

# Review of: "Somatic Arts and Liveable Futures: (Re-) Embodying Ecological Connections"

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My first comment is to point out that this article is already available in substantially the same form on the ResearchGate website. ([DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.7629756](https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.7629756))

More substantively, the article recognizes the limits of conventional approaches to dealing with the myriad of “ecological disasters.” I am not well versed in the author’s field of eco-somatic arts or the related field of eco-psychology, but I believe I can comment meaningfully. I would suspect that many encountering this article or others of similar content would be skeptical of the author’s claims for the effectiveness of eco-somatic practices to enhance consciousness of nature and our place in it. As an aside, it would help make the article more convincing not only to provide cites attesting to this, but also some of the actual data that backs up the claims.

My own work can also strengthen the case the author is making. In *The Right Way to Flourish: Reconnecting with the Real World*, I explore the work of Iain McGilchrist (*The Master and his Emissary: The Divided Brain and the Making of the Western World*), in which he argues that each of the two hemispheres of the brain attends to the world very differently. The right makes the connections to the world out there and presents it in its uniqueness and rich context, as a whole or Gestalt. Quite differently, the world the left presents to an actor is constructed from pieces (beliefs, facts) that have been abstracted over the course of the actor’s life. Actions will reflect the dominant hemisphere’s way of attending to the world. I do not mean to offer a detailed explanation in this comment, but merely to call attention to work that, I believe, can provide a more grounded foundation for the author’s arguments.

Body-centered activities, like art, music, dance, even walking in the manner presented by the author, are the domain of the right hemisphere, and all would be expected to increase its relative dominance over time. I have no doubts that, if done regularly, they would increase awareness of our connectedness to the world. The emphasis on plants follows from their ubiquity in most settings, but other features of the natural world are just as important.

The author argues that engaging the eco-somatic will reimagine the political. I disagree. The political is a complicated set of beliefs [in the left-hemisphere] generated over one’s life and shaped by that history. It takes much more than a new awakening to change them. And, on a cultural level, it is exactly those beliefs and norms that have caused all the apocalyptic situations that endanger the possibility of what the author calls “livable futures,” or “flourishing,” as I would call it. Knowing or thinking about such futures is insufficient to create them. It is the “political” or “societal” activities we engage in that have created the coming apocalypse the author refers to. We do need to think about it and do something about it if

a livable future has any chance to emerge. The practices outlined in the article can help us appreciate our connectedness to plants and the rest of nature. But, unless they also lead to a shift in our normal behaviors toward more caring and less using, the current trends will continue.