



A T E  
d e c k

by Irina Baldini

## Invisible introduction:

This introduction is invisible because it does not want the reader to substitute an experience with the wordy description of it. A guidebook should be "read after dark" (Robert Harbison, *Eccentric Spaces*), not to prevent the reader from radically separating the looking from the reading. This one gives a variety of information which the reader can take the time to absorb in preparation to an engagement with the practice.

This booklet is part of a tangible portfolio related to the ATE fluid-methodology (a practice of doubt and confusion through choreographic improvisation).

It is composed by a set of tools which can be combined into more or less complex frameworks. These are designed to be used to improvise or to compose movement, but not intended to be limited to this medium. The deck allows to undo thinking or moving patterns, but foremost it is an aid to fluidify situations that may have become stagnant, and to give permission to the discomfort that may arise from the practice to be integrated and made a part of the work process and outcome.

The methodology is based on a dialogue between movement and thought. The frameworks provided by the ATE are never fixed or absolute. They evolve and adapt to each person's artistic self-learning.



## Introduction

AN ATE (ACCOUNTABLE TEMPORARY EXPEDIENT) IS A TASK THAT IS DESIGNED TO RESPOND TO A CHOREOGRAPHIC SITUATION.

IT IS TEMPORARILY VALID AND DOES NOT APPLY TO ALL CIRCUMSTANCES.

ACCOUNTABLE MEANS CONSIDERATE OF THE CONSEQUENCES IT WILL HAVE ON THE CIRCUMSTANCE.

TEMPORARY STANDS FOR NOT APPLICABLE TO ALL CIRCUMSTANCES AT ALL TIMES (DISPOSABLE OR CASE SENSITIVE, EPHEMERAL).

EXPEDIENT IMPLIES THAT IT IS PRACTICALLY USEFUL IN A SITUATION OF ACTION.

The ATE deck is made of **43 picture cards**, an 8-face die and this booklet with guidelines on how to use and read the cards.

It is a tool for training, creating and (artistic) self-learning.

The ATE cards are made to:

- practice the ATE fluid-methodology,
- set a structure for a choreographic improvisation,
- or find a focus for the day, whichever practice or medium you may be focusing on.

They are divided in three decks:

**22** ATE cards, representing tasks constituting the methodology as of today

**15** Notion or Theme cards

**6** Trigger cards

**8** Numbers on a die, to *distort* the tasks

NB: the deck provides white cards for you to add to the deck, should you need different or further stimuli. In this way you will enrich and contribute to the porosity of the fluid-methodology.

## HOW DOES THE DECK WORK?

You can pick a single card from the black, the red or the white deck. You can also follow a suggested spread guideline, or you can make up your own, to suite your quest. Spreads in this booklet are indications for reading and activating the ATE.

Of course, there are more ways to use these cards that suggested, and the fluid-methodology allows for as many interpretation and contamination as there are users.

The cards can help challenge you and reveal different ways in which to approach a situation that may have become stagnant.

All you need is the willingness to develop an openness towards the unfamiliar.

Learning the ATE is a self-paced process that begins with the basics and then moves gradually into more detailed aspects of the practice.

The examples in the booklet are geared toward experienced dancers as well as people who come from different backgrounds and are curious to find new trajectories through the ATE fluid-methodology.

## THE BOOKLET:

In the **first** part of the booklet there are some warm-up exercises based on the knowledge of human anatomy, and that of principles deriving from Laban Movement Analysis (LMA) and Choreology.

The **second** part contains information about each of the ATE task-cards, the black deck. You can refer to this section as you go through the spreads and later as you continue your practice.

These are the main features of the deck.

The **third** part describes the notions or themes (red deck), the triggers (white deck) and the use of the die.

The very last section gives an example of how to lay the cards and interpret a spread.

## HISTORY OF THE ATE DECK:

My experience with the cards is in using these for myself, with my collaborators, and with friends (not necessarily familiar with movement practices).

The cards are not difficult to read, but there is always more to them that can be learned if you allow for your own interpretation to mess around with the initial suggestions.

### What is needed?

The only real requirement are the cards. If you don't have a deck, you can go visit [www.irinaosterberg.com](http://www.irinaosterberg.com) and go on PROJECT PORTFOLIO, where you can click on the cards and pick a few for your chosen spread.

There are many choices. This booklet is illustrated with images taken from the practice, depicting two of the dancers who are familiar with the ATE performing the tasks. The ATE cards also have the name of the task, notion or

trigger word on them, so you can find their description in the booklet following respectively the BLACK, RED or WHITE sections.

## BOOKLET CONTENT:

- **First Part**

- 1 - Introduction to anatomy
- 2 - Introduction to LMA
- 3 - Warm-up practices

- **Second Part**

- 4 - ATE task-cards: black deck

- **Third Part**

- 5 - The NOTIONS / THEMES: red deck
- 6 - The TRIGGERS: white deck
- 7 - The DISTORTION: 8-face die

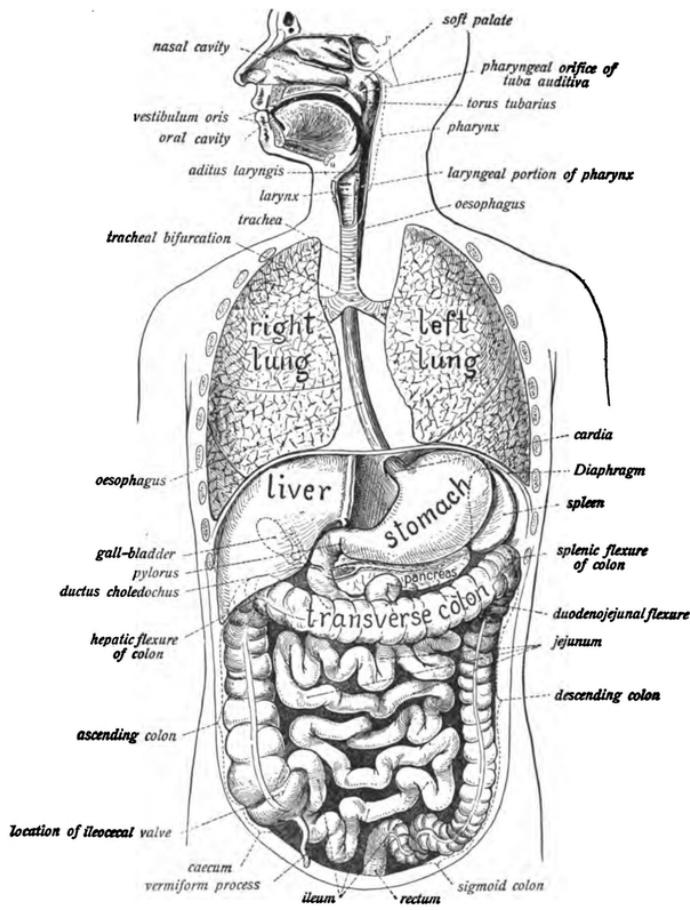
- **The Readings**

- 8 - Interpreting a Single Card
- 9 - A daily focus
- 10 - A practice
- 11 - A composition



## First Part

### 1. INTRODUCTION TO ANATOMY



To interpret the ATE tasks-cards it is helpful to be familiar with the anatomy of the human body. Keep an image of the organs of the body at hand to help you. It will be useful as a reference to the warm-up exercises found later in this booklet.

## 2. INTRODUCTION TO LMA

Laban Movement Analysis is a theoretical and experiential system for observing, describing and interpreting human movement.

At the heart of LMA is a recognition that movement is a psycho-physical process, an outward expression of inner intent. — (Ed Groff, Laban Movement Analysis: Charting the Ineffable Domain of Human Movement, JOPERD, February 1995.)

Laban Movement Analysis was developed by Rudolf Laban (1879-1958). Laban was a scientist, teacher, artist, social activist, visionary, and a creator.

Major Categories in LMA are: **Body, Rhythm, Shape, Space, Effort.** Broadly, they can be described as follows:

*Body* (also referred to as *Action*) is concerned with transferring weight, jumping, turning etc.

*Shape* refers to form and forming. Shape is the bridge between Body and Space.

*Body* deals with what is fundamental in human movement: 1. Change 2. Relationship 3. Patterns.

*Rhythm* is classified in the categories of *impulse, impact, swing, rebound* and *continuous*.

*Space* is the tracing of forms, moving through level zones, in personal space (kinesphere), interpersonal space and general space, across vertical, horizontal and sagittal planes.

*Effort* can be described as the dynamics, qualitative use of energy, texture, color, emotions, inner attitude, etc. There is an ongoing (Flow) sense of self (Weight) in relation to the environment (Space) over time (Time). Effort is divided in: *Light / heavy; bound / free; flexible / direct; sudden / sustained*. Each of these, embodies different qualities and tones of the body.

Konie, R. 2011. *CLMA*. [online] Available at <[www.movementhasmeaning.com](http://www.movementhasmeaning.com)>

### 3. WARM-UP PRACTICES

#### Body scan: organs

Lie on the ground, eyes closed. Notice your breathing and scan through the parts of your body that are in contact with the floor.

Place both of your hands on the belly and bring attention to its rise and fall with each in and out breath. In your mind's eyes, begin a slow journey of visualization of the organs of your torso: genitals, bladder, kidneys, liver, spleen, pancreas, stomach, esophagus, heart, lungs, trachea. Stay with each one as long as needed to register where they are in the body, and what qualities (texture and weight) they might suggest.

#### Hands on work: organs

If you are working with someone, take the opportunity to help each other find these organs. Have your partner's hand call for attention in different areas. They will move the palms of their hands to different places on your torso and you will follow their touch with your attention. Take as long as you need to walk through as many organs as you like.

### Hands on work: bones and tissues

If you are working in partners, have one person lie down, eyes closed. The other/s place the palms of their hand on different areas of the body. These can be large areas (a thigh for example), or very small ones (an ear lobe); the touch can be long or very short in time. It can be light or with an application of slight pressure. The person laying will notice how their attention shifts as the hands of their partners move on the surface of their body.

### Between Naming and Knowing

Stand still for a few moments and look around. Wait until you notice something and pay attention to whether noticing for you meant naming it or registering it as something you recognized was enough. Change location in the space and do it again. Change location, level (go to the floor for example), or speed at which you move, as soon as you register what you notice.

### Breath

Breathe in and out a couple times. Then hold and in or an outbreath as long as you can. And

release this. Alternate the following: breathe and move, breathe and don't move, don't breathe and don't move, don't breathe and move.

### Efforts

Visit all the effort as described in LMA effort graph. Later, try to contrast the tendencies of each effort (light going up, heavy going down for example) and attempt at challenging yourself to go the opposite way. As you discover more possibilities, you will then be able to choose from different nuances between the opposites.



## Second Part

### 4. ~~ATE~~ TASK-CARDS

#### BLACK DECK

What follows are 22 task-cards. Read the description as a reference point, but do not try to do the tasks 'right'. Take the liberty to contradict a suggestion or modify it. Ask yourself the question: *what does the task to do me, and what do I do about it?*

## **Balancing the boat:**

Observe the space, movement, rhythms, objects or people around you. Try to create a 'balance' between the elements you decide to focus on, bringing in your presence or taking it away from the space. What 'balance' means is at your own discretion. Feel free to change the speed at which you move, the areas in space that you inhabit, the levels and directions of your action. Run away, burst into action, disturb something already taking place...

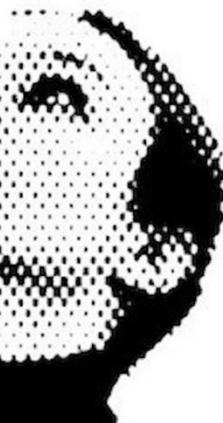


## **Beginnings**

Start a movement and interrupt it as soon as you think you know where it is headed. You might know this when you can name it, when you register it or simply you can predict where it will go next. Start anew, either with the same movement somewhere else in space, or with a different movement. Interrupt as before, never to complete the action.

## **Big things**

Think about the size of the actions you are doing. Can you take these to the extreme? How big can a movement become, and what happens to it when it stretched beyond what you can conceive?



## **Contents**

Choose an organ from your torso. Take a moment to establish where it is positioned, what other tissues it may be in contact with and notice or imagine its quality of texture or weight. Imagine being able to move it to a different location in within the body. Take it back to its original position. Choose another organ and do the same. Continue.

## Contradictions

Choose two organs of the torso. Associate to each, two opposite effort qualities among *light / heavy, sudden / sustained, flexible / direct, free / bound*. Attempt at embodying simultaneously both contradictory efforts at once. What kind of movement emerges, and moreover, what kind of state of mind does this tension between opposites produce?



## **Contradictory beginnings**

Initiate movements from two chosen body parts or areas of the body (these can be small areas: a nostril or the chin; or larger ones: the ribcage or the pelvis). Associate to each of the chosen areas, oppositional effort qualities (nostril = free; pelvis = bound) and try to commit to both at the same time. Is it possible to attend at both areas at once? What kind of feeling or emotion can emerge from attempting at accomplishing both?

## **Efforts**

Switch from an effort quality to another, every time you think you have accomplished its embodiment. Cover all the effort of the LMA graph: *Light / heavy; bound / free; flexible / direct; sudden / sustained.*

## **Eye task**

Alternate between moving your eyes and head, and not the body; moving your body but keeping eyes and head fixed; moving everything; stay still.



## **Ghost tasks**

Breathe in through one chosen organ, and out through a different one. Allow for the breath to expand and enlarge the organ, and to shrink and deflate the other. Each time breath exists, imagine it produces an intangible, yet visible trace in the air, which will be the ghost of your body. Consider this an extension of it, another limb that moves in space and interacts with it. It could be light, it could be made of a material you imagine, it could be ephemeral or last a longer time. Keep letting air in and out through different organs.

## **Habit**

Observe your movements, in anything you do. Try to change one thing about them: the location on your fingertips with which you type; the pressure with which you hold a cup; the way you press your foot on the ground on each step. Try this with every movement you make, assess, change, reassess.

## **Magnet**

Imagine placing on two areas of the body, two very strong magnets, reversed in the way that they repel each other. Attempt at simultaneously drawing the two parts together, knowing that they are bound to slip away from each other. You might get stuck, try for longer.

## **Meridians**

Imagine lines running all along your body, from head to toes, from fingertip across to fingertip. Multiple lines, describing the perimeter of the body. Try to use these lines to create trajectories in space, pasting the meridians of your body into the air in straight and curved lines. Can you leave a trace behind you, can you get rid of the first meridians and generate new ones as you paste the previous into space?

## **Migrating organs**

Choose an organ from your torso. Take a moment to establish where it is positioned, what other tissues it may be in contact with and notice or imagine its quality of texture or weight. Imagine being able to move it to a different location in within the body. Choose another organ and do the same. Imagine attempting to swap the places of these two organs between themselves. Do they leave a void behind as they move out? Does the hollow space get filled with liquid? Is the guest-organ welcome or uncomfortable?



## **Organs and body-parts**

Choose an organ of your torso, and another part of your body (this can be an entire area, or a segment such as a bone, a specific muscle, a piece of skin). Create a relationship between them by which they are either attracted to each other or repelled. How does this relation, and the tension between the two parts that this creates, change the tone of the entire body? How extremely close or extremely far can they get from one another? Notice in which ways you need to organize the rest of your body to facilitate this mission.





## **Shadow Task**

Imagine to be shining a light onto your organs. Pass it closely along their surface, creating a small pin light, and move further with it to illuminate more of the surfaces. Does this light create a shadow on the other side of the organs? Does this light spill though the fibers and light up the insides of it? Use the distance of the light and the direction it is pointed at, to generate shadows that are close and attached to the organ and expanded enough to spill out of the perimeter of the skin. Move your body to reveal or hide different areas to the light.



## Shelves

Imagine shelves, suspended all around you as you move across space. Each of them presents itself just at the right time to take the weight of a part of your body. Rest your jaw on a shelf at the height of your knees, rest the inside of your thigh on a shelf at the height of your hips. Find these supports, at times one at the time, at times five at the same time, coming from different directions. Notice how the body organizes itself to find rest in different positions.

## **Small and large bits**

Take your bits around for a stroll. Give permission to the small bits, such as the space between your fingers, the belly button, the pit of your neck to initiate a movement. Give permission to the large bits, such as an entire leg, the full torso or your back to follow, at the same time. Notice how small bits have the power to move the large ones.

## **Telling seen or imagined**

Tell what you just saw or imagined a moment ago. This might be reminiscent of a previous task, or of you coming back from another room or another activity. Try to share the task between telling it with your voice, and with your movement. Negotiate when is the voice being interrupted by movement to take over and vice versa.

## **Telling sensed or felt**

Tell what you are feeling or sensing right in the moment. Try to share the task between telling it with your voice, and with your movement. Negotiate when is the voice being interrupted by movement to take over and vice versa.

## **Telling thought**

Tell what you are thinking right in the moment.  
Try to share the task between telling it with your  
voice, and with your movement. Negotiate  
when is the voice being interrupted by  
movement to take over and vice versa.



## **Towards and away from the touch**

Imagine (or remember, if you have done the hands-on warmup) being touched. Identify with clarity the areas of touch and move in the direction of it. Choose whether to move towards it, or away from it. Choose at which speed to do so, how suddenly or continuously, with which effort, if freely or with resistance. Try to find out if you have tendencies to repeat certain areas, and if you do, try to change something about how you respond to the image or memory of touch.



## **Ways to begin**

Find ways to begin an action. It might be any pedestrian move to begin with. Try to begin the same action by altering something each time. Change the speed, the level, the effort, the body part initiating it, the direction in space. Change action when you decide you have exhausted possibilities.



## Third Part

### 5. NOTIONS OR THEMES

#### RED DECK

What follows are 15 notions or themes emerged from the practice of the ATE. Read the description as a reference, but do not feel too attached to the meaning given in this booklet. Ask yourself: *What do I mean by this notion?* *What can I make it mean?*

## **ALTERNATIVES**

Relating to activities that depart from or challenge traditional norms. ('alternating, alternate'): from French *alternatif*, -ive or medieval Latin *alternativus*, from Latin *alternare* 'interchange'. *Alternate*: from Latin *alternat-* 'done by turns', from *alternare*, from *alternus* 'every other', from *alter* 'other'.

## **ATTENTION**

Notice of someone or something. Late Middle English: from Latin *attentio(n-)*, from the verb *attendere*. *Attend*: Middle English (in the sense 'apply one's mind or energies to'): from Old French *atendre*, from Latin *attendere*, from *ad-* 'to' + *tendere* 'stretch'.

## **CONFLICT**

late Middle English: from Latin *conflict-* 'struck together, fought', from the verb *configere*, from *con-* 'together' + *fligere* 'to strike'; the noun is via Latin *conflictus* 'a contest'. A state of mind in which a person experiences a clash of opposing feelings or needs.

## **CONFUSION**

Uncertainty about what is happening, intended, or required. Middle English: from Latin *confusio(n-)*, from the verb *confundere* 'mingle together'. *Confuse*: Middle English (in the sense 'rout, bring to ruin'): from Old French *confus*, from Latin *confusus*, past participle of *confundere* 'mingle together'.

## **DECISION**

Late Middle English: from Latin *decisio(n)*, from *decidere* 'determine'. *Decide*: late Middle English (in the sense 'bring to a settlement'): from French *décider*, from Latin *decidere* 'determine', from *de-* 'off' + *caedere* 'cut'.

## **DOUBT**

Lack of conviction. Middle English: from Old French *doute* (noun), *douter* (verb), from Latin *dubitare* 'hesitate', from *dubius* 'doubtful'. *Dubium*: mid 16th century. *Dubious*: from

Latin *dubiosus*, from *dubium* 'a doubt', neuter of *dubius* 'doubtful'.

## **FLUIDIFYING**

Making not settled or stable; able to change.  
Late Middle English (as an adjective): from French *fluide* or Latin *fluidus*, from *fluere* 'to flow'.

## **IMAGINATION**

The faculty or action of forming new ideas, or images or concepts of external objects, not present to the senses. Middle English: via Old French from Latin *imaginatio(n-)*, from the verb *imaginari* 'picture to oneself', from *imago*, *imagin-* 'image'.

## **INTERFERENCE**

Late Middle English: from Old French *s'entreferir* 'strike each other', from *entre-* 'between' + *ferir* (from Latin *ferire* 'to strike'). To intervene in a situation without invitation or necessity.

## **MULTIPLICITY**

Late Middle English: from late Latin *multiplicitas*, from Latin *multiplex*. Involving or consisting of many elements in a complex relationship.

## **OBSTACLE**

Middle English: via Old French from Latin *obstaculum*, from *obstare* 'impede', from *ob-* 'against' + *stare* 'stand'.

## **TEMPORARINESS**

Not permanent. mid 16th century: from Latin *temporarius*, from *tempus*, *tempor-* 'time'.

## **TRAJECTORY**

Path of an object under the action of given force. Late 17th century: from modern Latin *trajectoria* (feminine), from Latin *traject-* 'thrown across', from the verb *traicere*, from *trans-* 'across' + *jacere* 'to throw'.

## **UNCERTAINTY**

Something that is uncertain or that causes one to feel uncertain. "of indeterminate time or occurrence," from *un-* "not" + *certain*. Meaning "not fully confident".

## **VOID**

Free from. Middle English ('unoccupied'): from a dialect variant of Old French *vuide* ; related to Latin *vacare* 'vacate'; the verb partly a shortening of avoid, reinforced by Old French *voide*.



## 6. TRIGGERS

### WHITE DECK

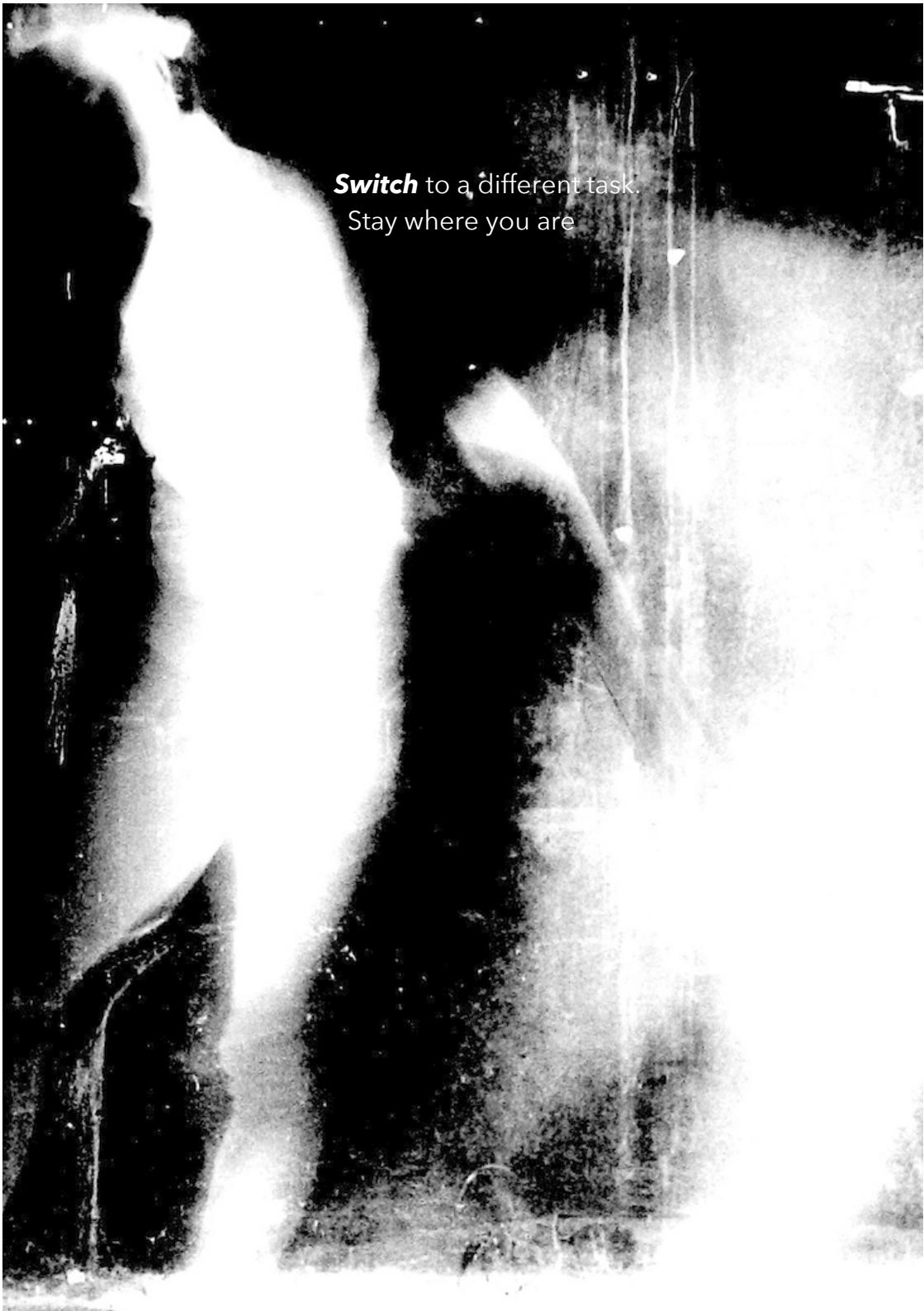
What follows are 5 words, used in the ATE fluid-methodology to further challenge responsiveness and fluidity. Ask yourself: *Do I need to call a trigger-word?* And if it is called by somebody else: *Do I want to obey the order, or do I contrast it, and in which way?*

**Drop** whatever you are doing.  
Wait until you find a reason to move.



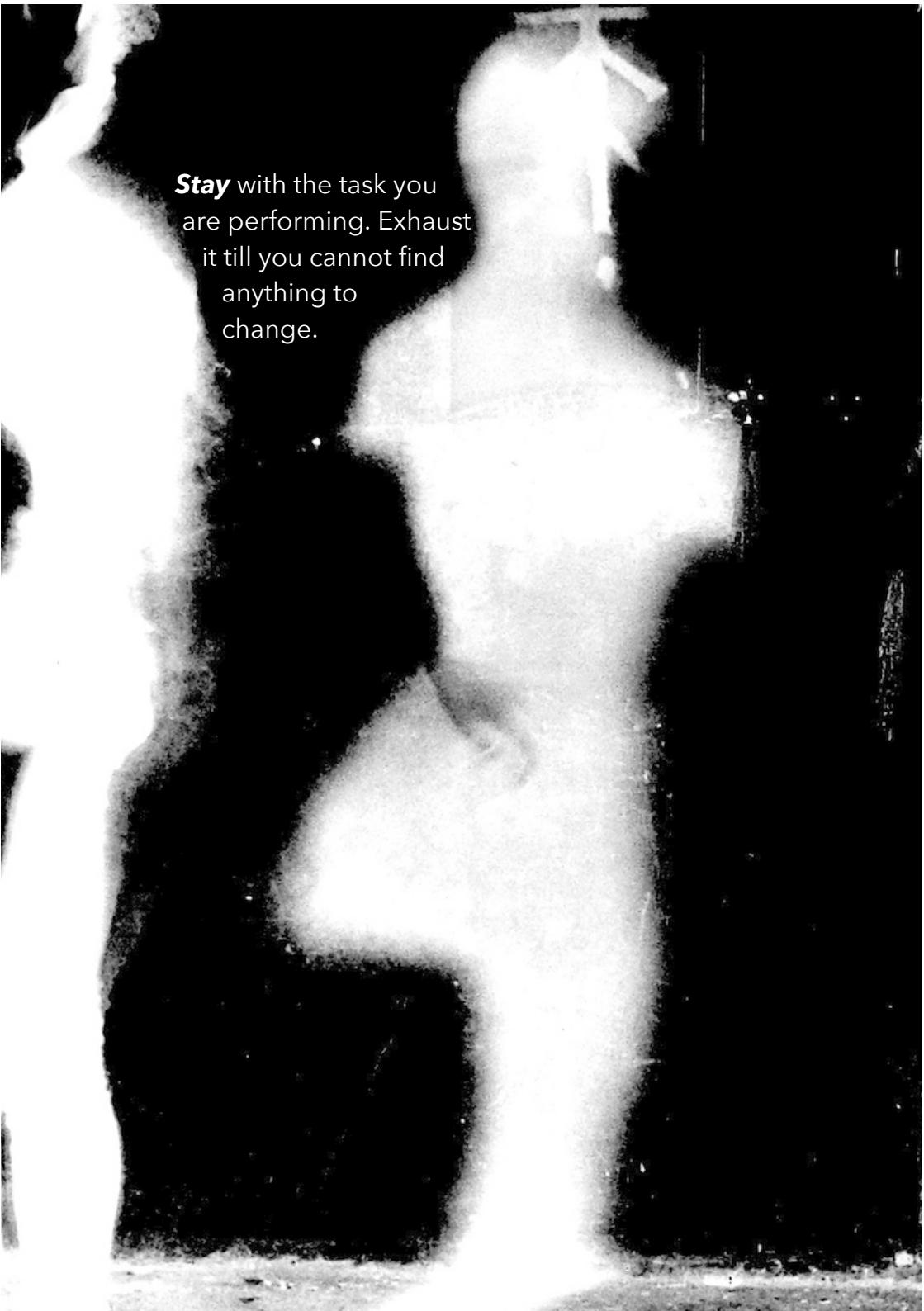
**Shift** to a different location in space. Continue  
on the same task.





**Switch** to a different task.

Stay where you are



**Stay** with the task you  
are performing. Exhaust  
it till you cannot find  
anything to  
change.

**Change** something or everything about what you are doing: the location, the action, the rhythms, the shapes, the efforts or all at once. This is the 'jolly' card in the deck. Use it as you please.

NB: there are 2 *change* cards in the deck.



## 7. DISTORTION

### 8-faced die

What follows are 8 distortion possibilities. These can be used to complicate a task further, in addition to the ATE task-cards, the notions or the trigger words. Throw a die to pick a distortion and ask yourself: *How can I do the same task, bringing to the foreground my attention to the element of distortion?*

## **1. Breath**

Use your breath to affect the task. Hold it, flush air out forcefully, combine it with movement or limit the movement to only the moments of holding the breath.

## **2. Size**

Remain loyal to the task, bringing your attention to the size of each movement. How large is unconceivably large and how small can unconceivably small be?

## **3. Speed**

Pay attention to the rhythm of your movements. Try to change the speed at which you are moving, and the rhythm (impulse, impact, swing, rebound or continuous) which characterizes each action.

## **4. Effort**

While performing a particular task, bring your focus to the efforts: *can you fluidly change the quality of your movements, from light to flexible to sustained or sudden, without changing the action?*

## **5. Level**

Remind yourself about the in-between levels. Besides high, middle and low level, there is a range. Change level of what you are doing. This might mean just two centimeters below or above.

## **6. Body part**

Change the body part which is initiating the movement you are engaged with. Keep the action and do it with a different part of the body.

## **7. Noticing-Naming**

Pay attention to what you are doing or thinking about and change something about it as soon as you can give it a name, or you feel you know what it is.

## **8. Gaze**

Use your eyes as an anchor in space. Fix them on something or someone and move your body without ever losing sight of this point.

## THE READINGS

## 8. Interpreting a Single Card

Each card from the black deck has a small citation. This is either from a known author, or my own (if there is no reference listed).

Feel free to associate the citation to the description of the card found in this booklet.

There is no correct interpretation, only the one that works for you.

It is an invitation to make room for feeling and intuition to play a role in the game.

## 9. A daily focus

You can pick a card from any of the decks and use it to set a focus for the day, or for the practice you are about to embark.

In case of the notions, this might be the theme of an exploration. You might want to support the exploration with an additional card, to create a dialogue or tension between two things that may not be directly or evidently related.

## 10. A practice

To use the card for a practice of improvisation or instant composition:

Choose minimum 3 cards from the black deck.  
Choose minimum 1 card from the red deck.  
Choose minimum 2 cards from the white deck.

Begin with a warm-up (as found in the First Part of this booklet). As you have prepared your body-mind to interact with the elements of any of the tasks in the ATE fluid-methodology, move onto the first task. Familiarize with it at first: read the description and see what you resonate with. You might want to pick an aspect, or the full description of the card. Do the same with each card from the black deck. Then look at the notion card and memorize the two trigger words you chose. Go on to jam with the tasks, the notion in the back of your mind, and use the triggers to get you unstuck if you have lost focus or interest in the tasks.

You can decide to add a distortion if you are up for further complications of the practice.

## 11. A composition

To compose with the ATE deck, you can create a spread of cards, a constellation that will help you find references in the choreographic process.

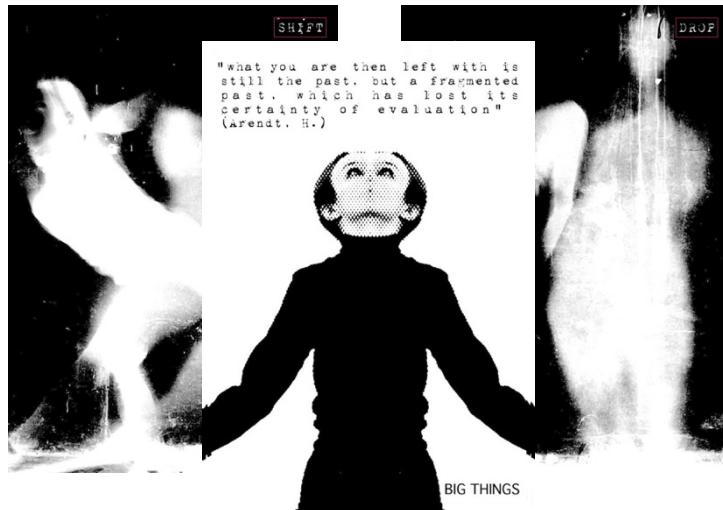
The position of the cards might indicate the location in space where the action happens or begins.

The relation of different cards may indicate how fast or slow a transition to the next task might occur.

The way in which cards overlap may create layers of complexity (multiple things happening at one time) or if you are working with more than one person, it may suggest that different performers are interacting in the same physical space but engaging in different tasks.

Of course there are more ways of structuring a composition based on the spread of the cards. The following is just a suggestion.

Enjoy the ride!



"what you are then left with is still the past, but a fragmented past, which has lost its certainty of evaluation" (Arendt, H.)

BIG THINGS



"Resistance is an imminent moment of potentiality" (Deleuze, G.).



DECISION

