Micro-practices for a New Gentleness

A prototype for a new Instrument by Performative Diagrammatics Lab

Premises what this score is based on	**Rules** directions for players	**Techniques** ways to play this score
1. This is an event *Gesture:* *Snow Angel*	**2.** Commit to participating *Gesture:* *Loose, crossed knees*	**3.** Resolving to be alert and active *Gesture:* Forward bend
4. The setting is meaningful *Gesture:* *Arms forward*	**5.** Use space and time deliberately *Gesture:* Lower arms palm down	**6.** Positioning things and people *Gesture:* Planting motion
7. At the center is a proposition *Gesture:* *Mountain*	**8.** Take the proposition at face value *Gesture:* Broad stance	**9.** Examining the proposition *Gesture:* Arm up arm down
10. All bring own ways of knowing and doing *Gesture:* Hip leads	**11.** Remember that inputs reflect ways of knowing and doing *Gesture:* Hands on hips	**12.** Contributing mindfully and listening generously *Gesture:* Turn back
13. Relationships are at play *Gesture:* *Line dancing*	**14.** Navigate relationships *Gesture:* Shoulder leads	**15.** Giving, taking and holding space *Gesture:* Legs wide
16. Done well, this benefits all *Gesture:* *Tumble*	**17.** Permit emergence *Gesture:* Looking up	**18.** Taking note of anything fresh *Gesture:* Hand on center

Loose crossed knees

Lower arms palms down

Broad stance

Hands on hips

Shoulder leads

Looking up

(2)

(5)

(8)

(11)

(14)

(17)

Snow angel

(1)
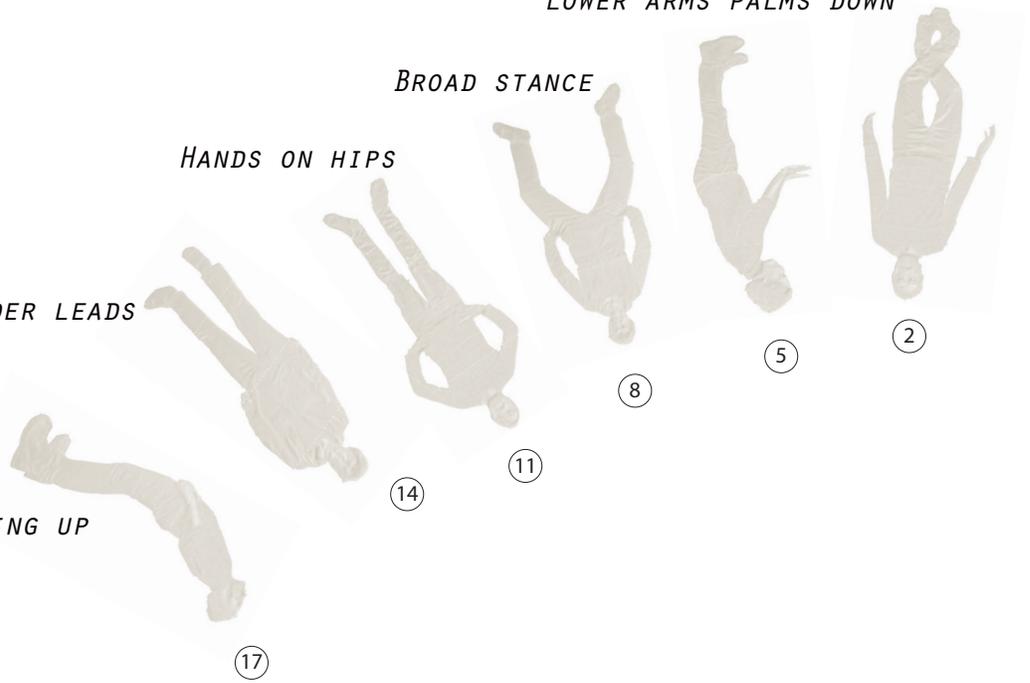
Arms forward
palms up

(4)

(7)

(10)

(13)

Mountain

Hip leads
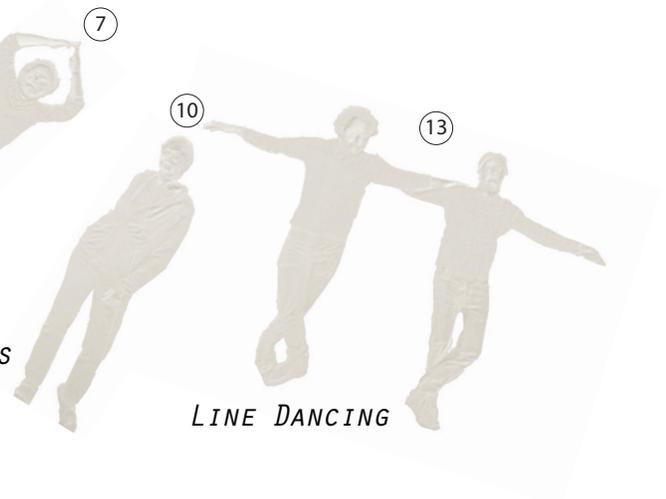
Line Dancing

Hand on center

Legs wide

(18)

(15)

Turn back

(12)
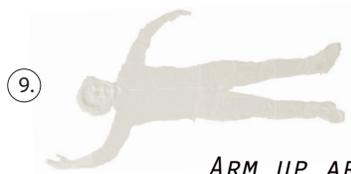
(9.)

Arm up arm down
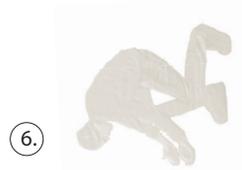
(6.)

Planting motion

(3)

Forward bend

(16)

Tumble

THE BRAID

A METAMODELING ADVENTURE

THE THREE ECOLOGIES
1989
FÉLIX GUATTARI

Adelheid Mers V.4, 2019
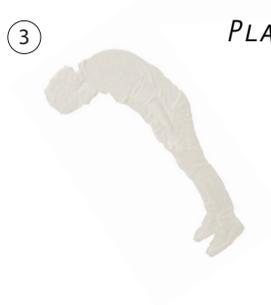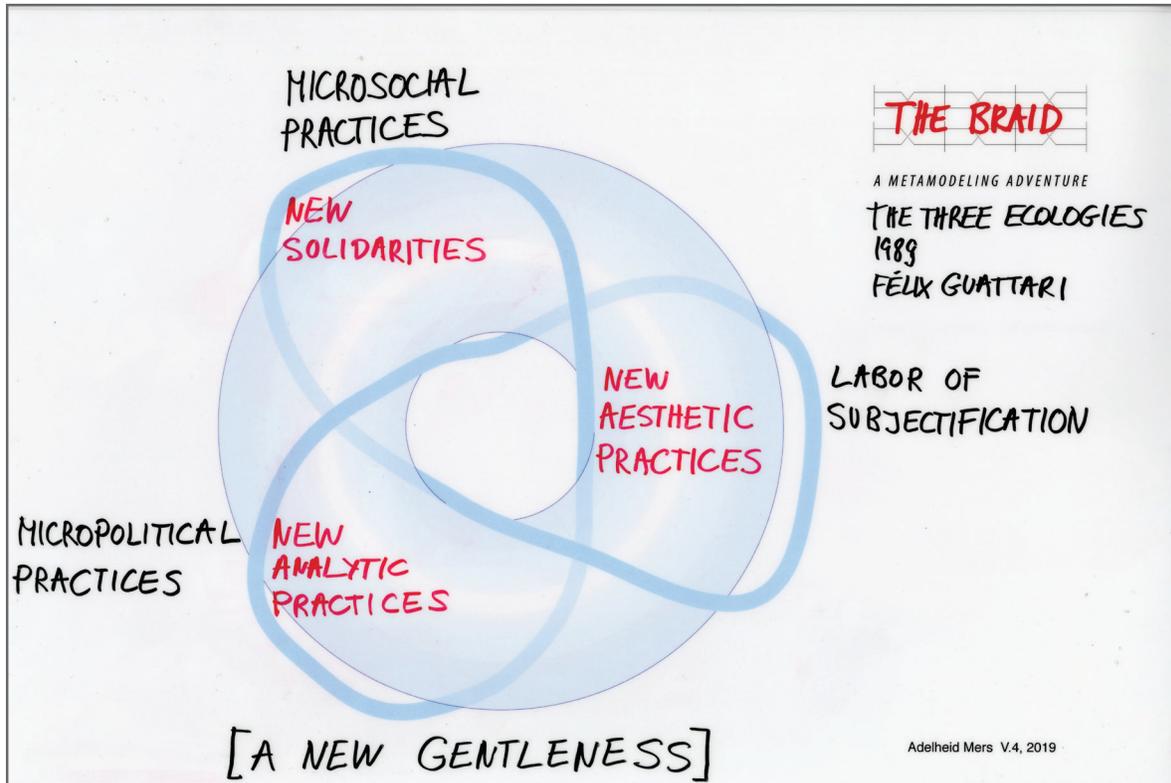
Micro-practices for a New Gentleness

With this project, we want to build an instrument for good conversation. It currently is a prototype, and it may stay like this permanently to work well. We do not yet know how to use it, but make a suggestion on a later page. We are inviting you to join the laboratory.

We think about the project as revolving around small group conversations that are co-facilitated by a group of users, with the help of a score, through a set of art objects. The name, Micro-practices for a New Gentleness, was inspired by diagram artist and philosopher Félix Guattari, who in *The Three Ecologies* asks to "organize new micropolitical and microsocial practices, new solidarities, a new gentleness, together with new aesthetic and new analytic practices."

Gentleness in conversation can refer to self-regard (or as Guattari might say, auto-management) and openness for other perspectives. Both are often hard to maintain. In a text titled *This is Play*, musician Stephen Nachmanovich wrote "levels of communication connect over, under, around, and through each other. It may be more accurate to say pretzels rather than levels." With this project, we are developing an art-based instrument that can help to unravel what happens in a 'good' conversation. The instrument is art-based in three ways. First, we are drawing on good conversations artists conduct all the time when speaking with each other about their work. Second, we create art objects to facilitate good conversations. Third, these conversations will be playful and performative, artistic moments themselves.

Since September 2019, when this project began to take shape, a group of artists met weekly. We started from the premise that artists have specific and generous ways to give each other feedback. We asked: What if artists had communication techniques that could be useful to others? By staging and analyzing such conversations, we found that for exchanges we find valuable, three nested categories can be identified: 1) beliefs, or premises are stated, 2) rules that are known to participants allow beliefs to be enacted, and 3) techniques participants know implement the rules. We have developed a set of statements across these groups, some of which have become the score of 18 sentences, listed in a matrix. The score is part of the instrument.

We develop facilitation instruments because we believe that it is important to access propositional and embodied knowledge. These ways of knowing are not separate from each other. To embody these statements in an instrument, we are drawing on two previous Performative Diagrammatics Lab pieces. For the overall design of the kit, we reference *The Braid Template*. Just as described by Nachmanovich above, it looks somewhat like a pretzel. We use this shape, called a Trefoil knot, as a string to which objects are attached. For *Micro-practices for a New Gentleness,* we physically performed each phrase, developing a full-body gesture to represent it. Our gestures are now attached to the string. These gestures begin the facilitation.

We plan to bring the kit to different places, to see if and how it can be made useful and enjoyable.

Adelheid Mers, Chicago, January 2020

FROM OUR NOTES

Draft uploaded January 1, 2020 by Christine

The toolkit provides a series of entry points for working and playing within a live-conversation context. These entry points are connected to physical gestures as a way to embody the prompts.

Listed here is one way to engage with the toolkit, and may be a logical place to start as you become familiar with the entry point statements and gestures, but the intention is that this structure is quite flexible and can be altered by the participants during each event.

Preparation:
1. Moving sequentially through the figures one by one, allow each member of the group to find a way to embody the gesture illustrated. Mentally and physically connect the gesture to its entrypoint phrase.

2. Discuss opportunities for flexibility in interpretation – what is discovered by each individual participant in their exploration of the gesture?

The Event Begins:
#1 – This is an event.
All members of the group perform the gesture for #1.

#2 – Commit to participating.
All members of the group perform the gesture for #2.

#3 – Resolving to be alert and active.
All members of the group perform the gesture for #3

#7 - At the center is a proposition.
One member of the group performs the gesture for #7 and proposes a focal point for the critique/conversation.

#8 – Take the proposition at face value.
All other members of the group perform the gesture for #8.

#4 – The environment created for the discussion affects how participants play the game.
All members of the group perform the gesture for #4.

#5 – Use time and space deliberately.
All members of the group perform the gesture for #5.
All members discuss and agree on the total amount of time to spend on the conversation. Someone agrees to be the timekeeper.

#6 – Positioning things and people.
All members of the group perform the gesture for #6, and then work collaboratively to set up the space, perhaps guided by the member who initiated the proposition in #7.

At this point we open up the conversation and allow any member of the group to perform any gesture at will. After performing a gesture, the member can choose to act on that gesture by any impulse it inspires (i.e. speaking, listening, moving, asking others to do any of the above)

At the end of the agreed upon time, the conversation ends. All members perform a gesture together, perhaps #1.

After the closing of the event, there is time for conversation about the instrument and its use. Participants are asked for specific feedback and reflections.