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dorsal practices [*re-turning*]

I

These two voices — moving back and forth. Passing back and forth — offering and receiving. Sharing vocabularies — there is an energetic dimension.

To be prepared to drop (into) something — being receptive to what might arise. This space in the middle — of cooperation or participation that is neither being in control nor being out of control. This middle space of trust — of trust and vulnerability.

Entering backwards, not knowing, holding a space open. Entering a space backwards — not as a method or technique but to explore things in a dorsal way. It doesn't mean that you know what is going to happen.

Ways of working with language — moving back and forth from the body. What the conversation brings, what the body brings. How to voice and listen at the same time. Reading, voicing and listening — the one moving into the other.

A space is held open. We are resting on the materials, yes, to rest upon materials. Being able to lean on materials. It is unpredictable, yet rests on what has come before. There is a rhythm and speed to it, like stepping into a river.

Time passing and words spoken, unfolding. To unfold until it stops — letting go or surrendering into the structure of the score. Coming back to single words — there isn't a demand for making sense. Suspending the requisites of logic or of argument or of clarity. Yet something is unfolding — there is a sense-making.

Speaking words which chronologically might have had no prior relation. Sense-making arising through the bringing together of fragments. The organisation of this sense is not always grammatical — it finds its own way through. More *sense-ful* — to enter this flow of exchange, a river of words.

Our bodies becoming vehicles for letting a language arise. Between movement practices and voicing practices — the one flows into the other. A feedback loop, a different kind of feedbacking.

Different activities that are happening simultaneously — how to navigate and negotiate, how many foci can one hold? Agility in being able to shift, as if moving with the changing currents of the sea or a river. Knowing how to navigate the swell.

More like passing time or spending time and sharing time. A different kind of listening, a different kind of engaging. A different kind of speaking, a different kind of communication.

Temporal coordinates can feel slippery. A sense of circularity — we are working with texts that have a linear unfolding but engaging them in a non-linear way. It is fragmentary, it is looping, it is returning, sometimes saying again and again. This does something with the material itself and with time. Temporal confusion, the loopiness of time. Non-linear, returning — a kind of murmuring.

Sharing and witnessing — of a shared language, of a direct experience. The intensity of the languaging is not always to do with what the words are saying. Oceanic, watery, this watery fluid sense of language — words and phrases coming to the surface and then disappearing again. A different way of languaging — not to do with clarity as such, feeling closer to blood, or fluid, or breath.

A language that is not always about the meaning of the words themselves, but the contact *between* the words, felt as direct experience. Not quite opaque — an in-between state of sense-making that is neither clear nor opaque but somehow in this zone in between: greyish, murky, milky.

II

What does it mean to come *back to*? Not to follow through, not to exhaust — but to come *back to.* The gesture of coming back to something has a circling dimension. Leaving something, letting it settle. Not to force something, not trying to force something, but *to come back to*. A gesture of coming back to practices or coming back to scores or coming back to movement fragments or refrains — to just keep *coming back*.

Coming back — and *reconnecting* in the coming back. Returning to something — how consciously that can happen, how possible is that? And what is it that's returning?

Returning to the score — to drop into the back and see what happens. Some things will have disappeared, later they might re-emerge. There are these levels of possibility and of consciousness, and sometimes of frustration: of having lost it, or of not being able to return.

Trusting, trusting in time, trusting there is time, trusting it can happen later, or it might not. Trusting — not really *trying* to return to something exactly but to the *possibility*. Not trying to grab hold of something, but just returning to the practice and seeing what will come from that.

To keep coming back to this sense of returning. And what is it that's returning in this return? What is it that I'm returning to in this voicing? Returning to the direct experience of practising, a specific event of practising — to come back to

those experiences, looping back to a direct experience. Not to circle out into abstraction.

The sense of returning is not only to do with human agency. It is not only like *I* am returning, but also that the *practice* returns. It's not that *I* am seeking it or that *I* am returning to it, but there's something of a practice or a sensibility of a practice or an attitude that returns, that comes about or, *yes,* emerges. Where is the agency in this returning? It feels as if it's not my decision somehow, or not *only* my decision.

The practice itself has the capacity to come back into experience. Sometimes a practice returns unexpectedly in a different context or a different situation. Is it *me* that's making that decision?

To return — you go back, you come back. But the way we are talking, it's not linear at all. It's more of a looping. Not to step back or reverse but turning over and over, returning through circling, to come about, to come around. Coming around again, coming back to. It's not only us that have the agency to return.

There's a circling, a looping, and the chance of things resurfacing, re-emerging or emerging differently. The surprise of returning to or coming back to a situation. Something re-emerges unexpectedly and the surprise in how this might feel — both familiar *and* unfamiliar.

A small shift rewires and disorients, reconfigures my thinking in a way. Like the gesture of being spun around and having to try to find myself in my environment once more. The threads of thought that were there are not quite where they were before. To stay with that in this turn.

There's something of my attention being taken back. The attention drops further back into body. *Into* — it falls *back into* the body-ness of the body. The sense of noticing and registering and voicing from this present sense as it is unfolding, but also the recollection of previous practising. This temporal experience feels somehow indeterminate in a way.

This gap or difference between repeating and returning — the taste or the sensitivity of those two ideas feels different. Coming back to certain practices doesn't feel like repetition — it feels like *returning.* To dwell in that difference and get closer to what this quality of returning is, if not repeating. Or even, what is it in repeating that is not quite the same as returning?

To do with time? With repeating — it feels like stepping into a future space somehow, a directionality that is moving forwards. Even if redoing or revisiting — the direction is one of moving forwards, sensitivity of direction towards a forward orientation.

With returning — there is a curve, a curve back. In relation to time — but not about the past. Returning — neither a movement forwards in the direction of the arrow of time nor a step back (in time) to revisit the past.

This stretchiness of time, the slowing of time, or dispensing of a temporal frame altogether. To suspend or hold open, to return, to just *stay with.* Maybe that is a different way of thinking about it — to *stay with* something, to extend the duration of, to become open to the duration of.

How is it to listen, to be listening? To open into another dimension of noticing, noticing how the body reconfigures. The relation of repetition and returning. Returning opens a different space, even going back to a *same* space, opens *another* space. A space in a space in a space — unfolding of *other* spaces.

Unfolding, overlapping — a different experience of time. Repeating can feel more like an action of making or of a *making happen*, trying to achieve something. To return — no pressure to remember. What is that gesture, what is that move — a reaching out that opens the situation to inhabit, to be in for a while. An opening, a capacity of openness — towards receptive listening.

Not to search for — just noticing what comes back, what returns. How movements or attitudes return. To take attention to the back, just to take the attention back. And the ways that thoughts come back or return. How much is it that I am returning to a thought or that thought returns almost by its own accord? It feels reciprocal — or it is hard to tell whether it is me that returns to thought or whether it is the thought that returns.

Dorsal practising — leaning towards, yet allowing the thoughts to return, surfacing or bubbling up. Liquid — a very liquid sense of thinking. Dropping in and dropping out — and how dropping out feels a spatial manoeuvre. There is a circle of attention — dropping out is horizontal, a step to the sides. To drop in is *vertical*. To drop in, to drop down, a shift in register. Yes, to drop in — I am falling in, becoming immersed. I am diving in. This liquid sense of thinking and thinking not being separated from the body.

III

Trying to revisit, seeing what would come. Starting to move, what returns by itself. Other things that I was trying to get in touch with, but that wouldn't return. Returning to patterns or sensations. How the body is shaped by bringing attention to patterning and pulses, these rhythmic patterns.

Giving space — to not *try* to find something again. Trying to return to something, the idea or a memory … and recognising the elusiveness of that. The memory of sensation can get in the way of re-finding. To practise in a way where things can be re-found — it might happen the next day or maybe never. Or maybe it returns — recognising it in a different way, something has shifted.

All these nuances of returning and re-finding and things being re-found. Some things return quickly, they are embedded traces in the body, you just need to find the right switch and they are there again. Returning to something in relation to the body — what the body can remember or understand. What part does memory play, body memory?

This physical sense of letting patterns return or re-finding things, or re-familiarising, things becoming familiar again. This returning is not backwards, it is not linear. A kind of resurfacing — it is *around*. This around-ness of the turn — this being in the midst, experienced in the body, not having step back or retrace one's steps.

The nuance of returning, the agency of returning. And what it means to return *to* something. And the sense of effort when *I* am trying or striving to return to something, there is a *trying* or a striving. Or when *something* is returning or recurring or re-emerging or reappearing again.

How to activate a practice, or how to be activated *by* a practice, which could be a different way of thinking about it. This sense of the practice returning, allowing the practice to return. In the moment, to trust, to allow a practice to return or a movement to return or a sensibility to return.

What the conditions need to be — what conditions are conducive? A sense of space and of openness to allow for the possibility of something to return — a different way of being in the world, a different rhythm, a different quality of time, a different quality of attention, a quality of patience. And when these qualities are not present — noticing the obstacles, or of trying to return to something with force and will.

Working with the body — it is more a letting go than a doing. Something about this dorsal quality of letting go. It can feel like nothing is happening. Not to try to make something happen. To trust that something *is* happening. Trying to hold on to it can stop the flow of what is emerging, *appearing*. To trust in embodied practices. And the kinds of words that emerge from this practice, the words almost emerge by themselves.

Dorsal practice as a means of letting go, no, not as a *means*, but as an attitude. Practices are cultivated towards a certain quality of living and of aliveness, and yes, a reorientation of living, or a reorganisation of life. There are different things at stake, and there are different durations.

We let our lives seep into this, and it seeps into our lives. Yet this reorganisation of living takes time, it takes a long, long time. Traces and patterns and habits, undoing and unmaking and unlearning. There is a seepage in this practice that happens over time, an extended sense of time. We have allowed things to *take time*. This patience, this quietness, this deep listening.

Coming back to the word *return*, and all these different senses of *returning*. Flipping something over and over, to see it in a different way. Turning it, literally handling something in my hands, turning it over, looking at it this way and then that way. Then maybe putting it down and stepping back. And in this act of returning to it, retouching it, you can move beyond the obviousness.

How is the ethical orientation of these dorsal practices? In forward-leaning moments, it feels like this "me", this "I", is pressing into the world, or leaning into the world, or intervening into the world — the feeling of separation between myself and the rest of the world.

With dorsal practices, the felt sense of the world is more present in my experience, so that line between — the line of *separation* — becomes less distinct somehow. That capacity to just dwell in the experience, rather than to try to press through or get through or push a way through life in a way. To just be in life and to be supported.

Disabling the desire to get *somewhere else*. A forward-leaning tendency is tied into a desire to be somewhere *other* than the experience that is unfolding. The shift towards the dorsal is accepting of that situation. And in accepting, it opens out. The edge between myself and the rest of the world becomes much softer somehow, experience less contoured in terms of *myself* trying to get *somewhere.*

Leaning but without gripping. Refiguring how the body is engaging in the world. The eyes are relieved of having to go forwards, of having to go anywhere. That pleasure or that joy just comes from not really thinking. No, not *not* thinking, but not a certain kind of thinking that is to do with being *elsewhere*.

The dorsal is a stepping back, or a leaning back. Attuning to the vibrancy of the moment, to the particular alivenesses there. Being taken out of that cycle of reaching towards, striving towards. It even feels quite atemporal, outside of time. It lasts for so long and then it is almost as if *chronology* comes back. And then that desire to get somewhere again returns. A very different register of being — this sense of *interlude*.

And how we are shaping — and how we are shaped by — our own movements. How we perceive and how we put ourselves into our own bodies and into the world.

There is this depth, this diving or dropping into. Not a physical space in the sense of flesh and bones, but more like a kind of psychic space that you could drop into. Dropping, dropping through the body, behind the spine — and the spaciousness that is opening there. Dropping into the depths of one's self, yet there is a space which opens up that is more than the physical space of the body.

Coming into this space of the back, *from* the back — the inner body behind the spine. The resource of spaciousness that is there. These two kinds of spaciousness — a spaciousness that opens out into the world through a participation with other forces in the world beyond the body, this feeling of movement as you are leaning into the wind, or leaning back, but also this spaciousness that has an interiority to it, of the more-than-material space behind the spine.

IV

Intermingling of voices and thoughts — being able to read, speak and listen to one's own voice and the voice of the other, whilst acknowledging someone else's listening and the complexity of that. The language creates a space of listening, a space for reflecting, a space for thinking, a space for connecting.

Coming into the practice as a way of coming back to an experience. I was searching for it in a set of ideas or concrete thoughts — and there's nothing there, there's nothing here. I cannot recollect. There is nothing to grasp or gather or capture. And as you're talking, I've got my eyes closed, and I'm looking away — I'm there in the space again.

A different way of reconnecting with an experience — I was searching for it in the wrong places. Approaching it in the wrong way, trying to capture it, trying to hold onto it, trying to somehow take hold of it. It is through the practice that it comes back, that it will come back. Not to try to access the experience as if it is already there, but to *enter* from the back and then it's *there*.

Loops of experience and understanding. Let's see what happens, let's see what happens in the moment. It opens up a different time. This listening and speaking at the same time, and the occasionality of that, the present tense of that. Re-meeting of the material and letting the material speak.

All these competing flows of energy — trying to make them sing together. A certain quality of concentration that's involved in that — it cannot be too focused. To be open to all these interferences from the sides.

Focusing with openness, a concentrated capacity for distraction. To focus without getting too fixed. Scanning, letting, rather than *trying* to re-find. Feeling where that material has come from, to feel the time-space that material holds. Yes, something reveals itself.

Cyclical — to feel the folds and circles and coming back, returnings. The cyclical folding of the present, revealing and unfolding. Like layers, like onion layers. Layers and layers — peeling and revealing, a cyclic unpeeling. Re-finding or rediscovering the material in speaking and listening of the other's voice, and how the material gets renegotiated somehow.

Renegotiating the variables — there is a fluidity between speaking and listening. So many things in motion — circling and cyclical. There are these two movements of circling — one on a horizontal register and one on a vertical register. The vertical movement — the temporal cycle of coming back to, like returning to in time. Coming back. Or things coming back.

There is this kind of looping. Feedback loops as well. Something re-emerging. And the relationship between something re-emerging or 'me' returning to it. Is something emerging or am I returning? I can't really tell.

Somewhere in the middle — in this coming back and coming back and coming back. But not quite in linear time — there's this quality of looping over and over again. To let something come — not so much returning to *something* but circling around. This notion of circling — against the violence of linear thought, the violence of constructing thought in the linear way. Circling or meandering thought — touching upon.

It is more indirect. Swaying around something, hovering over something — like the eyes hovering on the page and waiting for the words to come.

A sensitivity that's to do with not trying to get there too directly — to allow for the circling, a dreamy oozy kind of space that might seem formless. Yes, formlessness, but still being able to register or recognise a quality of thinking — very formless and soft but still there.

Swimming around in this soft thought space. This intermingling — a kind of thinking or languaging that is emerging in this space in-between. We're reading these fragments that are themselves in between our voices. There is the originary intermingling in the transcripts and the intermingling in the reading. This intermingling of voice, intermingling between listening, speaking and thinking.

A soft dance between thinking and listening. A peculiar listening space, or language space, opens up. Soft slippages — a soft amorphous space but very precise at the same time. How to honour that soft formless space, and at the same time bring into some kind of *form*? There is a density. More like a woven web.

Instead of speaking *to* somebody, there is a pool of words that someone is invited into. There is a pool of language and voice and sound, that you could drift in and out of. Watery, fluid, welling, bubbling — yes, welling feels closer to it. It's not like *me* doing the thinking, the thinking is *happening*. Thoughts are swirling around and bubbling up and coming around and emerging and disappearing, cloudy, murky.

I get close and it drifts away and then it comes back. I was listening. I was remembering. Your voice is swirling and curling around — I am not able to grasp everything. You seem to have put me somewhere, into a wordless murky space. I'm *in* something.

There are memories coming around me, they are not vivid, they are more like sensations. Rather than communicating, there is absorption through the whole body. To keep coming back to the material — a kind of estrangement, seeing it anew. Sometimes the originary context shines through but at other times it's like I've never seen that word or line before or never heard that before. In combination, it has a different meaning or different resonance that I'd never noticed. Exhaustion opens up to a completely different possibility.

V

This sense of wrestling with the material and how to meet with it in a way — more about listening *with it*, this *alongside-ness.* Not wanting something from it.

An exercise in listening. How it is to listen, what kind of listening is required? A dorsal voicing that does not accumulate, does not build towards argument. The form of the voicing itself might disallow or disrupt a certain kind of sense-

making that is looking for cohesion or evolution of sense, something that can be discerned.

Shift of preposition: from listening *to*, to listening *with* or listening *alongside*. With and alongside — there is more of a dorsal sense of around-ness, of co-existence. Inhabiting the same space and time. Not listening to *get* something but listening to experience. It opens a different relationship to the body, to space, to time.

Not trying to tell something or say something or communicate something as such. There is almost nothing there to hold, it doesn't accumulate. There is something about activating a different kind of listening, it calls for a different kind of listening.

There are these fields of practice: of voicing, and listening, and moving. This hard-to-graspness. Soft enquiry, soft listening. Holding open a space. This dwelling and inhabiting and moving and listening — the capacity to *be*.

Listening, less about attending to the content, but staying with the *feel.* Chains of thoughts — not sequential or logical. Sometimes one of the phrases resonates — and I hear it, I really hear it, or I hear it as if I have never really heard it before.

Yes, this co-presence between the act of listening and the voicing, or the moving and the voicing — a constellation of practices happening. A dorsal listening — which isn't listening *to*, isn't trying to glean information.

Slipping into a dorsal listening — listening to something, to someone and a sense of listening to oneself or of being listened to. This listening *with* or listening *alongside* includes oneself in the listening. It is not only *me* listening. A more inclusive sense of listening.

Returning or re-confirming or re-finding — knowing something or having experienced something doesn't always *stay,* it needs to be re-found or re-experienced to be kept alive. Re-experiencing.

A *not*-facing form of listening — as a way of witnessing, of *really* listening. Really listening — what do I mean by *really listening*? Not being too forceful — finding a sweet spot between turning in and turning away. Between turning in and turning away — a kind of soft attention, not a direct glance.

This way of listening, coming from the back. There is a kind of intimacy, a kind of intimacy with the environment and intimacy with oneself. Intimacy — a closeness with things. Open to the complexity of what is happening — this dorsal practising opens up the poly, the multi, the around-ness, rather than a single direction or focus. Recognising this mutually supportive dimension, the co-presence of languaging and bodying.

It is not only a language-based enquiry and not only a body-based enquiry but the enmeshing of these two modes of thinking. The one and the other are not distinct — something emerges in their meeting. In the coming back, coming

back and letting go. Different practices folding into each other — softening the edges, the edges of movement, the edges of language.

VI

Words enter the body, washing over me, dropping in, falling in. Exhaustion can create another kind of opening — a kind of vulnerability and fragility in that exhaustion.

What the voices are saying beyond their texture. Absorbing language through the body, through the skin. Texture resonating. The content is not always graspable — words passing through me. The feeling of language, the tone, the feeling tone. A way of becoming in touch again.

Content that feels mercurial, liquid. Letting it wash through. To listen — over and over, again and again, each time landing differently, feeling differently. Vibration, resonance — listening not only through the ears but through the skin, through the whole body. Not having to recall — but really to listen.

What comes to the surface differently? Voice as support — resting upon the voicing. A support to rest upon — to lay one's thoughts. Something that has come from the body is folding back into the body. Folds and circles — this is another kind of sense.

The voice curls around, one voice curling around the other. Circling, cycling, entering in a different way. Listening to the single words and short phrases mingling, becoming more enmeshed.

Taking time and taking of time. You don't have to *think* the words, the words are there to be felt. Forgetting everything that was spoken, that was listened to — it's all gone. Not being able to recollect it or not being able to hold it.

To recognise the desire for capture, to want to distil, to make sense of — and yet each time it slips away. Language, fluid, airlike — breathing. First, coming. The *feeling* of the phrasing, a felt tone or sense. There is a kind of cadence, of one voice moving into another. The one bleeds into the other, the one merges into the other, the one becomes the other.

No feeling in the eyes that I was searching. Resistance in the words — they're not hiding and they're not *not* saying. They leave a trace but there is no solid body, it is not a solid thing. Yet something that has been experienced. Like air and bubbles, a language of air.

This languaging that never accumulates into something that can be taken away or that refuses to be summarised or précised. All these distilled hours of speaking, yet nothing can be *taken* from it. A languaging in the immediacy of connection — yet it doesn't last, it can't be held, it can't be captured. Nothing remains.