

12 Embodied critical thinking and environmental embeddedness

The sensed knots of knowledge

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Recognising the embodied ground of thinking

The dominating consumerist and capitalist genealogies have inflated the thing-orientation¹ to *cancerous* proportions (Deleuze and Guattari 2005, 163; Marder 2021, 63; Sauka 2020a), and have been identified by environmental philosophers and other humanities scholars as evidence of a human–environment disconnection (Petitmengin 2021) that has seeped into our values, attitudes, and practices from the way we speak to our lived materialities and experiences.

Claire Petitmengin expresses it thusly:

The drama that we live as a human born in our Western civilization is that we are most of the time cut off from the felt dimension, the living heart of our experience. It would be more accurate to say that we cut ourselves off from it, by a process of rigidification that it is possible to recognize and describe. From moment to moment, we spend considerable energy trying to identify fixed forms in the fluidity of the world, objects of which we can say “this,” because it is only upon this condition that we can think of ourselves as individuals and say “I.”

(Petitmengin 2021, 175–176)

In this quote, Petitmengin acknowledges the interconnected problems of self-identification via the dichotomisation of subject/object, human/nature, etc., and the materialities that *become* from the ways in which we self-identify and, thus, also the ways in which we experience ourselves and our lifeworlds.

While it might seem like a trivial truth, how we approach, experience, and live our lifeworlds undeniably impacts our lived materialities. For example, in my home country Latvia the official public communication by the “Latvian State Forest” and “Riga Forests LLC” sometimes likens the forest to a bed of carrots. For example, a representative from Ltd “Riga Forest” has stated: “Forest management can be compared to agriculture, but there nobody cries about a carrot that is pulled out of its bed, yet we have to justify the cutting of the trees” (Kondrāts 2017). It presumes that the forest needs to be

harvested, replanted, and managed for it to thrive, in the same way that we approach a carrot bed in a garden. While one can argue that this approach is faulty (which it is), it is also a self-fulfilling prophecy that *turns* the forest into such a bed of carrots. Examples like that run across all domains of biopolitics to environmental policies, from the overuse of antibiotics to pollution of production, waste policies, and sustainability goals. All of these interrelated problems are characterised by depoliticisation (Neimanis et al. 2015), atomisation of the largely entangled issues, and an overall underrepresentation of more-than-human and environmental impact on human problems. In a more global sense, the dichotomy of wilderness/civilisation,² for example, endeavours a factual alienation between these domains, where the city becomes the only imaginable natural environment for a human being.

As a result, if intuitively one might feel wrong about describing a forest as a bed of carrots, or distinguishing wilderness from civilisation, what are we really left with, if not a plantation of carrot-like trees and an “untouchable” wilderness on the borders of a polluted city? The answer seems to lie within this fragile acknowledgement of this picture as counterintuitive to many. While everything, from pollution to the sixth extinction, and everyone from sociologists to biologists points toward Western societies as unrelenting consumers, colonisers, and killers of the environment, yet so many of us find that characterisation hard to digest, have an innate sense of nature as our home, and think of nature as something crucially connected to what and how we are. Precisely, this embodied intuition of there being something “more” to ourselves and our relations with nature than the predominant narrative tells us seems to point toward alternative stories, through which we are told and have lived, without even sometimes realising it. It seems that this “intuition” or *gut feeling* of connectedness and more variations of different relationalities to nature might be the crux that provides answers that might inform thinking and research practices.

Hence, in environmental philosophy, when seeking ethical knowing for the future, it is crucial to seek out that which is “already there” (Sauka 2023, 2024) – that is the alternative ways of relating to each other and the more-than-human earth that are already within our potentialities and quite possibly – also within our everyday experience, if perhaps concealed by the dominating lifeworlds of today’s urban societies in which many of us live. The stories or myths that we have told about ourselves in the past are one such potent source of knowing, when addressed in the modality of “how” rather than “what” (Petitmengin 2021; Yunkaporta 2020; Rasmussen 2021), that is – in the context of how they potentially engage us with the world around us, rather than in the context of “what” these stories convey (in the modern sense of facts).

In my work, when I address mythologies as potential sources for environmental knowing, I adhere to the methodology of critical genealogy (Foucault 1977; Koopman 2013). Rather than seeking the “objective” history, genealogical thinking turns to the “history of the present” (Sauka 2020b) and

acknowledges the manifoldness and open-ended character of the stories from which we come and through which we are told.

When doing environmental philosophy this way, however, it is important to acknowledge that such a change in focus from “what” to “how” entails a reconnection of philosophy and research practices in a broader sense to the realm of first-person embodied and embedded experience. This is also supported by the recent upsurge of first-person approaches, such as Embodied Critical Thinking, microphenomenology (Petitmengin 2017, 2021), and ecophenomenology (Abram 1997, 2011). These further illuminate the significance of recognising and revitalising human–environment relations on an experiential level of the “felt sense” (Gendlin 1966) for endeavouring a renewed proximity with nature.³ That also includes the nature within oneself based on that, which is “already there,” within the grasp of our embodied experience.

Thus, I am faced with two interconnected ways of knowing – a genealogical approach that relies on altering the stories that have been told “about us” by reaching to the ones we are told by, and a phenomenological approach that adheres to the experiential knowing, revitalisation, and recognition of human–nature relationality in the here and now. I continue struggling to grapple with both of these aspects separately, and in connection, with my other work (Sauka 2022a, 2022b). Yet, faced with the experiential, embodied aspect of thought as such a significant part of doing environmental philosophy, especially in the works of philosophers such as David Abram, Arne Naess, I could not help but wonder about the presence of a phenomenological facet in all aspects of research, in as far as research is always also connected to the scientist and their lifeworld (Petitmengin 2021). How do we make this presence seen?

To actualise the leap in thinking, it seems significant to make my connection with the lifeworld and felt sense explicit to both myself and the world, to emancipate research practice and language from “abouting” to “thinking from within” in a way that is also communicable between disciplines and scholars. Thus, in this chapter, I approach the role of Embodied Critical Thinking (ECT) in environmental humanities research. ECT as an experimental experiential approach⁴ that taps into the body via felt senses (Schoeller 2020) for doing research is a viable approach to draw to the fore the aspects of our experience that reflect embodied embeddedness and exist in a modality that goes beyond dichotomic thinking. Even more, via the felt sensing of the body as processual (Gendlin 2017), environmental embeddedness, and embodiment are at the core of ECT and Thinking at the Edge (TAE) research (Gendlin 2004).

In this context, ECT scholars highlight the link between experiencing embodiment and environment and the role of embodied experiences in the way we constitute and conceptualise nature (Schroeder 2008; Jóhannesdóttir and Thorgeirsdóttir 2016; Petitmengin 2021) and argue for the transformative potential of ECT (Schoeller and Thorgeirsdóttir 2019; Krycka 2006) that could allow us to reach into ourselves to find alternative, already present, experienced environmental embeddedness to more profoundly sense and

understand ontologies we live by as a precondition for transformative action (Gendlin 1997, 2017; Petitmengin 2021).⁵

Thus, this chapter makes the tentative claim that, while a lot, if not most of environmental humanities research already rests on a kind of “felt sense”⁶ that comes from the very fibres of being or, so to say, “from the guts” of the researcher,⁷ the application of ECT practices could be emancipating to make this kind of embodied, enactive, and embedded thinking more explicit. Enhancing the visibility of the embodied phenomenological facet of research would come with several benefits, including the possibility to decide to consciously include “felt sense” in the framework of research as well as the opportunity to self-reflect on the embodied and experiential aspects of thinking.

Moreover, it is also important to take into account that, if the dominating narratives are intrusive and stifling for the way we experience and constitute ourselves as individuals in a world that is seen as disconnected from us, they also stifle our knowledge communication with each other. This means that we might lack words to express the embodied intuitions, and we might thus find it challenging to go beyond a dualist thinking about subject–object division that phenomenologists of the body as well as feminist philosophers have criticised and elaborated upon by demonstrating how the subject and object are intertwined.⁸

Hence, the purpose of this chapter is to show how ECT can serve as a vital tool for recognising, revitalising, and reflecting embodied, enactive, and embedded thinking that comes from a felt sense, including, in research practices beyond ecophenomenology. In particular, the chapter traces the application of Eugene Gendlin’s move of *instancing* from his methodology of TAE to showcase the use of embodied knowing and felt sense in the context of environmental philosophy as well as its teaching, learning, and research. Thus, in a move from a “what” this theory is about to a “how” to enact it on a methodological level, this chapter takes me on an open-ended journey – a thinking process that in itself might prove useful for gaining some insight into environmental reconnection.

Reaching *beyond* with Embodied Critical Thinking

What does *doing* Embodied Critical Thinking in research look like, and what types of insights can it provide? Eugene Gendlin states:

Every topic and situation is more intricate than the existing concepts. Every living organism is a bodily interaction with an intricate situation and with the universe. When a human being who is experienced in some field senses something, there is always something. It could turn out to be quite different than it seemed at first, but it cannot be nothing.

(Gendlin 2004, 2)

Going out from the assumption of a deeper intricacy *within* the conventionally formulated concepts, TAE steps (Gendlin and Hendricks 2004) that are

adopted by the ECT approach (Schoeller 2023), thus, provide one possible method of reaching *beyond* the concepts that are usually adopted by researchers and binding one's research question or project to the felt sense *within* it. Taking these steps means taking into account the felt sense, as well as developing one's thought from and *with* these intuitions – a way of “carrying forward” (as per Gendlin 2017, see also Walkerden 2023). This way, one can express the intricate meaning that is often included within the concepts, yet, are inexplicable within the usual abstractions.

In the following, I will demonstrate the approach of ECT via TAE steps, to facilitate the use of embodied knowing and felt sensing in teaching and research in environmental philosophy and to showcase the application of these methods for bringing forth the implied experiential processuality and entanglement of materialities.

TAE steps can be taken alone, but more often than not it is helpful to have a partner, who follows closely one's progress in thinking, sometimes offering clarifying questions, and taking notes on what is said and felt. In this case, I met with a TAE partner/listener, who invited me to attend to my felt sense of doing research in environmental philosophy. In this exercise, we followed some of the TAE steps (Gendlin and Hendricks 2004) that included (1) forming a crux sentence that “comes up” from the problem/project at hand, (2) exploring the felt sense of the sentence, (3) rewriting the sentence based on the felt sense, (4) choosing the key concept of this sentence, (5) finding other ways to express the felt sense of this key concept, (6) defining all three key concepts. These adhere to Steps 1–5, “Speaking from the felt sense” (Gendlin and Hendricks 2004, 12–14). After this, we moved on to Steps 6–8, “Finding patterns from facets (instances)” (Gendlin and Hendricks 2004, 15–16). These steps include (1) *instancing* – anchoring the felt sense and crux sentences in experienced events – and (2) *crossing* – seeing what aspects stand out of the instances if they are looked upon together (Schoeller 2023, 304–306). As expressed in the TAE steps document, these steps help to “articulate an implicit knowing and make it communicable” (Gendlin and Hendricks 2004, 17).

TAE example – how to “carry forward”?

Key sentence, replacing words (steps 1–5)

My problem in research has often been connected to the complexity of expressing the intricacy, processuality, materiality, and embeddedness of nature cultures in the context of a dualist and often *thing*-oriented use of language that seems to permeate the dominating genealogies, that is calculative and objectifying thinking patterns, attitudes, and language use. These often complicate the explanations of new materialist and posthumanist thinking, which then, in turn, seem lacking in the sense of pointing toward a different kind of thinking that does not offer a methodology for its achievement.

Although alternatives and instances of feeling and experiencing the world processually and in an embedded and embodied way are present both in the alternative genealogies that co-constitute us, as well as in everyday experience, these often get drowned out by the dominating strains and are harder to grasp, especially, in a coherent research context.

With this in mind, I formulated my first crux sentence:

Surpassing contradictions to expose the obvious that is concealed.

My partner asked: How is your felt sense of this? I then went on exploring the felt sense of the sentence. What does it entail for my research? How does it make me feel?

There is a sense of urgency. Heaviness of hard work. Agitation. Need to do this whatever this is. Being worn down by this need. It would be easier to live without this need. If I could unsee the necessity to reveal the obviousness it would be easier not to have to write. Agitation until the work is done. It is a lot to put in every time.

Sadness. It is not obvious although it is. We could live but we cannot. We have to write.

My partner then asked: *Is this the predicament of environmental philosophy?*

The basic thought is so simple. Confusion that I need so many words to explain something so simple. There is a contradiction between the simplicity of thought and the many words.

It became obvious that the felt sense behind the key sentence referred to research in environmental philosophy in a general sense – as a calling, as well as a burden at times, and touched upon the feeling of sadness that simple, and – at least to me – seemingly obvious thoughts often need endless theory writing, convincing and neologisms to express them. Moreover, and what is even more alarming, these struggles to express seemingly simple thoughts and the “felt sense” of human embeddedness in the world coherently often also lead to theoretical conflicts even between like-minded scholars.

My partner then inquired: *What is the thought?*

Yes, what is the simple thought within everything?

Me: The most simple thought: *We are the world. No difference between spirit and body. Meaning is inherent in the world.*

In this context, I dipped into the felt sense (Gendlin 1995), to see whether I could reformulate the key sentence: “Expressing inherent sensefulness coherently.” From here, I chose the word “sensefulness” as the main concept and thought of possible replacements for this word. Seeking replacements for your

favourite concepts can be significant since one is often “led” by the concepts that one uses most often, and these concepts conveniently function as placeholders that misleadingly seem to be self-explanatory. This can lead to disconnected theories that blindly accept that certain concepts mean something, while, upon their use, each researcher might have a richer meaning behind the use of these placeholder concepts, which would also deserve to be “felt within” more closely, as they could add to the theory more than the use of convenient abstractions.

When looking for a replacement, one does not need to think of a synonym in the dictionary sense of “replacement,” but rather to allow a felt sense to emerge. This way, it is possible to open up a concept and ask oneself – what do I mean when I use this concept? To delve into that, there is a TAE step of finding replacements for the word last used, that is the term sensefulness. The replacements that came out of further exploring of the felt sense were:

1. *Vibrancy of life*
2. *Relatedness.*

After finding the “replacements,” I went on to find definitions that would suit them, to gain further insight into what I mean when I use these words which I have grown so accustomed to that I often forget to question them.

Definitions of three terms:

Sensefulness: Things and processes have meaning within them.

Vibrancy of life: The animacy of everything that is.

Relatedness: Direct relation and inbetweenness of actors.

This initial framework of TAE Steps 1–5 then allowed us to move further with the move of *instancing*, to see whether any relevant instances come from the felt sense of the theme, from which the key sentence and the accompanying keywords emerged. The first instance that came to my mind was connected to the way thinking and language influence our practices and materialities:

Production of trash via production of consumer things. I am constantly aware of buying cheap, unsustainable toys and clothing for my children. There is a double contradiction, I feel. First, the things themselves are an ontological contradiction – I need them but do not need them, and will soon discard them, since they are trash – a “should not have been” to begin with. Second, the children are so very nature-loving, embodied, and embedded beings of wonder who then need and use so much “stuff” from the production line of trash. An impossible conundrum. Sadness and heaviness when I think of this illogical situation of being a consumer. Cannot relate to the environment. To stay within society I have to buy things. We could make them more environmentally friendly with better quality. People cannot think of the sensefulness of the world; they would need to think differently.

This puts us in an impossible situation of no choice or a potential choice that is not made, like making quality products. Sustainable products.

Here, being “caught by language” transferred also to being “caught by the system” that, similarly to my initial problem, points toward a systemic problem, a necessity for a change on a larger scale. Firstly, similarly to how a researcher is compelled to explain anything that is beyond the conventional abstractions in a lengthy way, a person wishing to live sustainably might struggle due to the systemic hindrances at play. Secondly, this instance also refers to the concept of “sensefulness” as a potential turning point, as a marker of a necessary change in ontological assumptions.

I then moved on to the next instance that came to mind with regard to the key sentence:

Often philosophy students are so eager to run away from embodiment and embeddedness. It is so hard to demonstrate the need to embed our thinking and think environmentally. On the contrary, they tend to revel in the justifications of human ingenuity. Their heads are in the clouds of words. I remember this one instance in an exam. The student answered a question about “essence” and a quote on the difference between “self-moving” things and things that are moved from the outside – and the student chose grass and humans as the apparent opposites here. So many questions in me – why would you choose grass as a thing that is moved from the outside? Why was it so important to juxtapose yourself to another living being rather than a phone or a house, for example? In other words, why did nature fall victim to self-identification? Why does nature fall victim in so many cases of similar human exceptionalism that was reflected in the student’s answer? How is grass moved from the outside, you might ask. Well – it’s easy, they answered – the grass has a metabolism. Well, don’t we all. . . . The student did not have my questions, of course. Just living through the exam might be a feat comparable to how grass grows through the driest periods in the summer and still manages to somehow save some green. Yet it made me think of countless other times when I encountered a position – any position as always standing for or against something else. A is not not-A, always, and we identify ourselves as not being anything else – is it not curious? How to relate to the earth, if relation is dangerous to identification? How to accommodate that topic in teaching environmental philosophy or philosophy?

Here I saw two interrelated problems coming up. Firstly, this instance is tied to the first one, in the context of the complexity of changing mindsets on a larger scale and changing the discourses that rule over society not only in a language-related context but as materially embedded systems of living. Secondly, alienated and argumentative thinking often bypass similarities, as it values differentiating, branching, and distinguishing. Synthesising theories and

approaches becomes possible when concepts are stripped of their seeming conflictuality and juxtaposition that is often only present because of a disconnection brought by the use of words that do not align with the felt sense. We are even pressured to define in the introductory parts of essays or dissertations, the precise ways in which this exact piece of philosophical research is distinct from others and represents a certain niche (the “what”), though, we are never asked to inquire *how* these particular concepts relate me to the world? And that could be important, since asking – what are the contents beyond the concept that I use, and how the concept relates me to the world, might often bring about surprising connections with other concepts that are used for the same reasons, while being of different or even opposite meanings. Some researchers might use “transcendence” for the same reasons as others use the concept “immanence,” while for others “materiality” relates to meanings in the same way as “spirituality” for others. Probing and inquiring this “how,” whilst not simple, might inspire you to engage with this complexity of expressions and relationalities.

Both instances also brought to light the problem of hopelessness in the face of large, systemic hurdles for both research and experiencing environmental embeddedness. Thus, I formed a new key sentence:

Teaching and learning mindful embeddedness without losing hope.

This sentence served as an initial crossing of the sentences – that exposed one of the biggest challenges in environmental philosophy – the necessity to seek affirmative approaches and to both acknowledge but also not subject oneself to hopelessness. As expressed earlier, I use the TAE term *crossing* for a process of noticing the points of connection (or disconnection) that happen when both instances enter my thinking at once. This is not a comparison or contrast in the conventional sense, but rather a tentative probing around the felt sense – what comes up, if we think of these sentences together?

I then went on to cross these instances once more and added another thought to the mix. Namely, the keywords “without losing hope.”

When they understand. Sometimes eager not to know.

Example: Lose hope means apathy. How to inspire without extinguishing hope?

Then, a crossing instance came up for not losing hope:

Mushroom event. People growing mushrooms. Artist coloring fabrics with plants.

Small hands-on practices that give hope. Something you can do with your hands. Something small people can do so we sense relatedness with earth.

Partner: Is there something more?

This is related to creative expression.

In this instance, I focused on a recent event, when I gave a speech before the screening of the film “Fantastic Fungi” in a small town cinema in Latvia. This event was organised by a couple who have started a mushroom business, providing people with the possibility to grow oyster mushrooms and lion’s manes at home in specially prepared boxes. This instance not only logically leads me to affirmative environmental ethics as something that starts from small, creative practices and actions but also reminds us of the potential of the use of creative expression and hands-on exercises in teaching environmental philosophy. These exercises might be directed at direct experience of life’s processuality and connection to nature, etc. These could then help in arriving at alternative genealogies of processuality within our bodies, beyond an either/or – or even transforming contradictions into a synthesis of meaning, allowing us to think outside of the restraints of pre-given abstractions by looking within what is “already there.”

Finally, thus, I arrived at the idea of activism and hands-on practices as vehicles for shifting ontologies in an environmental context. The steps of TAE, hence, brought to the fore a previously unthought-of aspect of environmental education. While I knew and had engaged in hands-on practices and exercises, I often regarded them as too minor to be of any “real” impact, yet, the process of instancing and crossing allowed me to arrive not only at their significance but also to a reevaluation of their potential. Finding hope in the “minor” has long been mirrored by the systemic injustice and unsustainability of the “major,” yet, within these instances, I finally saw their mirror-connectedness as a potentially productive and hopeful combination, rather than a desperate cry for help.

On a meta-level, the TAE steps are themselves such a hands-on exercise, which I embarked upon when exploring my own embodied embeddedness within the thought processes that led me to continue the challenging journey of environmental philosophy again and again.

Conclusory remarks: embarking on a journey within

While there is a certain awkwardness, a sort of discomfort about including the “felt sensing” of a researcher into their research as a meta-approach or a useful facet of doing research – whether it be qualitative or quantitative methods that one uses – this awkwardness seems to come from the straightforwardness that the application of this methodology requires. In a sense, it asks the researcher to “get naked”⁹ in front of their own research, or to “look into the eyes” of their own fascination or research interest – why do I do what I do, and how does my felt sense inform me on my way?¹⁰

When writing this chapter, I went through the feeling of this awkwardness too. Why do I recite this process of thinking, if I could just say that “hands-on practices inform and add to experiential changes in environmental thinking” or something of the sort, rather than going through the motions of how I came to that thought? What does the process add to the discourse, if anything?

The emphasis on the “what” in research accounts for part of this awkwardness. More often than not, research is geared toward the product rather than the process of inquiry. While methodology, of course, is very important in most sciences, and new “technologies for *hunting* knowledge” are appreciated, science does not accommodate processes of *gathering* bits of insights as insightful in themselves, so long as they do not open a door to a potential new insight to gain or a new, more effective process for gaining that insight. This “product of knowledge” might be elusive or nonexistent, but still, it remains the main goal of the process. The process exists for the sake of the product. Thinking for the sake of itself “seems” to not affect the world, if only on students whose brains we might “train.” Thus, the felt sense that drives the research is most often left aside. This situation cannot but remind one of how capitalism is based on (mostly women’s) unpaid labour in the house, which has been made invisible by not acknowledging it, which brings about a certain awkwardness when addressed. Yet precisely this unnoticed process and the conscious reflection upon it might allow (1) recognising intuitions and felt senses as a necessary part of every research process and (2) thus adding the dimension of the “felt sense” critically and consciously to research practice.

Moreover, the awkwardness that is first felt by asking oneself the question, “Why am I adding this *intuition* to my research and what does it add to it?” itself deserves recognition and asks for an active researcher’s participation. Precisely, this awkwardness that makes us ask the question “Why exactly this?” can mark a difference between feeling and embodied knowing. How to take *gut feeling* to *gut knowing*, that is how to approach and connect to a place of felt sensing, without mistaking this for some other kind of passing feeling? That is precisely the work in which ECT and the TAE methodology can be of assistance since they include both carefully, and critically assessing one’s intuitions as well as creatively employing them for building ethically minded, livable, and even enjoyable futurities. A similar role to how research ethics also function as a meta-monitoring tool for research.

Personal and research-oriented felt sensing can often be interconnected, and, if “carried forward” (Walkerden 2023) can lead to a coherent and often innovative theory. Moreover, felt sensing can help (re) connect several seemingly unconnected aspects of research or other types of exploratory practices. For example, in the above example, I managed to *cross* the idea of explicating thought with hands-on exercises and activist practices that had not occurred to me as linked in a strong sense before. Reconnection to the felt sense, and thus also to embedded embodiment, is a useful approach in any endeavour, yet, it can be crucial, especially in environmentally-oriented research.

While ECT stresses the significance of first-person experience and the possibility of finding answers within oneself, it does not presume each personal instance as a universal truth but rather invites one to employ one’s felt sense for further inquiry. Moreover, ECT not only stresses the embeddedness and embodiment but works through it.

ECT in research, thus:

- 1) allows “reclaiming of nature” (Jóhannesdóttir and Thorgeirsdóttir 2016) as a significantly nature cultured space, from (rather than “about”) which to speak, being an essential tool for environmental inquiry in phenomenology,
- 2) but, can also be seen as a valuable meta-tool for any researcher for *feeling*, *sensing*, but also *reflecting* on their biases and *gut intuitions*, from which further research is often born.

In these ways, I see ECT as a promising emancipating approach both in scientific inquiry processes in the context of environmental humanities and beyond and in co-constituting lived materialities for the future. Thus, the approach of ECT is emancipating for doing environmental research or getting a closer glimpse of personal biases, inspirations, and intuitions on an experiential level. Yet, it can also be emancipating for communities in a broader sense if adopted as a thinking practice for getting in touch with nature, ourselves, and each other, and envisioning new practices that facilitate human-nature closeness in design, experience, and ways of life.

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Notes

- 1 Erich Fromm describes this as the having orientation and discerns it as different from an existential having. Fromm (1976, 85). Further – Sauka (2020b).
- 2 Criticized by Guha (2013); further discussion Sauka (2023, 89–90).
- 3 While the term “nature” here could be contested (Thorgeirsdóttir 2024), the ethical call adheres to realizing the sensefulness of the earth/materiality itself and urges reiterating immanent cosmologies.
- 4 As well as Eugene Gendlin’s philosophy with Thinking at the Edge (Gendlin 2004) focusing-based practices that form the conceptual and practical backbone of ECT (Schoeller 2023)
- 5 This approach is also in line with a broader spectrum of research from a first-person and/or phenomenological standpoint that brings to the fore experiential embeddedness and implies a phenomenological approach as a necessary aspect for doing research with other methods of inquiry. Some of these reflect on different aspects of embodiment, such as the growing interest in breathing (Škof and Berndtson 2018), listening (Bjelica 2022; Lipari 2014) and eating (Mol 2021; Pelluchon 2019) as possible starting points for phenomenological inquiry, included might also be feminist philosophical accounts (Ettinger 2005; Oksala 2016, 2021; Cixous 1976; Irigaray 1985, etc.).
- 6 A great example of research that is driven by a felt sense, are the ethnographic movies by Heland and Ernston (2016, 2018) that portray the conflicting understandings of “nature preservation” through conservation practices involving “local plants” and

the efforts to clear the areas of “alien” plants in Postapartheid South Africa and are also great examples of research that comes from a “felt sense” of the researcher. In these movies, the act of clearing and purifying “nature” is demonstrated as a decolonizing action. However, decolonization here employs both ideological and practical tools associated with colonization, thereby revealing a reversal of discourse that seeks to address what is broken by using the same tools (Lorde 1984), rooted in the perceptual imaginary of the human being as separate from nature. The authors use visceral video language to convey the nuanced problematics of the matter, while also delivering the results of detailed research. This example allows a fresh, felt sensibility from an experiential grounding that allows problematizing seeming juxtapositions in a more nuanced way, not as a clash of societies or a debate between local and global, but through the attuned, embodied sensibility to power, violence, entanglement, and processuality that crosses borders without erasing distinctions.

- 7 Thus, Montaigne, Spinoza, Nietzsche, William James, Alfred North Whitehead, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Hedwig Conrad-Martius, Gilles Deleuze, etc., etc., and many others – notably, most environmental philosophers form different ways of opposition to the so-called Global Northern outlook that seemingly dominates public discourse and societal ideas. Moreover, new trends in philosophy, both in phenomenological (Waldenfels 2000, 2003; Böhme 2019), new materialist and posthumanist contexts (Radomska 2016; Neimanis 2017, 2018; Alaimo 2010; Braidotti 2013; Radomska 2016) as well as in cognitive science (Varela and Thomson 1991; Noë 2009) and philosophy of biology (Meincke 2018; Nicholson and Dupré 2018) have furthermore highlighted processuality, porousness and transcorporeality of the body.
- 8 Which I, in the last instance usually describe as a “human exceptionalist substance ontology, where thingness dominates processuality”, characterized, among others, by a strict A is not notA logic that stands in the way of a more inclusive approach of conjunction.
- 9 Gendlin refers to the concept of “naked saying” and to the discomfort felt by “uncovering” the meaning of the felt sense in research: “Therefore when someone asks us: “what does this poem mean?” we answer: “The poem itself says what it means.” In this answer about poetry, we know what we are saying although we cannot substitute patterns for it. But, in philosophy and theory, we think we must be prepared to do so. If someone asks “What do you mean?” we feel a need to answer with clear categories and known meanings. We defend what we said by claiming that we “really” meant those clear categories. If we cannot say we meant them, if they don’t cover what we said, then we are uncovered – naked in what we said. Naked saying makes us uncomfortable. This philosophical discomfort is bodily, a physical sensation, isn’t it? Yes, our bodies are capable of philosophical discomfort. But the word “bodily” changes in saying this.” (Gendlin 1991)
- 10 “Reading insights through one another diffractively is about experimenting with different patterns of relationality, opening things up, turning them over and over again, to see how the patterns shift. This is not about solving paradoxes or synthesizing different points of view from the outside, as it were, but rather about the material intra-implication of putting “oneself” at risk, troubling “oneself,” one’s ideas, one’s dreams, all the different ways of touching and being in touch, and sensing the differences and entanglements from within” (Barad 2012, 77).

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