

## I FAMILY RESEMBLANCE

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We name things and then we can talk about them.

Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*

ANYTHING (MATERIAL OR NONMATERIAL) can be the object of our awareness, attention, or questioning mind. Whenever we ask “what is this?” we enter into an inquiring frame of mind. When we research something, we formalize this intuitive process to establish a definition for qualitative discourse or quantitative testing. We define the thing we seek to know more about. Then we have a basis for communicating the findings. The results of the research will rest on our basic understanding and definition of the thing we are investigating. The activity of defining underlies all other aspects of research.

Naming things is at root a philosophical endeavor, even though the framework or lens for investigation may be oriented aesthetically, biologically, sociologically, or historically. First comes an understanding of the phenomenon—the thing—and in dance this is not a material thing that can be positioned apart from ourselves. Dance derives from human movement and consciousness. It is an activity that ensues from our nature as moving beings and speaks of that nature in its environment and culture. I believe that movement is a part of our nature, which does not mean that we have no choices to make about what movement, where, and when. Nor does it mean that we are doomed to move all the time, like the maiden who makes the mistake of trading her soul for red shoes and has to dance forever.

We can be still (although children may have trouble with this). If we could not, we would not know movement. (Whoops! I'm beginning to define movement.) We know things partly through contrast—just as stillness gives us a perspective on movement and thus the possibility of naming it. Dance contains movement and stillness (and more). The “more than movement” aspects of dance point toward context: aesthetic, historical, cultural, kinesiological, and so on, which we explore throughout this text.

What would be the opposite of dance? Lassitude? A loss of dynamic tension between movement and stillness? Would it be “not dancing”? As I sometimes tell my students: “you’re not dancing yet.” What do I mean? Well, I might mean “you could do better” (enhance or refine performance), or “you’re not doing the intended movement yet,” or “the movement lacks something (maybe flow),” or “you’re doing all the moves, but *you* are missing.” These are matters of consciousness, my understanding or tacit definition of dance, as I name its features for the students in response to their performance. My teaching them how they might do better will further shape their understanding of what dance is, assuming they trust me and are paying attention. The dance arises intersubjectively in the interval between us. Our conscious interaction will be reflected in the movement event that we call dance. The concrete product began with our engagement toward a common outcome. This manner of describing experience in order to identify phenomena (the contents of consciousness) was initiated by Edmund Husserl, who hoped to return philosophy to a basic naming of essences, “the things themselves.”

Dance is often spoken of as though it were a singular thing, but we know we have various “things” in mind when we say it. It may seem curious to call dance (or dancing) a thing, an object. Yet the moment we bring ourselves to ask, “what is this?” our attention formulates the object of the question, bringing it into sharp relief. And necessarily so, to make the question clear. Our answer will further define the thing we have in mind (at least for the time being).

Thus there is a basic process of definition that is part of our fundamental consciousness of things. As we distinguish one thing from another, the pluralistic world of distinct objects arises, be these material objects, bodily activities (the things we do), or thoughts (the things we think).

But we rightly speak of dance as a subject also, particularly when we make it a topic or theme of inquiry. In this book dance is the central subject. Furthermore, it is the focal point for exploring a variety of research methods and modes of inquiry. Thus we locate the terms of dance in various contexts. Furthermore, we are establishing an entire field of inquiry as we consider the emerging methods for researching dance. This is a field in flux because it flows from studied and critical

contributions that define dance at ever deeper levels over time. We could say this is an objectifying process because it produces written texts and other records such as notation and video documents that expand our understandings of dance as a discipline—a researched branch of knowledge. At root is the subjective thematic or experience. We commonly speak of dance as a subjective experience, a part of our sentient life, sometimes synonymous with our subjectivity. This is the dance as perceived in action, not a matter for reflection or study but manifest in the flow of being.

## A Family of Meanings

Dance is not a precise concept or singular activity; it is richly diverse. But this does not mean, as is sometimes claimed, that dance cannot be defined. Rather, there are changing perspectives we take on the things we call dance. Dance already has concrete definitions in its various manifestations. Ask anyone what dance is, and they will give you an example. More abstract matters of definition revolve around new examples and whether they fit (or stretch, or contradict) existing understandings. There will always be particular examples or aesthetic movements that challenge existing definitions, but it is in relation to some basic understanding of a phenomenon that new examples can be included. They would bear at least “a family resemblance,” as Wittgenstein explores in his philosophy of language.<sup>1</sup>

Human beings are inventive creatures, and they are constantly inventing new ways to dance in bodily means and matters of movement. In addition, intentionality and interpretation enter into the picture. Our reasons to dance and the significance we find therein become part of the definition. We can move spontaneously and suddenly recognize a dancelike quality in the movement or observe the movement around us in a dance framework; but even this presupposes that we have an idea about what dance is.

If I say “I am eating,” it is easy enough to visualize the activity; only the circumstances vary. If I say “I am dancing,” visualizations of that activity could be infinitely varied. The word has been used to cover a wide range of behavior, from intricately formulated movement vocabularies performed in spectacular settings, as in the classical ballet, to the subtle and dangerous dynamic equilibrium of a tightrope dancer. A child’s creative play may be interpreted as dance. Dance therapists consider the whole movement character of a person to be his or her dance. People in wheelchairs dance, and otherwise functional populations also seek the therapeutic of dance and related somatic processes. In order to develop move-

ment therapeutics or integrative movement/dance lessons, a somatic or dance therapist may utilize personal movement patterns as dance. The field of dance is thus wide-ranging, extending from clinical and personalized therapeutic perspectives to historically preserved cultural and traditional forms.

Dance grows out of culture and feeds back into it. We can mistakenly suppose that culture is something that only anthropologists study, and that the study of dance as a matter of ethnic identity applies only to cultures outside the contemporary Eurocentric network. Anthropologist Joann Kealiinohomoku's breakthrough article, "An Anthropologist Looks at Ballet as a Form of Ethnic Dance,"<sup>2</sup> is still relevant in this respect. It is a reminder that all dance is essentially cultural and as such has ethnicity.

The most basic meaning of culture is "to till the earth." All people till the earth of their own identity. That is: we create culture in the creation of our dances, be they for the purposes of art, ritual, fun, or therapy. When we study dance, we are studying culture. When we research dance, we are researching culture, whether as an ethnologist, aesthetician, sociologist, or historian. Only the focus of inquiry varies. Culture is how we dance and dress and cook, how we worship and call upon transpersonal powers, how we paint and write ourselves into history. Culture contains aesthetic values and social-historical processes. Culture is not something we put on or take off, nor is it some higher valuation (even if we do "wear it on our sleeve"). The word *culture* may be used pejoratively, but this is an acceleration of its basic meaning. Culture is created from all of our doings and sayings, our buildings and holdings. In the case of dance, it is created in our movement and the values we create and experience in the particular kinds of dances we do. All people are culturally identified in their dances; all dance has ethnicity, and aesthetic, social, and historical essence.

### *Creativity Is Apparent in All Dance*

Creativity is apparent in all dance from the magic invoked in ritual to the varieties of theater dance that clear a "seeing place" where one may identify with a staged presence. (Our word *theater* is derived from the Greek word *theatron*, which means "seeing place.")<sup>3</sup> Dance is not just any movement, but movement that has been created for some particular purpose. Although we may lose track of the creative origin of traditional dances, all dance is the product of human invention. This is not to say that animals do not dance, nor the cosmos for that matter, just to delimit the phenomenon of human dance.

## *Aesthetic Value Belongs to All Forms of Dance*

Dance movement is also aesthetically constructed. All forms contain the aesthetic impulses that motivated their creation. They appear in the special qualities or properties of the movement—whether the movement stamps, stalks, flows, or freezes. Since we can identify and name such properties, we sometimes call them objective. From *aisthesis* (the Greek word for sense perception) the aesthetic is also the subjectively affective, that which influences sentient life and change. Objectification and naming of aesthetic properties is predicated on subjectively lived aesthetic values in dance. The first gives us the details, the second, the dance. Aesthetics gives us fragrance and also the flower.

Many other movement activities are aesthetically constructed and perceived, but dance is movement that is primarily marked by its aesthetic character (its qualitative dimensions). At best, aesthetic theory stops short of prescriptions, and one enters its objective-subjective loops somewhere in the dance. Not charged with sight, smell, touch, and sound, dictionary definitions can be immobilizing and disappointing.

In what sense is it right that we hold ritual and aesthetics in separate categories? In ritual, attention is also given to qualitative movement. I am thinking about the carefully executed, smooth, and formal movements of the Japanese tea ceremony that I witnessed in Tsuchiura, Japan—quite a dance, but still a ritual ceremony. The Haitian ceremonial dance *Yanvalou*, while intended to invoke healing spirits, is nevertheless aesthetically constructed, as its sinuous flow of body shows. *Yanvalou* presents patterned actions that are part of a cultural expression. The dance's aesthetic style is contextualized ceremonially using music, singing, mythology, and religion, as explained by Joan Hamby Burroughs. Edith Turner also describes a “stylistic” (aesthetic) feature of Inupiat Eskimo dance and culture in northern Alaska that is seen repeatedly: “the slow start, full force climax, and unexpected ending.”<sup>4</sup>

Aesthetic value belongs to all forms of dance; it is inherent in movement patterns and qualities, sometimes accentuated by jewelry, costumes, or props, and often contextualized in stories, rituals, myths, or religion. Traditional dances and classical forms (as lasting over long periods of time) produce aesthetic values that identify a people and contribute to their cultural values. Thus we can understand that the properties of South Indian *bharatanatyam* represent classically transmitted religious and theatrical aesthetics, or that American square dance proceeds from rustic folk aesthetics. Aesthetic characteristics of individual performers or instances of particular performances can also be marked.

## *Dance Always Appears in Context*

It is difficult to identify a “pure” or intrinsic dance, but there may be a way to consider this (as I take up shortly). This is because dance always appears in context. Dance is entertainment, play, art, and ritual—sometimes all at once—as in Garth Fagan’s syncretic polycultural dance theater. This is apparent in *River Song: From Earth Eagle First Circle* (1995), inspired by the aesthetic freedom of modern dance and tribal traditions in Africa and Native America and cast in an eclectic jazz style infused with ballet virtuosity. The whole emerges in relation to Fagan’s movement aesthetics, the feathered costumes of Linda King (Salish and Kootenai Tribe), and the jazz/Indian score (Don Pullen’s African-Brazilian Connection and the Chief Cliff Singers).<sup>5</sup>

## *Dance Always Has Style*

Dance always has style. Style is the “how” of dancing, its aesthetic character. It arises in the viewer as a matter of perception and interpretation in relation to the dance event. *Style emerges from intention*. This includes the intentions of the choreographer or the group, the purpose or purposes embodied in the dance event as a specific kind of cultural event, and the individual intentionality of the dancers (their own quality of movement and presence). We can think of style in two senses: the embodied characteristics of the dance, and the dancer’s individual qualities as personal signature.<sup>6</sup>

Intentions are clues toward the revelation of design. *Intention* here means “done by design,” as an aspect of voluntary motion. It is not a future projection of something that might happen. When we isolate and categorize elements of dance such as style and intention, our view will be partial, because analysis singles out certain elements for attention. But analysis is nevertheless a part of the whole picture. It presents the possibility that the whole exists and may be perceived in its parts.

## *Meaning Depends on Context*

A coherence of parts establishes context, that which makes meaning possible. Meaning depends on the contextualized whole. *Context is the weaving or joining together of elements to produce a whole*. Its first use concerns written text and how words are understood in relation to one another, but it also applies to movement significance. Neither words nor movement makes meaning when perceived out of context. Rather, we come to understand dance and to define it in terms of con-

text, an inner coherence of movement elements according to purpose. Context is also integral to the setting in which the dance is performed or viewed. Ice dancing, for instance, has dramatic aesthetic qualities that contextualize it as theater and entertainment. However, it is often performed in sporting competitions, and in sports arenas, which creates a crossing of contexts (and thus performing intentionality).

### *Dance Is Both Art and Entertainment*

Dance is ubiquitous as entertainment and commonly used for socializing. We do not usually term these forms art; but when forms of entertainment or social dance attain excellence, we do not hesitate to call them art. Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers have been much admired, for instance. Their art was constituted through combining tap dance and ballroom social dances in movie musicals. Art is another word for excellence, and it also has an institutional meaning, as it designates culturally valued works. For example, the ballroom, Hollywood tap dance of Astaire and the lesser-known vernacular tap dance of Bill Robinson could qualify on both counts. Robinson was no less an artist than Astaire, but the full spectrum of his dancing was not so widely popularized. Because of Robinson's race, acclaim came belatedly.

As art, dance can also be understood in its institutional aspects. We name some arts "fine arts" and institutionalize them in fine arts schools and university departments, a widespread practice in America. We also combine the terms *art* and *entertainment* in various ways. Entertainers are sometimes called artists, and we also speak of the entertainment arts. As an entertainment art, the Broadway musical is an institution that blends dance, music, and drama in total theater events. This blend has produced unique commentaries on contemporary life and its rhythms—from Leonard Bernstein's *West Side Story* (1957) to George C. Wolfe's *Bring in 'Da Noise, Bring in 'Da Funk* (1996). The latter grew out of Wolfe's idea of Savion Glover as a living repository of rhythm. As such it is dance history in the making. Wolf states in the program:

There are these old black tap dancers, who were taught by the old black tap dancers, and so on. All of those guys passed that information on to Savion, and it landed in his feet, and his being, and his soul.

My interest in tap springs from my passion for folk art. . . . Only a great folk art form can tell all our stories—and tap is one of the greatest folk arts we have.

I wanted to see how tap could not just tell stories, but how it could really convey really complicated emotion. Jazz dance does this, as do modern dance and ballet, but tap wasn't being mined for its emotional content. It was lopped off as

an art form that's just exuberant and fun and playful. With this show, I wanted to see how we could use tap to convey desires and drives—how it could become a source of delight, intensity, rage, or power.

Broadway is not the only institution for blending art forms. Theatrical melds that bear a family resemblance appear in several forms and use other names. Opera uses total theater elements, as do some mixed media and performance art. What we call musical theater in America is called pantomime in Jamaica. The meaning of pantomime as extracting and exaggerating realistic gesture is bypassed in favor of the root *pan*, suggesting an encompassing of elements—and emphasizing dramatic entertainment to music.

### *Dance Is Often Used as an Educational Medium*

Dance is often used as a means to educate: “to draw forth,” to *educere* (or lead forth, as a river). Dance may be a vehicle for drawing out individual responses to movement (creative dance) and establishing group cohesiveness (folk forms). There is transmission of group and individual bodily lived values in the educational processes of dance. With this in mind, educators such as Sue Stinson and Jill Green look at student interpretations of their dance classes, and they question educational processes to uncover destructive practices based on control and manipulation that engender poor body images.<sup>7</sup> What goes on under the name of education is not always or necessarily in the best interests of students, as research into dance education may begin to establish.

### *Dance Is Used for Therapeutic and Healing Purposes*

Dance evolved from the therapeutic of ritual and in many traditions is still used to call forth healing spirits. The healing capacities of dance derive from its intrinsic (experiential) values: pleasure in movement and the affective link between motion and e-motion. Dance therapists learn how to elicit the pleasure and power of movement as they use dance processes for therapeutic and healing purposes.

Somatic teacher-therapists draw upon these same experiential values and processes with their modalities of *movement and touch* (as explored in a recent article).<sup>8</sup> Somatic practitioners may attune to the aesthetics of healing in a dance-like manner. They often weave dance processes with somatic practices for body-mind integrity, psycho-physical (emotional) release, physical improvement, and dynamic alignment. The 1996 Conference of the Congress on Research in Dance at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro, *Dance and the Body*, dealt thematically with the relationship of dance and somatics. Movement aesthetics is



the root of somatics education and therapy, dance in all of its forms, and dance therapy. Dance crosses over naturally into therapeutic fields through its aesthetic component, “aisthesis” (as we just mentioned), or “aesthetikos,” the Greek root of aesthetics, meaning sense perception.<sup>9</sup> The basis for aesthetic perception and appreciation (valuation) lies in sentient life and its ever-present affective dimensions. Affectivity (in art and therapy) presupposes a multitude of stimuli that influence feelings, emotions, and movement: an innerscape, if you will, constantly in flux.

Similar concerns for sense perception and the affective motivate studies of infancy and developmental movement (developmental and cognitive psychology). Daniel Stern studies types of feeling experience involved in *categorical affects* (happiness, sadness, anger, and so on), *vitality affects*, those kinetic terms that indicate intensity and degrees of animation (fading, exploding, pulsing, and the like), and *relational affects* involving interpersonal sharing (feeling esteemed or ineffective, for instance).<sup>10</sup> *All such affects appear in various dance contexts.* They are aspects of experience influencing our perceptions and valuations. Affects color all movement and carry somatic thresholds as they rise to attention. We can become aware of and appreciate the affective in human movement, what philosopher Susanne Langer called “forms of feeling” in her aesthetics: form and feeling. We can describe these forms as they appear in movement. We might deem them beautiful, expressive, exciting, soothing, or—on the other hand—repulsive. Displeasure is also in the affective/aesthetic range of possibility. In such descriptions, we acknowledge the affective. Affectivity is not something added to movement. Human movement cannot be separated from its felt (somatic/affective) basis. Thus the affective permeates and colors all movement. Affective qualities are aesthetically distilled in all dance (playful, ritual, or presentational) and in the therapeutic processes of somatic and dance therapy. As we identify aesthetic qualities in the observable properties of movement to objectively *name* them, we draw upon our subjective experience.

### *Dance Is a Source for Self-Knowledge and Human Development*

As self-directed movement, dance is also a source of self-knowledge. Thus dance studies may be designed around concerns for human development. In their study of perception and movement affectivity, cognitive psychologists articulate concerns for “the self” that could enrich research in dance therapy and dance somatics. A good case in point is Ulric Neisser’s “Five Kinds of Self-Knowledge.”<sup>11</sup> He describes the person “here in this place, engaged in this particular activity” with respect to the physical environment, as “the ecological self.” This would be the dancer oriented in time/space, somatically alive to her experience of moving. What cog-

nitive psychology calls “the interpersonal self” would more appropriately describe the dancer’s perception of herself engaged with others in a folk dance, for instance, or in relation to an audience (if she is performing)—engaging them emotionally or conveying nonverbal signals.

Self-knowledge has a basis in sense perception including proprioception, the movement sense. All our movement is constantly being somaesthetically processed in the interweave of our senses, perceptions, and emotions. An essential insight of cognitive psychology beginning with J. J. and Elanor Gibson is that the senses function together *through movement* and not in isolation.<sup>12</sup> When we give conscious attention to our movement experiences, we make somatic processes and sense perceptions concrete. We do this in the act of self-awareness—always available through dance, made more explicit in somatic movement “self-awareness” explorations and in dance therapy through “authentic movement,” initiated through the work of Mary Whitehouse. In such work, dance is a source for self-knowledge and human development.<sup>13</sup>

The work of Ellen Dissanayake on human development bridges ethnography and aesthetics, suggesting that *multi-sensory performance* is our earliest art form, based cross-culturally in the mother-baby relationship and “baby talk” rhythmic play. Participation in creative arts and performance, from the first years of life and throughout life, is crucially important to human well-being. Dissanayake’s work *What is Art For?* (1988) and *Homo Aestheticus* (1992) is in the center of today’s discussions about the role of the arts in the evolution of culture and human survival. Her approach is ethological—that is, she views the arts as biologically evolved or adaptive propensities of human nature. *What is Art For?* considers why the arts evolved in the first place, and *Homo Aestheticus* looks at some naturally aesthetic aspects of human thought and cultural behavior. Her recent work in preparation, *Rhythm and Modes in Love and Art*, finds that precursors of the “arts of time,” dance, music, and dramatic performance, appear spontaneously in the earliest interactive relationship between mothers and infants. Babies possess a precocious capacity to respond to “rhythms and modes”—patterned vocal, visual, and kinetic signals that arise in play with loving adult partners. Rhythms and modes, Dissanayake says, “create and sustain love,” as they also give rise to the arts.<sup>14</sup>

### *Dance Often Intersects with Religion*

Dance often intersects with religion. It is a means of worship—although in the West, dance has had a love-hate relationship with formalized religion, depending on the prevailing attitudes toward the body. Joann Keali’inohomoku tells us that in the European Christian world, dance was rejected by the church even as this meant its relinquishment over control of the dancers. “The legacy of the separa-

tion of dance from the church is seen to this day as the received attitude toward dance as trivialization, denigration, and secular specialization. Today in the Western world serious dance is presided over by a secular priesthood.<sup>15</sup>

It is sometimes difficult to separate dance from religion in traditional societies, however. Parul Shah, a master teacher of *bharatanatyam*, one of India's seven classical dance forms, says that *bharatanatyam* originated in Hindu temples as a solo for *devadasis* (female temple dancers), but as a dynamic living tradition the dance form continues to evolve. Its name derives from *Bharata Natya Shastra*, Bharata's book (written between 200 B.C. and 300 A.D.), and the movements of the dance as presently performed go back about three hundred years. Now it is performed in theaters and sometimes in group choreography, Shah says. There is room for creativity in this form, even as its sacred source is recognized.<sup>16</sup>

### *Dance Is a Broad Category of Human Activity*

Dance is a broad category of human activity embracing tradition even as it evolves new forms. Dance also overlaps the other arts and other movement forms. Gymnastic dance, for instance, is both a competitive sport (in its competitive and quantifying mode) and a dance form (when its primary intent is founded in the qualitative dimensions of the movement and the enjoyment of performer and spectator). Since competition is not essential to dance, we can establish that, nevertheless, dance often appears in competitive contexts. There are ballroom competitions and ballet and modern dance competitions, not to mention highly competitive auditions of all kinds. Dance can be competitively contextualized, but it is not competitive in essence (intrinsically).

In contrast, we have explored that *cultural values* are present in all forms of dance, and that *aesthetic values of movement and the living body*, as well as *historical values*, are in the nature of, or intrinsic to, dance. We have also considered that the (ever-present) *affective values* of movement lend dance its aesthetic and healing powers and its potential for instilling self-knowledge. We have only mentioned *ritual* but have not asked if ritual is an essential element of dance.

### *Ritual Often Sustains Dance Practices*

As repetitive enactments, ritual elements often sustain dance practices. These are evident in daily dance classes that ritualize the experience of learning, for instance. But dances that found culture, that proclaim a people's identity and sometimes their religion and magic, are validated *as ritual*. They are often public rites of renewal and passage; they are not dance in a narrow sense. Ritual dances are usually total events that incorporate music and costumes as artifacts that cannot be di-

vorced from the dance movement. Dance is ritualized in its repetitive enactments and cultural practices. When it becomes commensurate with culturally instantiated rites and beliefs, *dance becomes ritual* as cultural repository. Ritual dances are often passed down for generations and thus become bearers of a people's history.

Cultural rituals and ceremonies extend space and time beyond the ordinary sense, and as such they are transformative on both personal and communal levels. As they embody myths and cosmologies they interpret and integrate culture. There is also the potential for new rituals to emerge, as Kealiinohomoku points out: "dance rituals are always being invented, retrofitted, or re-invented either through revival or syncretism."<sup>17</sup>

Entire systems of belief may be reinvented in ritual dances and translated from the past to the present. Brook Medicine Eagle, who was raised on the Crow reservation in Montana, speaks of "primary people," those who sustain a spiritual connection to the earth, even as she creates new rituals from old ones and gathers Native Americans with other Americans to focus their energies through the great buffalo drum. A simple circular dance pattern and her chanting of ritual songs further unifies the group, as I experienced at the yurt of Linda Herrinwind in Victor, New York, in 1996.

### *Dance Is a Theater Art*

Dance is further contextualized as theater and often called art. The latter may intone personal taste or critical acceptance. Theater arts are established communally and critically through shared values. Dance often comes mixed with other theatrical elements: scenes that imbue time/place and delineate space, costumes that sharpen or soften body lines or dictate period, music integral to rhythms and atmosphere, and spoken text. Is theater a necessary condition of dance, then? I would say no, since theater supposes the gaze of the other, the audience. Theaters are "seeing places" first. They require community, or at least a gathering of viewers. Dance may thus become the means for communication and art making, but its intrinsic character does not require this.

### **Intrinsic Dance**

Dance can be pleasurable and therapeutic. I call this experiential essence *the intrinsic dance*. It is the root of all dance, whether the dance is performed for others or not. As intrinsically valuable, dance is first of all body-for-self. Likewise, the dancer's performance begins with herself. It is she who imbues form, traversing

an intentional making and doing that inscribes the movement. She may also repeat or replicate forms (rhythms, dynamics, motifs, actions, or sounds), but these are just parts of her project. She is most concerned with embodying movement holistically, shaping and pouring it through the lived time of her performance.

Performance can indicate something internal to movement—although I realize that performance often means a performance for others, posing questions concerning the “audience effect” in the performer-audience transaction. To perform means to intentionally execute, to carry out a plan or move through a form, to follow through with skill, to finish something. All of these are desirable, at one time or another, in dancing. To perform also means “to show off,” or “to show off a skill.” This sometimes happens in dance, particularly in recitals that are planned as “smilers” for mommy and daddy, and in adult virtuoso dancing (followed by immediate applause). But we know this is not a necessary condition of dance performances. When the dancer’s attention shifts from the intrinsic dance to show the self rather than the dance, the dance is lost, as is also the promise that the performance may carry the performer beyond self-limits (self-focus, self-consciousness). This is a question of awareness. *Dance is performed* as skillful, or playful, or expressive, or the like, within a wide range of intentionality. It is the performer’s intention and purpose that makes dance “more than movement.”<sup>18</sup> One might argue that trance dances are outside the range of conscious intentionality and therefore not performed. But there is some basic intention for inducing trance and a purpose (usually healing or transpersonal communication) in the trance dance. Related to this would be the kind of dance that taps into the subconscious, such as the improvised “Dancing” performances of Christian Swenson, whose body-voice shimmers on the borderline of shamanistic voyage and performance. Here performance intention is mixed. It derives from his blurring of theatrical presence with phylogenetic quest.

*Intrinsic dance* is performed as body-for-self, not as body-for-other as in theatrical contexts, but looking inward to the experience. Logically speaking this would not be a type of dance, but a shift of attention. Phenomenologically, the dancer performs the dance in his or her particular manner. The dance can be consciously projected toward another in an act of communication, or more personally absorbed. The dancer’s dialogue with her dance and its aesthetic qualities, her purpose, the play of sensation with intention is the irreducible element at the intrinsic level. In value theory, *intrinsic value* is that upon which all other values depend. Moreover, it is an aspect of experience perceived *as valuable* (or it would not be called a value).

## *Naming Is a Preparation for Description and Definition*

Dance is defined (as a phenomenon) in its uses and in our perception. *Dance* is a name we give to a wide range of activities and behaviors. Wittgenstein holds that naming is a preparation for description in the language game. We also define in language, when we look for common features that exist among known examples. We give further meaning to the word when we contextualize it in sentences and larger composites of language: “always ask yourself: How did we learn the meaning of the word (‘good’ for instance)? From what sort of examples? In what language-games? Then it will be easier for you to see that the word must have a family of meanings.”<sup>19</sup>

As human activity, dance is movement evolved through creative processes, sometimes through ritual processes valued over time, endowing history and tradition. Dance is by no means bound by history and tradition, however. New dances may be ritualized in contemporary practices. Dances are done in play, for socializing, for entertainment, and for spiritual and therapeutic purposes. As qualitative movement intentionally given special forms, dances are aesthetically constructed. Dances are contextualized events; they are cultural, historical, and experiential. They require at the very least the dancer in motion, so their intrinsic values derive from human movement and the intentions embodied therein. Dances also derive their meaning from the dancing ground, as they are performed in various cultural settings: theaters, churches, village squares, streets, sports arenas, temples, palaces, forest clearings, dance halls, healing places, and underground in sacred chambers. Dances are aesthetic historico-cultural movement performances. They are created for various purposes; they have intrinsic values and attain significance in experience and interpretation.

## **An Objective Game Plan**

Albert Opoku, who founded the Ghanaian Dance Ensemble in Africa and taught dance at State University of New York at Brockport for several years, used to ask me: “Don’t you think it curious that Westerners call their own dance ‘fine art’ and relegate the rest of the world’s dance to the position of ‘ethnic’?” He said that he thought of the art and dance of Africa not as ethnic but as “living art.” His comment helped me understand how we typically interpret the world from a learned and subjective vantage point.

*Blind spots* may also originate in a cultural substratum, including sex and gender. For instance: I once listened to a paper on hegemony. The speaker pointed

out some cultural and social enclosures that isolate our understandings and enforce political boundaries but, unaware of his own position, he broached the subject of women by repeatedly saying “women are different”—although he was careful to espouse what he presumed to be a feminist point of view. I told him that “I am a woman, so for me women are not different: they are what I am.”

Our biases stem from and reinforce our gender perceptions and concepts of normalcy, our inherited and learned culture, and the known territory of our experience. Our ingrained prejudices, as they grow from fears of the unknown, are dangerous because they limit our sight and insight. Our aesthetic preferences, our cultural biases and prejudices are often unexamined. We are indeed bound up in, and bound by, our culture. We transcend these boundaries through education, through familiarity with other cultures, and through research. Then the unknown becomes the known, mind is expanded. Good research is predicated on being “open-minded,” but I suggest that mind is simply not always open to us. As researchers, questioners, and learners, we seek to move the mind toward the unfamiliar and conjure up family resemblance. As explained in our chapter on aesthetic inquiry, dance can be perceived in terms of quantitative measure or qualitative change. In the broad sense, quantitative research seeks to establish that which is predictable, the dependable boundaries of the dance phenomenon being investigated. We do not generally think of dance as a science, except in the very loose sense that it may be the subject of studies in the physics of motion. If dance is not a science, except in the sense of well-doing that crosses both science and art, we can nevertheless benefit from applications of scientific methods (of physical, behavioral, and social science) to dance problems. What goes into the performance of a successful pirouette, for instance, as measured and observed through scientifically designed processes with the aid of “kinematic” technology?<sup>20</sup>

Qualitative methods that examine and interpret dance from aesthetic, historical, and cultural points of view are consistent with the nature of dance, providing rich approaches for study. This text is concerned with both qualitative and quantitative modes of inquiry, but on balance it places much more emphasis on the qualitative, since dance crosses so many categories of qualitative value from the sociopolitical to the aesthetic/historic, including the spiritual, psychological, and therapeutic. Qualitative values are intrinsic to dance. They are the values we name when we identify something as dance, the various kinds of values that we experience when the dance fulfills its potential. Qualitative values issue from experience, or we could say that they are qualities of experience—as all intrinsic values are.<sup>21</sup>

Dance as human movement and human behavior also has observable properties that can be measured; thus dance is subject to quantitative research designs.

Qualitative and quantitative research designs serve different purposes, as this text explores.

We are familiar with the limits of scientific inquiry, but shouldn't questions also be raised concerning the limitations and pitfalls of qualitative and postpositivist research? *How does the researcher keep some measure of objectivity*, if objectivity is not the entire game plan, for instance? Without some level of objectivity and distance, the researcher might simply be guided by prejudice and bias, and conclusions could be drawn to suit any purpose. This can be particularly problematic when the research involves human subjects and situations close to the researcher. Self-reflexive questions are basic in all research. How do I understand my own position relative to the research design? Or, put more directly: why do I want to do this study (what are my motives)? And why am I using this particular approach? The researcher often wants to show or prove something; thus, motives should be examined. The very definition of the research problem and choice of procedures will begin to direct the outcome.

The approach of any qualitative research design is also its limitation. "Ideological critique," a recent approach in dance history research, admits its agenda to reduce the past to its ideological components, to read (reduce, reconstruct, or deconstruct) history in sociopolitical terms. This is bound to influence the author's interpretations. For instance, in Susan Manning's critique of Mary Wigman's career through an exposition of her "feminism" and "nationalism," it is not surprising that Manning found what she was looking for. Her highly interpretive ideological reconstructions of Wigman's dances are guided by the concept of the "male gaze" (as developed in modern feminist theory) and Benedict Anderson's definition of nationalism (as an "imagined community"). The latter leads Manning to a gauzy view of Wigman's solos as projecting "a mystical aura of Germanness." The use of loaded terms like "fascist alliance" and "collaboration" are not contextualized in terms of the pressures and prohibitions of the times. Manning sees Wigman's dances as "both fascist and resistive."<sup>22</sup> Can she have it both ways? When does "cooperation" with a fascist dictatorship (how and under what circumstances) equal "collaboration"? I think this is an interesting question. Nationalism (and patriotism) cover a lot of complex territory, just as dances and lives do not reduce to simple expositions of ideological terms.<sup>23</sup>

Like Manning, Isa Partsch-Bergson also questions romanticized versions of the rise of modern dance, but her writing emerges from an attempt to gain a contextualized perspective that neither condemns nor condones the path of individual artists as she tries to see them in the political context of their own times. Her account of Wigman's career and dances (from much of the same archival material) differs in many respects from that of Manning.<sup>24</sup>



As prototype for research, game plans are also explored (and pushed) in choreography, even as elements from folk and popular culture are bracketed in recent dance, and genres mix. Doug Elkins's irreverent work, *Where Was Yvonne Rainer when I Had Saturday Night Fever* (1996), is a good example. It draws hip-hop and capoeira (Brazilian martial art requiring extensive upper-body strength) into the orbit of funky-modern dance and "ballet-on-er-butt" as Elkins calls it. Speed and detailed rhythm give the dancers unique challenges. In Elkins's lecture-demonstration, he wears a baseball cap. Explaining that postmoderns consider their dances to be "texts," Elkins sporadically draws large lettered "ism" words like "foundationalism" from his notebook. He displays them, then puzzles: "I don't know whether I'm deconstructing romanticism, or romanticizing post-modernism, or just involved in my own form of post-Hegelian therapy?" Elkins satirizes the historical-aesthetic process that researchers try to sort out. When boundaries are crossed, established forms are questioned, sometimes transformed, and maybe deconstructed (given that interpretation). New forms emerge in context of our understanding of what has gone before. Meanwhile, something continues that we recognize as dance: a family of examples—old and new—results.

Isadora Duncan (with the aid of romantic waltzes) was also pushing history, as she introduced a new dance in the form of "the freedom of women" that would serve to critique what had gone before. An implicit feminism fueled Isadora's critique<sup>25</sup> and has been a continuing theme in modern and postmodern dance. Feminist research, like feminist dance, has political aims that color objectivity. (But *dance* does not care so much about objectivity, while *theory* usually does.) Feminists could counter (with good reason) that so-called "objective" research has cloaked an entrenched patriarchy.

Nevertheless, the operations of anything called "research" implore fairness and objectivity, even as they admit interpretation and valuation. The issue of objectivity in dance research is situated contextually. Objectivity may refer to process as in science, and it can also point toward removal of bias or prejudice in qualitative game plans. In both cases the researcher achieves observational and analytical tools that are in some measure objective if not governed by the scientific use of the term.

If I want to find out something—research it—I need to invoke my beginner's mind and, thus, the beginnings of an objective game plan. For it means that I do not yet know the thing I seek to understand, and that I am open to discovery. In this case, I remove myself or remain teachably detached (objective) in the learning process.

## NOTES

1. The concern for “family resemblance” in the matter of linguistic definition is explored in the philosophy of Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, 3d ed., trans. G. E. M. Anscombe (New York: Macmillan, 1958), 66–77.
2. Joann Keali’inohomoku, “An Anthropologist Looks at Ballet as a Form of Ethnic Dance,” in *Impulse* (1969–1970) (San Francisco: Impulse Publications, Inc., 1970), 24–33.
3. For a further exploration of dance as “theater” see Roger Copeland, “Theatrical Dance: How Do We Know It When We See It If We Can’t Define It?,” paper presented at Dance Critics Association conference, 1985.
4. On *Yanvalou*, see Joan Hamby Burroughs, “Yanvalou: Movement, Myth and Ritual in Haitian Vodou” (paper presented at the Congress on Research in Dance, Miami, Florida, 1995). On the Inupiat, see Edith Turner, “Gentle Inviting—The Power Dance—Off-Beat Stop: The Style and Meaning of Inupiat Eskimo Dance,” keynote panel presentation, Congress on Research in Dance, Miami, Florida, 1995.
5. Garth Fagan, *River Song: From Earth Eagle First Circle*, Rochester premiere, April 1995. This work grew out of an on-site exploration of *Garth Fagan Dance* with the dances of the Salish Kootenai Tribe of Montana and is given a further cultural context through the costumes of Linda King, member of the Confederation Salish and Kootenai Tribe, known throughout the Northwest for her beadwork, Indian dance outfits, dress, and fabric design.
6. This view of style as integral to a work involving the *what* as well as the *how* is consistent with Nelson Goodman’s more technical explanations of style as a metaphorical signature by which we recognize works as belonging to a period, group, or person: Nelson Goodman, *Ways of Worldmaking* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Co., Inc., 1978), 34–40. For further explanations of this in terms of dance, see Sondra Horton Fraleigh, *Dance and the Lived Body: A Descriptive Aesthetics* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1987), 90–91; also Mary Sirridge and Adina Armelagos, “The Ins and Outs of Dance: Expression as an Aspect of Style,” *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 36 (fall 1977): 13–24.
7. Susan W. Stinson, “Adolescent Perceptions of Dance Education” (paper presented at the Congress on Research in Dance, Miami, Florida, 1995). Jill Green, “Somatic Authority and the Myth of the Ideal Body in Dance Education” (paper presented at the Congress on Research in Dance, Miami, Florida, 1995).
8. For a discussion of somatic education and therapy in its relation to aesthetic values (of dance), see Sondra Fraleigh, “The Spiral Dance: Toward a Phenomenology of Somatics,” *Somatics* 10, no. 4 (spring–summer 1996): 14–19.
9. For a thorough treatment of sense perception as the root of aesthetics, see Richard Griffith and Erwin Strauss, eds., *Aisthesis and Aesthetics* (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1970).
10. Daniel N. Stern, “The Role of Feelings for an Interpersonal Self,” in *The Perceived Self*, ed. Ulric Neisser (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 205–15.
11. Ulric Neisser, “Five Kinds of Self-Knowledge,” *Philosophical Psychology* 1, no. 1 (1988): 35–59.
12. J. J. Gibson, *The Senses Considered as Perceptual Systems* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1966); *The Ecological Approach to Visual Perception* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1979); Eleanor Gibson, “Ontogenesis of the Perceived Self,” in *The Perceived Self*, ed. Ulric Neisser (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 25–42.
13. For dance as a source for self-knowledge, including perspectives from cognitive psychology and descriptive phenomenology, see Sondra Fraleigh, “Good Intentions and

Dancing Moments: Agency, Freedom and Self-Knowledge in Dance,” in *The Perceived Self*, ed. Ulric Neisser (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 102–11.

14. Ellen Dissanayake, “Movement, Time, and Emotional Communication,” keynote speech, in *Proceedings, 30th Annual Conference, Congress on Research in Dance*, ed. Nancy L. Stokes (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1997), 1–2.

15. Joann W. Keali’inohomoku, “Dance, Myth and Ritual in Time and Space,” *Dance Research Journal* 29, no. 1 (spring 1997): 68.

16. Parul Shah, lecture-demonstration, State University of New York, College at Brockport, Nov. 12, 1997.

17. Keali’inohomoku, “Dance, Myth and Ritual in Time and Space,” 69.

18. Fraleigh, *Dance and the Lived Body*, 88–93.

19. Wittgenstein, 43–49, 77.

20. Citlali Lopez-Ortiz, “Kinematic Trend of *Pirouette* Performances as a Function of Skill Level” (master of arts thesis, Department of Dance, State University of New York, College at Brockport, 1994).

21. See studies in value theory and aesthetics for fuller definitions of “qualitative value,” and “intrinsic value,” especially value theorist Paul W. Taylor, *Normative Discourse* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 1961).

22. Susan Manning, *Ecstasy and the Demon: Feminism and Nationalism in the Dances of Mary Wigman* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 3, 4.

23. Much of Manning’s desire to “rewrite the history of modern dance” (an ambitious enterprise) also rests on her ability to aptly intuit and describe the dances (and reconstruct their inherent ideologies). I would interrogate the objectivity of her book on this ground alone. Manning interprets the famous photograph of Isadora Duncan’s *Ave Maria* as demonstrating the downward pull of gravity juxtaposed with an “upward struggle against gravity.” This is a curious reading of Isadora’s soft and given posture as her head falls easily backward, her knees bend slightly under her relaxed torso, and her arms lift without fully extending. To me there is pathos and a surrender to gravity in this picture. See the photograph in Manning, 36.

24. Isa Partsch-Bergsohn, *Modern Dance in Germany and the United States: Crosscurrents and Influences* (Australia: Harwood Academic Publishers, 1994).

25. Isadora Duncan’s speech, “The Dance of the Future,” by invitation of the Berlin Presse Verlin was published as a pamphlet in 1903. “It became the manifesto of Modern Dance and a feminist classic,” as recounted in *Life Into Art: Isadora Duncan and Her World*, ed. Dorée Duncan, Carol Pratl, and Cynthia Platt, foreword by Agnes de Mille (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1993).