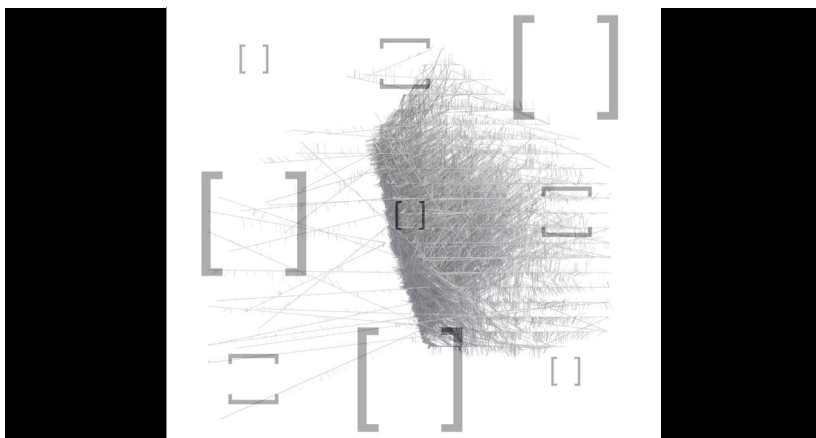


The *functional integration* between *parts* and *whole*—as a model of the body and its organs—was a metaphor used for [social organisation](#) from the beginning of the 20th century till after the 2nd World War. It hallmarked the [cast-system](#) in India. It was also core to [corporatism](#) in fascist ideologies.

Eventually—in the last part of the 20th century—the body (particularly the brain) was conceived as much more fluid, lending itself to varieties of functional integration. This is how brains and bodies could develop *many* repertoires: that is, multiple alternative ways of organising (or, *working*).

In sum, both bodies and organisations were conceived more as [disordered systems](#): ones with a capacity to *rearrange*. Here the relation between parts and whole is more *fluid*. In this line of thinking/extending—or, *designing*—work can be *freed* of alienating impacts of economics and/ organisations.



This concluding flyer is devoted to *mereology*: more specifically to the *place* of theory in *modelling* the relationship between *part* and *whole* of practical knowledge. The spectrum of practical knowledge ranges from *crafts* at the one end and *fieldwork* at the other: with *performing knowledge* in between.

Which means that it is ‘performing knowledge’—whether in the *crafts mode* or the *field mode*—which is our concern *here*. The role of theory is *neither* to provide a set of *premises* (or, a foundation) to be applied; *nor* is it to have ‘the last word’ in *concluding*. It is to operate *in medias res*: in the middle.

So, how can we think and extend this idea of theory, operating *from the middle of things*? An experimental attempt at this was done in the flyer-series **the 6th wall #01-06** developed in the *midst* of, and *alongside*, the ARW-21 (Artistic Research Week at KHiO). It is published on KHiODA.

The experimental model for this attempt was sampled from Maria Puig de la Bella Casa’s feminist theory (2017) *Matters of care—Speculative ethics in more than human worlds*. It features 3 modes of thinking relating to science, technology and art: **(1)** thinking *with*; **(2)** dissenting within; **(3)** thinking *for*.

It branches off the largely disseminated idea in AR of doing research *with*, *through* and *for* the arts. So, the word ‘for’ does *not* mean ‘instead of’ but *contributing adequately/positively within the subject matter*. The middle term **(2)** is underscored to indicate that this where we *can* locate theory.

So, here the basic gesture of theory—which is to *take one step back*—does *not* occur at the beginning **(1)** *nor* at the end **(3)**, but in the *middle* **(2)**. Which means that theory is *looped in* (rather than underlying or above). So, when theory separates itself, claiming a place of its own, it still remains *local*.

This is how we may conceive the role of theory in making the part-whole relationship *operable*: if a *whole* accommodates *specialised parts*, then the whole is *more broadly* defined *than* the parts. Yet, to be operable, the *properties* of the parts must be preserved to *extend* within the whole.

Here, Felix Klein (whose notions Rosalind Krauss includes into her essay *Sculpture in the expanded field*) proposes that, in order to extend the properties of the parts into the whole, a *special entity* is needed. Which means that *without* this special entity the whole/part does *not* function.

The point being is that this ‘special entity’ is *theoretical*. What does that mean? Let us conceive—in the spirit of the present series—that what *defines* the ‘part/whole relation’ is that they (part and whole) *do not* work for the same thing. They *can* be functionally integrated, but *not* always.

It means that theory is an *active model* that can maintain the parts/whole relation functionally integrated, but can also break it apart when they need to be reconfigured. In fact, this occurs all the time and it is called *criticality*: the active model works to *hatch new repertoires*. For fun or at need.