PERFORMANCE
PHILOSOPHY

FROM ODD ENCOUNTERS TO A PROSPECTIVE CONFLUENCE: DANCE-PHILOSOPHY

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This text could begin with an emphatic assertion: there has not yet been a philosophy of dance that compares to the theories brought forth by music, theatre, poetry or visual art throughout the Western history of philosophy and aesthetics since Plato. Several accounts of a vexed relationship between Western theatre-dance and philosophy repeat the same refrain: that (Western) philosophy 'neglects dance' (Sparshott 1983) and has had very little to say about dancing (Levin 1983). Although baroque ballet has developed equally through both dancing practice and the discourse of the eighteenth century genre of the treatise (Cahusac [1754] 2004, Noverre [1760] 2004), dance as such has been excluded from hierarchical classifications of the beaux arts, most notably from Diderot's and D'Alembert's *Enyclopédie* (1751–1782). Moreover, François Pouillaude has recently argued that the birth of modern aesthetics means, for dance, the installment of its literal, 'inaugural absence' (Pouillaude 2009, 15) from philosophical interest. While Kant's *Critique of Judgment* (1790) makes only two brief remarks in passing about dance, perhaps because the combination of 'the play of sensations in music with the play of figures in the dance' (§ 52) shows a confusion of temporal and spatial (plastic) categories, Hegel's *Aesthetics* ([1835/1842] 1975) and Schelling's *Philosophy of Art* ([1802-03] 1989) make no mention of it. With the exception of the poetic privilege that Nietzsche confers upon it in Zarathustra's dancing songs (Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* [1891] 1974) — a conspicuous case of metaphorical abduction which, as we will discuss later, carries on into contemporary philosophy — we will have to wait until the second half of the twentieth century for dance to make its theoretical debut in a small number of serious attempts to investigate it philosophically (e.g., Langer 1953; Sheets-Johnstone 1966).

My interest here is not in rehearsing the arguments of a rationale for this significant omission of dance from the Western canons of philosophy, aesthetics and art theory. The list of reasons involves outdated, overly general, disputed or even humorously coarse speculations (that dance, for example, has always been a 'female art' [Sparshott 1983, 95]). Instead, I will draw out the distinct registers of encounters between dance and philosophy in a *minor* key that is 'aside from' or that critically transforms major concerns of Western modernity. The range of these encounters begins with a presentation of three characteristic themes or recurrent problems across both continental and analytic philosophical inquiries into the nature and status of dance as a specific art, inquiries which will expound the difficulty in the rapport between the practice of dance and the abstract reflection of thought. Exposing a variety of efforts in twentieth-century philosophy to provide essentialist definitions of dance will consequently lead us to a remarkable episode of contemporary French thought in which dance is wrested as an instrument to reinstate Alain Badiou's and Jacques Rancière's particular philosophical concerns—included here because of their considerable impact on contemporary dance practitioners. In a third step, I will observe an inverse movement: how late twentieth-century French theory prompted a reconceptualisation of choreography and performance which began in the mid 1990s in European dance (in the works of Jérôme Bel, Vera Mantero, Xavier Le Roy, Eszter Salamon, Mette Ingvartsen, and others). The implications of this paradigm shift from modern, formal abstract movement to what is inappropriately referred to as 'conceptual dance' provide the ground for another kind of thought that both stems from and gives rise to a distinctive set of current practices of making, performing and attending dance, and that could best be accounted for by the principle of expression in the philosophy of Gilles Deleuze. Lastly, I will conclude this preliminary outline of 'dance-philosophy' with the most recent philosophical encounters with dance, as well as with a few terms, specific to contemporary dance, which have yet to receive philosophical attention.

Three problems *for* philosophies of dance:

1. Dance as an art paradigm

Dance's belated acquisition of the status of an art discipline constitutes the first obstacle to philosophy's consideration of dance as worthy of its theoretical interest. Jean-Georges Noverre's plea for a reform of mid-eighteenth-century ballet as '*ballet d'action*' after the Aristotelian dramaturgical model of mimesis during the Enlightenment proved to be a symptom of dance's historical subservience to and theoretical entanglements with other arts; Noverre's attempt to dignify dance on a par with tragedy was in vain, as his reform was ignored among theatre-dance practitioners during his lifetime and most of his experiments took place outside of France, the main center and object of his critique (Noverre 2004, xi). The subordination of dance to theatre drama and its inferior position vis-à-vis the other arts, due to its function of ornamental virtuosity, continued. It is only in the period of early modernism, and the second Industrial Revolution, from the latter half of the nineteenth century until the 1930s, that a rupture with ballet foregrounds bodily movements as both means and ends of modern dance as a new independent art. Dance history has favored the modernist ontology of dance in the vein of Clement Greenberg's

theorisation of modernism associated with abstraction, where modern dance was hailed as a new 'beginning', or as a 'discovery of the actual substance of the dance, which it found to be movement' (Martin [1933] 1989, 6), or as 'absolute dance' rooted in the pure bodily expression of subjective human experience, as Mary Wigman contends in her 'philosophy of dance' (Wigman in Cohen 1992, 149–153). For dance to become 'a paradigm of art', in Rancière's sense of 'becoming a paradigm of the relation between [...] the movements of a body on a stage and the gestures of a body in a workshop or in the street' (Rancière 2014, n.p.), it also had to be recognized through 'other eyes', most notably in the writings of Stéphane Mallarmé, which will remain, as we shall see, the crucial reference for contemporary philosophy's relation to dance (Badiou 1993; Rancière 2014; Pouillaude 2009). For Rancière, this 'moment of dance', in both the historical and conceptual sense —wherein one could also speak of a momentum by which a new balance between the body and movement is struck — also involves the emergence of a new subject position in which the first authors of modern dance appear. Or as Rancière summarises:

> ... the conventional art of dramatic action and the 'mechanical' art of the ballet could be dismissed and substituted by a unique art of the performing body 'speaking' to the audience in the universal language of movement. (Rancière 2014, n.p.)

Critical of the political consequences of claims of autonomy by virtue of the so-called universality of bodily movement, the post-Marxist literary theorist Andrew Hewitt regards modern dance as a source of an aesthetic ideology which proclaims emancipation through the body's experience of its own truth as its nature. The purity of movement is staked out through its origin or source: the body of the dancer. Movement becomes ontologically bound to the body, ontologised as a minimal resting place of 'noncompromisable subjectivity' (Hewitt 2005, 18). Binding movement to the body as a mechanism of subjectivation will pose two problems: the core of dance's holistic resistance to discursive thought coupled with dance practitioners' mistrust of theorisation, and the difficulty in establishing the work of dance, which will be tackled next.

2. The work of dance

Thanks to the coincidence of the source, instrument and site of danced movement in the body, the work of dance is conferred special ontological status. In aesthetic theories from the 1980s and beyond, largely informed by phenomenology and analytic philosophy, the status presupposes a duality between the 'work' and its multiple instances, that is, 'performances' (see Davies 1991, Ingarden 1989).[1] Graham McFee has formulated the most prominent view of analytic aesthetics on this issue:

> With dance, as with music, there are at least two 'objects of appreciation': the work itself and tonight's performance of it. These might be treated differently for critical purposes: thus, the dance seen last night might have been a wonderful performance of a mediocre work or (more likely) the opposite. To provide a conceptual structure for discussion of such multiples, some writers (Wollheim 1980, sections 35–6; McFee 1992, 90–4) have employed a type/token framework, such that dance performances are tokens of an (abstract) type. (McFee 2001, 546)

The uncertainty among analytic philosophers regarding what is constitutive and what is contingent for a work of dance viewed through a particular performance thereof cannot be the ground for attributing to it a purportedly weak, dubious, special or problematic condition. Such an ontological claim can be disputed, firstly, on the basis of its lack of specialist knowledge about dance practice, and secondly, its error of applying the standard of musical notation to dance. Moreover, the incapacity of Western philosophy and aesthetics to think dance might have to do with the tradition of applying to it the common regime of 'the work of art' (*oeuvre*), while there is 'no library of movement' and 'no stable objects' shareable by a broader community outside that of dance specialists (Pouillaude 2009, 9).

Contesting the strict conditioning of Nelson Goodman's division of allographic and autographic arts (Goodman 1976), Pouillaude has suggested that dance be considered an allographic art without notation. The allographic regime of dance grounds the possibility of iteration, extraction and retrieval of singular, constitutive characteristics – such as a repertory of movements, for instance – or contingent characteristics of an individual interpretation and their inscription in an oral-mimetic practice rather than in the writing and reading modes of music or literature. Most dance notation systems have proven insufficient or inadequate, lacking the prominence held by standardised Western notation in the world of music.[2] Therefore, Pouillaude has reformulated the type-token duality in a framework more suited to dance: the work of dance exists at once as a 'public object', shared and offered for judgment, and as a 'resistant object', capable of surviving the death of its initial protagonists, or in other words, existing beyond the experience or memory of its creation and performing processes (Pouillaude 2009, 77). He has chosen to redescribe the problem of dance's mode of existence in a conceptual imagery more passionate than the one yielded by the terms of positivist logic. Dance exhibits, for lack of an appropriate English translation, *désoeuvrement*: the regime of an 'unworking' (idle, inoperative) work. It is characterised, on the one hand, by physical expenditure (*la dépense*) or indifference to the trace or residue of action (Pouillaude 2009, 76), and on the other hand, by auto-affection, where motion in performance produces an infinite cycle of the renewal of energy in lieu of objects or things (Pouillaude 2009, 81). In concert with many recent projects which reinvent the tools for documenting and transmitting works of dance,[3] we may conclude that the ontological status of each work must be resolved individually. This entails paying attention to the idiosyncratic relationship between the shareable (exterior or public) and the reticent, self-absorbed or shattered aspects of a dance work, case by case.

3. Meaning and sense

The third problem concerns the production of meaning in dance, how dance signifies or 'makes sense', which has been labeled as the 'standard *sotto voce* accompaniment' to much of twentieth-century and contemporary dance, attesting to the puzzlement of novice dance audiences (Sheets-Johnstone 1979, 33). From the viewpoint of analytic philosophy, this problem is addressed as a matter of underdetermination:

> … the dance work is always underdetermined, relative to any particular performance of it, since each performance makes concrete in particular ways features of the dance which might have been concretized in other ways, indeed, which might be made concrete in those other ways in another performance of that dance, even one by the same company. (McFee 2001, 548)

One way in which recent dance studies have grappled with bewilderment in the face of what appears abstract and elusive about dancing movement was to attribute it to an ontology of disappearance. Peggy Phelan's thesis according to which performance is considered an event of elusive presence condemned to loss and repetitions of memory (Phelan 1993, 148–152) has had a significant impact on a segment of dance scholarship aligned with Lacanian and Derridean discourses on presence, writing, subjectivity, the gaze and history (Kruschkova ed. 2005; Siegmund 2006; Lepecki 2006; Foellmer 2009). The ephemerality of movement in dance is described as the body's self-erasure in the 'fading forms' of movement, and moreover is featured as a paradigm of the fundamental condition of performance. Disappearance, loss, lack and absence have been the notions through which dance scholars in the past decade have examined movement with bodily presence, regarding it as that which disappears and marks the passing of time. Comparison with music, as the time-based art with which dance shares some phenomenal characteristics, shows how inept the notion of dance existing 'at a perpetual vanishing point' is (Siegel 1972, 1). Music is no less immaterial than dance, yet thanks to its early alliance with science and philosophy, it has developed a notational system that secures against its disappearance. Had dance not been disregarded for its too fleshy (and therefore, ironically material) appearance in the past, it wouldn't have been so easily condemned to an ontology disappearance. Thus, the theme of disappearance obscures the problem of dance's significance, which the divergent philosophical theories had tried to solve earlier. It might be worthwhile to revisit the most noted attempts in so far as they disclose philosophy's method of making dance its object. We will map them out briefly here.

Susanne K. Langer was among the first authors who sought to explain how dance signifies, specifically on the basis of her symbolisation theory, devised under the influence of Ernst Cassirer (Langer 1953). Countering the prevalent notion of self-expression in modern dance, which she, unlike many other philosophers, was sufficiently familiar with so as to invoke it in concrete examples (Mary Wigman features as a prominent case), Langer introduced a distinction between the virtual and actual aspects of gesture as a symbolic form of imagined feelings in lieu of felt or intended-to-be-expressed emotions. The founding assumption of her conception of the virtual is indebted to Cassirer's concept of 'mythical consciousness', in which the symbol and its meaning are inseparable, and which reveals a quest for a deep-seated meaning of dance in tune with the German idealist tradition of *Ausdruckstanz*, as demonstrated by the following excerpt:

> The dance creates an image of nameless and even bodiless Powers filling a complete, autonomous realm, a 'world.' It is the first presentation of the world as a realm of mystic forces.... The substance of such dance creation is the same Power that enchanted ancient caves and forests, but today we invoke it with full knowledge of its illusory status, and therefore with wholly artistic intent. (Langer 1983, 38; 45)

A similar phenomenological ground with mystical undertones is to be found in Maxine Sheets-Johnstone's theory of objects-in-motion. Whereas Langer's theory accounts for the expressionist view of abstract motion, Sheets-Johnstone's phenomenological analysis of the perception of motion gives the basis for a formalist perspective on abstract bodily movement and presence. Or in her words,

> the dancer is not moving through a form; a form is moving through him. The dancer is not doing movement; movement is doing him. To be an object-in-motion is to fulfill a kinetic destiny, and to fulfill a kinetic destiny is to bring a qualitative world to life .... The dancer is not making the quality manifest, the quality is manifesting itself. ... It is only insofar as the dancer is permeated by quality, that he or she allows it full play by surrendering to it, that quality appears, and that the dancer can be described as 'having' a certain quality. It is on the basis of being had and thus having, or being possessed and thus possessing, that we can speak of a qualitative presence. In effect, quality is everywhere present because it is an absolute possession, and it is an absolute possession because it is an absolute surrender. (Sheets-Johnstone 1979, 40)

My aim in citing these two phenomenological interpretations of dance at length is to indicate the genealogy of the prevalent vitalist idea which motivates dance practitioners throughout the twentieth century and today, be it a mystical power that expresses itself in motion[4] or a formal quality that, despite its being objectified, possesses the body. This idea is the metaphysical horizon by which philosophy ennobled dance and elevated its status to a high art in the period from the 1950s to the 1970s. And it is also the episteme which Susan Foster breaks with in her quest for a dance theory that will specifically *read* dances and their subjects from a structuralist perspective of literary rhetorics and semiotics.

In retrospect, Foster's *Reading Dancing: Bodies and Subjects in Contemporary American Dance* (1986) is not only emblematic of the structuralist and, specifically semiotic, encroachment upon dance scholarship and its operation against received phenomenological ideas about dance. It also marks the beginning of a wholesale translation of methods of culturalist analysis and poststructuralist criticism, as well as of a set of particular concerns and topics mirroring the agendas of feminism, gender and queer theory, postcolonial theory and the politics of racial, ethnic and other kinds of identitarian difference, which shaped Dance Studies in the 1990s (see Goellner and Shea 1994, Koritz 1996, Dils and Cooper 2001). Finally, dance theory was no longer short of meaning-production, but of thought, or the problems and questions which would provoke philosophical thinking that would be particular to dance. In too many academic papers the works of dance started to model, like mannequins, for a particular theoretical interpretation, which reduced their meaning and thought-provoking capacity to readymade terms and concepts (see Desmond 1997). Therefore, another turn was needed, this time coming from a number of choreographers in Europe who sought a new poetics, one which would upset the sensibility and knowledge about dance and exceed both the formalist-abstract paradigm of dance with its phenomenological heritage *and* the poststructuralist readings of dance *qua* text. It was the choreographers themselves—Jérôme Bel, Xavier Le Roy, Vera Mantero, Juan Dominguez, Mårten Spångberg, Eszter Salamon, Mette

Ingvartsen, BADco and others across Europe—who shifted their focus from the formal-expressive categories of style, language and thematic "aboutness" of an aesthetic object to a critical and experimental inquiry into the conditions of theatrical representation, such as the act and the subject of performance (Mantero's *Perhaps she could dance first and think afterwards*, 1991; Bel's *The Last Performance*, 1998; Salamon's *What A Body You Have Honey*, 2001), spectatorship (Bel's *The Show Must Go On*, 2001), the creation process, rehearsal and presentation (Le Roy's *E.X.T.E.N.S.I.O.N.S.*, 1998–2003, Dominguez' *All Good Spies Are My Age*, 2002), material conditions of work (BADco/Nikolina Pristaš' *Changes/Promjene*), and so forth. Their preoccupations began to centre on what dance or performance is, how choreography could be expanded beyond the movement of the body and how the way dance is made necessarily determines performance. As the aesthetic values of kinetic forms or expressions became secondary, although not entirely absent, their work was labeled as 'conceptual dance'; however, this term is arguably a misnomer, since all the work had in common with conceptual art was the conceptualisation of its working methods and medium – namely, the dancing body.[5] But the most important outcome of what critics also referred to as 'new choreography' or 'new choreographic performance' (Lepecki 1999, 2006; Ploebst 2001) was that 'theory', or rather the reading of texts by Derrida, Deleuze, Deleuze and Guattari and so on, became a resource for choreographic texts, aligning dance with philosophy in the very poetics of dance. The effect that such a theoretical or conceptual turn had on contemporary dance is that it made it more widely visible, beyond what used to be the narrow and marginalized segment of the performing arts—that is to say, dance.[6]

Philosophers' metaphors of dance

The conceptual turn in contemporary dance and the discussions that included the voices of contemporary philosophers precipitated an interest in dance among important figures in contemporary European philosophy, such as Jean-Luc Nancy, whose conversations with the choreographer Mathilde Monnier spawned a book and a performance (Nancy and Monnier 2005, performance *Allitérations* 2001), or Jacques Rancière, whose essays 'The Emancipated Spectator' (2009) and 'The Moment of Dance' (2014) were written on the occasion of gatherings organised by the protagonists of so-called conceptual dance.[7] Prior to these, Alain Badiou's essay 'Dance as a Metaphor for Thought' ([1993] 2005) elicited attention outside philosophy among dance and performance theorists by the force of his contentious assertions about dance.[8]

Although Badiou's and Rancière's views on dance differ to the extent that their philosophical projects are politically and epistemologically different, they share a familiar methodological habit: their approach bypasses works of dance by mainly focusing on literary or cinematic sources that mediate dance or bodily movement. In both cases, Mallarmé's writings on dance figure is a significant reference (Mallarmé 1956). Whereas Rancière occasionally invokes concrete works (Lucinda Childs' *Dance* from 1979, for example) because his thesis on the aesthetic regime of art must be situated historically with a hint of analytical examples, for Badiou dance doesn't exist empirically, in the history of its practice, works, techniques, names and bodies (the only dance-related names being Mallarmé and Nietzsche). In fact, Badiou explicitly discloses his 'mission' to

speak of 'dance not thought on its own terms, on the basis of its history and technique, but of dance such *as it is given welcome and shelter by philosophy*' (Badiou 2005, 63; my emphasis). Dance appears as nothing more than an instrument of a philosophical exercise—a new 'metaphor' for probing Badiou's familiar subtractive ontology of event and thought. Therefore, we are compelled to make a binary decision, just like Badiou's event requires of its subjects: to either read this essay figuratively, as a specimen of the philosopher's conception of art and aesthetics, divorced from any historical and practical concerns of the art of dance, or to take Badiou's metaphor 'seriously' and envisage the dance that would ensue from his axioms. In a recent critique of Badiou, Jonathan Owen Clark has demonstrated how measuring the latter with the former register, namely, Badiou's theory from the viewpoint of the history of dance with his claims of 'inaesthetics', reveals difficulties in his philosophical arguments (Clark 2011). Let's briefly examine a few striking points in Badiou's encounter with dance.

With the aim of ostensibly furthering Nietzsche's praise of thought against the spirit of gravity, epitomized by the obedience of long German legs (i.e. military parade), Badiou rouses a series of Nietzsche's metaphors that depict dancing as flight ('bird'), explosive leap ('fountain'), the innocence of a new beginning ('child'), and as illusive lightness ('intangible air'). The body of his description is likened to the silent ballet dancer 'on points' that 'pricks the floor just as one would puncture a cloud' (Badiou 2005, 59). To make the metaphor 'work', the philosopher adjusts his image of dance to the requirements of his well-known subtractive ontology of event, which I will briefly outline here. The dancing body must be unrestrained, its movement not caused externally. Dancing isn't about self-expression either, since it appears as a muted intensity, or in Badiou's words, 'interiority' itself. Thus, for Badiou dance solely extends in space—an indeterminate, 'pure', virgin site; it doesn't have a name, as its body is anonymous too. It determines the stage before the event acquires a name that would cut the past from the future, and is therefore a suspension of time within space. Badiou's vision of dance subtracts all particularity from it, not only a historical context in which a particular subject acts and all possible registers of relations resulting from composing the motion of bodies in time and space, but also the form and concept in the act of dancing, the choreographic knowledge which supports it as well as the gaze which interprets it. The closest image of such dance would be the 'spontaneous' free improvisation in a solo performance, but seen in and for itself, in a romantic guise of an incorporeal event in which dancing marks the limit between being and disappearing. The translation of this image into contemporary dance practice resonates with the problematic ubiquity of solo dance, which promotes the individual autonomy of the dancer and the fetishist exclusivity of a 'here-and-now' expression withdrawing from this world. Reveling in Mallarmé's paradoxical statement that 'the dancer doesn't dance', Badiou dispossesses dance of the right to be an art, bestowing on it, conversely, a loftier status: the vanishing 'sign' of the possibility of art as such, inscribed in a 'thought-body' (Badiou 2005, 64). A condescending gift evocative of the Hegelian evaluative hierarchy of the arts with philosophy's eminence above them: dance isn't art, because it is much more than art. It is the condition of possibility for art as the body's capacity for thought.

That Badiou's philosophical abduction of dance implies a classical conception about modernist autonomy can be best inferred from a comparison with Rancière's 'Moment of Dance' (Rancière

2014). Like Badiou, Rancière reasserts his established theory on the several regimes of art, the aesthetic regime in particular, upon the new terrain of dance (Rancière 2004). However, his reading of the same claims that Badiou elaborated with Mallarmé, about the anonymity of the dancing woman who is not a woman and who does not dance, yields, in Rancière, a different concept of autonomy. Aptly, the centerpiece of his analysis is movement in Dziga Vertov's film *Man with a Movie Camera* (1929), the notable documentary which experiments with cinematic techniques in representing Soviet urban life. When Rancière designates this movement as 'free', which peculiarly echoes the French term for early modern dance after Isadora Duncan ('*danse libre*'), he painstakingly distinguishes it from the spontaneous, free expression based on will. In an implicit commentary on Badiou's essentialist view on dance, Rancière explains that free movement is not a matter of a purified essence specific to dance, but of an indistinction between means and ends, an aesthetic revolution in the Kantian sense of beauty and a "human revolution" as in Marx's sense of ending the alienation of workers. Thus he wrests the autonomy of movement from the cross-cutting of the images of people at work and people at play in Vertov's film as a case of heteronomy, a heterogeneous equality:

> The movements of the dancers are carried along in the rhythm of the montage. But, conversely, dance is the art that epitomizes the work of montage.... [It] is not so much the model of an original spring of the body as it is a model of translation, in the two senses of the word: it is a movement that presents itself as the translation of another movement. This is what was meant by Mallarmé's formula: the dancer does not dance. Instead she writes. However what she writes is not a composition of the movements and figures belonging to the vocabulary of the ballet. It is, he says, a 'metaphor of our form'. But this metaphor has no translation in any dictionary of tropes. It is the task of the spectator to translate it in turn, to compose for himself the poem that the ballerina writes with her feet. (Rancière 2014, n.p.)

In contrast with Badiou's ontological grip on dance as a new beginning, Rancière adamantly vies for an iterative differentiation that renders translation political. In a word, what operates in translation is the principle of equality which emancipates both dance and its spectators from the hierarchy of prescribed roles, activities and places, or of the police as a general law of distributing the sensible.

Apart from undoing the simple antinomy of the subtractive essentialist claim of modernist autonomy in Badiou—by showing that the more one stresses the specificity of an art, the more one is compelled to identify that specificity with the experience of radical heterogeneity (Clark 2011, n.p.)—what does Rancière's aesthetic regime *do for* dance? It provides the philosophical ground for a broader transdisciplinary consideration of dance as an instrument for studying the social practices of movement and bodies outside/beyond the narrow bounds of a specific art discipline. By consequence, the concept of 'social choreography' attests to such an approach, endorsing the critical analysis of how ideology operates aesthetically and how dance and everyday movement rehearse rather than only reflect social order (Hewitt 2005, Cvejić and Vujanović 2012). In Rancière's notion of dance as 'montage' as well as in the study of 'social choreography', we can

observe how the instrumentalisation of dance exceeds its usurpation by philosophy by conversely bracing dance and choreography as the instrument (and not as a metaphor) of expanded thought.

Choreographic performance practice and the expression of thought

There is yet one more register of the encounter between dance and philosophy, one which perhaps comes the closest to 'performance philosophy' as its particular 'dance-variant'. It concerns a kind of thought that arises from the recent practice of European contemporary choreography (since the mid-1990s) and at the same time gives rise to, that is, distinguishes, the specific modes of making, performing and spectatorship in dance. What qualifies such movement is immanence, as Laura Cull describes it (Cull 2013, 12-13): a vertigo that ceaselessly produces processes that interfere in one another, processes of thought, sensibility, imagination, physical movement, attention and so on, as opposed to the hierarchy of philosophical thought transcending dance. Thus, the choreographic practice in question develops a distinctive method of creation which could be accounted for as choreographing problems, rooted in the philosophy of Gilles Deleuze and his reading of Spinoza and Henri Bergson.[9] The choreographic creation of problems as an expressive logic of thought will be featured here as a specimen of the theorisation of choreography in the nexus of philosophy and experimental dance practice. A comparable approach is found in Petra Sabisch's study titled *Choreographing Relations: Practical Philosophy And Contemporary Choreography* (2011), whose explicit aim is to situate philosophy and choreography on a par with, and on the same plane as, an immanent practice of thought. While Sabisch emphasises thought and sensibility as concepts of *relation* — as singular 'assemblages of relations to objects, to music, to bodies, relations between bodies, relations of visibility, relations between forces, relations of movement and rest, etc.' (Sabisch 2011, 7) — here *problem* will be the term in my account of the relation between ideas and experimentation. Whereas relationality stresses the proximity between philosophical and choreographic articulation, 'problem' focalises the driving force of critical and experimental modes of creation.

The choreographers whose work is comprehended by the method of problems belong to that grouping of artists from various disciplines who have developed an affinity with Deleuze's thought over the last two decades.[10] However, the references to Deleuze in their work are occasional and inconsistent, often mixed with a whole array of other philosophers and theories. Thus, the fact that these choreographers have been reading contemporary philosophy, Deleuze among other authors, does not legitimize per se or determine the ways that Deleuzian thought might matter for contemporary choreography. It informs us, though, as Efrosini Protopapa has remarked about Jonathan Burrows and Xavier Le Roy, that 'these artists consider writing, reading and discussing a *method of practice within choreography*' (Protopapa 2004, n.p.), which compels us to read them with a particular focus on the questions that guided them in experimenting.

In a brief definition, the method of problems consists in the posing of questions that differentiate terms and conditions under which the creation of a material object—the composition of a bodily movement—unfolds. In Deleuze, problems are objects of 'Ideas', as they characterise the relationship between forms of thought and forms of sensibility as one of difference rather than

identity. Ideas here are choreographic, which entails inventions of the body and/or movement in performance as well as of time that is coextensive with the body and movement in performance. In European contemporary dance, the choreographic idea that constituted modern dance during the first decades of the twentieth century is still pivotal: the synthesis between the body and movement under two operations, the subjectivation of the dancer through (emotive) self-expression and the objectivation of movement through the physical expression of the dancing body. Subjectivation secures the necessity of the movement in the body's urge to move and express its inner (emotional) experience. Objectivation presupposes another relationship between movement, the body and the subject in the expressive act: dancing is foregrounded, or even reduced to a physical articulation of the movement, whose meaning lies, tautologically, in itself. Movement is created as an object in itself that engages bones, muscles, ligaments, nerves and other body parts of the dancer in strictly physical activity. Objectivation of the movement by self-referentiality renounces the expression of the self in the movement—the 'outwarding' of an inner experience—but it still relies on the body-movement bind.

Both types of synthesis connect the body and movement in one organic whole, which in the experimental practice of European contemporary dance is rendered problematic. The rupture of the organic regime consists of dispensing either with the body as the source of authentic movement or with the object of movement to which the body is physically tied. Choreographing problems involves composing these ruptures between movement, the body and time in performance such that they engender a shock upon sensibility, one that renders many aspects of choreographic performances hard to identify, recognize or accommodate within the horizon of expectations of contemporary dance. These problems 'force' thought as an exercise of the limits of sensibility that can be accounted for not by representation, but by the principle of expression that Deleuze develops from Spinoza's philosophy in his key books on ontology, *Expressionism in Philosophy: Spinoza* ([1968] 1992) and *Difference and Repetition* ([1968] 1994). Expression is a logic opposed to representation; it is a certain way of thinking and forming ideas outside of analogy and emanation as the dual aspects that govern (transcendental) relations of agreement between the idea and the object understood to be a thing. It is the thought that forces a practical path in which ideas in the form of problems and compositions arise in parallel, non-causal correspondence. The probing of this path could be referred to as experimentation, whereby time is inserted into the construction of the problem, doubled by a sensorial and affective experience of the experiment parallel to the thought. This time could be regarded as a time of learning, which involves unlearning or undoing, ungrounding the knowledge of possibilities that reproduce rather than create new movements, bodies and their relations. Such learning implies 'violent' training without a general method, but with a dedication to the problem that, as Deleuze describes, 'demand[s] the very transformation of our body and our language' (Deleuze 1994, 192). Le Roy explicitly refers to learning as the process of a removal of habit under the construction of constraints:

> I always worked with constructing constraints in order to produce 'new' movement or to transform the perception of the body in a situation. What can you do when you cannot do this or that; you have to look for another way, and you have to go around habits. In a way, it's making things difficult in order to explore ways outside the power of habits. (Le Roy in Cvejić 2009, n.p.).

Problems, also understood as the disruptions of habits, as Le Roy reports above, offer us an insight into a coextensive parallelism between thinking and the practices of making, performing and attending choreographic performance. Thus, the parallelism accounts for their dual status: the problems stem from the very process of creation, as they express the thought that guides the choreographers in their decisions; and the problems are also *given by* the performances, as they further provoke us, who observe the work post hoc, to account for them conceptually by a philosophical method. In this way, choreography contributes to a philosophical rethinking of the relationship between the body, movement and time and, consequently, gives rise to distinctive concepts of its own.[11]

The theory of expression of thought we have outlined here shares a common ground with a few other philosophical accounts of contemporary dance that separate these Deleuzian approaches from the previously discussed philosophies of dance.[12] Its main assumption is that dance, like any other performance, should be regarded as a time-based art, in contrast to the linguistic assumptions of performativity. The approach of the expression-based thought in choreography favors the notion of attending, according to which performance is approached from the aspect of time conceived as Bergsonian duration: a 'succession of qualitative changes, which melt into and permeate one another' (Bergson 2002, 61), an indivisible continuous multiplicity. The experimental choreographic practice of the last two decades has countered the perception of movement's ephemerality or bodily presence/absence by sustaining motion and stillness, by persisting in the transformation of movement and bodies into the future, by exploring sensations and affects in processes of becoming, by implicating the spectators in processes beyond the actual performance, by manipulating performers' memory of past movements in the present. These strategies all point to the importance of duration, or time in which change is created and perceived, and becoming, through which the bodies and movements transform. Therefore, dance is better approached as a transformation process rather than as a fleeting act—contrary to the prevalent thesis about dance's disappearance, which we discussed earlier in Badiou's and other philosophical accounts of dance. The genesis of dance is located in process and duration rather than in an act whose meaning transcends or lies outside of duration.

Prospects of a dance-philosophy

We are coming to the end of a winding course marked by historical, inherited difficulties, and then by the sporadic ventures of philosophy into dance in the twentieth century. Having arrived at the beginnings of a 'dance-philosophy' today as a kind of thought which arises within the material practice of dancing, only provisory conclusions can be drawn. First of all, thanks to the expansion of choreographic poetics during the last two decades, and to its encounter with Deleuze, dance has ceased to figure as a metaphor in universal abstract singular form, an ahistorical conduit for a general ontology, as it was for Nietzsche or Badiou. What contemporary dance and its theories have 'learnt' from Deleuze is the immanence of the practice, whereby philosophy no longer claims the exclusive right to thinking nor does it seek dance to flesh out its abstract and general ideas. Secondly, after centuries of musing on 'what philosophy could *do for* dance', the question is now

reversed. Recent writings by Brian Massumi and Erin Manning, as well as Alva Noë, contribute with advanced solutions to the problem of 'what dance can do for philosophy' instead. In view of opening philosophy to its outside, Massumi and Manning explore 'what writing can do to make thought-felt what art can do, with philosophy' (Massumi and Manning 2012, vii) after Deleuze, expanded in relation to A. N. Whitehead's process oriented philosophy and William James's radical empiricism (see also Manning 2013). Like Massumi and Manning, Noë has also incorporated his research of William Forsythe's movement language into his study of the embodied action-based cognition (Noë 2012). Dance in particular has enabled him to demonstrate how perception and concept-formation can no longer be accounted for by the traditional representational theory of mind, how they instead depend on skills acquired through doing and training, similarly to how dance is learnt and made. The effect of dance entering these philosophical considerations is an upgrading of a speculative philosophy of process, for instance, or of a phenomenology combined with cognitive science that takes an experimental, radically pragmatic stance. Given the newly gained experimental ground of philosophies which consider dance as a movement of thought, we might hope that some problems that contemporary dance has been grappling with—kinaesthesia and proprioception as sensations specifically related to bodily movement, and gesture—will become the object of a fruitful, reciprocal encounter between contemporary dance and contemporary philosophy, or, in a (portmanteau experimental composition of a) word, a dance-philosophy.

Notes

[1] The duality in the ontological status of the work which involves performance, such as music and dance, was first posited by phenomenological aesthetics, most notably in the work of the Polish philosopher Roman Ingarden (1989).

[2] Myriam Imschoot (200) writes: "When looking for an overview on the notational endeavors of choreographers and dance makers in the last centuries, what one sees is more a sort of 'babelisation' of idiosyncratic instructions than a commonly and widely applied overarching language. To some, the dream of making dance visible and thus indelible has therefore proven to be an illusion. Unable to furnish the bones, dance would linger outside, on the threshold of the archive."

[3] William Forsythe, *Improvisation Technologies*, CD ROM 1999; Emio Greco|PC *Inside Movement Knowledge*, 2008; Forsythe's *Motion Bank* with online scores of the works by Jonathan Burrows and Matteo Fargion, Deborah Hay, Bebe Miller and Thomas Hauert available online (http://motionbank.org).

[4] For a contemporary dance poetics rooted in formalism and combined with Far-Eastern philosophical influences that imbue the form with mystical value, see the work of Anne Teresa De Keersmaeker (De Keersmaeker and Cvejić 2013).

[5] The debate about 'conceptual dance' went on for a few years in European journals and magazines specialised in the performing arts (*Frakcija*, *Maska*, *TkH Journal for Performing Arts Theory*, *Ballet-Tanz International*, *Mouvement*, *Etcetera* and others) and came to the conclusion that 'conceptual dance' does not designate any movement, poetics, style or genre. Instead, it symptomatically evidences a problem of qualifying as choreographies those performances that contest the foundational characteristics of dance as a historical art discipline. 'Conceptual dance' is still used derogatorily, connoting the negative sense of a betrayal of dance.

[6] The following exhibitions and programs are just a few among many that testify to a keen interest in choreographic performance in the contemporary visual arts context: the exhibition *Move: Choreographing You* at Hayward Gallery, London, autumn 2010; *Choreography: Experiencing Space, Time and Ideas*, a workshop at Tate Modern in autumn, 2011; The Performance Exhibition Series, which primarily features dance, in MOMA, New York, since January 2009; and the opening at Tate Modern of The Tanks, a permanent venue for performance and other time-based arts.

[7] In the opening of his book titled *The Emancipated Spectator* (2009), Rancière explains how this volume of essays originates in an invitation to reflect on the spectator on the basis of ideas developed in his book *The Ignorant Schoolmaster* at the opening lecture of the fifth Internationale Sommerakademie in Frankfurt am Main in 2004.

[8] For a critique of Badiou's reflections on dance in relation to the subjectivity instilled by solo dance, see Kunst (2003). Jonathan Owen Clark (2011) has written a critical exegesis of the same essay by Badiou, probing the terms of Badiou's general subtractive ontology of Merce Cunningham's concept, language and oeuvre, taken as a counterpart to Badiou's favorite case in point, Arnold Schönberg.

[9] The following section is derived from my upcoming book *Choreographing Problems: Expressive Concepts in European Contemporary Dance and Performance* (forthcoming).

[10] Hence, 'body without organs', 'becoming', 'rhizome' and 'affect' feature as prominent terms in the lingo of dance practitioners.

[11] In *Choreographing Problems* I devise several concepts on the basis of a philosophical consideration of seven works: *Self Unfinished* (1998) and *Untitled* (2005) by Xavier Le Roy, Weak Dance Strong Questions (2001) by Jonathan Burrows and Jan Ritsema, *héâtre-élévision* (2002) by Boris Charmatz, *Nvsbl* (2006) by Eszter Salamon, 50/50 (2005) by Mette Ingvartsen, and *It's In The Air* (2007) by Ingvartsen and Jefta van Dinther. 'Part-bodies', 'part-machines', 'movement-sensations', 'headbox', 'wired assemblings', 'stutterances', 'power-motion', 'crisis-motion', 'cut-ending' and 'resonance' account for the construction of problems and compositions that desubjectivise or disobjectivise relations between movement, body and time as regards the constitution of the dancing body, and between performing and attending (to) performance with respect to theater dance.

[12] See also Lepecki (2006) and Apostolou-Hölscher (forthcoming).

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Biography

Bojana Cvejić (Belgrade) is a performance theorist and maker based in Brussels, and a co-founding member of the TkH editorial collective (http://www.tkh-generator.net). Cvejić holds degrees in musicology and philosophy (PhD, Centre for Research in Modern European Philosophy, London). Since 1996, she has (co-)authored and collaborated in many dance and theatre performances with J. Ritsema, X. Le Roy, E. Salamon, M. Ingvartsen, and E. Hrvatin. Her latest books are *Choreographing Problems: Expressive Concepts in European Contemporary Dance and Performance* (Palgrave, forthcoming), *Drumming & Rain: A Choreographer's Score*, co-written with A. T. De Keersmaeker (Mercator, Brussels, 2014), *Parallel Slalom: Lexicon of Nonaligned Poetics*, co-edited with G. S. Pristaš (TkH/CDU, Belgrade/Zagreb, 2013), and *Public Sphere by Performance*, co-written with A. Vujanović (b_books, Berlin, 2012). Cvejić teaches at various dance and performance programmes throughout Europe (e.g. P.A.R.T.S. Brussels). Her latest works include the exhibition *Danse Guerre* at CCN Rennes (2013) and *Spatial Confessions* at Tate Modern (2014).

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