

現代舞蹈與性別研究中的身體之 再思維

——「梅洛龐蒂宇宙」概念介紹

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摘 要

儘管「身體」目前是文化研究的一個熱門主題，舞蹈哲學仍舊方興未艾。舞蹈這種活生生的矛盾組合可提供給哲學家一個獨特的場合重新思維主體與對象之間、藝術家與作品之間、心靈與身體之間的諸種關係，並克服西方哲學的傳統二元論。實際上，由於對身體的理解仍舊模擬兩可，古典哲學似乎未能掌握到概念關鍵來理解舞蹈現象。從柏拉圖、笛卡爾到胡塞爾，人類主體性與人格同一性的界定是奠基於智性的與理性的特徵。舞蹈分析能夠有機會在人類學、美學、存有學層面上提出一種對身體新的概念化作用。首先，要分析的是，現代舞蹈的出現以及女性主義的興起彼此間歷史與結構的關聯。其次，舞蹈身體的構成有所理解，將發展出此理解的各種含意。最後，基於身體的重新界定而產生的舞蹈藝術實踐，也有其哲學後果可以被提出。

關鍵詞：舞蹈、性別研究、肉體化、身心關係、梅洛龐蒂宇宙

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Rethinking the Body with Reference to Modern Dance and Gender Studies : Introduction to the Concept of “Merleau-Pontian Universe” (MPU)

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Abstract

Though the Body is now a hot topic in cultural studies, philosophy of Dance is still in its infancy. However Dance, this living oxymoron, can provide to the philosopher a unique occasion to re-think the relationships between subject and object, artist and work, mind and body and overcome the traditional dualisms of Western Philosophy. Actually, because of its ambivalent understanding of the Body, classical philosophy seems unable to furnish the conceptual keys to understand the dancing phenomenon. From Plato to Husserl via Descartes, the definition of human subjectivity and personal identity has been based on intellectual and rational characteristics. Analyzing Dance gives the opportunity to elaborate a new conceptualization of the Body, in its anthropological, aesthetical and ontological dimensions. Firstly, the historical and structural links between the emergence of Modern Dance and the rise of Feminism will be analyzed. Then, the implications for the understanding of the constitution of dancing bodies will be developed. Finally the philosophical consequences of the dancing artistic practice on the redefinition of the Body will be addressed.

Keywords: dance, gender studies, embodiment, mind-body relation, Merleau-Pontian universe

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The sheer singularity of Dance

Art comes from the complex encounters between a force (desire, idea, intention, will, etc.) and a medium (stone, words, pigments, canvas, etc.). Art means more than imposing a form to a matter (classical Aristotelian hylomorphic conception);¹ it means expressing cosmic forces through a polarizing medium.² Great artists often have said that the medium has its own power,³ leading the artist in unpredictable directions.⁴ Thus the artist is not so much the rational genitor of a finite work than the empathic midwife assisting

¹ Henry W. Peacock, *Art as Expression* (Washington: Whalesback Books, 1995), 11: “Most people are attracted to representational drawing and painting because of their familiarity with form. It is a simple, conditioned response based on experience [...] Reality, however, varies among people according to their curiosity and perception. A creative person will look beneath the surface of form and beyond a factual summation of experience.”

² Gilles Deleuze, *Francis Bacon: The Logic of Sensation* (*Francis Bacon: Logique de la Sensation*), trans. Daniel W. Smith (London: Continuum Press, 2003), 40: “In art, and in painting as in music, it is not a matter of reproducing forms, but of capturing forces.”

³ Michel Tournier, *Le vent Paraclét* (Paris: Gallimard, 1977), 183-4: «au bout de peu de temps mon livre est doué d’un nombre plus grand de pièce, organes, éléments de transmission, réservoirs, soupapes et bielles que je n’en puis concevoir en même temps. Il échappe à ma maîtrise, et se prend à vivre d’une vie propre. J’en deviens alors le jardinier, le serviteur, pire encore le sous-produit, ce que l’œuvre fait sous elle en se faisant. Je vis dans la servitude d’un monstre naissant, croissant, multipliant, aux exigences péremptoires [...] Et quand elle me lâche, quand gorgée de ma substance, elle commence à rouler de par le monde, je gis exsangue, vidé, éccœuré, épuisé, hanté par des idées de mort.»

⁴ David Sylvester, *Interviews with Francis Bacon* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1975), 11: “It [Painting, 1946] came to me as an accident. I was attempting to make a bird alighting on a field. And it may have been bound up in some way with the three forms that had gone before, but suddenly the line that I had drawn suggested something totally different and out of this suggestion arose this picture. I had no intention to do this picture; I never thought of it in that way. It was like one continuous accident mounting on top of another.”

an ongoing process.⁵

In the classical understanding of Art, in order to have a complete mastering over the creative process in which he is involved, the artist seeks to stand apart from it. The materiality of the distinction between the artist and its work help to maintain such a distance: in pictorial art, the painting is not the painter; in literary art, the book is not the writer. *The sheer singularity of Dance among other Arts comes from the fact that the body is its specific medium.*⁶ In embodying such a medium as a condition of its artistic expression, the Art of Dance seems to intrinsically overrule the classical model of spatial and temporal dissociation between the artist and its work. Dancing bodies conflate, in one single space-and-time cluster, the constitution of Dance material condition (i.e. bodies themselves) and the presentation of Dance formal expression (i.e. the choreography). The action of the choreographer on the dancer likens to the operation of transubstantiation in the Christian liturgy: in the dance he designed through the medium of dancers' bodies, the choreographer is present everywhere as a whole though being nowhere as a part (the substance of the choreographer is present while the species of the dancer remain). Furthermore in Modern Dance, the material frontier between the artist and its work tends to be abolished: in the experience

⁵ Giacinto Scelsi, *Les Anges Sont Ailleurs...* (Arles: Actes Sud, 2006), 215: «L'étrange valeur qu'on attribue aux œuvres d'art, aux créations artistiques, provient justement du fait qu'elles sont la cristallisation visible et l'incarnation matérielle d'un processus de connaissance directe et unique des forces cosmiques créatrices. Mais il y a plus encore: si d'une part, l'artiste parvient à ce contact cognitif avec des forces créatrices, d'autre part, il y a aussi une activité de ces forces mêmes, qui agissent sur l'organisme humain et, particulièrement, sur celui de l'artiste.»

⁶ Ann Cooper Albright, *Choreographing Difference: The Body and Identity in Contemporary Dance* (Hanover: Wesleyan University Press, 1997), 3: "Unlike other cultural productions, dance relies on the physical body to enact its own representation."

of the solo, the choreographer becomes its first dancer; in the experience of improvisation, the dancer becomes its first choreographer. The singularity of the choreographic art in general comes from the intertwining between objective bodies and subjective intentionality. Subject and object are caught in a creative process through which they exchange their essential components: to subjectivity is given an objective form (i.e. the body) while this objective form is moved by a subjective undercurrent. The dancing bodies emerge at the confluence of an object filled with consciousness, intentionality and sensibility and a subject outlined by its carnal shape and defined by its physical interactions with the environing world.⁷

Though the Body is now a hot topic in cultural studies, philosophy of Dance is still in its infancy. However Dance, this living oxymoron, can provide to the philosopher a unique occasion to re-think the relationships between subject and object, artist and work, mind and body and overcome the traditional dualisms of Western Philosophy. Actually, because of its ambivalent understanding of the Body, classical philosophy seems unable to furnish the conceptual keys to understand the dancing phenomenon. From Plato to Husserl via Descartes, the definition of human subjectivity and personal identity has been based on intellectual and rational characteristics.⁸ Analyzing Dance gives the opportunity to elaborate a new conceptualization of the Body, in its anthropological, aesthetical and ontological dimensions. Firstly, the historical and structural links between the emergence of Modern

⁷ Ann Cooper Albright, *Choreographing Difference: The Body and Identity in Contemporary Dance*, 4: “Although it is of the body, dance is not just about the body, it is also about subjectivity – about how that body is positioned in the world as well as the ways in which that particular body responds to the world.”

⁸ See Jean-Marie Schaeffer, *La Fin de L'Exception Humaine* (Paris: Gallimard, 2007).

Dance and the rise of Feminism will be analyzed. Then, the implications for the understanding of the constitution of dancing bodies will be developed. Finally the philosophical consequences of the dancing artistic practice on the redefinition of the Body will be addressed. Thus this paper is about the conceptual consequences of the artistic practice of modern dance, within its cultural and political context, for the philosophical understanding of the body: the consequences of the analysis proposed for the aesthetics of Dance itself are simply outlined and will be addressed in another paper.

Contemporary Dance and Gender Studies: a practice of becoming-woman

If the ontological singularity of Dance is that the Body is its specific medium, the historical singularity of Dance is that the Dancing Body is largely feminine in its expression. The overwhelming presence of women creators in Modern Dance contrasts with their relative minority (literature, painting) or marginality (music composition, architecture) in other arts.⁹ Let us remind the names of the great women creators of Modern Dance since its inception in the beginning of the twentieth century: Loie Fuller (1862-1928), Isadora Duncan (1877-1927), Doris Humphrey (1895-1958), Martha Graham (1894-1991),

⁹ Helene Thomas, "Dance: Overview," *Routledge International Encyclopedia of Women: Global Women's Issues and Knowledge*, vol.1, eds. Cheris Kramarae and Dale Spender, (New York: Routledge, 2000), 289-292: "The history of women theater dance, from ballet to modern dance to postmodern dance, reveals that women have made considerable contributions to the development of dance, as performers, as choreographers, and as prime advocates in the institutional development and establishment of certain dance genres."

Yvonne Rainer (born 1934), Trisha Brown (born 1936), Pina Bausch (1940-2009), Lucinda Childs (born 1940), Susan Buirge (born 1940), Deborah Hay (born 1941), Odile Duboc (1941-2010), Carolyn Carlson (born 1943), Jackie Taffanel (born 1950), Nancy Stark Smith (*born* 1952), Joëlle Bouvier (born 1959), Anna Teresa De Keersmaeker (born 1960), Myriam Gourfink (born 1968), etc. Such an overwhelming feminine presence is attested also in non-Western Modern Dance were female dancers reinvented their classical tradition: Carlotta Ikeda (born 1941), Lo Man-fei (born 1955), Shantala Shivalingappa (born 1976), Maria Kiran (born 1981), etc. Indeed great male choreographers participated actively to the constitution of Modern Dance: Ted Shawn (1891-1972), Merce Cunningham (1919-2009), Steve Paxton (born 1939), Lin Hwai-min (born 1947), Dominique Bagouet (1951-1992), Daniel Larrieu (born 1957), Julyen Hamilton, etc. However this quantitative and qualitative prominence of women creators in Modern Dance is something so specific that the question of the links between Dance and femininity must be addressed when aiming at rethinking Body through Dance.¹⁰

Historically speaking the invention of Modern Dance participates to the deep cultural transformation of the beginning of the twentieth century: Einstein with the relativity and Heisenberg with quantum mechanics departed radically from the classical Newtonian model of Nature as well as Kandinsky and Klee, after Van Gogh, Cézanne, and Gauguin, departed radically from the classical Poussinian vision of the World. As well as Einstein and Heisenberg

¹⁰ Ann Daly, *Critical Gestures: Writings on Dance and Culture* (Hanover: Wesleyan University Press, 2002), xxxix: "In an era of growing feminist consciousness, in an art from long populated by women and focused on the image of Woman, dance provided an inevitable focal point for feminist criticism. Since the 1960's, works by Yvonne Rainer, Senta Driver, Anna de Keersmaeker, Pina Bausch and many, many others have required a shift in critical approach."

developed a physical science situated above (cosmology) and below (microphysics) the human scale of action, Malevich and Klee, among others, developed an art of painting situated beyond (pure abstraction) and besides (pure sensation) the human scale of vision. Modern Dance introduced a similar departure with the conventional scale and representation of body movement, in exploring un-experienced modes of slowness and swiftness, by disrupting the former adequacy of dance to music. How and why women artists became instrumental in the breakthrough leading to Modern Dance is worthy to be clarified.

Before Modern Dance, except Marie Rambert (1888-1982) and Ninette de Valois (1898-2001) late transitional representatives of the romantic ballet, the femininity of Dance concerned performers not choreographers. The romantic ballet is composed of feminine bodies, officiating the cult of the *ballerina*, while the choreographer is mostly a man. The asymmetric relationships of power between the unique dominant elder male choreographer and the cohort of obedient, pure and reserved young women performers is perfectly illustrated by Balanchine's (1904-1983) definition of ballet: "the ballet is a purely female thing; it is a woman – a garden of beautiful flowers, and the man is the gardener."¹¹ This proposition hosts a remarkable compound of traditional metaphysics and conventional sociology dichotomies; it involves a whole range of oppositions between one and multiple, subject and objects, ruler and ruled, Idea and elements, male and female. The male wise choreographer cultivates the feminine wild body: out of a multitude of growing flowers, he creates an ordered garden.

¹¹ Quoted by Roger Copeland, "Towards a Sexual Politics of Dance," *Contact Quarterly*, 7.3/4 (New York, Spring/Autumn, 1982): 48-54.

Actually, this relational gender paradigm, assimilating man with form and woman to matter, goes back to Aristotle's definition of hylomorphism: "Yet the form cannot desire itself, for it is not defective; nor can the contrary desire it, for contraries are mutually destructive. The truth is that what desires the form is matter, as the female desires the male and the ugly the beautiful—only the ugly or the female not per se but per accidens."¹² The process of becoming is assimilated to an operation of molding where the form is the mold and the matter the wax. "Gendering" this idea, Aristotle affirms that the form is masculine and the matter is feminine: the matter desires the form as the female desires the male and imperfection perfection. The form is the masculine intellectual ruling static principle and the matter is the feminine malleable ruled moving element. Western Metaphysics rest on conceptual dichotomies grafted on gender imaginary: immobility, thinking, perfection and form are equated to masculinity while movement, desire, imperfection and matter are equated to femininity.

As the French philosopher Michel Bernard affirmed: "the Body is a symbol used by society to disclose its phantasms."¹³ That the association between Body, Woman, Matter and Desire percolates into the ("phallogentric") conception of the romantic ballet denotes a darker face of dance, i.e. the links between dance and prostitution. Dance and prostitution have been associated in almost every civilization and go in par with woman inferior status in patriarchal societies.¹⁴ This is particularly true regarding the conception of

¹² Aristotle, *Physics*, I, 9, 192a 13-24, *The Works of Aristotle*, vol.8, ed. William David Ross (London: Encyclopedia Britannica, 1989), 268.

¹³ Michel Bernard, *Le Corps* (Paris: Seuil, 1976), 134: «le corps est le symbole dont use une société pour parler de ses fantasmes.»

¹⁴ Judith Lynne Hanna, *Critical Gestures: Writings on Dance and Culture* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988), 46: "Within a global perspective, sex and dance are

woman and the definition of Dance in the nineteenth century: Felicia McCarren recently demonstrated how the practices of romantic ballet and prostitution at the Opéra of Paris intersected with Charcot's medicalization of hysteria in France.¹⁵ Understood in this perspective, the invention of Modern Dance by women artists implied claiming back ownership over their own bodies.¹⁶ Moreover the aesthetical (and ethical) condition of possibility of Modern Dance is the breaking away from the indignant relation between dance and prostitution. In this context, if Loie Fuller can rightly be considered one of the forerunners of Modern Dance, it is because she subverted the relationships between feminine body and sexuality in Dance. Instead of using veils to suggest nudity and entice desire, Loie Fuller created a form of dance where the body comes to be hidden by the colorful swirling movement of silk garments and the creative use of scenic lights. The French symbolist poet Mallarmé rightly highlighted this point when he evoked her dance: "An armature, which is of no particular woman, and thus instable, across the veil of generality, draws onto such a revealed fragment of the form and there drinks the flash that renders it divine; or exhales in return, by the undulation of the fabrics, floating, palpitating, scattered this ecstasy."¹⁷

associated in multiple ways that are not always mutually exclusive", 56: "Examples of aphrodisiac dancing abound throughout the world. Women (and sometimes young men) dance to entertain men whose prurient interests often override concerns of artistic merit. The dancer's message is sexual service for one or more senses [...] Dancing to entertain men is found in the institutions of the Chinese chi-nu, Japanese geisha, Indian devadasi and nautch, Arabic guina, Korean kisaeng, Persian motreb, and Moroccan shikhat."

¹⁵ See Felicia McCarren, *Dance Pathologies: Performance, Poetics, Medicine* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998).

¹⁶ Elena Cuffari, "Habits of Transformation," *Hypatia*, 26.3 (Malden, Mar. 2011): 535-553: "according to feminist existential phenomenology, feminist pragmatism, and feminist genealogy, our embodied condition is an important starting place for ethical living due to the inevitable role that habits play in our conduct."

¹⁷ Quoted by Felicia McCarren, *Dance Pathologies: Performance, Poetics, Medicine*, 124;

As the French critic Laurence Louppe noted: “modernity in dance often involves a questioning about what is received and inscribed into our bodies”.

¹⁸ Modern Dance is the symbol of women reasserting the control on their own body not only against its alienation of prostitution but also without its limitation to maternity. Historically speaking, the image of women bodies in Art is remarkably constant. From the Venus figurines of the Paleolithic period (*Venus of Willendorf* or *Venus of Dolni Vestonice*) to *The Three Graces* (1636) of Peter Paul Rubens to the nudes of Pierre-Auguste Renoir, feminine beauty has been associated with a fleshiness emphasizing the anatomical features pertaining to woman fecundity. Reversely, if Manet’s *Olympia* (1863) sparked controversy and stirred such a scandal, it is because, as Zola wrote, instead of painting a *cliché* and representing a myth, he presented a real woman involved in demimondaine activities: he depicted a skinny nude woman, staring the viewer with a cold, frank look, deprived of the attributes of shyness and fleshiness of usual mythical Venus. If Loie Fuller could represent the symbol of Dance and feminine Body liberated from the alienation of prostitution, Isadora Duncan could represent the symbol of Dance and feminine Body enfranchised from the social confinement to the reproduction of the species. Revolutionary abandoning corset and ballet shoes, Isadora Duncan substituted the formality of the ballet designed by the male choreographer to the experience of free dance based on the exploration of proprioception and

Stéphane Mallarmé, “Autre étude de danse : Les fonds dans le ballet,” *Igitur, Divagations, Un coup de dés* (Paris: Gallimard, 2003), 210: «Une armature, qui n’est d’aucune femme en particulier, d’où instable, à travers le voile de généralité, attire sur tel fragment révélé de la forme et y boit l’éclair qui le divinise; ou exhale, de retour, par l’ondulation des tissus, flottante, palpitante, éparse cette extase.»

¹⁸ Laurence Louppe, *Poétique de la Danse Contemporaine* (Bruxelles: Contredanse, 1996), 114: «la modernité en danse consiste souvent à interroger ce qui est reçu ou inscrit dans le corps.»

kinesthesia.

In Dance, Body is re-discovered as being not only a mean but also an end. There exists a strong link between Modern Dance and the feminist movement:¹⁹ by reasserting control of their own bodies, by inventing Modern Dance, women artists evidenced that the feminine body is aimed to something else than prostitution or maternity. But Modern Dance is not only a symbol of women social emancipation; it implies also a revision of the metaphysical refusal of the body and opens a path for a potential relocation of bodies in the understanding of human subjectivity in general.²⁰ Judith Butler convincingly noted that Western Metaphysics, in the same conceptual move, separated mind and body and identified male to mind and woman to body.²¹ For the male scholar, the body is doubly other: other than his thinking, other than his

¹⁹ Karen Barbour, *Dancing Across the Page: Narrative and Embodied Ways of Knowing* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011), 80: "Based on our own lived experience, I think that movement in women's solo contemporary dance making might be understood as receptive to multiple influences, integrated and understood through embodiment, and responsive in many ways, included both choreographed and improvisations expressions. This understanding of alternative feminine movement relates to our individual choreographic strategies and way to recreate femininity. The re-created understandings of femininity and feminine movement that we have developed reflect our embodied ways of knowing. Such empowering practices in dance making allowed us to re-create ourselves, at least for a time."

²⁰ Ann Cooper Albright, *Choreographing Difference: The Body and Identity in Contemporary Dance*, 7: "In its desire to reclaim the female body as valuable place of knowledge and identity, seventies feminism sought to refute the body/mind dualism so prevalent in our culture."

²¹ Judith Butler, "Variations on Sex and Gender, Beauvoir, Wittig, Foucault," *Feminism as Critique: Essays on the Politics of Gender in Late Capitalist Societies*, eds. Seyla Benhabib and Drucilla Cornell (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1987), 128-142: "By defining women as 'Other', men are able through the shortcut of definition to dispose of their bodies, to make themselves other than their bodies – a symbol potentially of human decay and transience, of limitation generally – and to make their bodies other than themselves. From this belief that the body is Other, it is not a far leap to the conclusion that others are their bodies, while the masculine 'I' is the noncorporeal soul [...] Hence, women become the Other; they come to embody corporeality itself."

gender – and doubly denied (“phallogocentrism”): “I think *ergo* I am not my body, *ergo* I am not a woman.” Moreover, such a separation between Mind and Body implies a subsequent distinction between Being and Have: I *am* my Mind but I *have* a Body. *Because of the identification between body and femininity, women were seen as men’s property and in the duty to serve them, as well as bodies were seen as the subject’s property and in the duty to serve Mind.* Thus Dance in general and Modern Dance in particular is a unique occasion to amend and revise our conventional categorizations of reality organized through artificial conceptual dichotomies with potentially unegalitarian social consequences.

Rethinking Dance as a creative technique of embodiment

After having defined the links between the emergence of Modern Dance and the rise of the Feminist Movement, two of the consequences of the links between “Womanity” and Body for the definition of Dance will be analyzed: 1. the constructivist conception of the dancing body and 2. the multiplicity and multilayer functionality of the embodied dance.

The becoming-Body of the Dancer: Dance Training

In Simone de Beauvoir’s famous aphorism: “One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman”,²² a dual proposition can be read. The first proposition

²² Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex* (New York: Vintage Books, 1973), 301. Simone de Beauvoir, *Le Deuxième Sexe I* (Paris: Gallimard, 1949), 285: «On ne naît pas femme: on le devient. Aucun destin biologique, psychique, économique ne définit la figure que revêt au sein de la société la femelle.»

enounces that sexual identity is partially controlled and instituted by social and cultural conventions;²³ the second proposition conveys the idea that the becoming of embodiment as a process differs from being a body as a thing. This second idea comes to be particularly developed by Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari when they affirmed that “becoming woman, more than any other becoming, possesses a special introductory power” and that “all becomings being with and pass through becoming-woman”.²⁴ It should be noted that Simone de Beauvoir’s and Deleuze and Guattari’s propositions are not addressing the same point. Saying with Simone de Beauvoir that the being-woman is a social construction means that all the “arguments” disqualifying women from doing certain social activities by using the pretext of “woman’s natural characteristics” are in fact untenable: sex is biological but gender is social.²⁵ Thus, what can be learned from Gender Studies is that if Gender is a socio-cultural construction, Bodies also are a socio-cultural construction. Thus Dance in general and Modern Dance in particular can be

²³ Simone de Beauvoir, *Le Deuxième Sexe I*, 285: «Aucun destin biologique, psychique, économique ne définit la figure que revêt au sein de la société la femelle humaine; c’est l’ensemble de la civilisation qui élabore ce produit intermédiaire entre le mâle et le castrat qu’on qualifie de féminin.»

²⁴ Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus* (London: Continuum Press, 2004), 274, 306; Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Mille-Plateaux* (Paris: Minuit, 1980), 304: «peut-être le devenir-femme possède sur tous les autres un pouvoir introductif particulier»; 340: «tous les devenirs commencent et passent par le devenir-femme.»

²⁵ Judith Butler, “Sex and Gender in Simone de Beauvoir’s *Second Sex*,” *Yale French Studies. Simone de Beauvoir: Witness to a Century*, 72 (Yale, Winter, 1986), 35-49: “The distinction between sex and gender has been crucial to the long-standing feminist effort to debunk the claim that anatomy is destiny; sex is understood to be the invariant, anatomically distinct, and factic aspects of the female body, whereas gender is the cultural meaning and form that that body acquires, the variable modes of that body’s acculturation. With the distinction intact, it is no longer possible to attribute the values or social functions of women to biological necessity, and neither can we refer meaningfully to natural or unnatural gendered behavior: all gender is, by definition, unnatural.”

seen as places where experiencing their *creative* deconstruction.

Modern Dance stands at the confluence of the plasticity of the Body and the intensity of the becoming-woman. The connection between Dance and practices of Embodiment comes not simply from the evidence that bodies are on the stage but rather from the understanding that the stage provides the settings for their becoming. As Ann Cooper Albright said: “at the very moment the dancing is creating a representation, it is also in the process of actually forming that body. Put more simply, dancing bodies simultaneously produce and are produced by their own dancing.”²⁶ Mallarmé broached the same idea in a poetical way: “To understand that dancer *is not a woman dancing*, for the juxtaposed causes that she *is not a woman*, but a metaphor summarizing one of the elementary aspects of our form, sword, cup, flower, etc., that *she does not dance*, suggesting, by the marvel of ellipsis or elan, with a corporeal writing that would necessitate paragraphs of prose in dialogue as well as description to express, in the rewriting: poem disengaged from all writing apparatus.”²⁷ The dancing body is and is not the body of the dancer. In the process of becoming-woman, the dancing body becomes other than a woman; in the process of becoming body, the dancing body becomes other than a body. It abandons somewhat its actual sex and physiognomy to become a pure

²⁶ Ann Cooper Albright, *Choreographing Difference: The Body and Identity in Contemporary Dance*, 3.

²⁷ Quoted by Felicia McCarren, *Dance Pathologies: Performance, Poetics, Medicine*, 122; Stéphane Mallarmé, “Autre étude de danse : Les fonds dans le ballet”, *Igitur, Divagations, Un coup de dés*, 210: «À savoir que la danseuse n’est pas une femme qui danse, pour ces motifs juxtaposés qu’elle n’est pas une femme, mais une métaphore résumant un des aspects élémentaires de notre forme, glaive, coupe, fleur, etc, et qu’elle ne danse pas, suggérant, par le prodige de raccourcis ou d’élans, avec une écriture corporelle ce qu’il faudrait des paragraphes en prose dialoguée autant que descriptive, pour exprimer, dans la rédaction : poème dégagé de tout appareil du scribe.»

movement of energy embodying visions and expressing ideas in the language of forms. Dancing is to give movement to immutable forces: it goes with creating the virtual Body of our actual body.

This operation doesn't result from an immaculate conception. It does require an intense, continuous and sustained *training*. Depending of the methodological nature of such training, different kinds of dancing bodies and styles of Dance are involved and emerged at different moments. During the Classical period, according to a mechanistic vision of the Body, the dancing body has to conform to cadenced movements following the rhythm of the melody. Baroque Dance, dominated by the French Noble Style, is defined by a series of dance types (*bouffée*, *courante*, *gavotte*, *passacaille*, etc.) in which body movements and musical forms are closely related. During the romantic ballet period, the training didn't aim anymore at establishing a strict correspondence between musical rhythms and body movements but at disconnecting the intense activity of the lower part of the body (feet and legs) with the ethereal serenity of the upper part of it (arms and face). The achievement of the training was proved by the capacity of the dancer to mobilize an intense muscular effort while manifesting facial expressions of grace and content. The relationship between Dance and Music in the romantic ballet changed: it evolves from a "mechanical" rhythmic correspondence according to the score to an emotional melodic expressivity according to the narrative.

With the emergence of Modern Dance, two major changes occurred. First of all, as already noted, music stops to be the measure of movement. As well as in Modern painting depiction and figuration came to be disconnected, dancing and music came to be as well disconnected in Modern Dance. That

doesn't mean that the painter and the dancer didn't need training any more or can do anything whatever they like.²⁸ On the contrary, the greatest difficulty of Modern Dance is that if body movements cannot simply follow the music played on the stage, you have to find a musicality from within leading the body to move. Secondly, and as a consequence, Modern Dance involves a new kind of training that can be defined with reference to Antonin Artaud's "affective athleticism". Artaud's new kind of actor training "method", elaborated in the perspective of the "Theater of Cruelty" performances, is largely applicable to Modern Dance body training. The actor/dancer should follow the internal rhythm of the flow of emotional energy inside the body: "The belief in a fluid materiality of the soul is indispensable to the actor's craft. To know that a passion is material, that it is subject to the plastic fluctuations of material, makes accessible an empire of passions that extend our sovereignty [...] To understand the secret of the passionate time – a kind of musical *tempo* which regulates their harmonic beat – is an aspect of theater long undreamed by our modern psychological theater."²⁹ As well as Deleuze, referring to Klee,³⁰ defined painting as rendering visible invisible forces of nature, dancing could be defined as rendering mobile the immobile forces of the Self. What is moving in dance is not simply the body of the dancer: the bodily movements of the dancer have only the function of mobilizing these immobile forces constituting the virtual Body. Mounting this virtual Body

²⁸ Dee Reynolds, "Energies of Resistance in Twentieth-Century Dance," *Sur quel pied Danser? Danse et Littérature*, ed. Edward Nye (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2005), 299-318.

²⁹ Antonin Artaud, *The Theater and its Double* (New York: Grove Press, 1958), 135; Antonin Artaud, *Œuvres complètes, tome IV, Le Théâtre et son Double* (Paris: Gallimard, 1956), 157.

³⁰ Paul Klee, "Creative Credo (1920)," *Theories of Modern Art: A Source Book by Artists and Critics*, ed. Herschel Browning Chipp (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1968), 182-186: "Art does not reproduce the visible; rather it makes visible."

inside our actual body, as the tank of forces that will take over the dancing body in the dancing, is the goal of the affective training, designed by Artaud with reference to Non-Western practices (Artaud quotes Chinese and Indian medical practices). Actually, the emergence of a specific Modern Dance training was supported by the rise of new kind of therapeutic body techniques in Europe and United-States, departing from the mechanistic approach of the body, to which almost every dancer is familiar: osteopathy indeed but also Feldenkrais method,³¹ Alexander method,³² Bainbridge Cohen's "Body Mind Centering" method,³³ among many, many others.

Dance differential and multilayer embodiment

What we have learned from Gender Studies is not only that human sexuality can be defined by biology (sex) or sociology (gender) but also that the Body is a complex entity, constituted by the intersections of many layers of reality, as Rose Braidotti brilliantly showed: "The body, or the embodiment, of the subject is to be understood as neither biological nor a sociological category, but rather a point of overlapping between the physical, the symbolic and the sociological."³⁴ Such an idea is of decisive importance for the understanding of Dance.

The human body (and brain is of course a part of the human body) is one the most complex "things" that exists; it hosts in itself the different strata

³¹ See Moshe Feldenkrais, *Awareness through Movement: Health Exercises for Personal Growth* (New York/London: Harper & Row, 1972).

³² See Gerda Alexander, *Eutony: The Holistic Discovery of the Total Person* (New York: Felix Morrow, 1981).

³³ See Bonnie Bainbridge-Cohen, *Sensing, Feeling, Action: The Experiential Anatomy of Body-Mind Centering* (New York: Contact Edition, 1993).

³⁴ Rose Braidotti, *Nomadic Subjects: Embodiment and Sexual Difference in Contemporary Feminist Theory* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 4.

composing the World: physics (mechanics and dynamics); chemistry; biology; sociology; culture. Our body can move because of its belonging to the physical world; our body can change because of its belonging to the chemical world; our body can reproduce itself because of its belonging to the biological world; our body can work and struggle because of its belonging to the sociological world; our body can pray and taste Art because of its belonging to the cultural world. Moreover, all these different layers of reality are connected by the evolution of the Self into Time: individuality is the result of their continuous embodiment. This multiplicity inside the body is disclosed by the dancing operation.

The dancing body can express different styles of Dance depending on the level of reality from which it is soaring up and express different quality of movements depending on its power of individuation. Classical dance expresses the mechanical and dynamical part of our embodiment of the world: forces of translation and variation; romantic ballet expresses the chemical and biological part of our embodiment of the world: forces of thermodynamic becoming and degradation (*La Sylphe* and *Swan Lake*); modern expressionist dance expresses the biological and sociological part of our embodiment of the world: forces of impulsive emotions and repetitive struggles (Martha Graham's *Lamentation* and Kurt Jooss' *The Green Table*); post-modern constructivist dance expresses the sociological and cultural part of our embodiment of the world: forces of non-linear becoming and contemplation (Carlson's *Blue Lady* and Larrieu's *Waterproof*). Moreover, whatever the style of Dance involved, the quality of the Dance depends on the power of plasticity of the dancing body, on its capacity to individualize the different levels of reality to which it participates.

What we learn from Dance about the Body is that the Body cannot be reduced to one single level of reality. In order to re-think the Body, in congruence with the dancing practice, we have to avoid three pitfalls: 1. physicalist atomism, stating that bodies are nothing but molecular aggregates, is unable to take into account the specificity of biological processes; 2. biological holism, stating that bodies are nothing but organic entities, is unable to take into account the specificity of *human* bodies integrating social and cultural features in their very constitution; 3. spiritualist dualism, stating that bodies are an obstacle to the development of the soul because of their prurient and anarchic desires, is unable to take into account the “wisdom of the body”³⁵ guiding the rock climber on the mountain and the dancer on the stage.

The Body is neither physical nor biological or sociological nor opposed to soul and spirit: it is at the same time physical, biological and sociological and something more than their mere summation. The Body is not a thing, even a complex one, but a process: *the Body is nothing but the process of embodiment which individualizes our connection to the world. The actual human body is a compound of physical, chemical, biological, sociological and cultural elements whose integration depends on the individuation of the virtual Body to which Dance specifically has access* (alongside with some mystical practices involving the body). To dance means to set the virtual Body in motion by the use of the actual body. The immanent disclosing of the virtual Body inside the actual body stirs an intense feeling of inner fulfillment. The

³⁵ Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 23: “Behind your thoughts and feelings, my brother, there stands a mighty ruler, an unknown sage – whose name is Self. In your body he dwells, he *is* your body. There is more reason in your body than in your best wisdom.”

notion of *rasa* in Indian aesthetics³⁶ captures the essential idea of the result of this operation. Moreover Spinoza's definition of the third kind of knowledge could be regarded as the best description of the mystical union of the Self with its body. Actually Spinoza said that the feeling of eternity was possible to experience in this very life and that such an experience shall come not from our mind but from our body: "Nevertheless, in God there is necessarily an idea that expresses the essence of each particular human body, under the aspect of eternity [...] The mind conceives nothing under the aspect of eternity except by conceiving its body's essence under the aspect of eternity."³⁷

Conclusion: embodying the Body and connecting to the Link

Thinking the body not as an object, a thing that we have, but as a subject, a form that we are seems to have been a nearly impossible task for classical philosophers from Plato to Descartes to Heidegger to achieve. For Socrates in Plato's *Phaedo*, embodiment is a kind of congenital disease whose symptoms are lust and desire from which contaminated souls must be cured by the use of philosophy for the ones seeking truth.³⁸ For Descartes, Nature can be reduced

³⁶ Kathleen Marie Higgins, "Rasa," *A Companion to Aesthetics*, eds. Stephen Davies, Kathleen Marie Higgins, Robert Hopkins, Robert Stecker, and Davids E. Cooper (Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 2009), 492-494.

³⁷ Baruch Spinoza, *Ethics*, V, § 22, § 31, *Complete Works*, ed. Michael L. Morgan (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 2002), 374, 376.

³⁸ Plato, *Phaedo*, 65d, *Complete Works*, eds. John Madison Cooper and D. S. Hutchinson (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 1997), 57: "the soul of the philosopher most disdains the body, flee from it and seeks to be itself."

to the law of mechanics and bodies are nothing but machines.³⁹ The only point of connection between mind and body is the brain: to human will is given the power to control the external sensations and internal emotions converging to the brain in order to achieve the auto-domestication of the animal-machine body.⁴⁰ Despite Heidegger's critics of traditional Western Metaphysics, his philosophy of existence seems to follow the old tracks in failing to take into account animal and bodily aspects of the Self:⁴¹ the anthropocentrism of the *Dasein*, the focus on the problem of the *meaning* of existence,⁴² leads him to almost ignore problems of life embodiment.⁴³

³⁹ René Descartes, *The Passions of the Soul (Les Passions de l'Âme)*, I, § 6, *The Philosophical Writings I*, trans. John Cottingham, Robert Stoothoff, Dugald Murdoch (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 330: "And let us recognize that the body of a living man differs from the body of a dead man in just the same way that a watch or other automaton (i.e. self-moving machine) when it is wound up and contains within itself the physical source of the movements for which it is designed, together with everything else needed for its operation differs from the same watch or machine when it is broken and the source of its movement has stopped working." René Descartes, *Les Passions de l'Âme*, I, § 6, *Œuvres Philosophiques Tome III*, ed. Ferdinand Alquié (Paris: Garnier, 1998), 955: «... considérons que la mort n'arrive jamais par la faute de l'âme, mais seulement parce que quelqu'une des principales parties du corps se corrompt; et jugeons que le corps d'un homme vivant diffère autant de celui d'un homme mort que fait une montre [...] lorsqu'elle est rompue et que le principe de son mouvement cesse d'agir.»

⁴⁰ René Descartes, *The Passions of the Soul (Les Passions de l'Âme)*, I, § 50, *The Philosophical Writings I*, 348: "For since we can with a little effort change the movements of the brain in animals devoid of reason, it is evident that we can make an even better job of this in the case of men." René Descartes, *Les Passions de l'Âme*, I, § 50, *Œuvres Philosophiques Tome III*, 995: «Car, puisqu'on peut, avec un peu d'industrie, changer les mouvements du cerveau dans les animaux dépourvus de raison, il est évident qu'on le peut encore mieux dans les hommes, et que ceux même qui ont les plus faibles âmes pourraient acquérir un empire très absolu sur toutes leurs passions, si on employait assez d'industrie à les dresser et à les conduire.»

⁴¹ See Kevin A. Aho, *Heidegger's Neglect of the Body* (New York: SUNY Press, 2010).

⁴² Jean Beaufret, *De l'existentialisme à Heidegger* (Paris: Vrin, 1986), 18: «Le point de départ nécessaire de toute tentative pour déterminer dans toute sa rigueur, l'être de l'étant en général, est l'homme comme être là ou *Dasein*. Car, de tous les étants, l'homme est le seul en lequel soit fonctionnellement exigée une solution au problème de

The phenomenology of Husserl and moreover Merleau-Ponty goes closer to the goal of thinking the body as the subject of human individuation: the body (*Leib*) becomes the substance-subject (*Subjekt-Leib*) of the feeling faculty (*empfindendes Ding*). The phenomenological experience anchors on a living body (*Leibkörper*) provided with the capacity of feeling life itself (*leiblicher Körper*). Merleau-Ponty's fascinating notion of *chiasm*, articulating the body of the spirit to the spirit of the body,⁴⁴ opened a new promising path. However the phenomenological experience connects to the body mostly by the mean of an inward, internal feeling of the Self.⁴⁵ This is even clearer in Michel Henry's philosophy where the inscription of subjectivity into the Flesh goes with its absolutely passivity and interiority.⁴⁶ The phenomenology of the Flesh cannot decisively contribute to the conceptualization of Dance which involves necessarily activity and exteriority of the body. It fails to understand the link between the inward proprioception (synesthesia) and the outward

l'exister.»

⁴³ Cristian Ciocan, "The Question of the Living Body in Heidegger's Analytic of Dasein," *Research in Phenomenology*, 38.1 (London, Spring, 2008), 72-89.

⁴⁴ Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible (Le Visible et L'Invisible)*, trans. Alphonso Lingis (Evanston: Northwestern Illinois Press, 1968), 259: "There is a body of the mind and a mind of the body and a chiasm between them". Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Le Visible et L'Invisible* (Paris: Gallimard, 1979), 313: «Il y a un corps de l'esprit et un esprit du corps, et un chiasme entre eux.»

⁴⁵ Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *In Praise of Philosophy and Other Essays (Éloge de la Philosophie et Autres Essais)*, trans. John O'Neill (Evanston: Northwestern Illinois Press, 1963), 7: "There is thus no transitive relation between me and my body, me and the world, and it is 'towards the within' that the self can overflow." Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Eloge de la Philosophie* (Paris: Gallimard, 1953), 14.

⁴⁶ Stella Zita de Azevedo, "Passivity and Fundamental Life's Experience in Michel Henry's Thought," *Phenomenology of Life - From the Animal Soul to the Human Mind: Book II. The Human Soul in the Creative Transformation of the Mind*, ed. Anna-Teresa Tymieniecka (London: Springer, 2007), 11-32: "Not only is the body not an object amongst others, but it is not an object at all, i.e., it does not belong, in any way, to the order of exteriority."

proprioception (kinesthesia) articulated by the dancer.

The only philosopher that may help in thinking the dancing body is Henri Bergson. In the first lines of *Matter and Memory*, Bergson proposed a genesis of our perceptions whose pivoting point was the feeling and moving body: “Here I am in the presence of images, in the vaguest sense of the word, images perceived when my senses are opened to them, unperceived when they are closed. All these images act and react upon one another in all their elementary parts according to constant laws [...] Yet there is one of them which is distinct from all the others, in that I do not know it only from without by perceptions, but from within by affections: it is my body. I examine the conditions in which these affections are produced: I find that they always interpose themselves between the excitations that I receive from without and the movements which I am about to execute, as though they had some undefined influence on the final issue.”⁴⁷ If Gilles Deleuze extracted from *Matter and Memory* a whole philosophy of Cinema, a whole philosophy of Dance could be also driven out of Bergson’s masterpiece. In conclusion, I would like to propose new concepts to rethink the Body and define the philosophical ground on which a philosophy of Dance could be established.

Basically, our body is a moving membrane separating/reuniting inside and outside. Excitations and reactions depend on the environment: bodies’ survival has for condition the constitution of a local environment inside the global world, what Uexküll named an *Umwelt*.⁴⁸ Our body involves more

⁴⁷ Henri Bergson, *Matter and Memory (Matière et Mémoire)*, trans. Nancy Margaret Paul and W. Scott Palmer (London: Georges Allen & Unwin, 1929), 1-2.

⁴⁸ See Jakob von Uexküll, *A Foray into the Worlds of Animals and Humans: With a Theory of Meaning (Streifzüge durch die Umwelten von Tieren und Menschen)*, trans. Joseph D. O’Neil (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010).

than our body; it involves an *Umwelt*. The limit of our world is the limits of our body – and reciprocally, because of their intertwining. The chiasm between the proper body and its *Umwelt* can be called, in homage to Merleau-Ponty, a “Merleau-Pontian Universe” (MPU). For example, if spider’s net is spider’s *Umwelt*, the gathering of the spider and its net in the same cluster denotes an “arachnid MPU”. Such a MPU is an actual MPU: spider’s net is the actual extension of spider’s body inside the environment. Actual MPUs have two characteristics: they are spatial and statics. As far as Dance is concerned, the stage can be viewed as the dancer’s *Umwelt*: interactions between the dancer and the stage shape the actual form of a dancing MPU. But there exist not only actual MPUs but also virtual MPUs. The virtual MPU doesn’t involve the actual body of our daily actions but the virtual Body of our highest potentialities: not our cinematic body but our energetic Body, i.e. the Body to which the body of the dancer is connected through dance. While actual MPUs come from the ex-tension of our body into space creating an *Umwelt*, virtual MPUs come from the in-tension of our body into time creating an ‘*Umzeit*’ – as I propose here to coin it. Virtual MPUs are mobile and temporal: they are not localized in one single space; they are fragments of Time we transport with us. As Bergson noticed what links us to Time is our relationship to Memory: our ‘*Umzeit*’ is defined by the set of memories embodied in our actions and feelings. As far as Dance is concerned, the dancer is not only connected to the stage but also to his/her own life, to the auto-fiction his/her dance is narrating. *Umwelt* and ‘*Umzeit*’ define the actual and virtual environments in which body and Body are evolving: the dual join between body & *Umwelt* (actual MPU) and Body & *Umzeit* (virtual MPU) defines our integral Self.

Traditionally, the Self has been understood through the relationships between Body and Mind: usually Mind supersedes on the Body, except in the materialist (Epicure, Diderot), empiricist (Hume) and naturalist (Nietzsche) traditions where Body prevails. However Mind and Body are only “fictional” realities: they didn’t exist in themselves. Only exists what articulates them together: the Self. The Self is the link between Mind and Body; it is like a string whose low/slow vibrations denote the Body and whose higher/faster vibrations denote the Mind. Therefore traditional philosophical mistakes consisted in envisaging only the two extremities of this rope, the bodily extremity and the spiritual extremity, without acknowledging their belonging to the Self unique vibrating string. “Body” and “Mind” are nothing but embodiments of the Self: the actual embodiment of the Self outlines the body/*Umwelt* interactions (actual MPU); the virtual embodiment of the Self outlines the Body/*Umzeit* interactions (virtual MPU). Finally I contend that Dance is the living operation by which the body and the Body cross their *Umwelt* and *Umzeit* to create new ways of aesthetical embodiment.

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