

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

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With many approaches to the ecological crisis dominated by either green-tech solutions or cynical greenwash, this article gives a helpful alternative by advocating eco-somatic practices. The writer goes to the heart of the ecological problem itself: the hierarchical dualisms of mind-body and human-nature are embedded in both western modernity and ecological decline. The shift of attention proposed here towards the human body and its relationship to the other bodies of Earth is timely.

The primary aim of the paper is to engage people, through simple eco-somatic practices, with the world of nature at a deeper level (psychological, emotional, spiritual), shifting from the mental to the tactile in order to deeply observe and attend to the entire more-than-human world.

Two small critical comments follow:

First, it is perhaps both obvious and beyond the scope of the paper that numerous cultures in the past (and present), such as Australian Indigenous culture, exhibit what can be called an eco-somatic awareness, and that the lack of eco-somatic awareness seems to be peculiarly a feature of western modernity. This is, I think, already implied, but the paper could be enhanced by noting it just a little.

Second, the writer correctly names one negative environmental impact of the Coronavirus as increased plastic waste, but could also acknowledge some of the ecologically positive aspects of the pandemic. As people traveled less, carbon emissions reduced. And through the experience of lock-down, it became evident that what was previously seen as the 'normal' way of living (with high levels of production and consumption) was not the only way, that living differently could be endured, and that alternative human futures may be possible.

The great strength of the article is its practical and tangible focus: the value of recognizing and experiencing ecological grief; the focus on awakening the body's memory through somatic sensing, which connects people with their present place and time; engaging with parts of nature (stones, trees, etc.) in order to become more connected to the world; recollecting being in nature in childhood; and learning to 'conspire' with plants. The somatic exercises are described in clear language, are detailed, and are easy to follow.

I appreciate the opportunity to read and review this article, and I acknowledge the good contribution it makes.

