

**falling into the sensuous,
cached intelligible**

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Acknowledgement

First I would like to express my gratitude for the stimulation and inspiration of the earth and to all beings. I have compassion and solidarity to all of the beings who are suppressed. Altho I have made a choice for my focus in this thesis, I don't neglect any other perspective nor do I want to create a hyaracy in different perspectives. I feel my writing can improve to reflect the sincerity and details of the topic with better and clearer words then I currently use. Over the time of writing I have become more centered with my own body, this has greatly improved my clearnes on the topic.

I am grateful for the guidance of Tobias Karlsson who has been a wonderful supervisor editor; his presence, patience and character have taught me a lot about myself and how I am writing. It has also saved the reader from reading with frustration and has greatly improved the flow in my sentences. I want to thank Virginia Vivaldi who read drafts of parts of this text, lending a listening ear and sharing opinions and thoughts; especially I thank Virginia for suggesting to write in present tense and to be more direct and less metaphorical, her contributions have made the text understandable. Then I want to thank Karelle Letrange and Maud Paul for reading drafts and making helpful comments.

Introduction; Why ‘supernatural’

In this text I am looking into the division¹ of sensuous and intelligible comprehension by engaging with the sensuous world and reflecting on how reason becomes our preferred anchor point for perceiving reality over time. An unison between reason and the sensuous has the potential to create a substantial perspective from something that seems to be floating and mystic.

Along the way of living within an urban Western landscape we have learned to think about, behave towards, and relate to ‘nature’ in the ways we are embodying daily. Therefore we can hardly be surprised that our civilized bodies; i.e. our eyes, our ears and also our mindsets, are somewhat insensible to the existence of lively beings beside ourselves in urban environments. We may notice the Black-headed gulls targeting our trash or the Rock doves presence when we eat something in public space, we notice the shadow of an Elm upon a street². In our relation with nature we seem to jump ahead to a brain state of analyzing our immediate lived experience. Reframing what we sense with theories and our sciences, using reason to experience a state of certainty, instead of paying attention to a state prior to our analytical processing.

Looking at public space in urban environments we can see that we are creating spaces where we feel at home³, whether nature feels at home within the urban spaces has not been of our interest or concern. Nature still has the same value in current cities as when european people had the mentality of conquering rather than living with(in) nature, this has led to carving the notion of human over nature in our “meaning horizons”. [The meaning horizon embodies the shared concepts and structures of the world that are held in common understanding within a community⁴, a word I first came across in the texts of Edwin Jones.]

“[...] everyday communication operates with available meanings grounded in the already familiar structures of the shared world and manipulates these in common or

¹ By opposing sensuous and reason I instantly contradict myself, proclaiming the division. Therefore I want to clarify that I am not attempting to force a portmanteau, for me it is about creating a balance between these ways of comprehending perspectives.

² I chose the Elm as an example after having looked at the trees that are present in Amsterdam according to a tree map (<https://maps.amsterdam.nl/bomen/>), Tobias shared a funny observation on the combination of words; “nightmare on ...”

³ the urban environment is not a place where we can comfortably do all our necessities without either having to pay or violate social rules

⁴ Edwin Jones *Reading the book of nature: a phenomenological study of creative expression in science and painting* (1e. edn Ohio university press 1989) 1-4

standardized patterns to call forth what is already understood.”

5

Edwin Jones

The environment has been labeled as dangerous and simultaneously we approach it as a source of value. The idea of rising above nature has played an important role in western culture for centuries. We find evidence of this in old philosophy as well as in religion; Aristotle formulated how humans are superior due to their capacity to ‘reason’; And according to the Bible, other beings were perceived to be created for humans to rule over⁶. **To change our current relation with nature we can dissect some particular moments in the development of the academic world to understand how we have come to our current mindframe of “hyperseparation”.** At Least Val Plumwood describes the current meaning horizon to be one of “hyperseparation”, or in other words radical exclusion.

Because the other is to be treated as not merely different but inferior, part of a lower, different order of being differentiation from it demands not merely distinctness but radical exclusion, not merely separation but hyperseparation⁷.

According to Plumwood the dualism created between ‘reason’ and ‘nature’ has from the origin of the western world been the underlying story. I pause; The idea that we as humans are the center of the world has led us to today's society where we live in urban environments with infertile landscapes, within which we participate almost exclusively in interactions with other human bodies and our flourishing human-made technologies.

The arousal of our analytical bodies, by technologies, has helped to integrate science in our meaning horizons, leading to an unawareness of the potent nature that surrounds us even in what seem to be barren landscapes.

To create one possible understanding of how we have come to a reality where we favor reason and are unaware of the sensuous agency of nature among us, I will combine my experiences with scientific topics regarding nature's agency.

This brings me to my first challenge; acknowledging the sentience of the more-than-human-world, an acknowledgment that seems to be irrational.

Looking into the origins of science to find an answer regarding the neglect of our sensuous capabilities, I find some of the foundational notions within science that incorporate assumptions instead of certainties to create certainties on the subject of sensuous comprehension.

⁵ Edwin Jones *Reading the book of nature: a phenomenological study of creative expression in science and painting* (1e. edn Ohio university press 1989) 1-4.

⁶ "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue ("kabash") it. Rule ("have dominion") ("radah") over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground." Genesis 1:28

Meaning of subdue ("kabash"); 1. To reduce the force of something, or to prevent something from existing or developing and 2. To subject, subdue, force, keep under, bring into bondage

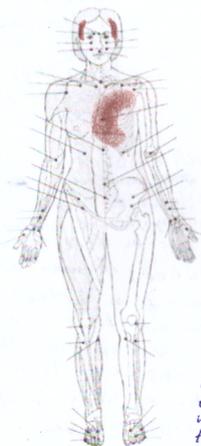
⁷ Victoria Davion, *Ethics and the Environment*, Vol. 14, No. 2, Special Issue on Ecofeminism in Honor of Val Plumwood / Guest co-editor, Chris Cuomo, University of Georgia (Fall 2009), pp. 1-2

Our dependence on certainty has developed a landscape relying on infrastructures and buildings that are made to stay the same, static, while nature likes to change. I often ask myself how we can be responsible towards nature, to the planet. An answer has not yet come to my mind, but in the process practicing body awareness has come to my attention having a potential in exploring answering questions. Using the sensuous body to comprehend answers I started to collaborate with embodiment coach Virginia Vivaldi⁸. Together we are developing a series of body booklets⁹ that facilitate space to document ‘thinking’ with our body.

⁸ Virginia Vivaldi is an embodiment coach, working in the field of trauma, nature, attentiveness

⁹ The Body Booklets are a work in process with which me and Virginia Vivaldi are experimenting with mapping the sensations we experience. It is a tool that can be used by practitioners of any kind of body awareness and does not by itself carry a doctrine or individual practice.

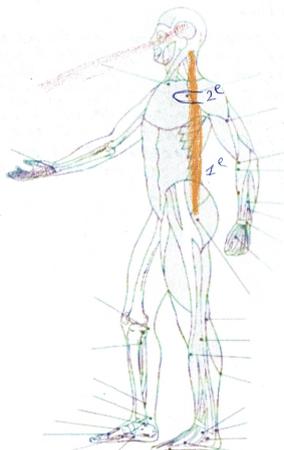
How does the water inside of me feel?



The first sensation I had was a feeling of pressure on and around the right side of my heart. It slowly arised from a few centimeters away of my heart, then gradually getting closer. the whole sensation seemed like as if something carefully and with love touched my heart from the inside of my body. the moment of touch was first shocking, but configured into a present and friendly touch.

after the feeling around my heart faded i focused on the question again. (something that next time i will not do, because i changed my focus in the body and needed to re orientated myself) an pressure started to form on both sides of my head, just above the ears next to the eyes. it was as if something was passing my skull from the inside and wanted to extend the width of my head from front to ~~back~~ the pressure was spread over a larger surface, slowly it centered it self and became more intense then it disappeared.

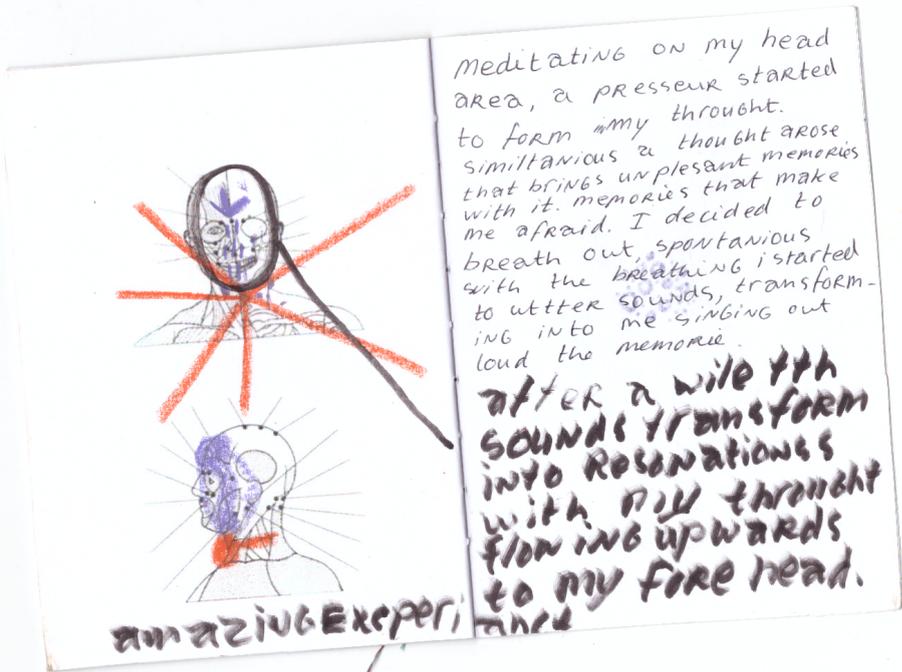
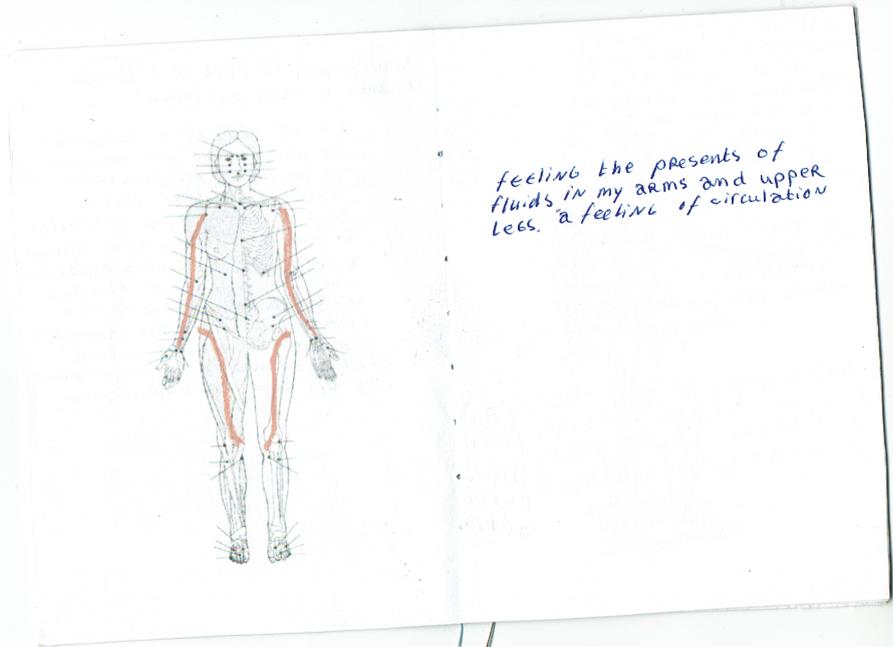
i decided to Reinject The Posture in the anatomy map.



and in the readinments i felt an energy coming true my skin.

while i was in the posture i noticed a discomfort in my back, it felt as if my back was crouched, along my back took an unexpected experience at 1st it took the time to allow my back to align my lower back with my ~~top~~ base.

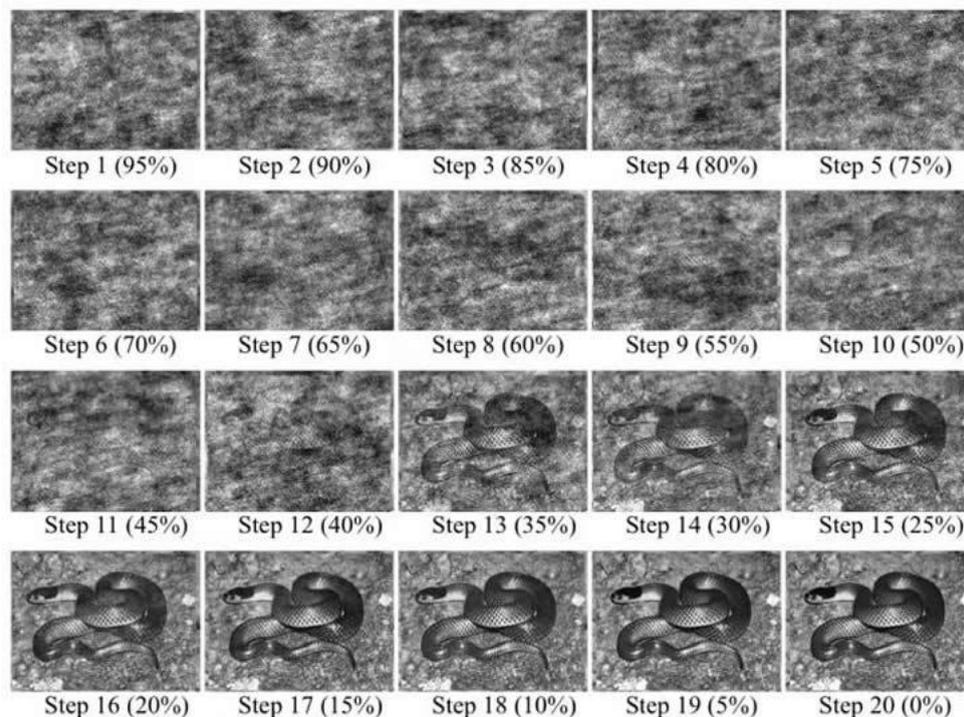
while i did this i felt an sensation in my belly. when i focused on the location i felt ~~one~~ of my vertebrae was not aligned. focusing on this spot i realized my body



Above there are some examples from the Body booklet that I used to document sensuous experiences.

Falling, catching

From the start I had the intention to create a fluidity between me and natural-entities. The focus on body awareness had a intervention for me, the borders of my body started to liquify with that what is beyond my body¹⁰. Beings who at first are physically not looking a lot like us became relatable (take for example plants; they don't have legs; they don't have eyes; making plants other to us; easy to *hyperseparate*). I noticed that interacting attentively with my surroundings expands my understanding of my limitations, limitations created due to my intelligible way of perceiving the world, I noticed how with the liquefaction of my body's borders these limitations dissolve and I recognize that I have plant-like qualities and vice-versa.



Examples of a Random Image Structure Evolution (RISE) sequence for snake pictures. Participants looked at a sequence of 20 pictures with interpolation ration starting from 95 percent to 0 percent with steps of 5 percent. RISE sequence gradually changes from unorganized to well discernible. Neurosciencenews image is credited to Nobuyuki Kawai.

Considering that our senses, taste, smell, touch, sight, have all been shaped by our coexistence with plants and other natural-entities. The narrative of coevolution resonates with a scientific interpretation of the biblical story of the garden of Eden; In the garden of Eden Adam and Eve were living in constant happiness. Until a dastardly serpent persuades Eve to eat one of the forbidden fruits, “your eyes will be opened” the serpent said. In recent studies from

¹⁰ The moments in which I experienced these liquifications were not so frequent, they did so ever had a great deal of influence on me and the way I see other beings.

anthropologist and behavioural ecologist Dr. Lynn Isbell of the University of California, she argues that the mythical story contains scientific truths¹¹. She formulated the Snake Detection Theory¹², showcasing that there is a correlation to the development of eyesight and the, at that time, most dangerous predator to humans, snakes. Avoiding slithering predators is considered possibly responsible for the evolution of keen eyesight in our primate ancestors, similar finding ripe fruits has helped with the development of color vision.

Looking back at my own education the rational meaning of a 'things' existence has always been the main focus, especially the intelligible comprehension. It makes me wonder why we are so focused on perceiving reality intelligible. Furthermore I consider how a sensuous grasp of reality influences my perspective. Starting with rediscovering the possibilities of my senses I want to create unison between the academic and sensuous world for my perspective on reality. Therefore I will juggle with uncertainties and how they often are presented as certainties, asking about the unknown knowns¹³ around our meaning horizons and the dualistic framework we enclose ourselves in.

A solution to the miscommunication between humans and non-humans, in the western academic world¹⁴, was proposed in 1972, by Christopher D. Stone, professor of law at the University of Southern California, when he published the article "Should Trees Have Standing? Toward Legal Rights for Natural Objects". Arguing that law has developed in a way that allows previously condemned creatures to confer rights upon. Stone's idea resonated with many environmentalists and helped to grant legal personhood for several mountains, rivers, and other natural entities. Stone suggested that to make the world of non-humans integrate with human society, people should act as proxies¹⁵ for nature. A Colombian anthropologist Astrid Ulloa coined the term "ecological natives" to describe people who act as political-ecological-agents, these are people uncontaminated by the economic-capitalist-markets. For how long will natural entities be unpolluted by our patronising intelligible comprehensions.

There is a possibility that soon we will look back at today's situation as the last moments of an 'incredible ignorance'. Humans have changed nature, and themselves, with the choices of domestication and cultivation and are still keen in applying contemporary technologies upon the non-humans around us.

¹¹ A. ISBELL, L., 2009. *The Fruit, the Tree, and the Serpent: Why We See So Well*. [online] Available at: <<https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctvjnrj0>> [Accessed 1 March 2021].

¹² Snake Detection theory suggests that predatory pressure from snakes has contributed to the evolution of our eyesight by selected individuals who are better able to recognize them, improving their survival chances, according to the evolution theory they therefore transfer such skill to their offspring.

¹³ A way of describing the things we do know, but don't know we know. The metaphor I came across in the writings of Slavoj Žižek's book *Events; A Philosophical Journey Through A Concept*

¹⁴ Indigenous communities, in particular, have always practiced the attribution of personhood to natural entities, While westerners attributed "incompetence" indigenous communities see natural entities as beings that articulate themselves in ways that humans can understand.

¹⁵ So a human 'hero' saves and speaks for the trees? — sounds like white man

Technologies that make it possible to equip all kinds of creatures with technological information, giving them human language capabilities, and controlling behaviour accordingly. We are momentarily at the edge of connecting objects to each other in ways they can collaborate like our organ system does. Some of us are excited by the internet of things, others are concerned about the rise of the internet of beings that will follow in the footsteps.

Are we going to implement anthropocentric rhetoric [regarding humankind as the central or most important element of existence] in the algorithms we equip beings with? Do we dare to misrepresent our environment in these manners to bring ourselves in line with our wishes and needs for it? Do we really see humankind as the only eligible for the world's collabs, and simultaneously in the position as the only savior of the planet?

Einstein said: "We cannot solve our problems with the same thinking we used when we created them"; There is no way to alleviate the Anthropocenic violence using Anthropocene logics. Therefore reflecting upon Anthropocentric rhetoric can help us see possible mistakes, attributing that the Anthropocene walks in the footsteps of five hundred years of colonial violence, capitalism, white supremacy, and a dualistic mindframe. Looking back at Stone's intention, it may have been empathy with natural-entities, his answer is rather human centric. What Stone implies with the "needs" or "wants" for non-humans is to preserve the natural entity as close as possible to the conditions when it was given a rights-holder. He disregards the actual feelings of non-human entities¹⁶: as long as we formulate the "needs" and "wants" with the conjecture of a solely human intelligible we will not be able to connect to the sensuous parts of the natural-entities. Therefore we have to go beyond the *known knowns*, the *conditions of an natural entity in the time it was given personhood*, we have to confront the *unknown knowns* regarding the sensuous world around us.

I want to share with you some moments when I fell into the more-than-human-world. Poet Alfred Tennyson, "I am a part of all that I have met"¹⁷, comes to my mind if I would summarize these falls. Moments in which I am more sensitive to subtleties, I let my body guide me, my involvement does not happen because of a certainty to attain an increase in sensitivity rather I let myself fall into reality, an increase in my feeling of connectedness with the world occurred simultaneously.

Being one with a stick and the wind

My body is tired while I am observing the sun disappearing behind a building. I haven't done much during the day, and it is going to be dark soon, this time of the year the sunshine leaves early. Looking at the harbour from my window I

¹⁶ although human rights don't include the right of happiness either, it allows for the pursuit of happiness to take place.

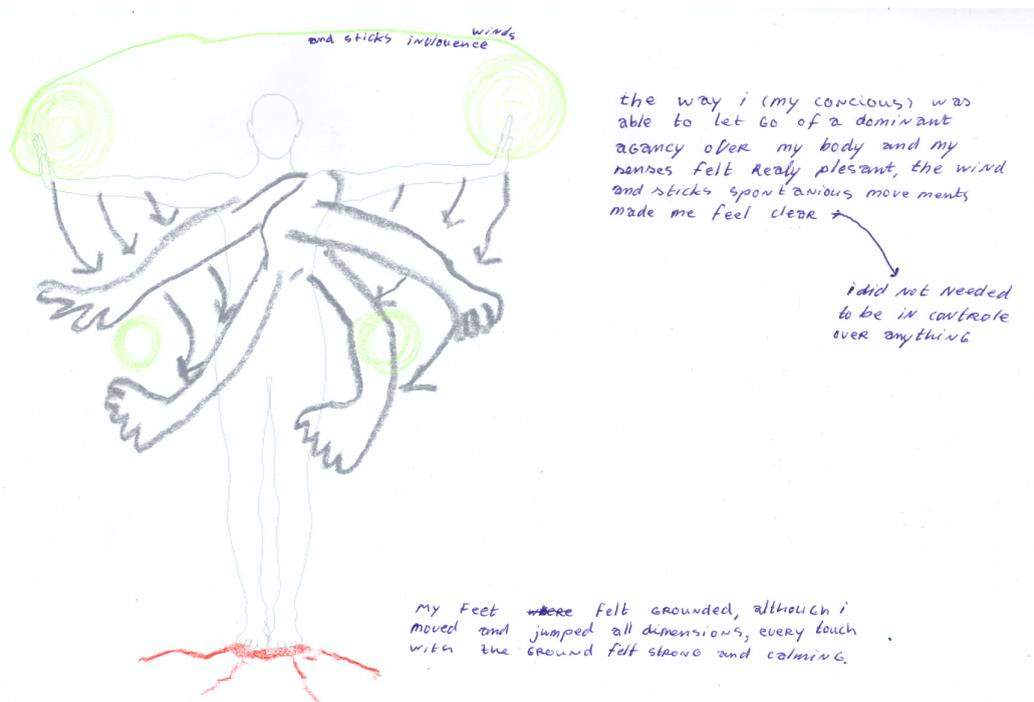
¹⁷ <https://www.sparknotes.com/poetry/tennyson/section4/>

notice the waves dancing, more than usual. The waves reflect the sunset, fragmenting the light in gradients of red, orange and yellow. In the harbor the waves are increasing in size and the rhythm of the reflections is anticipating a storm. The wind, water and the sun converge in my room, transforming the ceiling into dancing water; the shadow of objects are animated by the reflections. What a lightfull dance. I wonder how the water influences the movement of the wind.

The sun has, since long, completed its disappearance and layers of clouds block a constant vision of a shiny moon. I had prepared myself for a cold evening walk. Instead I am now noticing that it is pleasantly warm outside, due to a lee my house creates. It's at the alley next to my building that the storm is noticeable due to a fluttering fence. In Holland the land is flat giving wind freedom to build up speed, although the architecture (a solid mass) can act as a barrier it can also facilitate an increase in air movement for local areas. On the way to the fence I encounter a stick, presumably the remains of a dried up Japanese Knotweed stem (*Fallopia Japonica*). Before I touch the Japanese Knotweed I ask for its consensus, then I pick up the stem, it is hollow and one end has ramified into increasingly smaller branches, slightly reminding me of the bifurcation diagram. Sliding my fingers across, I feel the tangible surface, in the experience I embody a feeling of lightness. I place my fingertip, a bit off the middle, between both ends to find the balance with the stem. Breathing deep, acknowledging the Knotweed, I strongly tie a rope around the place my finger just touched. Letting the stem slight out of my hand while keeping the rope tight between my fingers, it is the wind that immediately catches the stick, making it fly. Arriving at the fence, I mentioned earlier, the stem of the japanese knotweed reaches my eye height within a second, whereas before it was dangling around my feet. When I move the hand holding the rope, the stem moves simultaneously on the push of the wind, when the velocity of airflow increases violating the symmetry between my movements and the stems. As I follow the increase of movement in the stem, pondering its agency in its maneuvers, I begin to realize the stem me and the wind began to move in a different plane than before. I have dropped my authority over the movement of the stem, and recognize the stems and winds directory over me. Altho we individually spin different patterns, it seems to me like we are weaving a single intersecting pattern. This widening of my perspective got me entranced with the situation and I could not sense anything different than being a part of them.



My immediate lived experience gives me the input of an awareness present in the wind as well as in the branch during our dance. This disappears gradually during the dance since I begin to lose the sense that my companions have their own awareness and agencies. Is it me, am I tired? This realisation comes synchronic with me becoming less concentrated and distracted. The earlier perceived to be organic movements that the stick performed, now start to appear more mechanical and dependent on the velocity of the wind and the tension in the rope. I start to get back to a state of mind in which I can analytically calculate and predict, and 'know' what happens in my immediate environment using reason. The winds intuitive movements become direction and power, a force that is recognized to be the reaction of pressure difference in the atmosphere. Its liveliness disappears. I start to notice how the aerodynamics of my body position create a certain amount of possible movements for the stick, no spontaneous attention from the is really necessary.



After my interaction with the Japanese Knotweed and the wind I came across the book "The spell of the sensuous"¹⁸, written in 1996 by David Abram who gives an example of a phenomena where assumptions created certainties. In the book Abram discusses his experiences in Indonesia and Nepal where he meets with local sorcerers and shamans to learn their 'magic'. He notices that western anthropologists, influenced by the idea of the 'supernatural'¹⁹, created an image of sorcerers and shamans that is deluded and misunderstood. According to the anthropologists, having mysterious powers and practicing what is considered to be beyond human ability must be some sort of 'supernatural' power, something related to the non-physical realm.

The concept of the supernatural and relating to the non-physical realm brings me to investigate how Descartes thinks about geometries and mathematics. These confirmations from academia on the existence of a 'supernatural' has drawn western civilization more into believing in a realm beyond reality instead of focusing on reality, contributing to the current perspective of western assumption regarding the natural world; being largely determinate and mechanical, and which does not contain a sensuous agency. Before we read Descartes's assertions, we are going to look into how Galileo²⁰

¹⁸ David Abram *The spell of the sensuous, perceptions and language in a more-than-human world* (vintage books. edn A division of penguin random house llc 2017)

¹⁹ the early european interpreters of the indigenous lifestyles in the east were Christian missionaries. The antropologic skill of these interpreters was highly influenced by institutionalized Christaian dogma.

²⁰ In the following parts I am going to investigate the contributions of Galileo Galilei and Rene Descartes to the creation of science, in my opinion we have to keep in mind the time period these persons lived in when we want to understand their works. For both Galileo and Descartes this is

displaces the importance of perceiving the world in abstracts. My unison with the Japanese Knotweed and the wind fluctuate between experiencing the sensuous world and trying to figure out comprehension by abstracting the occurrences out of habit. Understanding the reasoning of Galileo creates a foundation for why we view nature as purely mechanical and helps us understand 'supernatural'.

An influential and perhaps familiar indication, within science at least, of universality is the application of mathematical and geometrical reasoning to the behavior of physical nature. Galileo made the assertion that the book of nature²¹ is written in the language of mathematics and only those properties of matter that are tractable with mathematical measurement (such as size, shape, and weight) are real; the other more subjective qualities (such as sound, taste, and color) are merely illusory impressions.

This grand book, the universe, [...] is written in the language of mathematics, and its characters are triangles, circles, and other geometric figures without which it is humanly impossible to understand a single word of it; without these, one wanders about in a dark labyrinth.²²

With Galileo's metaphoric word choice for nature, book, he signifies a discussion regarding the system of belief at the time that relies on a book²³; Nature vs Reason, in this case reason is represented by the bible. Galileo considered the bible as a subjective book rather than reason itself, the free interpretation does not allow a universal language. Whereas nature communicates with geometrical shapes, a language that is universal, only Galileo discovered a slight problem with the book of nature; the book of nature is written in a language that is too complex to be fully grasped by our human intellects. Therefore Galileo suggests to simplify these physical phenomena that appear in the natural world by abstracting them from reality and make them comprehensible for humans.

between 1500-1648, a time when modernity was emerging in Europe. An increase in population and the start of colonization asked for new thought on what life is about. Western Europe underwent a transition in its political landscape, nation-states emerged with the protection of strong monarchical governments, replacing and breaking down local governance. Diplomacy and warfare started to be conducted in new ways. I believe that all of these factors play a role in the creation of the work by Galileo and Descartes — influencing how their careers would look like and indicating topics that would be important to address for philosophers and "men of reason". They thought about ways to justify and make sense of what was happening in the society at large, how to rule a bigger society and how to justify the wars on overseas 'enemies'.

²¹ Galileo sees nature as a book that can be read, instead of words written in mathematical functions and equations, at the same time he chooses the word book due to another book that is considered the truth at the time; the Bible.

²² Edwin Jones *Reading the book of nature: a phenomenological study of creative expression in science and painting* (1e. edn Ohio university press 1989) 20

²³Geoffrey Gorham and others *The language of nature; reassessing the mathematization of natural philosophy in the seventeenth century* (1st. edn University of minnesota press 2016) The Ontological and epistemological underpinnings of galileo's mathematical realism.



With Galileo's action of abstracting physical reality he switches around our way of interacting with the world; reason becomes depending on a scientific method to perceive physical reality²⁴. For me creating a worldview where abstractions are central seems to be a moment of detachment from reality, similar to the concept of 'supernatural', we separate²⁵ ourselves from the interpersonal relationships we can have with each other; including humans, animals, plants, rivers, mountains and other natural-entities. Galileo's focus on nature as the source for reason is a highly radical point of view at the time, since it is humans who created reason in the first place, right?

Returning to dependency

Reading more about the separation of relational aspects with nature I decided to go for a walk when a 'epiphany' takes place, a plant that catches my attention

²⁴ We have to think critically about Galileo's intervention of abstracting nature, we can't just accept reality because it is convenient. With notions like the one from Galileo we may forget that philosophy is not independent from social problems. Reality shows us that it is the case that philosophy tends to favor people of a certain class at the expense of other beings outside that class, both humans and nature. Galileo's philosophy, this is also relevant for Descartes, whose theories will be discussed later, has been created in the context of a particular society and developed by a person belonging to the socially economic higher class. Galileo's idea for science is an ever evolving system. In today's society the idea that we can reformulate the abstract understanding of reality everytime our intellects are able to perceive something better is more complicated than it seems, a rather idealist thought than reality. Since there are many (social) factors involved in the determination of contemporary science—Companies who invest, want research only in particular fields; governments are hiding their newest inventions from each other; in this neoliberal society, everything can be privatised and is for sale, even meaning.

²⁵ is this an early attempt of escape isme, later in the text i will come back to several examples

alongside a bike path in the Volkstueinpark Bretten. The entity has narrow leaves that are narrow, at ground level they are bright green and near the end they become a purple blue. Their surface is smooth and without hairs, attached are flowers with a deep violet-blue colour. Bell-shaped with up-turned tips from each of the six petals. With a sweet smell the flowers are attracting a closer interaction, making me notice the cream like white coloured pollen inside. In the shade of trees and in the midst of tall grass. Being interested in the given name I find that, besides it being a medicinal help for leucorrhoea, when you cut open the stem or the bulb of the plant the sap can be used as an adhesive²⁶. During the Bronze Age fletchers used bulbs of the Bluebell (*Hyacinthoides non-scripta*) as glue to attach feathers to shafts of arrows. "The bulbs were probably chewed (NOTE: Bluebell bulbs are poisonous) to access the sticky sap; human saliva helps break down food into sugars that our bodies can absorb and the chewing process would make the bluebell bulb an ideal glue"²⁷. Reading that the plant has the potential to create an adhesive opens up a potential relationship with the Bluebell I had not considered before. Somehow it is an *unknown* but *known* feeling that I can depend on this plant.

Continuing with Galileo's intellectual legacy, he establishes investigative freedom, which will be fundamental for science. However it is only after René Descartes *meditations on first philosophy*, published in 1641, that the general meaning horizon integrates an objective view on material reality; as a strictly mechanical realm, a determinate structure whose laws of operation could be discerned only via mathematical analyses.

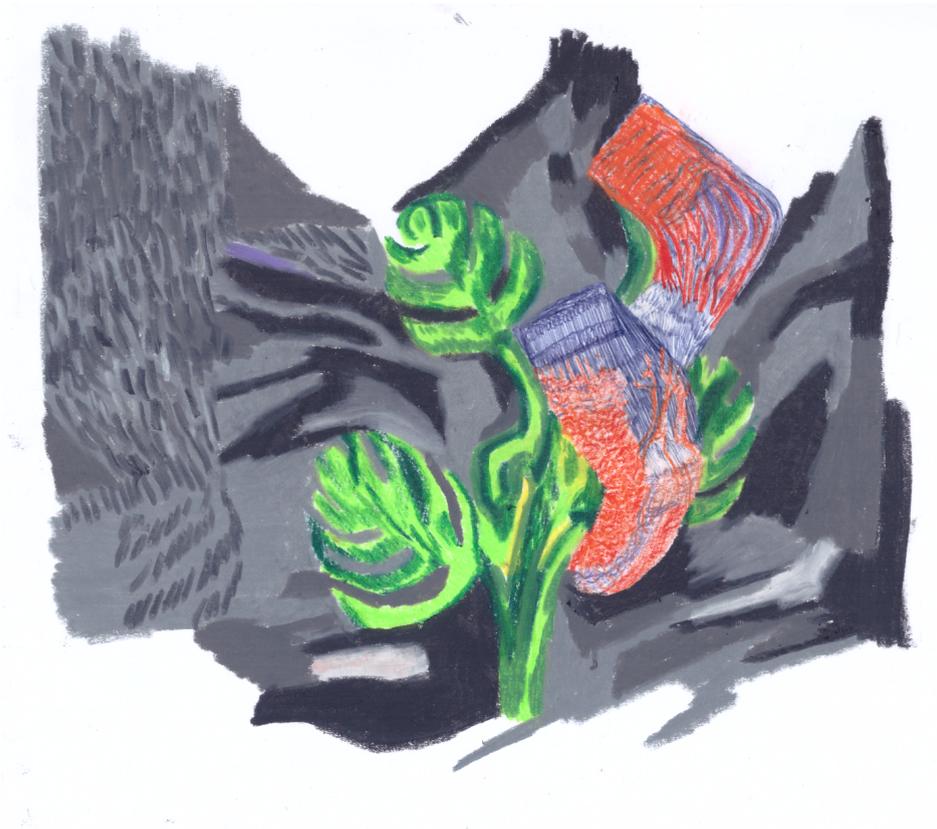
To me this is a particular problem connected to viewing the world in abstractions, viewing nature as a strictly mechanical realm shows us the integration of anthropomorphism [the attribution of human characteristics or behavior to a god, animal, or object] in the academic world, since anthropomorphism allows humans to, like stone suggests become proxies for natural-entities. We're projecting characteristics upon beings that help us relate to them, only our assumptions are coming from a solely human perspective – possibly resulting in us rendering them as mechanical. Turning the living world into a machine we actually set it up to work for us, by doing so we've created a context in which we can deploy plants and organisms, molecules and other entities in our service.

...The next morning I wake up with a memory of walking through a street with big glass windows, showcasing excessive displays of various clothing brands on each side of the road. With the intention to understand how the displays showcasing polyester (plastic) clothing influence me, I activate my bodily senses and decide to take smaller steps to walk at a different pace. As I am about to

²⁶<http://www.naturalmedicinalherbs.net/include/searchherb.php?herbsearch=bluebell&x=0&y=0>

²⁷[https://cc.bingj.com/cache.aspx?q=The+bulbs+were+probably+chewed+\(NOTE%3a+Bluebell+bulbs+are+poisonous\)+to+access+the+sticky+sap%3b+human+saliva+helps+break+down+food+into+sugars+that+our+bodies+can+absorb+and+the+chewing+process+would+make+the+bluebell+bulb+an+ideal+glue&d=4665520038741445&mkt=nl-NL&setlang=en-US&w=tSqhUUy_aX1JohN9H6M0mIM3TLfnkV0](https://cc.bingj.com/cache.aspx?q=The+bulbs+were+probably+chewed+(NOTE%3a+Bluebell+bulbs+are+poisonous)+to+access+the+sticky+sap%3b+human+saliva+helps+break+down+food+into+sugars+that+our+bodies+can+absorb+and+the+chewing+process+would+make+the+bluebell+bulb+an+ideal+glue&d=4665520038741445&mkt=nl-NL&setlang=en-US&w=tSqhUUy_aX1JohN9H6M0mIM3TLfnkV0)

place my foot on the ground I freeze, by stopping my movement I save a flower's life that grows in between the pavement of the street. As I am kneeling down to look, my eyes adapt to the macro view. I am astonished. Suspecting a flower head to blossom, I find instead a little sock growing.



Looking around to sense where I am, a shop display is showcasing handcrafted woven fabrics from sheep wool and plant fibers. While entering I turn my head, facing a tree. Instead of growing fruits, this tree has clothing pieces growing in all sizes.

I recognize how we can become attentive to the green beings that are growing all around us, and actually with us. Beings we include in our symbols and signs, beings that create the air we breath, make elixers with, medicine, poison, fibers, intoxicate ourselves with and build our lifestyles around. To me the plant world has, besides evolving, focused on involving themselves into our lives, and the lives of all beings and earth itself. Not only have plants involved themselves into our lives, we are co-evolving around companionship we, involuntarily, have with plants. Consider our defined sense of taste, smell, eye sight and touch have all been shaped, and are still being shaped, by our becoming alongside plants and the local environment. The dream reminded me of co-involvement with each other, a reminder of an *unknown known*.

Rene Descartes focuses, in *meditations on first philosophy*, on metaphysics. Metaphysics is basically about answering the ultimate question, e.g. *what is there?*, *what is this object actually?*, *what truly is existence?* By using metaphysics Descartes tries to prove the existence of god. This he 'does' by arguing that there

are fundamental interpretations in reality, objects that everyone perceives the same. Examples of fundamental objects are geometric shapes, e.g. circles, triangles and the square – similar to Galileo, only Descartes sees importance in the origins of their existence;

The existence of these fundamental objects, these geometric shapes, that are out there, must have been placed in reality, along with our universal interpretation of them, by someone.

Since they are perceived universally, Descartes insinuates that someone, a higher being, must have placed them in existence. In other words Descartes is saying that the existence of these fundamental shapes and their universal interpretation implies the existence of God. Here we come across another attempt to escape from reality, we have seen some examples of exit strategies already, by declaring the existence of the 'supernatural'. Integrating the idea that universal shapes are an act of God pushes away the intimate relationship with otherly beings we have created over several thousand years. Like the snakes have developed our eyesight, humans have by living among nature terra shaped the habitats and bodies of nature and vice-versa. Descartes helps the devaluation of nature by giving gratitude for the universal language to God/'supernatural' instead of nature.



Cirsium Vulgare, the Spear thistle, Bull thistle, or Common thistle. Photos taken in Noorderpark, Amsterdam.



Urtica dioica, Stinging Nettle. Photo taken in Noorderpark, Amsterdam

The assertion²⁸ that Descartes makes about the existence of a higher being that created a universal language is exactly the opposite of what Galileo intended with his assertion regarding the geometric shapes. I feel Galileo attempted a reconnection with nature from a more down to earth perspective, Descartes steers the attempted back to a supernatural origin. And Descartes' method works, many people at the time believed in Christianity and linking mathematics and geometrical shapes to God opened up possibilities for research that the church did not allow before.

An unexpected visitor

16:23. “TOCK”, “TOCK” ‘what...who is knocking on glass? The rhythm changes arbitrarily, intensity peaks up and down. I move towards the window. My nervous system is in hyperarousal. When I halt, the sound stops. I move forward, the ticking starts again. Quickly, I look at the location, retaining my movements - a bird in flight appears! Inside or outside the window?

While sharpening my vision, excitement increases. The bird moves hysterically, it is inside and wants to go back to the outside world.

While I am tense I ask the bird; “How can I help you, bird?” I relax through a grounding exercise²⁹, after which I approach the bird. “Hey bird, I am here to help you get out of these walls, I am not going to hurt you”. The bird hangs on the fabric by the window. Its wings, wrapping the body, are shaking. I open the window widely. The bird appears calmer, I am calmer too.

I approach the bird again “Hey, I was scared too. Welcome to my home, I am flattered that you come to visit so unexpectedly. I am helping you to fly outside and I will tell you what I do: I now take a cardboard paper and I will help you

²⁸ The statement of Descartes can not be certified with the argumentation he gives, since he assumes that the reason for the existence of a universal language implies the existence of god, he does not find any evidence for the existence of a creator in his search for a higher realm.

²⁹ An ABC exercise that embodiment coach Virginia Vivaldi shared with me; Awareness: body scan and peripheral vision; Breath: observe my current breath and progressively deepen it; Centredness: my whole body is structural and balanced

moving on it.” I move my eyes from the cardboard to the bird, from the bird to the cardboard. The bird lets go of the fabric and sits on top of the cardboard. While I move towards the window, holding the cardboard, the bird and I keep tracking each other's eyes. A feeling of comfort and relaxedness radiates from the bird's eyes. I carefully place the cardboard surface on the window frame. The bird sits on the window frame with me for a while before it flies away.³⁰

My interaction with the bird shows me something remarkable, in my reflection the bird was able to feel the stress and tension that was stagnated in my body. My first attempt to communicate with (or come close to) the bird was a total failure and probably created more stress in the both of us, since the bird attempted to escape and therefore flew into the window again. After doing the ABC exercise the interaction with the bird changed, I was allowed to come closer and the movements from the bird were starting to become less rapid and stressful. At first I did not notice that a change in my body's circulation had changed. It was only after I became a bit stressed again that I noticed the response of the bird to my tensions.



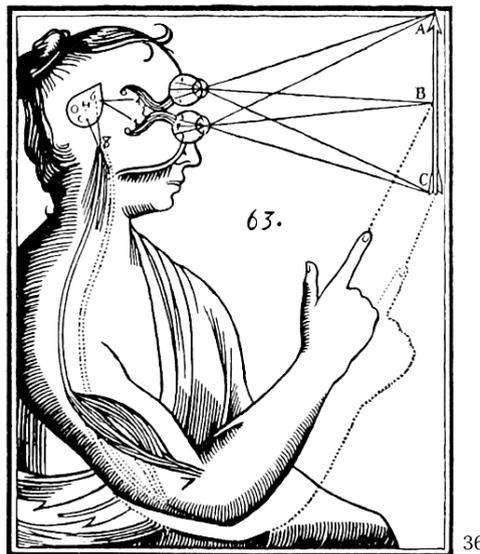
Comprehension with reason is believed to make humans different from other beings³¹, only for Descartes this did not distinguish enough difference. In his meditations he sees how our bodies look and behave similar to those of the natural world, therefore he focuses on a metamorphose of the perception towards our bodies that will allow him to radically exclude humans from nature.

³⁰ This text was edited in collaboration with Virginia Vivaldi

³¹ Val Plumwood *Feminism and the mastery of nature* (1st. edn Routledge 1993) 69-72

See! With no effort I have reached the place where I wanted to be! I now know that³². Even bodies are perceived not by the senses or by imagination but by the intellect alone, not through their being touched or seen but through their being understood; and this helps me to know plainly that I can perceive my own mind more easily and clearly than I can anything else.³³

Since the body becomes, just like nature, a mechanical thing Descartes reaches a conclusion that the nature of the mind (a thinking, non-extended thing) is completely different from that of a body (an extended, non-thinking thing), and therefore it is possible for one to exist without the other. The notion of mind-body can be seen as a structural example where the mind resembles the subjective realm (based on or influenced by personal feelings, tastes, or opinions³⁴) and the body resembles the objective (not influenced by personal feelings or opinions in considering and representing facts³⁵).



René Descartes's illustrates dualism as follows; an input is passed on by the sensory organs, in this case the eyes, to the epiphysis in the brain and from there to the immaterial spirit.

My experience interacting with the bird gives me the feeling that the focus on comprehending solely with our intelligible capacities loses track of the world around us. It wasn't through reason that the bird calmed down, it was the change of circulation in my body that ultimately made the difference. At first i was in my usual state of not noticing, not being aware, the state that Decartes suggests to be in. His formulation of mind and body belonging to different orders, can be seen as a choice of efficiency. Decartes notices that with the mind

³² Descartes showcases her the singularized direction science is taking, excluding any plurality

³³ Rene Descartes Meditations on first philosophy in which are demonstrated the existence of god and the distinction between the human soul and body (not clear. edn Jonathan bennett 2007) 8.

³⁴ <https://www.lexico.com/en/definition/subjective>

³⁵ <https://www.lexico.com/en/definition/objective>

³⁶ Wikipedia The free encyclopedia Wikipedia, [27 june 2019]
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mind%E2%80%93body_dualism 27 June 2020

he is able to think and create a comprehensible world view, whereas with the body he can not. This brings him to a dualism; mind / body, human / nature, in his opinion breaking humans lose from nature since we can ascend to a 'higher' state of life by solely interacting with reason we can ascend from the body. Now Decartes has created a substantiation for his cause and *certainty*
The radical exclusion that makes us believe that our bodies and minds are really different comes from a mindset that holds dear to create distinctions between things and not looking at the similarities. Recognizing our power to ally with our body can help us make alliances with the outside world, for this to happen we need to understand how integrated the dualistic system of mind-body separation is in our contemporary meaning horizon.

Being ripped apart by a pair of eyes

The western world has built many conceptual frameworks. like the mind-body example, around dualisms, during my research on the causes of abstraction of reality I came across Plumwood's book; *Feminism and the Mastery of Nature*. A book wherein Plumwood argues how feminism can be used as a mirror for contemporary society to reflect upon. The critique eco-feminist philosophy has on society is expressing a problem that goes beyond the suppression of women, it goes beyond the suppression of humans.

In the western society we tend to separate (us from them), we tend to create an 'other'. We separate ourselves from entities that we perceive, using reason, to be different than us. We tend to place our focus on the group we are part of, everything else; any 'other' culture, race, gender, body, we classify as the 'other'. We tend to focus so much on the difference between us and the 'other' that we are only able to see the polarities, a construct of devaluing and sharply demarcating the sphere of otherness. Dualism, explained as simple as possible, is the conceptual division of something into two distinct parts. Plumwood explains the means of dualism with the following example;

“[...] the colonised entities are appropriated, incorporated, into the selfhood and culture of the master, which forms their identity.”³⁷

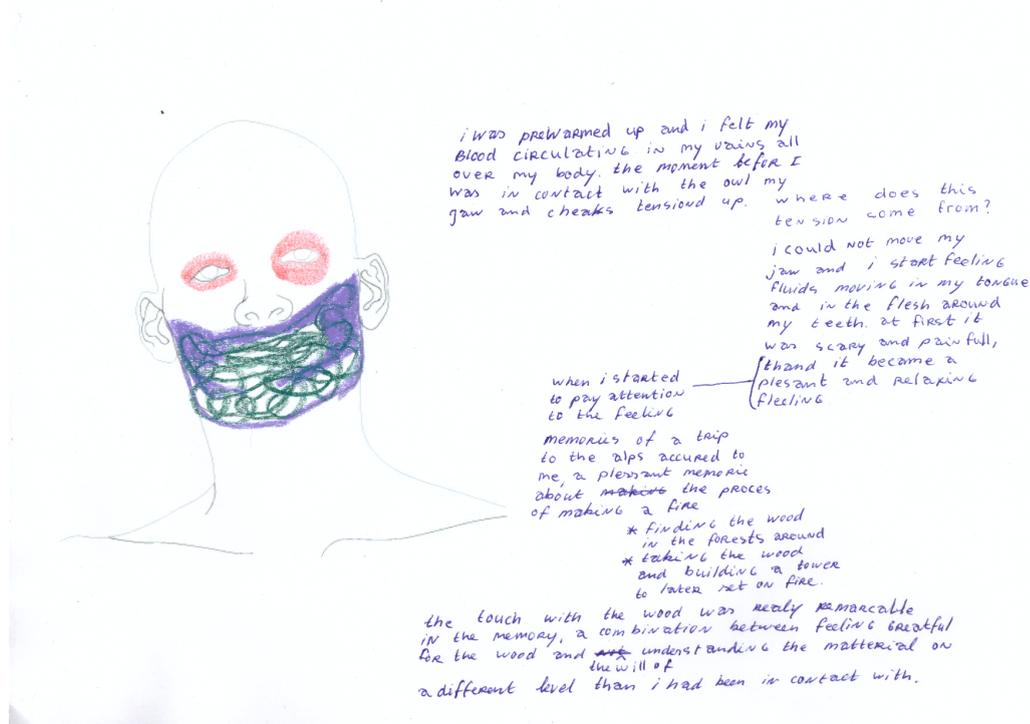
My intention for the night is to go outside and dance, move and stretch, feel my body and allow it to move me. Outside I smell the wet street, a pleasant petrichor³⁸ scent, the humidity in the air makes it fresh on this midsummer

³⁷ Val Plumwood *Feminism and the mastery of nature* (1st. edn Routledge 1993) 41

³⁸ when rain falls after a prolonged dry spell. Petrichor — the term was coined in 1964 by two Australian scientists studying the smells of wet weather — is derived from a pair of chemical reactions.

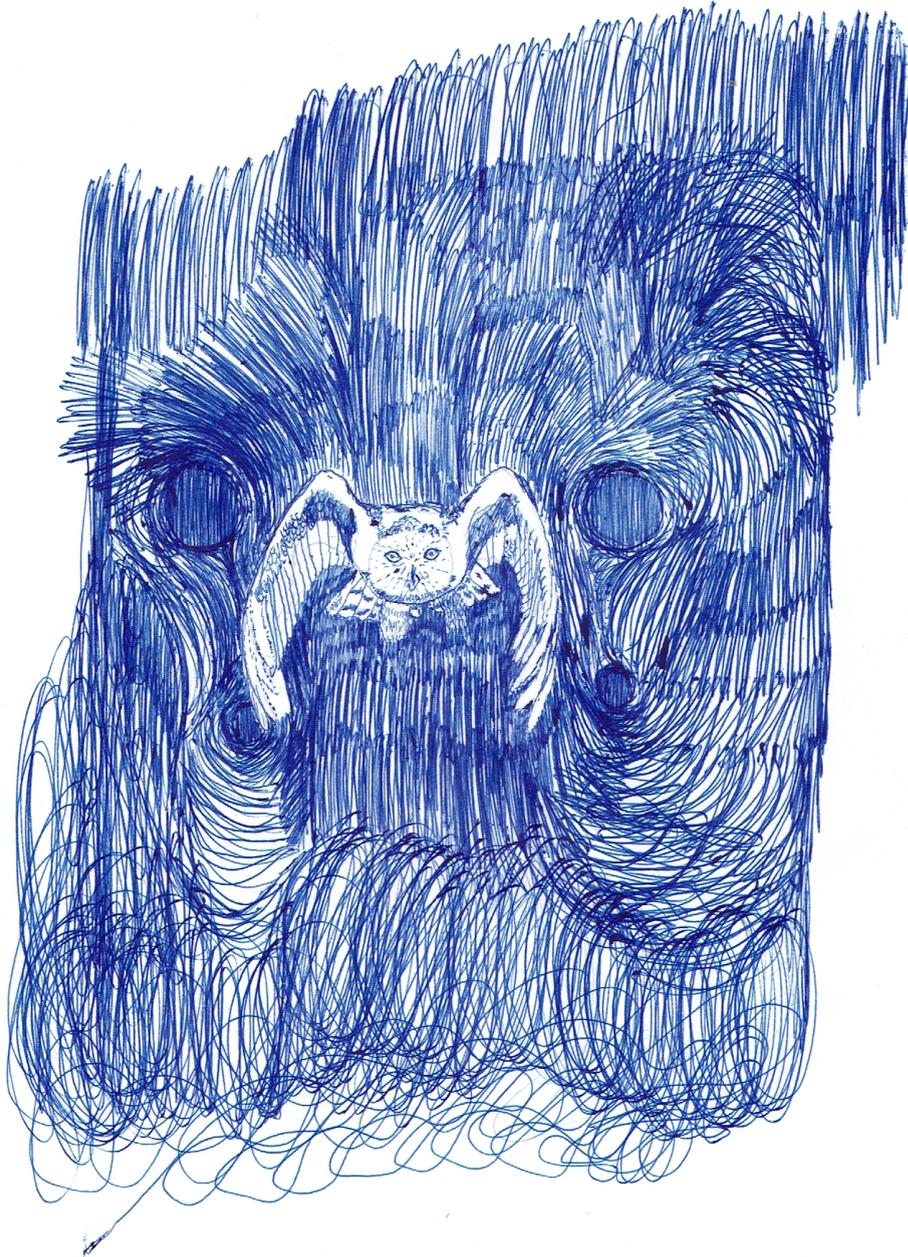
Some plants secrete oils during dry periods, and when it rains, these oils are released into the air. The second reaction that creates petrichor occurs when chemicals produced by soil-dwelling [bacteria](#) known as actinomycetes are released. These aromatic compounds combine to create the pleasant petrichor scent when rain hits the ground

night. Focussing on my breath while letting my body do the moving, I become increasingly more present to sensations I encounter (and incounter). Lately I have become a student of subtle differences, now noticing how my ears attend to the sound of the wind and the distant birds- no longer do I perceive them as melodic white noise, i perceive them as meaningful interactions to the local environment. Using these voices as my guidance, attending locations in my body feeling a presence, a pressure, I follow the circulation true my body lose my focus, concentrating again to re attend the connection i feel with the environment, this cycle continues for a while. Uncomfort in my hamstrings and feed occurs when I stretch them, simultaneous memories of friends and family concerning my body come to mind. I tell myself that this is my body, focusing on pushing these memories out of the pores in my skin. A sensation of space under my skin increases combined with a relaxed feeling, extending beyond the limits of my body, breaking the boundaries of my human vesel.



I am now frontal facing my house, standing still to take in the view, when a shadow moves in the corner of my left eye. My body feels the presence of the shadow, tintling my skin in a pleasant and alive way. By reflex I turn my head and as the size of the shadow becomes apparent, flinging over the transport trucks, I feel blood circulating in my veins; as a wild proglacial river flowing under my skin, the sensation of goosebumps follows. The shadow morphes with another shadow and disappears. Although I did not get a glimpse of the being itself, somehow I have the feeling it is the owl that I had seen a long time ago in the neighborhood. I stayed looking at the place where the being had disappeared. Suddenly, now heading straight towards me, an owl with full stretched wings hovers through the air, making a quick turen and lands on the fence next to my house. My eyes and the owls are looking straight into each other, mesmerised by

the deep yellow, orange gaze upon me. Being striped apart by a humble and infinitely more centered and awakened vision than myself. The owl flies away into the shadow it had apaird from earlier, my eyes keep focused on its trajectory, witnessing the precision and calmness of the owl. It flies upwards and disappears behind the top of a wall from the warehouse.



Human domination over nature has similar features as the structure of oppression of race, gender, emotions and colonisation. The created dualism becomes more than a relation of difference or dichotomy and there is also a deeper meaning than a hierarchical relationship, since in dualism the identity of the otherness are depicted as inferior and denied importance, they should not

relate to the valued/superior side of the dualisme (*the master*³⁹). This is a perfect example of how we live in abstraction; since in the real world we see that everything influences and has importance for each other, *everything relates, circulates and regenerates each other*. In dualism the form of the valued, denise the importance of the subordinate to focus on the distinctions between the polarized sides and to increase maximum separation, since it does not want to be associated with the *otherness*, why not? The *hyperseperation* makes it possible for the *master figure* to justify their choices and actions.

The master figure(s) can also be found in the refuge of the supernatural, giving a justification for actions as well as providing 'ethical' reasoning⁴⁰. Dualising the world and separating it from its inherent possibilities enables us today to do what we do, morally accepting the consequences. What if we reformulate our ethical framework and incorporate the abyss of our understanding towards the-more-than-human. I found this quote from a modern native american, that presents her interpretation of the indiginous understanding of nature;

We are the land ... that is the fundamental idea embedded in Native American life ... the Earth is the mind of the people as we are the mind of the earth. The land is not really the place (separate from ourselves) where we act out the drama of our isolate destinies. It is not a means of survival, a setting for our affairs ... It is rather a part of our being, dynamic, significant, real. It is our self ... It is not a matter of being 'close to nature' ... The Earth is, in a very real sense, the same as our self (or selves) ... That knowledge, though perfect, does not have associated with it the exalted romance of the sentimental 'nature lovers', nor does it have, at base, any self-conscious 'appreciation' of the land ... It is a matter of fact, one known equably from infancy, remembered and honoured at levels of awareness that go beyond consciousness, and that extend long roots into primary levels of mind, language, perception and all the basic aspects of being ...

Paula Gunn Allen, Laguna Pueblo (1979: 191-192)

Attentiveness to consensus

Throughout the process of researching and writing I have come to acknowledge how looking at plants with eyes, fingers and noses to find similar body parts or characteristics as we have is not going to work. Plants do not have fingers nor do they have noses in the ways we have noses, a superficial judgment can lead to the sense that plants are the ultimate otherness to us humans. What I noticed

³⁹ Plumwood uses the word 'master figure' to describe the oppressor. I agree with her to take a step away from the misunderstanding created by the dualisme within feminism of masculinity being the oppressor.

⁴⁰ I just now checked the definition of the word supernatural, (of a manifestation or event) attributed to some force beyond scientific understanding or the laws of nature, what laws of nature? Are these laws of nature not scientifically conceived? Well that's a side note ;)

along my trajectory is that when we break down our constructed perspective and look at the practices of plants that we can actually start to recognize the animal-like qualities within plants and the plant-like qualities in us humans. When we look beyond our reason and let our body guide the primary interaction with the world, we can understand the misconception Galileo and Descartes proclaimed to be true. I strongly believe that we should interact with the sensuous world more frequently. Interacting with the natural entities we come across and share compassion with each of them.

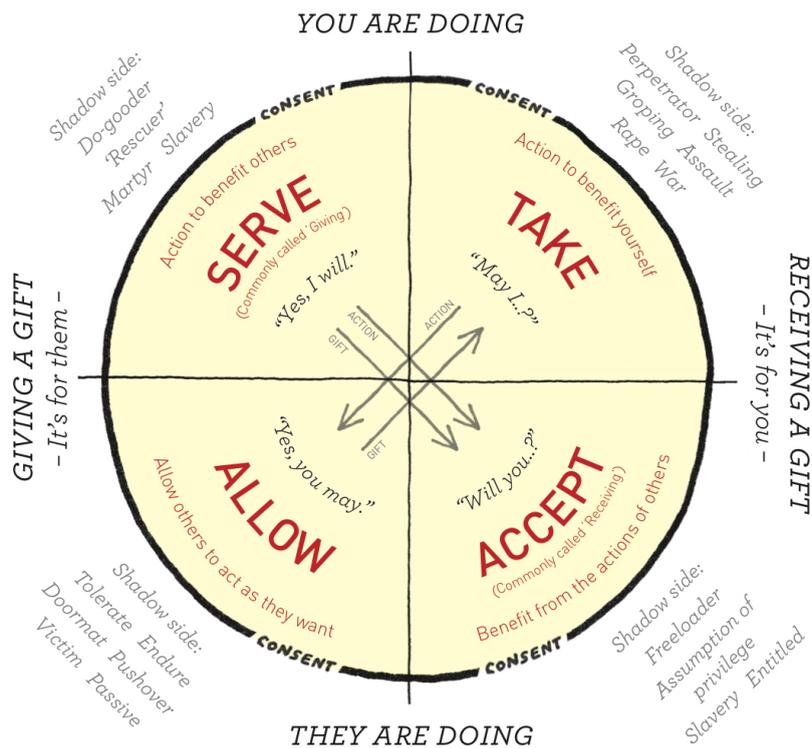
Reading the book *Events* from Slavoj Žižek wherein he quotes Brian Greene's book *The Elegant Universe*. Žižek uses a quote to give an example of how quantum theory works, I find this quote useful to showcase the failure we have in our relation to the planet and the plants, animals and even to ourselves.

“The energy a particle has can wildly fluctuate so long as this fluctuation is over a short enough time scale. So, just as the accounting system of the airline “allows” you to “borrow” the money for a plane ticket provided you pay it back quickly enough, quantum mechanics allows a particle to “borrow” energy so long as it can relinquish it within a time frame determined by Heisenberg’s uncertainty principle... But quantum mechanics forces us to take the analogy one important step further. Imagine someone who is a compulsive borrower and goes from friend to friend asking for money. The shorter the time for which a friend can lend him money, the larger the loan he seeks. Borrow and return, borrow and return—over and over again with unflagging intensity he takes in money only to give it back in short order... Heisenberg’s uncertainty principle asserts that a similar frantic shifting back and forth of energy and momentum is occurring perpetually in the universe on microscopic distance and time intervals.”⁴¹

With help from the quote above I perceive humans to be in a *quantum relationship*, so to say, with everything⁴². In our current relationship with the planet we are only taking, and since we are *only* taking we introduce a toxic relationship, we are not following Heisenberg's uncertainty principle in our relation to the planet, by giving back, and therefore we create an imbalance—by which we break equilibrium.

⁴¹ Žižek, S., 2014. *Event*. [Erscheinungsort nicht ermittelbar]: [Verlag nicht ermittelbar].

⁴² Not only humans are in a *quantum relationship*, everything is in such a relationship with everything.



A tool to understand the toxicity within a toxic relationship can be the Wheel of Consent. It is a wheel divided in 4 quadrants each being part of the art of receiving and giving. The tool is designed by Betty Martin⁴³, for understanding our actions in regards to consensus. When we act without having consent, we fall into the shadow sides of our actions. I feel a lot of times this is where I have been in my relation to the environment, not asking for consent nor attending to the possible signs the environment communicates. For me the act of asking for consent has opened a beautiful path within which there is a lot to explore. The environmental historian William Cronon writes: "The place where we are is the place where nature is not".⁴⁴ This sentence helped me along the way of experimenting with radical attentiveness, to understand the framework of my education towards nature. The world is divided in different places; we visit nature when we leave the urban environment behind, what do we consider to be nature anyway? I remember a conversation I had with a friend of mine a few years ago, he was convinced that humans are no animals. I asked him why he stated such a thing, he could not answer. It seemed like it was for him just the way he coped with the world around and maybe to protect his ethics. I currently perceive nature as a unison with many interconnected parts, in which even the smallest organisms are able to express themselves. The power of restoration and

⁴³ Bettymartin.org. 2021. *Betty Martin – Developer of the Wheel of Consent*. [online] Available at: <<https://bettymartin.org>> [Accessed 1 March 2021].

⁴⁴ William Cronon, "[The Trouble with Wilderness: or, Getting Back to the Wrong Nature](#)," in *Uncommon Ground: Toward Reinventing Nature*, ed. William Cronon (New York & London: W.W. Norton & Company, 1995)

regeneration lies in the collaboration of all those parts together. At the point we are now it is up to us to choose where we want to position ourselves⁴⁵ within the *quantum relationship* - which relations do we want to support, which we want to weaken and maybe ultimately stop⁴⁶.

To live in this complex reality we humans have to take the responsibility of attending to the practices of beings, attending to terraforming the plain interconnected and overwhelmingly alive web - I get the possibility to apologize and to realign myself. net consciously with a collaboration between each other. As the wind takes apart a rock and carries sedimentation to new locations, a river slowly finds its way across the land facilitating a path of migration for sedimented entities, we humans can participate in the continuous cycle of creation and regeneration instead of differentiating yourself from it – or put ourselves above it.

I recognised a tremendous difference in the moments I let my body participate in acquiring knowledge and interacting with the sensual world. The *Body* booklets have shown me that exploring the body has a lot of potential in our attentiveness to our surrounding. Mapping the sensations and being able to fall back on experiences gives the possibility to learn the languages of the sensuous world. Attending to the language of the sensuous world morphs the separation we created in our settlements into a unison for relationships with, what we first suppressed, nature and our own bodies. By experiencing and becoming more attentive with the world around us we can start noticing the alterations and the practices of beings, learn from them and share with them our acquired knowledge. We can shift to a fundamentally different way of interacting with and relating to the world and our surrounding aliveness. What I am experiencing more and more, is - when attending to the presence of this finely

The idea that human life takes place in a self-enclosed, completely humanized space that is somehow independent of an inessential sphere of nature which exists in a remote space “somewhere else” might be seen as the foundational delusion of the West.⁴⁷

⁴⁵ no hierarchical

⁴⁶ The relations i am addressing are allincompassng; ranging from interacting with a tomato plant, the production of clothing, selling bitcoin, traveling to work in the morning.

⁴⁷ Val Plumwood, “Nature as Agency and the Prospects for a Progressive Naturalism,” *Capitalism, Nature, Socialism* 12, no. 4 (2001), p. 26