willingness to be open for vibrating together, for being of service in the resonance of the collective, by sustaining the inner space of vibration and channeling power toward interaction. The nurturance derives from fueling the process by tapping inner sources of energy, and allowing this energy to amplify and be amplified by others. The present moment becomes, then, the platform we engage into changing ourselves, and the world with us. Because I cannot change the world if I do not change with it. Participating in that transformation is a twofold way of making the world more peaceful and a subjectively better place to life, and of celebrating this life right now, in each and every breath - transformative and aware breath.

Dance can contribute to the "(…) ecstasy of living the spirit of the moment" (Roth 1998b: 3). This dancing path has no beginning and no end: "it is a vibrant, (…) never-ending, ever-changing dance of life. In inertia our fullness is empty; in ecstasy our emptiness is full" (Roth 1998b: 200). In the availability of the inner and interrelational space, vibrations meet, even where violence has settled and energetic power represented in voice has been silenced. The tunneling and amplification of these vibrations are powerfully collective. And it is in the collectively shared horizon of possibility that one's becoming takes form and dissolves in the present moment, in a continuous discovery and awe of life's exuberance which invites to dance.

## Limitations, Challenges, and Recommendations

In this chapter I highlight some limitations of this research and challenges I have faced in the process. This reflection aims at contributing to further discussions and future research. Some of the topics pointed out here were dealt with in different chapters, but presenting them in a condensed form may provide a more encompassing picture of the challenges and limitations.

An initial challenge was to talk about dance. Due to the split between folk dance and professional dance, and the consequent institutionalization of knowing how to dance, I had difficulties addressing dance in a way that would not be restricted to ballet or high-skilled techniques and performance in my audience's understanding. I considered changing the name and calling it body-mind practices, in order to reduce potential resistance generated by the idea of dance. But in the end, I decided just to add this reference in the folders and conversations, for two main reasons. First, because body-mind practice refers to a vaster field with many different techniques, and therefore it might give an inaccurate idea of my proposal. Second, because I believe that working with the idea of a dance that is spontaneous and conscious may be beneficial to deconstruct this idea of "I cannot dance" and refresh the field in its variety.

I established a dialogue between the families of peace – energetic, moral, modern and postmodern, and dance expressions, in an attempt to comprehend the relations and influences of peace understandings in dance, and vice versa. My intention was not to offer an extensive study on dance expressions, but to pinpoint certain elements to illustrate and foster the discussion. I chose to focus on several specific examples, following the criteria of correspondence with elements in the dance and the interpretations of peace being addressed. Within each practice, I also adopted a narrowed focus, not intending to explore in-depth the varieties of each expression, but to illustrate and debate specific approaches. These criteria

allowed me to narrow down the examples which would foster the dialogue intended, but also excluded a wide range of expressions in dance. Further research to broaden this dialogue is required and seems compelling.

Another aspect that generated resistance was the understanding of conflict itself. While the overall topic of the research would raise interest, dance as a conflict transformation method was often seen as a technique to be applied to others. In no way do I dismiss the importance of such work with at risk populations and among groups in regions of protracted conflict, and furthermore, I am very excited to see additional research that focuses on specific groups. However, I also realized that these arguments may underlie a denial of the systemic implication and shared responsibilities of problems in the world. In what indicates the widespread perspective on conflict as something bad, I often encountered resistance in the acknowledgment of the existence of conflicts and the need for methods to deal with them in so-called privileged areas.

This perspective may have two sides: on one hand, I consider myself "normal" and objective, handling perfectly with my issues (Conflicts? What conflicts?). Therefore, people who needed conflict work would be the ones in trouble with the current state of affairs, excluded from the structure, and seen as problematic. On the other hand, such a perspective may as well disavow my participation in elicitive conflict transformation methods, because I do not deserve such attention while there are so many people with more needs than I have, and undergoing these experiences would be seen as selfish. A transrational perspective on peace and conflict twists both arguments, in the sense that engaging in elicitive conflict transformation methods is neither selfishness nor weakness, but an act of generosity out of love and willingness to be of service.

While writing, I also faced the challenge of language. Beyond the inherent limitations of not writing in my native language, I refer here mostly to the tension I found between a

proposal which encompasses body and mind as interconnected, and a language structure (in English, but also in Portuguese and other grammar) that reflects the split between body and mind and culture and nature. For example, when I refer to 'my' body, I grammatically say 'it hurts', instead of I hurt. This creates a conundrum that is difficult to untie. I embraced the contradiction, and this tension can be felt throughout the text.

Another aspect related to language is the use of verbal guidance and prompts to orient the practical exercises in a way that is clear, direct and transmits confidence. Some expressions are commonly used to stir intellectual work, and their utilization as a cue for dancing and feeling may generate confusion and stimulate over rationalization. I also noticed that in the days I was not feeling very grounded my guidance was not very clear. At a certain extent, this is natural because facilitators are human beings with contact boundaries at work, whose vulnerabilities inform the practice. However, it is also important to highlight the need to use clear and lean language, which provides clarity of guidance while addressing vulnerabilities. This clarity contributes to hold a safe space. Furthermore, there is a highly transformative potential in directly addressing and engaging with the vulnerabilities present, including the ones of the facilitator, as an opportunity for conflict work.

A certain level of difficulty with language connects also with challenges I faced regarding the methodology. I encouraged the participants of the dance sessions to use embodied writing to describe their experiences, via sharing some excerpts of my own and others. However, the proposal did not find much resonance with them, although two of them reported that they would have liked to engage on it. I identify several possible reasons for this: first, some reported a lack of meditative time and calm space outside the sessions to concentrate on such a production. Second, the intrinsic difficulties of putting into words an experience that is very subjective and not completely describable. As writing is often used in a cognitive manner, especially in academia, associating writing with the very subjective experience of dance and

movement generates certain dissonance. It takes time to adjust languaging to embodying, and availability of time was a concern for the participants.

On the other hand, my own experience with embodied writing revealed it as a very compelling way of portraying experiences, fostering further reflection, allowing to relive the experience through different lenses, and gaining further insight into them and myself. It is important to address the caveat that, at times, my commitment to engage in embodied writing interfered with the spontaneity of the experience, because I kept on anticipating the act, diverting my attention from the moment. Nevertheless, awareness and a deep breath grounded my presence again. Based on these insightful effects, I encourage further exploration of this technique with subsequent groups. For that, I would suggest a deeper introduction of the method in the beginning of the sessions, and setting specific times for the writing to take place. Acknowledging that different methods resonate differently with each person, I would say it is also important to present it as a possibility and make different techniques, such as painting and drawing, also available.

Similar reflections can be derived from the use of more objective formats. On the one hand, I attribute the low number of responses I received to not designating a specific time within the session for the participants to fill out the forms. On the other hand, I also felt resistance in terms of engaging into cognitive reasoning after the practices, because of putting into words what sometimes was not directly translatable, and also out of a need for communitarian exchange instead. So, the NVC-based evaluations and the pre- and post-test were useful for the evaluation of the sessions, but I could not derive comparisons regarding the overall objective of the research. Further explorations are therefore required for a more insightful use of these tools. Having the support of a second person could have been helpful in this sense as well.

For the kind of information I was pursuing, the interviews proved to be adequate, and very sensitive to the textures and nuances of the experience, although it took some time and

questioning to get a more sensual perception of their lived experience. It is important to consider that the contact I had with the participants during the semester, in and out of the sessions, as well as their interest in similar topics, might have consciously or unconsciously influenced their answers. If on the one hand this contact may have influenced participants to express greater sympathy toward the sessions, on the other hand, a distant interviewer would probably not have collected as personal recounts. Supported by the proposal argued in this research, I took the risk and opted for closeness, conducting the interview myself. I also chose to engage in interviews after the end of the sessions, because I wanted to get insights not only on the experience itself, but also on its influence in their daily lives after two months of practice. Combining interviews right after each session with interviews after the whole experience might facilitate the recollection of sensual impressions, benefiting further researches.

The importance of the setting was often highlighted by the participants in terms of contributing to a safe space, and it is important to address it here. From having water and snacks available, a pleasant temperature of the room (which was not a consensus though) and the volume of the music to the location and surroundings of the physical space, all contribute to the experience. Setting the decoration and arranging the place before participants arrived became also a meditative moment for me, in which I could concentrate and be present.

In terms of the facilitation process, one participant pointed out that she could perceive openness, honesty, and excitement with the proposal in my oral presentation, and that was one of the elements that took her to join the practice. During the practices, another participant stated that a nonjudgmental presence on the part of the facilitator positively influenced the experience, providing an aura of fun to what could have been an intimidating endeavor. She also observed that the fact that I joined the group in the dance was helpful, in terms of participating and modelling a full engagement in the exercise. According to her, it set the tone on how they were supposed to be engaging in the space, not in terms of performing great dances for other people's

aesthetic amazement, but rather of enjoying the movement. Some participants also commented that they appreciated the planning and the arch of the whole session. Although they stated that they could not fully comprehend the logic behind it, they affirmed it was impactful.

In terms of cultural influences, it is important to emphasize that although tapping different sources and knowledges from different cultures, many of the authors and dancers inspiring this research come from a Western perspective. In terms of the practices and exercises developed and adapted, they are influenced by Eastern types of meditation, Western dance, and Brazilian theater, in combination with my own Brazilian social and cultural background.

In practice, the exercises have been applied in Brazil and in the United States, in this last case with participation of people from diverse geographical and cultural backgrounds, though with some years of living in the US. The elicitive approach was the guide for navigating diversity and cultural sensitiveness. In practice, it meant being aware that physical contact, as touching or holding hands for example, may not be a major concern in a Brazilian setting, while in different settings this could be very sensitive, and the exercises might have to be adjusted. Sensitivity to these formal and unformal agreements is essential to preserve the wellbeing of the participants, and balancing between self-preservation and taking risks also applies in this context. The invitational aspect of the practice, the openness to any decision to opt out, and awareness to consent are extremely important for holding a safe space and need to be constantly recalled.

This balance also applies in terms of exploration of feelings and emotions. While the safe space, the support offered by community, body, breath, and the frame can hold suffering and enable transformation, the setting is not designed for psychological treatment of traumatic materials that may surface. Such cases did not happen, but in the occurrence of a crisis, appropriate referrals to trained professionals can be made. In this sense, although healing may happen in the dances, the main focus approached here is not therapeutic, but geared toward

conflict transformation. Dance as a method to elicit conflict transformation can be used in parallel with other practices, and further research on that combination is required.

In terms of conclusions that can be extracted from the practice/research group, it is important to bear in mind the particularities of the group in terms of peace and conflict training, previous friendship bonds among the participants, and their relative acquaintance to dance and physical activity. It is also important to consider that there were other experiences with transformative methods going on during the semester, including other dance practices. So, I do not attribute the impressions of the participants strictly to the participation in the dance sessions comprised in this research, neither do they. In this sense, they wisely brought to light connections with and comparisons to other practices that contributed to their experience and therefore contribute to this reflection.

I am excited for further investigations on how to address differently the elements identified as contributing for rendering the frame conducive, as well as on different elements that provide auspicious conditions to make the dancing experience meaningful for conflict transformation and unfolding peaces. In the nexus between peace, conflict and dance, I chose to enter from the perspective of peace studies, dialoguing it with some dance expressions. Further research on this same nexus from the entry point of dance would be fascinating, as well as dialogue with other fields such as healing or health practices and psychology. By the kind of experiences portrayed, I also see a lot of potential in the exploration of this topic through lenses of feminist and gender studies.

This research contributes to the field of peace and conflict by dialoguing dance expressions and perspectives on the body with interpretations of peace in history and culture. Furthermore, it discusses dance and its potential to unfold peaces from a transrational perspective, and explore elements which contribute to make dance a method to elicit conflict transformation. This exploration can also benefit other methods, by bringing insight on how to

integrate and combine these elements in new and different manners, and can also benefit from further dialogue between the practices and methods approached here and others.

This has been a journey of dancing concepts and conceptualizing experiences of dance. Different textures of energy flow were sensed, experienced through movement, and languaged, as well as concepts were embodied. In this exploration, the understanding engendered by these varied experiences does not completely overlap, as can be seen in the recounts portrayed in this research. The contradictions and tensions of the non-overlapping edges motivate further research, questioning, and dance. Also, many overlaying lenses can be identified, in a way of offering insights on frames which can be used to facilitate further conversation, elicit conflict transformation, unfold peaces, and inspire a more fulfilling life.

## Conclusion

This research was motivated by the exploration of ways of creatively tapping the energy generated by conflicts in order to develop new dynamics in relationships, and in particularly, focused on dance as a method to unfold peaces and elicit conflict transformation. This focus was inspired by my own transformative experiences with dance, by practitioners' insightful reflections on dance, and by research carried out in peace studies, which highlighted potential contributions of arts and movement/body techniques to this field. After identifying peace as presence, as a way of being in the world, the investigation then set out by exploring elements that render the embodied here and now moving experience meaningful. The following challenge was experimenting with a combination of those elements in a frame which could create auspicious conditions for eliciting conflict transformation and unfolding peaces. The transrational peace philosophy and the elicitive approach to conflict transformation provided the theoretical reference for this exploration.

In order to explore these elements, I began looking at some of the ways interpretations of peace have reflected and influenced dance expressions. For that, I delved into each family of the interpretations of peaces and established a dialogue between them and expressions of dance which correspond to these cultures and historical periods. This dialogue was guided by the interplay of Dionysian and Apollonian forces as discussed by Nietzsche.

Balance is a key element in an energetic understanding of peace. It is characterized by the unobstructed flow between Apollonian and Dionysian forces, which represent opposites that exist in the world. Dances stemming from an energetic perspective see body and mind as one united entity, connected with nature and the whole cosmos. Dance is then a spiritual practice that enables the human being to tune in with the vibration of the cosmos' energies. This process reflects a search for balance in the system in which human beings are embedded and nurtured,

and which they can also exert influence through the very resonance of their body. Dance in this worldview is a communitarian practice, in which all are participants and partake in the Dionysian ecstasy of tragedy and exhilaration of life. Dances are inherent in life and therefore celebrate birth and death, seasons, spirituality, and natural elements.

The spiritual, communitarian, and participatory elements undergone an important shift that took place in cultures which have a predominantly moral understanding of peace. Peace then, is detached from its locus in human relationships to be related to the one God. Attainable only in a future, this peace is bestowed by God's grace according to a strict commitment to divine rules coordinated by God's representatives. Dance is stripped of its spiritual content, and the communitarian bond is substituted by a performance which emphasized differentiation, in terms of position, rank, and ability. An audience is established apart from the performer, with the role restricted to that of an observer. In other cases, it became just a pastime. Based on the same observation of worldly dichotomies, moral understandings praise Apollonian form over Dionysian energy, which is cast aside. As a consequence, the encounter of moral understandings with energetic dances has been mainly violent and tending to exclusion or annihilation. Body is split from mind, as well as from nature, and is despised as sinful or idealized as an ethereal, diaphanous, and white being as seen in romantic ballets.

However, some integrations have been attempted, and energetic rituals have been incorporated in moral practices, a strategy resorted by both sides. In the case of practitioners of energetic dances, disguising their practices underneath moral traditions was a way to perpetuate their culture. In the case of people with moral perspectives, this incorporation represented an attempt to flatten, transmute, or contain those practices within an Apollonian form. Still, other energetic dances remained present under the conditions of tolerated or unofficial. While the Dionysian element can be found in practices such as Sufi whirling, in the realm of religious

traditions, it also found its way, although detached from any spiritual content, in carnival and popular festivities.

The view of dance as a pastime, apart from daily life, was also perpetuated in societies with a modern understanding of peace. While peace remains out of reach and detached from human relationality and projected into the future, it is not bestowed by God's grace anymore, but can be achieved by human rationality. Sets of rules are still the reference, but now it is the law of the nation state and the reason of scientists which set the tone. The perspective toward the body in a modern interpretation of peace deepens the split between it and the mind, which becomes the center of reasoning, rational thought and therefore, truth. Body, as well as nature, is seen as a resource to the triumph of the mind, and as so exploitable and disposable. The ideal image of the body becomes the perfected body, and dances praise technique, precision, and perfection. Apollonian form remains in a dominant position, as could be observed in the examples of Louis XIV's and Balanchine's ballets *Apollo*.

Postmodern peaces questions the absolute truths of modernity, as did Isadora Duncan in her fierce critiques toward ballets and its rules of pointed shoes, body types, and rigid techniques. Postmodern peaces argue for many local and imperfect peaces. Duncan's dance opened way for multiple explorations in dance, emphasizing respect for the body and for the spiritual aspect of dance revealed in the Dionysian rapture. Her dance and her vision for it was considered groundbreaking, as postmodern peaces shake the beliefs of modernity with plural truths and peaces related to human relationality in each and every encounter. As postmodernity criticizes modernity by its very rational means, Duncan's postmodern revival of Dionysian energy also remained curtailed within the modern structure at the macro level in dance.

However, both postmodern peaces and Duncan's dances were vital in setting the stage for multiple approaches and further experiments in peace and dance with respect for plurality.

Transrational peaces, in turn, do not deny or reject the key elements of the energetic, moral, modern, and postmodern interpretations of peace, but recognize harmony, justice, security and truth as necessary aspects of life. The need is to balance them, twisting their harmful tendencies when unchecked and rampant. The split between body and mind does not sustain itself anymore, and they are integrated as essential elements in this balancing, through which the many layers of human beings can be explored while the flow of energies can be tapped and intentionally directed at transformation. Following this perspective, I approached a transrational perspective on dance in which the many expressions can be explored and potentially provide conditions for experiences of peace, when practiced with awareness and conscious of the harmful tendencies of one or other extremes of Dionysian and Apollonian imbalance. In this sense, various dances can provide a floor for the celebration of diversity in life, in its suffering and joy. However, the degree in which each dance offers auspicious conditions for peaces to unfold differs, and my next step is to identify further elements and combinations which contribute in rendering a conducive frame for meaningful experiences.

Grounded in the view that conflicts are natural features of human relationships and peace can be perceived in the very process of its transformation, I set out to explore the realms of conflict transformation, with a special focus in the elicitive approach. In the dynamic balance of the flow of Dionysian and Apollonian forces, tension is inherent in the process, and necessary to uphold both as well as to give space for creativity and the unknow to present new alternatives. As conflict is seen as blockages in the flow of energy, tapping into these pockets of constricted energy potentially allows an increased flow and the unfolding of peaces. In an elicitive perspective, the conflictive situation contains the elements for its transformation in the

relationships of the parties, and a space can be facilitated to tap into these energies and allow creativity and the unknow to combine in different possibilities.

Guided by the layered structure of the elicitive conflict transformation pyramid (Dietrich 2013), I approached the inner and outer layers influencing human relationships to explore their specificities and potentials and shed light into ways of finding resonance and balance among them. A third principle of transrational peace philosophy is also explored, the correspondence between the inner layers of sexual, socio-emotional, mental, and spiritual and the outer familial, communal, societal, policital and global layers. In terms of the practice explored in this research, correspondence implies that the deeper the work, the broader the impact. Exploring interactions beyond the episode, the apparent cause of the conflict, and the persona, the masquerade of the individual, allows to investigate further dissonances in the contact boundaries at work and the potential for tapping into conflictive energies approaching the epicenter.

The following step was to look at methods developed to elicit conflict transformation, their principles, formats, and key elements. At this point, I approached humanistic psychology and its exploration of elicitive methods, to briefly analyze movement, dance, and the body from its perspective on transformative methods and derive insights to inspire my approach on dance. I also ventured into an exploration of meditation, as it influenced humanistic psychology and my own dance practice. Further influences are body-mind practices as the *Gymnastik* movement, Dance/Movement Therapy, and Authentic Movement. In this manner, I approached another perspective on dance which diverged from the professional dance field and reemerged in these techniques in an approach to healing, health, consciousness, and often spirituality. In the humanistic psychology hub of methods, I also locate Gabrielle Roth and her technique of the 5Rhythms, which influenced my further explorations in dance as a method of elicitive conflict transformation. Before this step, I delved into the explorations of art and body and mind

techniques viewed from the peace studies field, to ground my explorations on what has been identified as necessities for conflict and peace work.

With those contributions in mind, I ventured into a practical and theoretical exploration of dance as a method to elicit conflict transformation, having as foundation the series of dance sessions I facilitated for the research/practice group. In the dialogue among literature, the form and content of the sessions, and the comments and insights provided by the participants, elements identified in the previous explorations and new ones were tested, combined and twisted. This exercise generated an approach to dance as a method to elicit conflict transformation anchored in the exploration of multiple elements which contribute to provide auspicious conditions for meaningful experiences.

In this sense, an exploration of body, presence, and time, allowed practicing techniques for refining attention and presence, then bringing this awareness to movement, tapping into bodily wisdom, rooting presence in the movement of bones, muscles, head, hips, and limbs. On the one hand, it favors getting acquainted with the body and its potentialities, helping to go beyond self-consciousness and the split between mind and body as well as allowing an encounter with the body as a resource of safety, at-homeness, and vulnerability. On the other hand, it allows for sensing and listening to the body's stories, memories, and desires, enfolding the present moment of awareness with past and future being revealed in the here and now.

A joint exploration of breath, senses, and space motivated delving into inner and outer spaces, connecting the breath which extends from inhalation, heartbeat, blood flow, and exhalation to the air and winds which occupy the outer scape. In this sense, breath reveals the spaces inside, as well as stimulates sensing the boundaries which sustain life in its individuality and the spiritual blow which animates it. In a continuum, air also unveils our connection to the outer space, blurring those same boundaries through sensing belonging to the windscape that animates life in nature and all other beings. In this interconnectedness, not only is life nurtured

but also vulnerability is shared, revealing human participation in the changes of the cosmos, and also the impact of one's actions and choices. Through breath, a person shares in the world's tragedies, but she can also contribute to its nurturance and fullness through the quality of presence she brings to each breath. Breath unveils space in the moment, which is imbued with creativity and the unknow, necessary for unfolding multiple possibilities for conflict transformation, and a life in its fullness.

Having anchored presence in body and breath, extending awareness of our participation in the larger space and windscape of existence, allows for further observation of pain and feelings. The exploration of spaces reveals not only joy, but also pain and suffering. Breath, body, windscape, and community as resources provide the support to the task of looking into pain and feelings, which requires sustenance, because they are more easily clouded by ego defilements. Without the haziness of ego, uncovered by awareness in presence, pain can be seen as a signpost of unbalance, and feelings as responses to resonance and dissonance at a person's contact boundaries at work. Observing the textures of feelings enables her to identify their functions as protective systems, and also their potential for further harm if left unbalanced. From this acquaintance facilitated by movement, it is possible to explore manifestations and expressions of feelings, the qualities of their energies, and ways of tapping into them to foster responses more in tune with authenticity and choices which contribute to aliveness.

Befriending feelings in movement and getting acquainted with their expressions and ways to tap them in a healthy and protective way provide sustenance to dive into realms more clouded by egoic projections: our sufferings, and emotions. Emotions are mechanisms of survival, evaluations made from past experiences which inform discernment for future choices and options. In movement, it is possible to identify attachment or denial projected by these memories on the present moment. Movement offers dynamicity and space to discern feelings from emotions and suffering from pain, unveiling them, dancing with them and letting them go.

Then, it is possible to learn from them while being able to respond and make decisions based on a clarity in the present situation. The energy liberated from the drain of attachment or denial can then flow freely in healing ways, instilling vitality, and inspiring actions based on authenticity and compassion.

The vulnerability unraveled by letting go of control and loosening the grips of attachment and denial reveals interconnectedness. In the resonances and dissonances in a one's inner and outer layers, conflicts happen and are transformed through the flow of energies, whose power stems from an unconstrained ride. In the flow of energies that connect us through all our layers, in the ever-changing cosmic system in which we participate, we also exert influence in transformation through intentionality. Through the presence practiced in dance, it is possible to experiment new forms, movements, and rhythms of one's own becoming. In partnering with others, it is possible to explore dynamics of relationships, tuning responses with one's own authenticity and acting out of compassion. This power bred from the flow of energy cast by movement, deriving from vulnerability, from being open to ever-becoming, offers the freedom to change ourselves into as many possibilities as the moment presents, increased in the pollination of the encounter.

The realization of the power to change, derived from the acceptance of vulnerability, allows the exploration of textures of feelings, emotions, and thoughts from a loving standpoint. Surrendering to the flow, deeper knots of energy become noticeable, because they are tapped with this loving flow of power. Dancing contributes to vitality by engaging with these tensioned pockets, and clear the channels and pathways for power to ride, tapping into locked energies and allowing to harness them into the transformative process. Exploring those places which drain more energy in rejecting and denying holds a lot of potential, and in the dualities of opposites, it is possible to explore resistances, likes, dislikes, shadows, fears, and free energies for a more resonating communication in relationships. In the process of embodying language

and languaging embodiment, a person refines her intention and infuse vitality in life-giving convictions, such as acting out of compassion and will to be of service.

In the unrestricted flow of opposites upheld in tension, multiple alternatives of combinations emerge. In the flirt of Apollonian and Dionysian forces, possibilities of becoming unfold, in a way that is not just inevitable, but that allows creative engagement, a participation with that energetic power of giving a certain temporary frame, style, and texture to the process. Dancing, tapping into knowledge pouring out from body, intuition, senses, emotions and rationality, allows becoming conscious of and accessing the flow of energy pervading oneself and connecting one to everything and everyone else.

Searching for an understanding that aligns pieces of knowledge that are not completely translatable informs a living which may be contradictory at times, but still is sound, and can enliven the senses, challenge the intellect, spark intuition and instill spiritual gratitude. Practicing dance in this sense, as a way of living and becoming, does not orient action or will toward conclusion, results, peak moments or ecstasy, but enfolds them in vibrating platforms in the inner and interrelational space of ever-becoming. The tunneling and amplification of those vibrations are powerfully collective. And it is in the collectively shared horizon of possibility that one's becoming takes form and dissolves in the present moment, in a continuous discovery and awe of life's exuberance which invites us to dance.

In sum, in this invitation to dance with conflicts and unfold peaces, the proposal of the sessions was to anchor presence in body and breath, enlivening inner senses in the here and now, and enfolding them in the larger windscape of existence which expands through space and time. This provides resources and safety in the exploration of observing this presence through pain and feelings, exploring memories and judgments present in suffering and emotions, and ways to move them with awareness. From this moving observation, energy stems in the form of power which inspires agency in the constant becoming. Such process is not only personal

but relational, and is fueled by the tension of upholding opposites and exploring sympathy and resistance, light and shadow, which in turn provides the spark for creativity and unveils the unknown. While observing the interplay of these energies and the sustenance of the container, alternatives emerge, informing a way of living more authentic and responsive to the present situation.

Dancing as a way of living points toward a practice that provides the space to elicit conflict transformation and sustains the intention to unfold peaces, in an awareness brought to the process which reveals life in its fullness. The arch presented here was one way of organizing the process, among many possible approaches, depending on the intention brought to the practice, the response of the participants, and the topics to be touched upon. But above all, it has to be danced! Dance by itself is just a method; it requires a dancing presence in what then becomes a life-long journey of transformation.

As a facilitator, this invitation to dance inspired a process that was very transformative. It humbled my impetus to push a determined process, increased my trust in the various elements composing the experience and strengthened my confidence in disposing them in an auspicious frame. Furthermore, it also allowed me to practice presence, being aware of prejudices and biases as they were revealed through movement or language. This was a fascinating process of learning, in terms of my initial intention of self-transformation, which was seeing others' beauty beyond bias and prejudices. Process in which I was courageously supported by the participants of the sessions. It started with becoming aware of the biases and expectations I had, and then not suppressing or condemning, but rather trying to offer them as vulnerabilities in the process. In the encounter of vulnerabilities, of our joys and sorrows, beauty unfolded, and with it, also gratitude.

Although it may sound as a progressive development, it is a continuous process, with its setbacks and breakthroughs, embedded in awareness and constant revaluation, and pollinized

in the encounter with resonant and dissonant views. In writing, such process led to a reassessment of initial rigid judgments to some topics, for example international relations and ballet, and derived a text more in tune with my multifaceted experience of them. Seeing my arguments dancing on paper, after the feedback loops between theory and practice, allowed a multifold perspective, which entailed a deeper understanding of my biases, with the care of not refraining from communicating my point - if that was the case. In this way, the idea is that they invite to movement rather than become static.

After the long process dancing between languaging and embodying, it is time now to indulge in this invitation to movement full of stillness, in a celebration of life coinciding with spring blooming outside my window. With this invitation to dance, I conclude this writing process, which hopefully continues to vibrate, and is incorporated into movement where new forms are gained in the flow of Apollonian and Dionysian forces that pervades the exploration of dance, conflict transformation and peaces.

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# Appendix

## Appendix A: Informed Consent Form

**Eastern Mennonite University Institutional Review Board**
**Study Information & Consent Form**

The purpose of this research is to explore movement and dance as methods to elicit conflict transformation and unfold peace.

If you participate in this research, you will be asked to participate in activities including dancing and moving spontaneously guided by music; theater games, guided breathing and imagery activities; and discussions about peace and conflict. You will be asked to share your opinions and experiences through speaking, writing, drawing and movement.

The risks involved in this research are minimal and equivalent to physical activities such as walking and aerobic exercise.

There will be no personal benefits to you from your participation in this research. However, the results of the research may contribute to peace and conflict studies, movement/dance studies and arts-based peacebuilding.

Your participation in this project will take approximately 14 hours, divided in weekly sessions of one hour and thirty minutes each. An extra hour per week may be requested for journaling outside the meetings. The duration of this research project is from October 11th to December 9th.

Your participation in this research is strictly voluntary. You may refuse to participate at all, or choose to stop your participation at any point in the research without fear of penalty or negative consequence.

The information/data you provide for this research will be treated confidentially, and all raw data will be kept in a secured file by the researcher. Results of the research will be reported anonymously, and no individually identifiable information will be presented unless explicit permission is given to do so.

You also have the right to review the results of the research if you wish to do so. A copy of the results may be obtained by contacting the researcher: Paula Ditzel Facci (paulafacci@gmail.com).

If further questions arise, or you feel you have been treated unfairly, please contact Dr. Cheree Hammond, of the Eastern Mennonite University Institutional Review Board, Eastern Mennonite University, 1200 Park Rd., Harrisonburg, VA, ph. (540) 432-4228, email: cheree.hammond@emu.edu.

*Participant consent*

I, (print full name) _____, have read and understand the foregoing information explaining the purpose of this research and my rights and responsibilities as a subject. My signature below designates my consent to participate in this research, according to the terms and conditions listed above.
Signature_____ Date_____

I agree to give the researcher permission to record my image, voice and likeness using:
☐ photography       ☐ audio       ☐ video
Signature_____ Date_____

I, (print full name) _____, give the researcher permission to use, publish, and republish, in the context of this research, photographic, video, audio reproductions of my likeness or voice, journals, drawings or poetry made for this study. I allow the use and publication of these materials:
☐ without my name attached to it       ☐ with my name attached to it
Signature_____ Date_____

## Appendix B: Pre- and Post-Test Form

Name_____                                   Date_____

**PART I**: For the following statements, please CIRCLE the number that best reflects your current situation according to the question.

1. I am confident in my capacity to transform conflicts.

Not very confident-1-----------2------------3-------------4------------5------------6- Very confident

2. I am satisfied with the outcomes of the conflicts I deal with in daily life.

Not very satisfied- 1------------2------------3------------4-------------5-----------6- Very satisfied

3. I am confident in my capacity of being a peaceful presence in a conflictive situation.

Not very confident-1-----------2-------------3-----------4------------5-----------6- Very confident

4. I often experience peace in my daily life.

Not very often -     1------------2-------------3-----------4-----------5----------6- Very often

5. I am comfortable with my body.

Not very comfortable -1----------2-----------3-----------4-----------5----------6- Very comfortable

6. I am confident in my capacity to identify and deal with my emotions in a conflictive situation.

Not very confident-    1-----------2-----------3-------------4-----------5----------6- Very confident

7. I often assess my body and emotions as sources of knowledge before making a decision.

Not very often -        1-----------2-----------3-------------4-----------5----------6- Very often

8. I am confident in my capacity to recognize my repetitive patterns and reactive responses in conflictive situations.

Not very confident-    1-----------2-----------3-------------4-----------5-----------6- Very confident

9. I am confident in my capacity of being aware of judgments that I make when I relate to other people.

Not very confident-   1-----------2------------3-------------4------------5----------6- Very confident

10. I am confident in my capacity to empathize with others in conflictive situations, especially the ones with whom I disagree.

Not very confident-   1-----------2------------3-------------4------------5----------6- Very confident

11. I am confident in my capacity to open spaces to elicit creative alternatives in conflictive situations.

Not very confident-   1-----------2------------3------------4------------5----------6- Very confident

12. I am confident in my capacity to identify when I need to step back and take care of myself.

Not very confident-   1-----------2------------3------------4------------5----------6- Very confident

13. I am confident in my discipline to constantly reflect, refine my energies and work on my own conflicts.

Not very confident-   1-----------2------------3------------4------------5----------6- Very confident

**PART II:** Please answer to the following questions:
15. What do you understand by peace?
16. What do you understand by conflict?
17. Do you use any method/strategy/technique to deal with conflict? If yes, which one(s)?
18. What motivates you to participate in this research/practice?
19. Use the space below to give any other contribution you would like to.

## Appendix C: NVC-based Reflection

**Dancing Conflicts, Unfolding Peace: elicitive conflict transformation through dance and movement.**

### Reflection 1

This form proposes a reflection about the activities you have participated in the research "Dancing Conflicts, Unfolding Peace", from October to November 2016, at EMU, facilitated by Paula Ditzel Facci. The following reflection is based on Nonviolent Communication (Rosenberg 2005).

Considering all the activities developed, please answer the following questions:

1) Were there actions that contributed to well-being? Which ones?

2) Were there specific needs that you had that were met? Which ones?

(If you answered **no** to question n°2, please go to question n°5. If you answered **yes**, please continue to question n°3).

3) What were the feelings generated by meeting these needs?

4) Refer back to your answer to question n° 1. Is there any way these actions could influence changes in your daily life? How?

5) Were there actions that contributed to discomfort or distress? Which ones?

6) Were there specific needs that you had that were unmet? Which ones?

(If you answered **no** to question n°6, please go to question n°9. If you answered **yes**, please continue to question n°7).

7) What were the feelings generated by these unmet needs?

8) What would be your request to see these needs met?

9) Please use the space below to give any other contribution you would like to.

Thank You!

Reference: Rosenberg, M. (2005) *Nonviolent Communication*: A Language of Life. Encinitas: PuddleDancer Press

## Appendix D: Collected Responses to the NVC-Based Reflection

| **1) Were there actions that contributed to well-being? Which ones?** |
|---|
| R1. Yes. Each of the movement exercises was life-giving. I particularly enjoyed the partnered sculpting and "follow the hand". |
| R2. Sharing space with others, dancing with others, spontaneous dance |
| R3. Yes - I really felt that the rock meditation activity helped to promote mindfulness and well-being. The session where we explored feelings/emotions - joy, fear, anger, sadness, compassion also helped me work through and process some ongoing stuff I've been experiencing. |

| **2) Were there specific needs that you had that were met? Which ones?** |
|---|
| R1. One need that was met for me during a busy time of the semester was the need to stop "doing" and start "being"- being present to myself and my inner experience. |
| R2. I did not know how many varied and deep emotions can come out from a dance - this met my needs in unforeseen ways. |
| R3. I would say that in general the sessions have helped me to feel a sense of belonging which is a general need I have been struggling with off and on since moving back to the area (and no longer being a student). |

| **3) What were the feelings generated by meeting these needs?** |
|---|
| R1. Satisfaction. Calm. Freedom. Vulnerability. Release. |
| R2. Revelation, releve, shared love, care, connection. |
| R3. I would say that experiencing belonging has helped me to feel more joy, more compassion, and a general sense of contentment that has been life affirming. The sessions and the spaces you have created are something I look forward to - they help me to slow down, be more reflective, and help keep me more engaged with creativity and healthy expression. |

| **4) Refer back to your answer to question n° 1. Is there any way these actions could influence changes in your daily life? How?** |
|---|
| R1. While I initially struggled with the lack of dialogue integrated into the exercises, this practice of "knowing through by body" instead of through words was very eye opening. I would like to integrate this further in daily life, but it will take time, work and support because it is very unfamiliar to me. |
| R2. I spent fair amount of time reflecting on these events and I returned to them in my life. I think I started to incorporate these experiences into my life in a rather subtle way. |
| R3. The meditation activity with the rock, and some of the other activities that have meditative aspects to them have encouraged me to practice mindfulness more often – even if its just when I'm doing the dishes, yardwork, or other tasks that I might otherwise label as burdensome or mundane. The activities focused on emotions and feelings have helped me to become more open to and accepting of feelings/emotions without judgment... and have also encouraged me to acknowledge/observe feelings in ways that feel healthier, rather than letting them dictate how I walk through my daily life and interactions with people... so I guess that amounts to |

| **5) Were there actions that contributed to discomfort or distress? Which ones?** |
|---|
| R1. The first exercise while lying on the floor was difficult. Physically, the floor was hard and uncomfortable for by boney spine. I had a hard time emotionally connecting with the movements and felt very slow for me. |
| R2. Some activities did not feel very spontaneous and those were harder to do - they brought more tension and struggle. But that is all right. Nothing felt really negatively or triggered truly negative reaction or feeling. |
| R3. I think the activity where you invited us to consider a particular conflict/situation with someone induced some stress. I think this was okay though – it was challenging and in the end felt like a healthy exercise for me – was just a bit hard to follow the prompts and work through it in a way that was meaningful yet not overwhelming. |

| |
|---|
| **6) Were there specific needs that you had that were unmet? Which ones?** |
| R1. I have a need for my mind to be engaged in movement and did not feel that it was with this exercise. I also enjoy more active/fast paced activities- but that is very much an individual preference. |
| R2. I did not come with many expectations so I do not have a list of items I could compare my experience with. |
| R3. Not that I can think of, no. |
| **7) What were the feelings generated by these unmet needs?** |
| R1. Restlessness. Impatience. Physical pain. Boredom. |
| R2. |
| R3. |
| **8) What would be your request to see these needs met?** |
| R1. A mat would have helped my back feel more comfortable. Perhaps more guidance on where to direct thought would have been helpful. |
| R2. |
| R3. |
| **9) Please use the space below to give any other contribution you would like to.** |
| R1. This was a beautiful workshop, Paula. Thank you! I'm only sorry that I couldn't attend more of them, but am so grateful for the one that I did. I experienced a personal transformation in how I lived the rest of the day and those that followed. Additionally, it helped me to understand movement as a tool in peacebuilding in a new way. Thank you! |
| R2. I really appreciate the space you create and the opportunities it gives us - I already learned a lot. I have an easy time dancing with some people and harder time dancing with other people. Everyone feels differently and that on its own is interesting. Can we explore this a bit more? It seems to me that some people dance with their body and some with their minds - is that the difference I sense? |
| R3. No other contributions at the moment, though I am going to try and do some more of the embodied writing stuff that we've talked about and see if anything comes of it. |

**Appendix E: Pre-test Compilation of Responses**
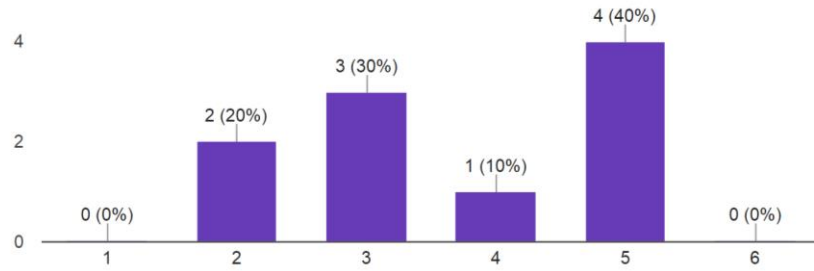
1. I am confident in my capacity to transform conflicts.



2. I am satisfied with the outcomes of the conflicts I deal with in daily life.
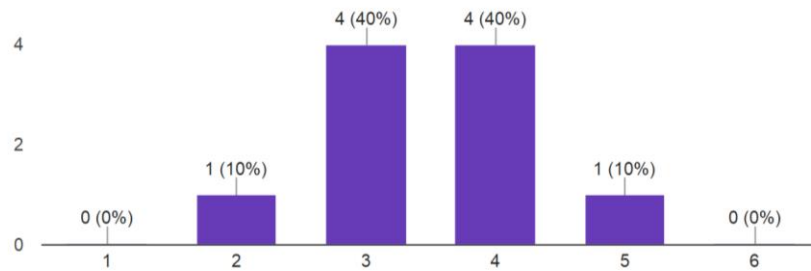


3. I am confident in my capacity of being a peaceful presence in a conflictive situation.
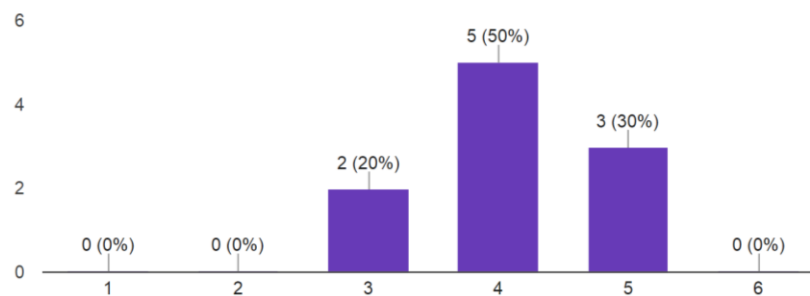
4. I often experience peace in my daily life.
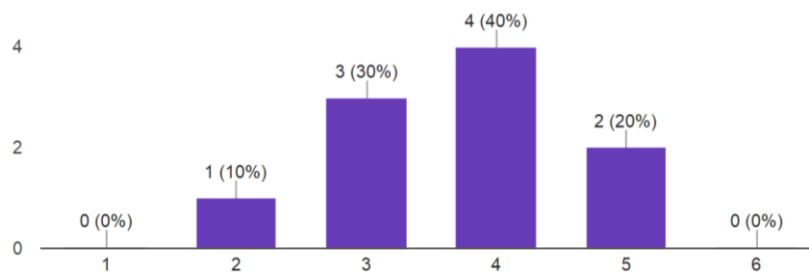


5. I am comfortable with my body.
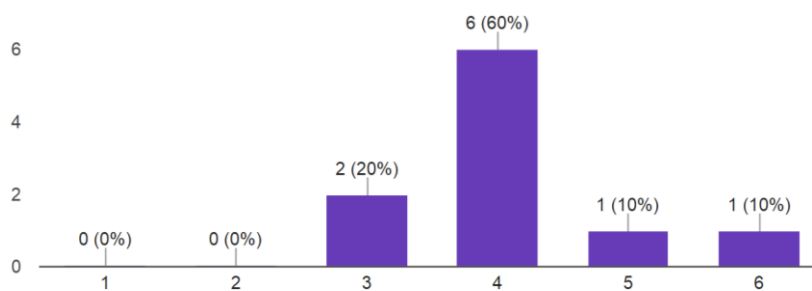


6. I am confident in my capacity to identify and deal with my emotions in a conflictive situation.
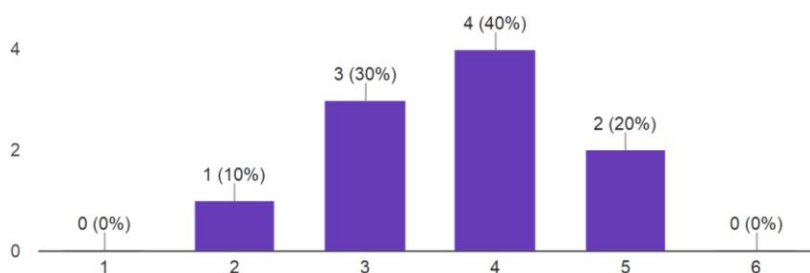
7. I often assess my body and emotions as sources of knowledge before making a decision.



8. I am confident in my capacity to recognize my repetitive patterns and reactive responses in conflictive situations.
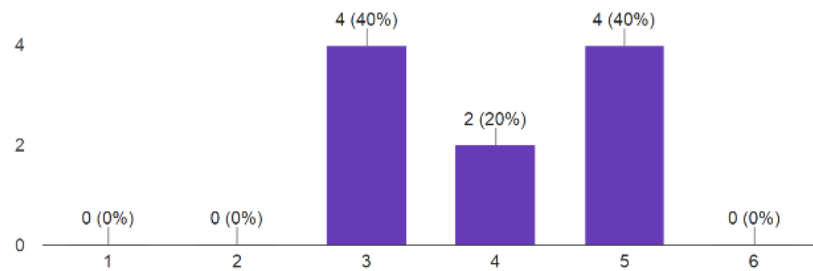


9. I am confident in my capacity of being aware of judgments that I make when I relate to other people.

10. I am confident in my capacity to empathize with others in conflictive situations, especially the ones with whom I disagree.
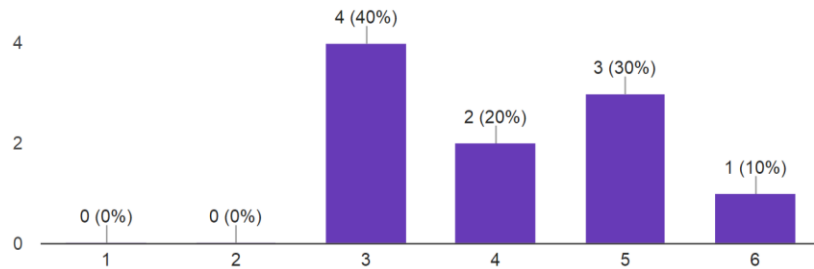


11. I am confident in my capacity to open spaces to elicit creative alternatives in conflictive situations.
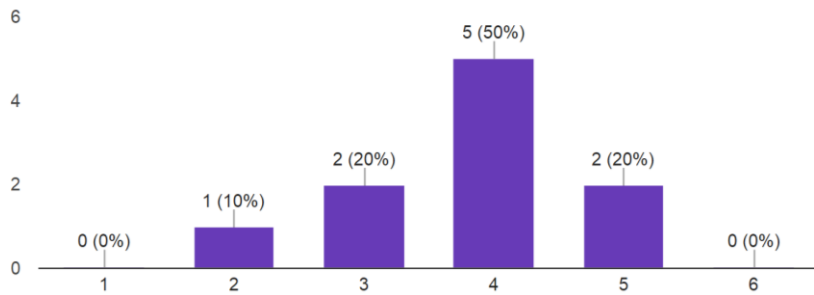


12. I am confident in my capacity to identify when I need to step back and take care of myself.
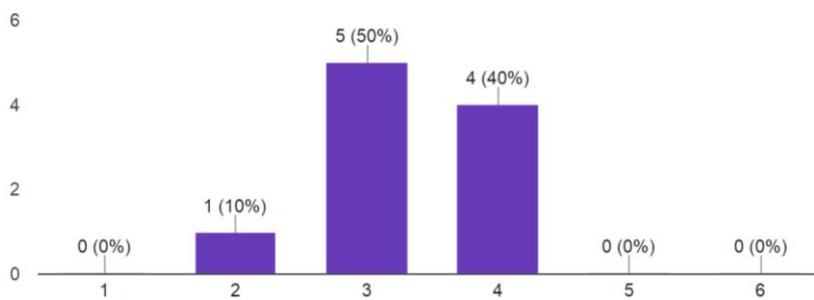
### 13. I am confident in my discipline to constantly reflect, refine my energies and work on my own conflicts
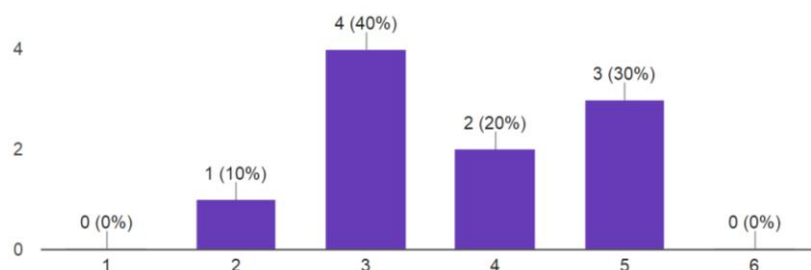


## 15. What do you understand by peace?

Inner quietude, willingness to sit/move with oneself, open channel connection to the divine in me and the world.Interpersonal: communal sensations where people can thrive and are respected not violated.

Acceptance of life just as it is. Conditions for thriving + joy. Right relationship between humans with each other and with the earth + all life.

Peace is a state of harmony, equilibrium, and justice. It is a state of being that is experienced by individuals, communities, etc. True peace has a quality of nonviolence, non-coercion.

Situation/process in which conflicts are understood and handled in a non-violent way and with all the members of the conflicts involved on them.

Calm space on the inside

Freedom from anxieties. Experience of calm instorm, wholeness and wellness.

The place where we can be our best selves.

Mutual understanding, fairness, equitable power distribution, interdependence, community

Holistic. Not simply negative peace

State of being, feeling and relating - whole

## 16. What do you understand by conflict?

strife, discord, pain or a state of unresolved something - change or need for change

Disagreement and competing ideas or positions, discord.

natural state of affairs where there is disequilibrium or lack of harmony, may escalate into forms of physical emotional, structural violence.

Disagreement between two or more people, even with oneself about some decisions that need to be decided.

opposite requests from different parties

diverging perspectives and/or behaviors.

An opportunity

Arises from diversity, people are different, so conflict is natural.

That it's not an entirely bad thing. It can be constructive. It's an energy.

disconnection - violence

## 17. Do you use any method/strategy/technique to deal with conflict? If yes, which one(s)?

many... dialogue, especially... palyback theater + community building. Deep listening

meditation. Talking to people with diverse perspectives imagining every life situation is a teacher.

Nonviolent Communication, Conflict Coaching, strategic facilitation, Mediation, personal reflection, journaling

Give time to think about the conflict and avoid early reactions that i can regret later. Exercise as method to relieve stress and frustration.

Holding others in a safe space. Keeping peaceful tone.

if intrapersonal: meditation or exercise or prayer. If interpersonal: takitout

Lots. Talking, photography, appreciative inquiry, mediation, writing, moving, visioning together.

Reflection. Open ended questions.

Taking a step back. Use of reflection, but in terms of applying CJP practices and tools in real life, I am not quite there yet.

circle processes, listen, love, dialogue

## 18. What motivates you to participate in this research/practice?

I love dance, love music, and am so often frustrated by the tyranny of sitting and verbal engagement in classes, work and the world. i think more in music than I have the dance to express, and I long for spaces and community where I can let out my natural means of expressing myself and empathically with others.

I love dance. I am also studying how dance and arts-based practices inform + intersect with conflict transformation.

interest in topic, fascination with Paula's research. Desire to be more physically active

I'm interested in this topic as I consider myself a dancer and I believe in arts as capable of transform conflicts

Curiosity. Interest in psychology and counseling. Experience with dance.

I believe in movement as a way of knowing

I love to dance. Dancing brings me peace. Dancing is about the one way I feel at peace in my body

I want to understand the link between intimate knowledge of one's emotions, expression, and peace/justice.

Because Paula is awesome!

dancing my way into healing

## 19. Use the space below to give any other contribution you would like to.

Glad you are here.

Excited to get started! And interested in opportunities to support you in your research/work.

Aesthetic responses

Good luck, Paula!

Thank you!

**Appendix F: Post-test Compilation of Responses**

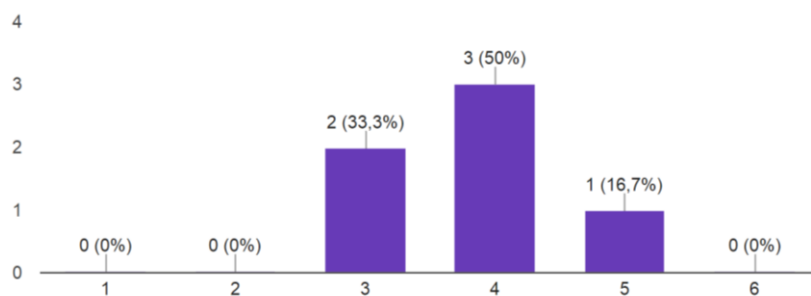1. I am confident in my capacity to transform conflicts.



2. I am satisfied with the outcomes of the conflicts I deal with in daily life.
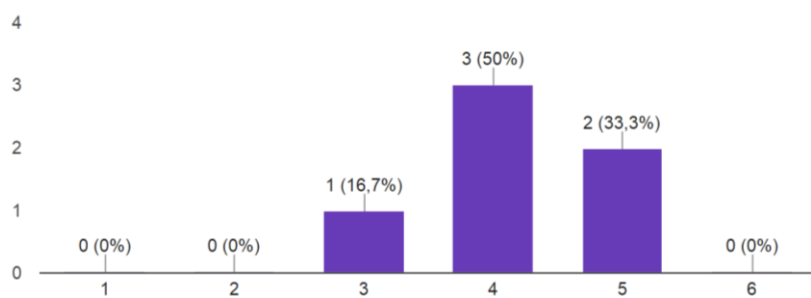


3. I am confident in my capacity of being a peaceful presence in a conflictive situation.
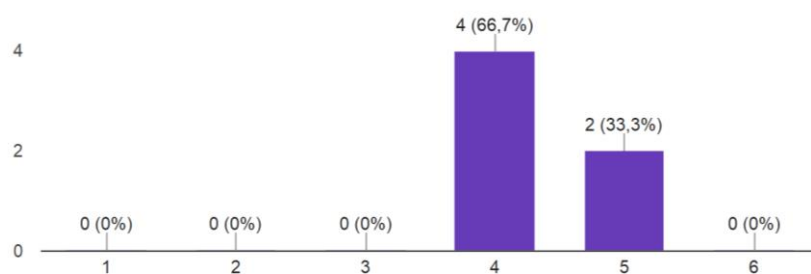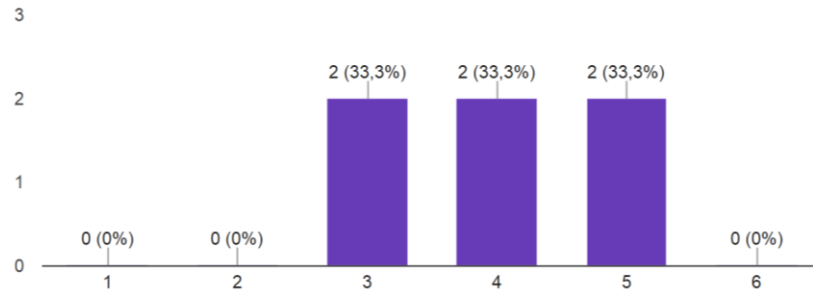
## 4. I often experience peace in my daily life.



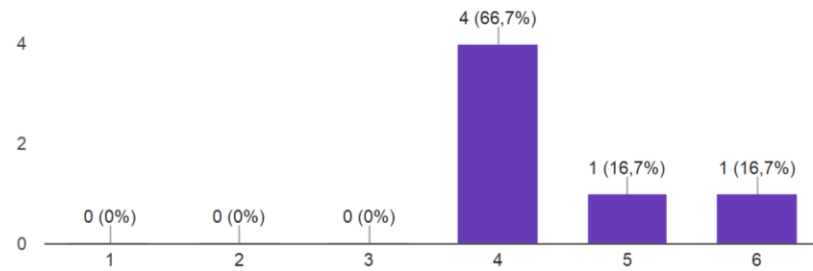## 5. I am comfortable with my body.



## 6. I am confident in my capacity to identify and deal with my emotions in a conflictive situation.
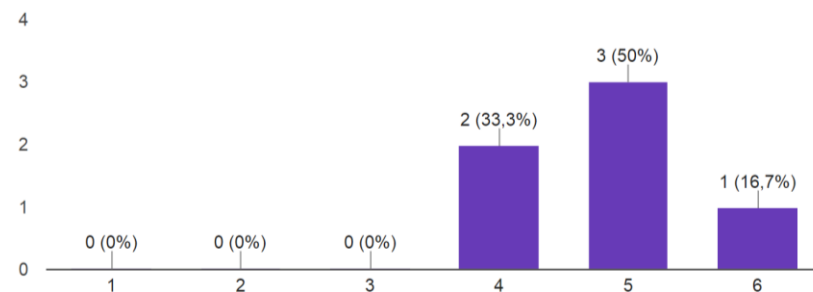
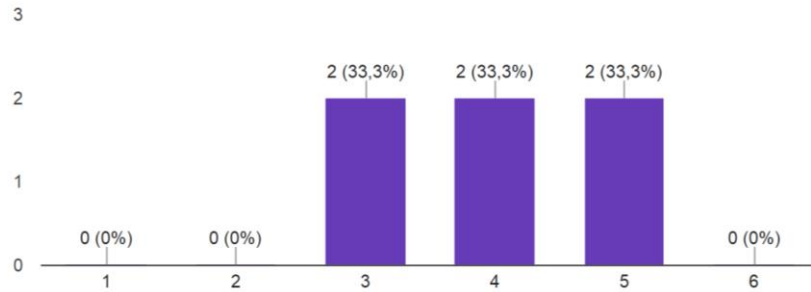7. I often assess my body and emotions as sources of knowledge before making a decision.

3

2 (33,3%)    2 (33,3%)    2 (33,3%)

2

1

0 (0%)    0 (0%)                                    0 (0%)

0

1    2    3    4    5    6

8. I am confident in my capacity to recognize my repetitive patterns and reactive responses in conflictive situations.

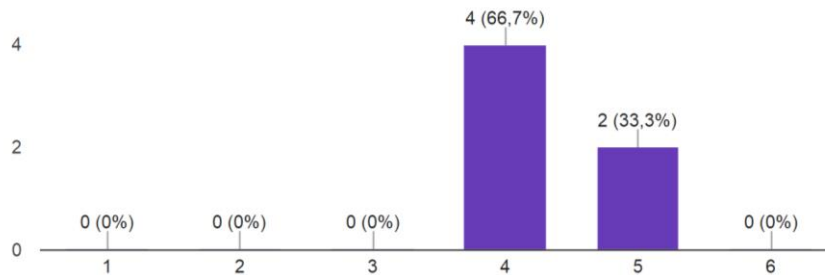4 (66,7%)

4

2

1 (16,7%)    1 (16,7%)

0 (0%)    0 (0%)    0 (0%)

0

1    2    3    4    5    6

9. I am confident in my capacity of being aware of judgments that I make when I relate to other people.

4

3 (50%)

3

2 (33,3%)

2

1 (16,7%)

1

0 (0%)    0 (0%)    0 (0%)
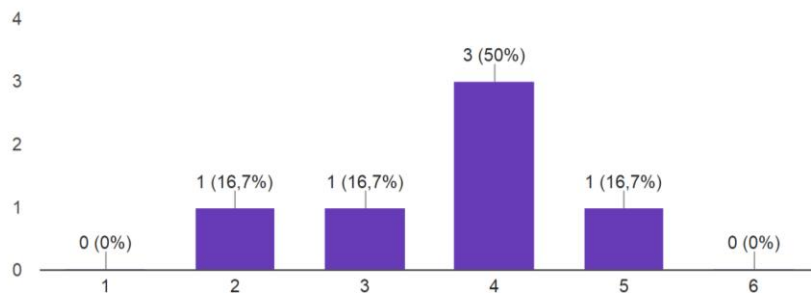
0

1    2    3    4    5    6

10. I am confident in my capacity to empathize with others in conflictive situations, especially the ones with whom I disagree.
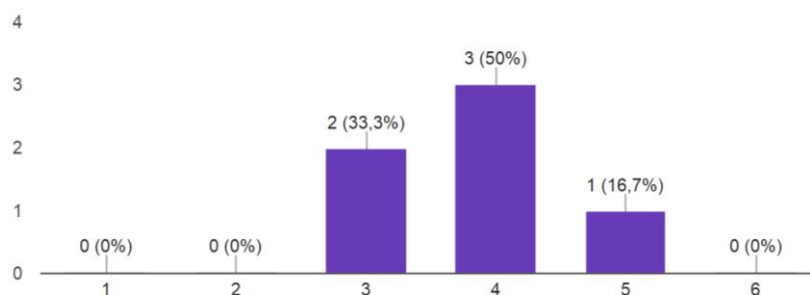


11. I am confident in my capacity to open spaces to elicit creative alternatives in conflictive situations.



12. I am confident in my capacity to identify when I need to step back and take care of myself.

## 13. I am confident in my discipline to constantly reflect, refine my energies and work on my own conflicts



## 15. What do you understand by peace?

| |
|---|
| Balance |
| Stillness, light, darkness. Power of the collective to hold, protect. |
| Possibility to coexist in safety, justice, room for all emotions without harming self and others. |
| Peace is a state of contentment and presence with circumstances, situations. |
| Justice, truth, autonomy, interdependence, trust, expansiveness, health, dynamism, room for mistakes, continuity between past and present / future |

## 16. What do you understand by conflict?

| |
|---|
| The absence of peace - inner and outer |
| many many things. |
| disagreement, opposing views, positions |
| Ongoing part of life to be grappled with, hopefully nonviolently and through compassion. |
| Could be interpersonal collisions intersecting with collisions on a structural and systemic level |
| Collisions = not necessarily bad |

## 17. Do you use any method/strategy/technique to deal with conflict? If yes, which one(s)?

crying. And tapping. And dancing, music and photography.

listening, meditation, dance, circles, understanding trauma's impact on body, brain beliefs, behavior

nvc - reflection, strategic inquiry, facilitation

reframing, initiating one-on-one dialogue if interaction in large-group is unproductive, alone time to recalibrate when I'm starting to caricature someone I'm in conflict with, seeing a certain image of human dynamics as humorous

## 18. What motivates you to participate in this research/practice?

I love dance. And I believe in the nexus between dance and peacebuilding.

Utter love for music+movement. Yearning, need for more ways to do peacebuilding and life! Sense of incompleteness + being cetered+complete+me+connected to music when I move/dance.

Love dancing, love Paula

Body and emotion exploration

Dance has given me a lot of joy and strength, so it's nice to see it being combined with peacebuilding and conflict transformation

## 19. Use the space below to give any other contribution you would like to.

Thank you profoundly. I will take the emotions, games, experince and many others of self-exploring, connecting with others, the vision of using music-movement into my world!