

Making Dance Modern:
Knowledge, Politics, and German Modern Dance, 1890 – 1927

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Abstract

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Between 1890 and 1927, a group of dancers, musicians, and writers converged in Germany, where they founded an artistic movement that has come to be known as German modern dance. This dissertation provides a history of the origins of this movement and its central figures, including Émile Jaques-Dalcroze, Isadora Duncan, Mary Wigman, Rudolf Laban, Hans Brandenburg, and Valeska Gert. These figures, I show, developed modern dance in an attempt to theorize and transform the social order. With the exception of Gert, this was a social order based upon principles of stability, unity, and consensus. Modern dancers promoted this order through practices of performance, pedagogy, and writing; they elaborated their ideas in conversation with contemporary and historical debates in Western theatrical music, natural science, philosophy, and politics. Their efforts sought to demonstrate that the coordinated movement of society hinged upon a logic and order inherent to the physical movements of the individual dancer, whose dancing body and the knowledge it contained formed a perfect model for all bodies.

In contrast to many of their contemporaries in literature and the arts, German modern dancers developed what this dissertation labels as “embodied conservatism,” which was an attempt to actively shape society according to principles of physical alignment, harmony, and order. Though embodied conservatism was not a discrete program for politics, by the First World War it became a platform for ideas and values of the Weimar political right. These included questions about human agency and freedom, which were foundational to the development of modern dance beginning with Jaques-Dalcroze and Duncan, and which dancers such as Wigman

and Laban made central to their respective approaches to dance. This dissertation shows how, particularly after 1919, modern dancers in Germany transformed questions of social sovereignty and the individual's capacity for creative genesis into questions of national identity perceived as vital to the maintenance of a stable society. This dissertation concludes by arguing that embodied conservatism enabled German modern dancers to conceive of National Socialism as an organic extension of their original vision for social order.

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To my mother,
and the memory of my father

Introduction

Modern Harmony

One cannot escape from this brutal and aggressive logic that exhibits itself in all the values and non-values of our age, not even by withdrawing into the solitude of a castle or of a Jewish dwelling; yet a man who shrinks from knowledge, that is to say, a romantic, a man who must have a bounded world, a closed system of values, and who seeks in the past the completeness he longs for, such a man has good reason for turning to the Middle Ages [...] It was a world reposing on faith, a final not a causal world, a world founded on being, not on becoming; and its social structure, its art, the sentiments that bound it together, in short, its whole system of values, was subordinated to the living value of the faith: the faith was the point of plausibility in which every line of inquiry ended, the faith was what enforced logic and gave it that specific coloring, that style-creating impulse, which expresses itself not only in a certain style of thinking, but continues to shape a style characterizing the whole epoch for so long as the faith survives.

Hermann Broch, *The Sleepwalkers* (1931)

In 1905 a dance class for young girls was held in a villa in a quiet suburb of Berlin. The students, barefoot and dressed in white tunics, moved around the spacious studio that once served as a drawing room. Figurines from antiquity lined the walls. Persian rugs draped across the piano and along the floor. The students, whose movements varied slightly from dancer to dancer, followed their teacher, who closed her eyes and slowly lifted her arms.¹

Twenty years later, a dance class was held in a townhouse in a quiet neighborhood in Dresden. The students, men and women in bare-feet and black costumes, moved slowly in a line across the large studio that once served as a drawing room. Light from the windows streaked along the studio's empty walls. The students formed a long arc behind their teacher, gesturing with slight variation. Lifting their arms in different directions, cupping their hands to their chins or their cheeks, and tilting their heads forward or to the side, they danced together in concentration as if belonging to one body.²

¹ Photograph of the Duncan School, Grunewald, c. 1905. Reprinted in Frank-Manuel Peter, Hrsg. *Isadora & Elizabeth Duncan in Deutschland / In Germany* (Köln, 2000), 65.

² The Wigman School Dresden, "Building, Lessons." [Photographic Images of the Wigman School]. Dresden, 1920-1924. Akademie der Künste, Berlin, Mary Wigman Collection [hereafter referred to as: "AK MWS"] 2.4.2. "Fotos, Schule, Lehrtätigkeit." S 394, Nrs. 4; 19.

These were familiar scenes at the Duncan and Wigman dance schools. Led by their respective founders, Isadora Duncan and Mary Wigman, these classes were central sites for the emergence of modern dance in Germany. Importantly, they illustrate the founding premise of German modern dance: the formation of a stable body through the coordinated movement of its members.

“For seeing life is but a motion of limbs, the beginning whereof is in some principal part within...”³ So begins Hobbes’ examination of the source of authority and the formation of the state. In the seventeenth century Hobbes conceived of the forces governing embodied motion as models of the forces governing nature, politics, and society; as a source for knowledge, the “motion of limbs” exposed a logic and order from the apparent chaos of lived experience. This motion had analogs in the features determining collective life, including power, freedom, organization, law, and justice.⁴ Hobbes defined freedom, for example, as the absence of physical restraint, which indicated the consequences of unchecked political force. “For the nature of power, is in this point, like to fame, increasing as it proceeds; or like the motion of heavy bodies, which the further they go, make still the more haste.”⁵ Power in its many guises was something physical, embodied.

Similar to Hobbes, modern dancers in Germany during the twentieth century sought to understand the features of society through the motion of limbs. For dancers such as Wigman, Duncan, and their students, physical movement modeled and generated social order. To show the connection of physical forces to political and social ones, Hobbes established a creative language

³ Thomas Hobbes, “The Introduction,” *Leviathan*, 1., 7. All references to Hobbes are cited from Hobbes, *Leviathan*, ed. J.C.A Gaskin (Oxford, 1996 [1651]).

⁴ Steven Shapin and Simon Schaffer, *Leviathan and the Air Pump: Hobbes, Boyle, and the Experimental Life* (Princeton, 1985).

⁵ Hobbes, *Leviathan* I.X. [41], 1-2, 58.

that also articulated a theory of human governance; through double meanings, imagery, analogy, and metaphor, he activated languages of text and body to explain how and why people entered into collective life. To understand how people came to be governed, he argued, one needed to begin with knowledge about – and of – the body in motion. An understanding of physical movement explained an individual’s entry into the social order, whose coordinated movement depended upon the coordinated movements of each member.

Like Hobbes, Wigman and Duncan believed that social cohesion could emerge from chaos. Hobbes was a philosophical materialist who believed in the artifice of power and nature as nothing other than man’s “appetites and aversions.”⁶ Wigman and Duncan, in contrast, defended nature and defined power differently. Though they agreed with Hobbes that aspects of nature were unstable, they believed that it provided an important basis for social unity. Unlike Hobbes, they held fast to their sense that nature was more than the demands of hunger and thirst, “exoneration and excretion,” or physical sensations of pleasure, anger, love, and hate. For dancers, the motion of limbs indicated the motion – and authority – of non-physical forces. Unwilling to discount a combination of material and immaterial grounds for social unity, dancers sought to understand how both the natural and the metaphysical ensured the freedom, order, and stability of the collective.

Other individuals joined Duncan and Wigman in their efforts. These included musicians, dancers, and writers such as Émile Jaques-Dalcroze [1865 - 1950], Rudolf Laban [1879 - 1958], Hans Brandenburg [1885 – 1968], and Valeska Gert [1892 – 1978]. Each of these individuals believed that knowledge generated through dance showed how the singular body formed a model for the collective and proved the grounds for its law and order. Their approach to the relation between the individual and the community differed in emphasis: some devised dance theories of

⁶ Hobbes, *Leviathan*, I.VI. [24], 2-4, 34.

large-scale social structure and transformation; others elaborated theories of human nature, feeling, and freedom; others sought to articulate the social construction of time and space. Hailing from Switzerland, the United States, Germany, and the Austro-Hungarian Empire, they converged during the first decades of the twentieth century in Germany, where they founded schools based on their methods, wrote books outlining their systems, and performed dances for audiences that modeled their visions of the collective.

From 1890 to 1927, German modern dancers sought to articulate a complete account of natural and social orders for their contemporary, modern, moment. The dancer expressed society in physical movement, shaping it through a combination of nature and choice. In 1924, Wigman defined this movement as a unique form of knowledge, which took shape as a “sacrifice that each, small individual ego brings to the large mystery of creative form.”⁷ Through knowledge of dance, the individual relinquished her physical force to the forces around her and became a model for others. “Show men what knowledge is and you will show them the grounds of assent and social order.”⁸

*

The Search for Harmony: Dance and Politics in Weimar

This dissertation is a cultural and intellectual history of German modern dance that attends to the subtleties of dance’s relationship to politics. This dissertation shows how German modern dancers embedded themselves deep in politics through their efforts to reimagine social

⁷ Mary Wigman, “Tänzerische Weg und Ziele,” *Die neue Rundschau*, November 1923. Printed in “Mary Wigman Heft,” *Der Keil* 1, Nr. 1 (April 24, 1924), 14. All translations in this dissertation are mine unless otherwise noted. In general, language used to describe dance is tricky to translate. In this dissertation, I have attempted to balance contextual meaning with linguistic accuracy. For the readers’ reference, I have included original terms and phrases in instances where I have either taken liberties with translation or feel that original emphasis is particularly important.

⁸ Shapin and Schaffer, *Leviathan and the Air Pump*, 100.

order, which gave rise to an approach to expression that differed significantly from their modernist contemporaries in other arts. German modern dancers frequently declared their work to be “apolitical,” and a tradition of dance scholarship has taken them at their word, analyzing the history of the form in its relationship to art and culture, but not to society and politics.⁹ With a complex relationship to the practical details of their political circumstances – “the immediate field of partisan competition for political power, everyday governmental action, and the ordinary function of institutions” – German modern dancers dived into what political theorist Pierre Rosanvallon defines as “the political,” the “modality of existence of life in common as a form of collective action” that shapes concepts of “power and law, state and nation, equality and justice, identity and difference, citizenship and civility.”¹⁰ As we will see in this dissertation, German modern dancers’ visions of society enabled them to directly engage with these concepts in their writing, lectures, classes, and performances. Revising and proposing alternatives, dancers crafted social visions that hinged upon negotiations of power, sovereignty, identity, and difference. Their belief in the dancer’s movement as a model for social movement demonstrated their belief in the political – in “modalities of existence of life in common as a form of collective action.”

⁹ This includes the first wave of historical scholarship on German modern dance after the Second World War. For a comprehensive overview of this body of literature, see Susan Manning and Lucia Ruprecht, “Introduction: New German Dance Studies / New German Cultural Studies,” in Manning and Ruprecht, eds., *New German Dance Studies* (Urbana, 2012), 1-16. For examples of historical scholarship, see work by Austrian émigré and English-language scholar Walter Sorell, the first scholar to translate Wigman into English: Sorell, *The Dance Has Many Faces* (World Publishing, 1951); Sorell, *The Mary Wigman Book* (Middletown, 1975); and Sorell, *Dance in Its Time* (New York, 1981). To date, Sorell’s books are the largest compilation of English-language translations of Wigman’s writing. See also Karen K. Bradley, *Rudolf Laban* (Routledge, 2008); Evelyn Dörr, *The Dancer of the Crystal* (Scarecrow, 2003); Dörr, *Rudolf Laban – die Schrift des Tänzers: ein Portrait* (Taschenbuch, 2005); Diane Howe, *Individuality and Expression: The Aesthetics of New German Dance, 1908-1936*, New Studies in Aesthetics, vol. 24 (New York, 1996); Hedwig Müller, *Die Begründung des Ausdruckstanzes durch Mary Wigman* (Ph.D. Diss., University of Cologne, 1986); Müller, *Mary Wigman: Leben und Werke der große Tänzerin* (Berlin, 1997); Valerie Preston-Dunlop, *Rudolf Laban: An Extraordinary Life* (London, 1998) and Preston-Dunlop, *Rudolf Laban: Man of Theater* (London, 2003). As explained throughout the dissertation, many of these texts were written by former students of German modern dancers in an effort to protect their legacies from the “stain” of their Nazi involvement from 1933 to 1936.

¹⁰ Pierre Rosanvallon, “Inaugural Lecture, Collège de France,” in *Democracy Past and Future*, ed. Samuel Moyn (New York, 2006), 36.

German dancers were not alone in their efforts to creatively reimagine the social body. From the end of the nineteenth-century to the mid 1920s, as Europeans experienced war, revolution, economic catastrophe, and social and technological change, Germany became a laboratory for cultural experiments in collective organization. This was based in a longer tradition, beginning in the eighteenth-century with thinkers such as Johann Gottfried Herder, who conceived of culture as a site for social and political critique. Herder himself turned to poetry and music to develop his theories about readership and comprehension¹¹; later thinkers, from Goethe and Wagner, to Mann and Brecht, used literature, music, and drama to explain human behavior and motivation, social mobility and structure, and to propose alternatives and reforms. Some, like Wagner or Brecht, explicitly believed that society was based upon culture, and saw culture as the bearer of politics. Others, such as a young Thomas Mann, defined German culture in opposition to both society and politics. At the end of World War One, he declared that Germany had divided culture from politics, which he defined as the impulse to build democracy and civilization. “German tradition is culture, soul, freedom, art and *not* civilization, society, voting rights, and literature.”¹²

German modern dancers, like many of their Weimar artistic and intellectual contemporaries, viewed “culture as a ‘noble’ substitute for politics,” an attitude that some have argued has shaped modern German history from the end of the nineteenth century to the Second World War.¹³ German modern dancers maintained that their work as dance had little to do with the practical realities of governance, legislation, or deliberation. Yet their practice and ideas indicate otherwise. Their work extended from their frustration with modern life and its forms of

¹¹ Tanvi Solanki, “Reading as Listening: The Birth of Cultural Acoustics, 1764-1803” (Ph.D. Diss., Princeton University, 2016).

¹² Thomas Mann, *Reflections of a Non-Political Man*, trans. Walter D. Morris (New York, 1983 [1918]), 17.

¹³ Wolf Lepenies, *The Seduction of Culture in German History* (Princeton, 2006), 6.

education, social representation, and economic and social inequalities; their engagement with these issues stimulated them to imagine alternatives. The Swiss musician Jaques-Dalcroze, for example, believed that traditional educational methods failed to account for the child's subjective experience and in doing so weakened republican values. Duncan believed that cultural and social convention – from clothing and dress, to practices of marriage and domesticity – restricted female agency. Gert believed that class inequalities defined human experience as one of economic oppression. In each instance, dance reformed negotiations of power between people through the motion of limbs. Through his music and movement exercises, Jaques-Dalcroze instilled Enlightenment values of democracy and civic responsibility in students. In her public lectures and school for young girls, Duncan revised scientific theories of evolution in order to restore power to women. Through her unconventional theatrical environments, Gert collapsed divisions between rich and poor, audience and performer, the politically powerful and the politically marginal.

What kind of society did these dancers imagine? This dissertation argues that, with the exception of Gert, German modern dancers believed that collective life was grounded in a basic order that existed beyond their reach. Modern life disrupted this order; their goal was to restore it. As dancers, their role was to ensure the continued maintenance of this order, and to protect it for future generations. They referred to this as “harmony” and/or “the harmonic,” terms that they often used interchangeably in an explicitly musical sense – as a combination of elements with a pleasing or unitary effect (“harmony”), or the component frequencies of a note or combination of notes through wave-motion (“harmonic”). Used as a noun or in its adjectival form, harmony and the harmonic indicated the proper, pleasing position of one element within a larger sequence, or a complete, lawful, unitary system.

Isadora Duncan frequently invoked ancient philosophy to elucidate her ideas, and Plato provides a useful frame to understand how she and other German modern dancers conceived of harmony as stable social order shown through the body. In *The Republic*, a person's ability to translate musical and physical virtue into social and political ones qualifies her/him as a model leader of the polis, or a "guardian." "It seems then that a god has given music and physical training to human beings [...] for the spirited and wisdom-loving parts of the soul itself, in order that these might be in harmony with one another, each being stretched and relaxed to the appropriate degree," Socrates explained his disciples, likening human virtue to the tones produced by the fixed tensions of strings on a musical instrument.¹⁴ To achieve harmony one needed to adjust the individual parts of one's body and soul into a complete, effortless balance. "Then the person who achieves the finest blend of music and physical training and impresses it upon his soul in the most measured way is the one we'd most correctly call completely harmonious and trained in music, much more so than someone who merely harmonizes the strings of his instrument."¹⁵ To "harmonize" meant simply to adjust one discrete element (i.e. a single string) independent of the larger whole, while to be "harmonious" described a condition of total alignment within a complete order (i.e. a single string tuned in accordance with a tuned instrument). With its comprehensive vision of accord and balance, harmony was a practical guide for the individual body to achieve the ideal condition that modeled and maintained the social body. Many modern dancers, like Plato, saw male and female bodies as equally powerful in this respect.

To show how harmony was synonymous with the social, German modern dancers translated musical definitions into what Wigman called "language of the dance." Scholars in the

¹⁴ Plato, G.M.A. Grube, and C.D.C Reeve. *Plato's Republic* (Indianapolis, 1992), III. 411e., 88.

¹⁵ Plato, *Republic*, III. 412a., 88.

history of science, technology, and musicology have shown the close historical ties between music, mathematics, the performing arts, and the sciences.¹⁶ Like their European musical and scientific predecessors stretching from antiquity to the late nineteenth- and early twentieth centuries, German modern dancers sought to explain the shared forms of logic and order undergirding what they believed to be harmonic properties of sound and physical motion. Through gesture, visual representation, metaphor, analogy, pedagogical instruction, and written text, modern dancers demonstrated that physical tension converged into accord. Wigman's dance class was "a group, an orchestra of moving bodies." Jaques-Dalcroze devised with *Rythmique* a system for musical instruction based in physical techniques of effort-reduction to show how the adjustment of muscular tension resolved into easy balance. Laban based his system for dance and his concept of "oppositional force" [*Gegenbewegung*] upon images of visual and musical harmony developed by nineteenth-century German crystallographers, through which he argued for the seamless reconciliation of tension undergirding all movement.¹⁷ Wigman and Duncan respectively showed how struggle and transformation led to "harmonic" [*harmonisch*," "harmonic"] states, which in turn explained human development and natural law. In all of these examples, the singular body modeled for society the resolution of discord into order. To resolve conflict meant first to identify it as a problem: in a sense, dancers were not unlike Christian theologians since Augustine, who identified the unfolding of history within separate secular and

¹⁶ Myles Jackson, *Harmonious Triads: Physicists, Musicians, and Instrument Makers in Nineteenth-Century Germany* (Cambridge, 2006); Alexandra Hui, "Changeable Ears: Ernst Mach's and Max Planck's studies of accommodation in Hearing," Special issue on Music, Sound and the Laboratory from 1750-1980, *Osiris* 28, no. 1. (January 2013): 119-145; Hui, *The Psychophysical Ear: Musical Experiments, Experimental Sounds, 1840-1910* (Cambridge, 2012); Claude V. Palisca, "Scientific Empiricism in Musical thought," in Hedley Howell Rhys, ed. *Seventeenth Century Science and the Arts* (Princeton, 1961), 91 – 137; Adelheid Voskuhl, *Androids in the Enlightenment: Mechanics, Artisans, and Cultures of the Self* (Chicago, 2013).

¹⁷ Rudolf Laban, *Choreographie, erstes Heft* (Jena, 1926).

sacred orders to explain how individuals lived according to one plane of modern fracture and disorder while alongside it existed a parallel plane of eternal truth, stability, and cohesion.¹⁸

*

The “Modernism” of German Modern Dance

Through their visions of harmony, German dancers established curious definitions of “the modern” and fit uncomfortably at the time and in retrospect within analytic categories typical of aesthetic modernism. Teaching their students to move freely within the context of a group, Duncan and Wigman, for example, declared that though their dance were new, it expressed preexisting conditions and order. “And here I want to avoid a misunderstanding that might easily arise,” Duncan explained to audiences in 1903 as she outlined her work according to theories of Darwinian evolution and examples from classical antiquity. “You might conclude that my intention is to return to the dances of the old Greeks or [...] a revival of the antique dances or even those of primitive tribes. No, [my dance] will be a new movement, a consequence of the entire evolution which mankind has passed through.”¹⁹ For Duncan, modern dance expressed an already existing natural order that her “new movement” exposed for contemporary audiences.

Wigman defined dance as modern in a similar sense. Elaborating upon her vision of the social collective built from the coordinated movements of its members, Wigman explained that dance outwardly expressed an individual’s inner state – a condition that encompassed more than the “appetites and aversions” of Hobbesian nature. “We don’t dance ‘feelings!’ [*Gefühle*] The

¹⁸ Karl Löwith, *Meaning in History: The Theological Implications of the Philosophy of History* (Chicago, 1949).

¹⁹ Isadora Duncan, *Der Tanz der Zukunft [The Dance of the Future]* (Leipzig: Eugen Diederichs, 1903), 24.

change and transformation of the conditions of the soul is what we dance, how it is fulfilled in each individual in his own way, and how it becomes, through the language of the dance, the mirror of mankind, the most unmediated symbol of all beings.”²⁰ Like Duncan’s “new dance,” Wigman’s “language of the dance” revealed how the modern individual already belonged to an existing, coordinated order. Knowledge of this order emerged through dance and demonstrated for contemporary audiences how independently moving limbs and physical forces aligned into stable unity. “We carry a longing in us and have a goal, which is: a group, an orchestra of moving bodies.”²¹

Similar to Duncan and Wigman, other modern dancers referred to their work as “new dance” [*neue Tanz*], “modern dance” [*moderne Tanz*], “free dance” [*freie Tanz*], or (most often) as “dance.”²² They defined dance relative to their context and their audiences, rather than stylistic, conceptual, or aesthetic concerns. Relative to previous traditions of theatrical dance, their dance was quite new. Most apparent the departure of their physical gestures from earlier forms of European classical ballet, the *danse d’école*, or pan-European schools of “expressive” and “plastic” dance.²³ Respective dancers’ designations of their work as “modern,” “free,” and “new” were synonyms for “different” or “alternative.” Furthermore, because of their understanding of harmony and efforts to define the social order accordingly – as the alignment of component parts within a unitary system – their definition of the modern demanded a

²⁰ Wigman, “Tänzerische Weg und Ziele,” 14.

²¹ Wigman, *Ibid.*, 14.

²² For a history of these terms see, Susan Manning, “Ausdruckstanz,” in *Routledge Encyclopedia of Modernism*, online ed. (London 2016).

²³ Such schools were influenced primarily by the teaching of actor François Delsarte, as well as works and performances by French, American, and Austrian dancers Loïe Fuller, Ruth St. Denis, and Grete and Elsa Wiesenthal. See Deborah Jowitt, *Time and the Dancing Image* (Berkeley, 1988), 67 – 148. See individual entries on these dancers in Selma Jeanne Cohen, ed., *International Encyclopedia of Dance* (Oxford, 1998).

preposition: their dance was not just “different,” or “alternative,” but “different from” or “alternative to.” The classification of one’s work as modern or new signaled one’s belief in the fundamentally relational – the fundamentally social – basis of dance.

Scholars of dance, art, and culture have long struggled with German modern dance’s relationship to categories of aesthetic modernism. In its broadest definition, “modern dance” refers to a style or approach to dancing that seeks the outward representation of inward states, often expressed through what American dance historian John Martin has described as “metakinesis,” or “kinesthetic transfer”: an empathic process whereby viewers identify emotional states or attitudes effected through a performer’s muscular strain, tension, and physical effort.²⁴ Through metakinesis, Martin has argued, “the dance becomes a lyric art; it deals with no literary program, no storytelling involving characterization, no exploitation of either personal charm or technical virtuosity. It is directed solely to the publishing of the artist’s immediate revelation of some aspect of his relation to the universe, a flash of insight which he is unable to rationalize or reduce to direct factual statement.”²⁵ In 1945, Martin defined these features of American modern dance specifically in opposition to its German counterpart, and his main examples included a comparison of dances by Duncan versus those by Wigman.²⁶ As the first

²⁴ John Martin, “The Nature in Movement,” in *The Dance in Theory* (Princeton, 1989 [1965]) 23. See also Martin, *Introduction to the Dance* (New York, 1939) and Martin, *The Modern Dance* (Brooklyn, 1933). Martin’s ideas on metakinesis were influenced by German philosopher Theodore Lipps’s theories of empathy. For a concise summary of Martin’s concept, see Noël Carroll and William P. Seeley, “Kinesthetic Understanding and Appreciation in Dance,” *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 71, No.2 (Spring 2013): 177 – 186.

²⁵ John Martin, “American Modern Dance” in Anatole Chujoy and P.W. Manchester, eds., *The Dance Encyclopedia* 2nd ed. (New York, 1967 [1945]), 45.

²⁶ Martin writes, “Isadora’s own dancing dealt in heroic generalities, impassioned romantic affirmations inspired by music of similar character and so dependent upon it as to be utterly shapeless without it. Wigman’s dance dealt similarly in large generalities, but they were more philosophical and mystical, frequently concerning death and possession. Far from being an affirmation of individuality, it was a reconciliation of the self with unknown forces, an ‘acceptance of life,’ as she described it. The American dancers were not tempted by generalities, but were activated by specific aspects of reality pinpointed in personal experience. Their attitude was not one of acceptance but affirmation, definite commitment and even challenge” (Martin, “American Modern Dance,” 45).

full-time dance reviewer for the *New York Times*, Martin influenced generations of critics, scholars, and educators of American and European modern dance, particularly with his definition of modern dance as “point of view” rather than a technique or particular system.²⁷

This dissertation builds upon Martin’s definition in order to challenge it. This dissertation considers Duncan and Wigman as equal contributors to a transnational approach to modern dance, which emerged in Germany beginning in 1890. Scholars of German dance have noted that modern dance in Germany was not a movement guided by aesthetic principles but a group of artists seeking collective organization. Dance historian Susan A. Manning, for example, defines German modern dance as a “loose alliance” of artists united by a series of mutually beneficial administrative and organizational actions, while Marion Kant characterizes it “less as an art form than a rhythmically marked movement toward a utopian model of society.”²⁸ As Chapters 2 and 4 demonstrate, Duncan and Wigman defined modern dance as social order: denying that concepts of national identity were relevant to the moving individual within the context of a

²⁷ Gay Morris, *A Game for Dancers: Performing Modernism in the Postwar Years, 1945 – 1960* (Middletown, 2006). Martin’s definition dance forms the basis for Morris’ own understanding of modern dance. For literature on American and European modern dance, including histories and controversies surrounding its features, see: Selma Jeanne Cohen, “John Martin,” in *The International Encyclopedia of Dance*, ed. Cohen, online edition (Oxford, 2005). See also: Jack Anderson, *Art Without Boundaries: The World of Modern Dance* (Iowa City, 1997); Sally Banes, *Terpsichore in Sneakers: Post-Modern Dance* (Middletown, 1980); Gabriele Brandstetter, *Tanz-Lektüren: Körperbilder und Raumfiguren der Avantgarde*. 2te Auflage (Rombach, 2013 [1995]), published in English and cited here as *Poetics of Dance: Body, Image, and Space in the Historical Avant-Gardes*, trans. Elena Polzer and Mark Franko (Oxford, 2015); Selma Jeanne Cohen, *The Modern Dance: Seven Statements of Belief* (Middletown, 1966); Roger Copeland, *Merce Cunningham: The Modernizing of Modern Dance* (New York, 2004); Julia Foulkes, *Modern Bodies: Dance and American Modernism from Martha Graham to Alvin Ailey* (Chapel Hill, 2002); Mark Franko, *Dancing Modernism / Performing Politics* (Bloomington, 1995); Lynn Garafola, *Diaghilev’s Ballets* (Da Capo, 1989); Garafola, *Legacies of Twentieth-Century Dance* (Middletown, 2005); Ellen Graff, *Stepping Left: Dance and Politics in New York City, 1928 – 1942* (Durham, 1995); Jowitt, *Time and the Dancing Image*; Rebekah Kowal, *How to Do Things with Dance: Performing Change in Postwar America* (Middletown, 2010); Susan Manning, “Modern Dance,” in *Routledge Encyclopedia of Modernism*, online ed. (London 2016); Hedwig Müller and Patricia Stöckemann ...*jeder Mensch ist ein Tänzer: Ausdruckstanz in Deutschland zwischen 1900 und 1945* (Gießen, 1993); John Perpener, *African-American Concert Dance: The Harlem Renaissance and Beyond* (Urbana, 2001); David Vaughan, *Merce Cunningham: Fifty Years* (New York, 2005).

²⁸ Susan A. Manning, *Ecstasy and the Demon: Feminism and Nationalism in the Dances of Mary Wigman* (Berkeley, 1993), 7; Lillian Karina and Marion Kant, *Tanz Unterm Hakenkreuz* (Henschel, 1999), published in English and cited here as Karina and Kant, *Hitler’s Dancers*. trans Jonathan Steinberg (Berghahn, 2003), 88.

coordinated social body, they collapsed social representation and practice under the umbrella of a universal dance for their contemporary, modern, moment. As we will see, the designation of German modern dance as an explicitly national effort came from the voices of dance critics, such as Hans Brandenburg, who in 1919 was just as motivated to show modern dance as the antithesis of liberal democracy as Martin was in 1945 to show modern dance as its apogee. These chapters further demonstrate how the founders of modern dance in Germany crafted an approach to expression that was both technical system and a “point of view,” which demanded elucidation as much through written language and rational comprehension as through embodied action and empathy.

While it is true that for modern dancers, as for other modernists, “what mattered most was individual expression and having the artistic product relay that intellectual or emotional process,”²⁹ the basis for German modern dancers’ “individual expression” differed substantially from their contemporaries. As thinkers and artists who believed that the singular body modeled a unitary order encompassing all bodies, German modern dancers believed that individual expression always worked in service to a larger structure. Their approach to individual freedom – and to freedom of movement – was therefore different. Hagar Kotef has pointed out how “freedom of movement remains at the heart of liberal conceptualizations of freedom”; we will see in this dissertation how dancers’ notions of individual mobility ran counter to the liberal assumptions of many artistic modernists about issues such as human agency and freedom.³⁰

German modern dancers’ emphasis on the systematization of knowledge in pursuit of stable social order, and their use of “modern” to designate context or relational logic

²⁹ Foulkes, *Modern Bodies*, 16.

³⁰ Hagar Kotef, *Movement and the Ordering of Freedom: On Liberal Governances of Mobility* (Durham, 2015), 4.

distinguished them from their Expressionist, Dadaist, Surrealist, Futurist, and Cubist peers in literature, the visual arts, music, and drama. This was best captured by their pointed silence, punctuated by occasional criticism, towards other modernist forms. In 1916 in Zurich, Laban dismissed the performances of the Cabaret Voltaire and other modernists. “Cubism, Simultanianism [*Simultanismus*], Futurism flower here with strength. We [let] these currents vegetate as seemingly unproductive.”³¹ The work of modern dancers did not go unnoticed by other modernists, who likewise dismissed them. Futurism founder F.T. Marinetti, for example, noted that Duncan’s dances were “desperate nostalgia[,] spasmodic sensuality and cheerfulness, childishly feminine.”³² With their definition of “modern” as a relational quality of structure and order, modern dancers positioned themselves in opposition to the movements of those around them. In further distinction from their modernist contemporaries in Austria, German modern dancers did not move “in independence of the past” but in careful alignment with it.³³

Largely in retrospect, scholars have referred to German modern dance as “*Ausdruckstanz*” [“expressionist dance” or “dance of expression”].³⁴ Though German modern dancers did use the term “*Ausdruck*” [“expression”] and the verb “*ausdrucken*” [“to express”] to reference their work, it was not a term they associated with their conceptual vision. With the exception, perhaps, of Wigman’s personal association with expressionist painter Emile Nolde,

³¹ Rudolf Laban, Letter to Hans Brandenburg (Zurich, 28 August, 1916), 4. John Hodgson Archives / Rudolf Laban Collection [Hereafter referred to as “JHA RLC”]. Brotherton Library, Leeds University. BC/MS 20c Theatre/Hodgson/1/1/361, no.8 (Letters from Rudolf Laban to Hans Brandenburg, 1914 – 1934).

³² F.T. Marinetti, “Manifesto of the Futurist Dance,” [1917]. In F.T. Marinetti, *Selected Writings*, ed. R.W. Flint and trans. R.W. Flint and Arthur Coppotelli (New York, 1972), 137. Marinetti did, however, consider the merits of the “much more modern spirit” in work by Jaques-Dalcroze (138).

³³ Carl E. Schorske, *Fin-de-Siècle Vienna: Politics and Culture* (New York, 1980), xvii. For an important challenge to Schorske’s definition of aesthetic modernism, see Alys X. George, “Body / Culture: Viennese Modernism and the Physical Aesthetic,” (Ph.D. Diss, Stanford University, 2009).

³⁴ Susan Manning, “*Ausdruckstanz*”; Karl Toepfer, *Empire of Ecstasy: Nudity and Movement in German Body Culture, 1910-1935* (Berkeley, 1997).

German modern dancers did not associate themselves or their work with schools of German expressionist art, expressionist poetry, drama, film, or literature. In recent years scholars of German dance have clarified the emergence of the term “Ausdruckstanz,” linking it to post-WWII efforts by artists and students to rehabilitate the Nazi-era politics of particular German modern dancers, such as Wigman, Laban, and Brandenburg, all of whom enjoyed considerable patronage from the National Socialist government from 1933 to 1936.³⁵ Many of these scholars, including Kate Elswit, have modified the debate by using the term “Weimar dance” to refer to a diversity of performance forms during the Weimar-era. In addition to drawing crucial attention among scholars of Weimar culture to dance, Elswit’s characterization has set a standard for scholarly revisionism on dance in Weimar to include analyses of artists traditionally absent from its secondary histories, including Gert, as well as Kurt Jooss, Oscar Schlemmer, and Anita Berber.³⁶

However, the use of the term “Weimar dance” neither attends to the fact that German dancers referred to their work as “modern” nor offers explanation for their use of the label. Here I seek to reopen a debate over the meanings of the term and the cultural, social, and political programs it stood for in the first decades of the twentieth century. This approach reminds us that scholarship contains a politics of its own: foregrounding histories of lesser-known dancers, recent scholarship on Weimar dance forgoes an analysis of figures such as Laban, Wigman, and Duncan, those traditionally at the focus of *secondary* histories and who exerted undeniable

³⁵ Kate Elswit, *Watching Weimar Dance* (Oxford, 2014), xi – xxxv. See also: Brandstetter, *Poetics of Dance*; Kate Elswit, “Berlin...Your Dance Partner is Death,” *TDR: The Drama Review* 53, no. 1 (Spring 2009): 73 -92; Susanne Franco, “Ausdruckstanz: Traditions, Translations, Transmission,” in Susanne Franco and Marina Nordera, eds., *Dance Discourses: Keywords in Dance Research* (Routledge, 2007), 80 - 99; Susan Manning, “Ausdruckstanz”; Manning and Ruprecht, “Introduction: New German Dance Studies / New German Cultural Studies,” 1-17.

³⁶ Ana Isabel Keilson, “A Review of Kate Elswit, *Watching Weimar Dance*,” *Germanic Review: Literature, Culture, Theory* 90, No. 4 (2015): 369 – 372.

influence on the development of the form in the 1920s.³⁷ In an effort to understand the formation of modern dance in Germany, this dissertation analyzes figures commonly included in secondary histories of German modern dance (e.g. Duncan, Laban, Wigman) and those commonly excluded (e.g. Jaques-Dalcroze, Brandenburg, Gert). Doing this enables us to reevaluate their contributions not only to modern dance, but to modern art, modern ideas, and modern politics. This extends across Europe as well as the globe. Scholars of European modernism and of Weimar culture have shown the important global and transnational influences informing European artistic and literary forms from the turn of the century to the late 1920s; scholars of German dance, however, have yet to fully examine the transnational influences in the emergence of modern dance.³⁸ Chapters 5 and 6, for example, demonstrate how Hans Brandenburg, an otherwise obscure figure in dance historiography, played a significant role in Laban's emergence

³⁷ Elswit's text, for example, includes no mention of Laban. See also Manning and Ruprecht, eds., *New German Dance Studies* (2012).

³⁸ On European modernism in a transnational and global perspective, see: Alys X. George, "Editing Interwar Europe: *The Dial* and *Neue Deutsche Beiträge*," *Austrian Studies* 23, "Translating Austria" (2015): 16 – 34; Andreas Huyssen, "Geographies of Modernism in a Globalizing World," *New German Critique* 100, Vol. 34, No. 1 (2007): 189 – 207; Huyssen, *Miniature Metropolis: Literature in an Age of Photography and Film* (Cambridge, 2015); Huyssen, *Other Cities, Other Worlds: Urban Imaginaries in a Globalizing Age* (Durham, 2008); Huyssen, *Present Pasts: Urban Palimpsests and the Politics of Memory* (Stanford, 2003); Marsha Meskimmon, *We Weren't Modern Enough: Women Artists and the Limits of German Modernism* (Berkeley, 1999); Christoph Schaub, "Weimar Contact Zones: Modernism, Workers' Movement Literature, and Urban Imaginaries" (Ph.D. Diss., Columbia University, 2015). On Weimar culture in a transnational and global perspective, see: Katharina von Ankum, ed. *Women in the Metropolis: Gender and Modernity in Weimar Culture* (Berkeley, 1997); Kathleen Canning, Kerstin Barndt, and Kristin McGuire, eds. *Weimar Publics / Weimar Subjects: Rethinking the Political Culture of Germany in the 1920s* (Berghahn, 2002); Luke Springman, "Exotic Attractions and Imperialist Fantasies in Weimar Youth Literature" and Tom Neuhaus, "How Can a War be Holy? Weimar Attitudes Towards Eastern Spirituality," in John Alexander Williams, ed. *Weimar Culture Revisited* (New York, 2011), 99 – 115 and 117 -137. For examples on scholarship on German dance that consider transnational influences and the global context for German modern dance, see: Kate Elswit, "Back Again? Valeska Gert's Exiles," in Manning and Ruprecht, eds., *New German Dance Studies*, 113- 129; Jens Giersdorf, "Towards a Transnational History of East German Dance," *Studies in Dance History* (2013): 157 – 177; Claudia Gitelman, ed., *Liebe Hanya: Mary Wigman's Letters to Hanya Holm* (Madison, 2003); Marion Kant, "Was Bleibt? The Politics of East German Dance," in Manning and Ruprecht, eds., *New German Dance Studies*, 130 – 146; Tresa Randall, "Hanya Holm and an American *Tanzgemeinschaft*," in Manning and Ruprecht, eds., *New German Dance Studies*, 79 – 98.

at the forefront of the German dance community by the late 1920s.³⁹ Brandenburg's inclusion in a history of German modern dance not only shifts our understanding of Laban's institutional centrality but shows how Laban formed many of his key ideas in dialogue with Brandenburg, particularly regarding what Laban understood to be the dancer's social agency. In his/her capacity as a creative producer rather than "artist" or "imitator," the dancer possessed a power to fashion behavior, values, and attitudes, all of which were necessary to establish social harmony. Building upon a body of scholarship by Marion Kant and Karl Toepfer, I argue that Laban's concept of the dancer's "second nature" forms his most significant contribution to German modern dance – not, as is commonly accepted, his system for dance notation.⁴⁰

Historians of German culture and society have offered dance scholars little assistance in understanding the features and origins of German modern dance. Studies of Weimar culture typically include little to no mention of modern dance, much less definitions or explanations of its "modern" character.⁴¹ Ironically, scholars of Weimar culture often frame their historical

³⁹ Aside from one article on Brandenburg's relationship with dancer Gertrude Leistikow and Toepfer's references to him in a study of German body culture, Brandenburg has yet to receive substantive attention from dance scholars. See Jacobien de Boer, "'Sie Lieber Hans Brandenburg,': Gertrud Leistikow and Hans Brandenburg," *Dance Research* 34, No. 1 (Summer, 2016), 33; and Toepfer, *Empire of Ecstasy*.

⁴⁰ Marion Kant, "German Dance and the Concept of Criticism," manuscript version and English translation by the author, in *Être ensemble. Figures de la communauté en danse depuis le XX siècle* (Centre National de la Danse, 2004), 143-164; and Toepfer, *Empire of Ecstasy*. My argument challenges dominant and recent accounts of Laban, including: Dörr, *The Dancer of the Crystal and Rudolf Laban – die Schrift des Tänzers*; Martin Green, *Mountain of Truth: The Counterculture Begins, Ascona, 1900-1920* (Hanover, 1986); Ann Hutchinson Guest, "Dance Notation," *International Encyclopedia of Dance*, ed., Coen; Hutchinson Guest, *Labanotation: The System of Analyzing and Recording Movement* 4th ed. (New York, 2004); Carole Kew, "From Weimar Movement Choir to Nazi Community Dance: The Rise and Fall of Rudolf Laban's *Festkultur*," *Dance Research* 17, no. 2 (Winter 1999): 73-96; Preston-Dunlop, *Rudolf Laban* (1998) and *Rudolf Laban* (2003).

⁴¹ Canning, Barndt and McGuire, eds., *Weimar Publics/Weimar Subjects*; Peter Gay, *Weimar Culture: The Outsider as Insider* 2nd ed. (New York, 2001 [1968]); Jeffrey Herf, *Reactionary Modernism: Technology, Culture, and Politics in Weimar and the Third Reich* (Cambridge, 1984); Peter Jelavich, *Berlin Cabaret* (Cambridge, 1993) and *Berlin Alexanderplatz: Radio, Film, and the Death of Weimar Culture* (Stanford, 2009); Anton Kaes, Martin Jay and Edward Dimendberg, eds. *The Weimar Republic Sourcebook* (Berkeley, 1994); Walter Laquer, *Weimar: A Cultural History 1918 – 1933* (New York, 1974); Meskimmon, *We Weren't Modern Enough*; Patrice Petro, *Joyless Streets: Women and Melodramatic Representation in Weimar Germany* (Princeton, 1989); Detlev J. Peukert, *Die Weimarer Republik – Krisenjahre der Klassischen Moderne* (Suhrkamp, 1987), published in English and cited here as Peukert,

analyses with the image of a dancer, whose freely moving body forms a central metaphor for the Republic: the energetic rise and fall of its constitutional democracy, its dynamic technological changes, or the embodied force of its social, political, and cultural revolutions. Peter Gay describes Weimar's "tormented brief life," "tragic death," and "precarious glory" as "a dance on the edge of a volcano"⁴²; tellingly, Gay's study includes no mention of dance. Modern dance, however, would have no place in it. While critical of society around them, German modern dancers experienced life in the Weimar Republic as neither tragic nor tormented, but as poised for harmony. Features of cynicism, alienation, and generational struggle – what Gay notes as the defining gestures of Weimar's "outsider as insider" – were foreign to modern dancers. As this dissertation shows, modern dancers bathed their work with optimism, the impulse towards unity, connections to past tradition, and a sense that human action expressed the nature of truth. Even those among them who rejected forms of liberalism, democracy, or mass culture did so from a belief in the future possibility for holistic unity, order, and stability.⁴³ By highlighting this disjuncture, this dissertation contributes to literature on Weimar thought that rejects a "political metanarrative," which insists, as historian Peter Gordon and others have remarked, "that culture must somehow track, reflect, or otherwise serve as an allegory for politics."⁴⁴ More importantly, German modern dancers draw our attention to the processes by which the dancer's body, as political or social metaphor, becomes historically depoliticized. In the case of Weimar, the

The Weimar Republic: The Crisis of Classical Modernity, trans. Richard Deveson (New York, 1989); Eric D. Weitz, *Weimar Germany: Promise and Tragedy* (Princeton, 2007).

⁴² Gay, *Weimar Culture*, xiii and xiv.

⁴³ Anne Harrington, *Re-enchanted Science: Holism in German Culture from Wilhelm II to Hitler* (New Jersey: Princeton, 1996).

⁴⁴ Peter Gordon and John McCormick, *Weimar Thought: A Contested Legacy* (Princeton, 2013), 3.

dancer symbolizes a culture that is “nostalgically remembered as a great promise that remained largely unfulfilled.”⁴⁵

The marginal position of German modern dance in scholarship on German and Weimar culture further underscores the necessity to attend to dance’s relationship to politics. Historians of dance have demonstrated the generally conservative- and right- political affiliations of specific German modern dancers, such as Wigman and Laban.⁴⁶ Because of German modern dance’s political alliance with the National Socialists beginning in 1933, this body of scholarship has focused on the late 1920s, has taken a largely documentary or biographical approach, and has offered more evidence of this alliance rather than explanations for it.⁴⁷ Such sources, while invaluable, do not adequately examine the politics of German modern dancers before 1927 -

⁴⁵ Lepenies, *The Seduction of Culture in German History*, 16. Contemporary imaginaries attest to the stranglehold of nostalgia on Weimar culture, particularly dance. Beginning with the 1951 adaptation of Christopher Isherwood’s short story, “I am a Camera” for Bob Fosse’s acclaimed 1972 film *Cabaret*, the dancing body has remained a popular political and social metaphor for the “tragic death” of Weimar. In addition, more contemporary examples include “Glitter and Doom,” a 2006 – 2007 retrospective of 1920s German portraiture at New York City’s Metropolitan Museum of Art. Featuring works such Max Beckmann’s “Dancer in Baden-Baden” (1923), the show presented a vision of Weimar as a kind of “death dance” of social bodies: a “demimonde of prostitutes and profiteers, war veterans and war widows, performers and poets [...] [These] powerful images serve as mirrors to a glittering get doomed society.” (Anonymous [curatorial note], “Exhibition Overview,” accessed December 9, 2016. <http://www.metmuseum.org/exhibitions/listings/2006/glitter-and-doom>) In Germany, highly popular “decadent” dance revues in rebuilt Weimar-era theaters, such as the Wintergarten (<http://www.wintergarten-berlin.de/en/>) and the Friedrichpalast (<https://www.palast.berlin/en/>), have played an integral part of Berlin’s growing tourism industry since the late 1990s.

⁴⁶ Terri J. Gordon, “Fascism and the Female Form: Performance Art in the Third Reich.” *Journal of the History of Sexuality*, Vol. 11, No 1.2 Special issue: German Fascism (Jan- Apr. 2002), 164-200; Laure Guilbert, *Danser avec le IIIe Reich: Les danseurs modernes sous le nazisme* (Brussels, 2000); Karina and Kant, *Hitler’s Dancers*; Kant, “Death and the Maiden: Mary Wigman in the Weimar Republic,” in *Dance and Politics*, ed. Alexandra Kolb (Oxford, 2011), 119 - 144; Kant, “German Dance and Modernity: Don’t Mention the Nazis,” in *Rethinking Dance History: A Reader*, ed. Alexandra Carter (London: 2004), 107 - 118; Marion Kant, “Practical Imperative: German Dancer, Dancers, and Nazi Politics,” in *Dance, Human Rights, and Social Justice*, eds., Naomi Jackson and Toni Shapiro-Phim (Scarecrow Press, 2008), 5- 19; Manning, *Ecstasy and the Demon*; Toepfer, *Empire of Ecstasy*.

⁴⁷ Karina and Kant, *Hitler’s Dancers*; Manning *Ecstasy and the Demon*; Müller and Stöckemann, *...jeder Mensch ist ein Tänzer*.

1928, when the first two German Dancer's Congresses at Magdeburg and Essen centralized the dance community around Laban and his notational system.⁴⁸

Borrowing from this secondary literature, this dissertation excavates the origins of German modern dance in order to clarify its later political affiliation with National Socialism. Without offering a *sonderweg*-style argument, it demonstrates that German modern dance's preoccupation with the singular body as the model for social order formed the basis of its politics, which emerged on the Weimar political right not in the late 1920s, as dominant accounts suggest, but as early as 1919. Moreover, such politics were not incidental to the dance community in the late 1920s, as Manning and Kant have claimed,⁴⁹ but were self-consciously adopted by its founding figures in their original efforts to construct social harmony through dance. This dissertation thus revises secondary accounts of Weimar culture that assume the liberal or leftist affiliations of its modern dancers, or regard politics as incidental to their cultural and aesthetic production.⁵⁰

Though they largely affiliated with the conservative right, German modern dancers were not "anti-moderns" or even "anti-modernists." Scholars of European modernism, including Eugene Lunn, Andreas Huyssen, and Daniel Albright, have described the heterogeneity of its artistic and literary forms, and they are joined by many others in acknowledging modernism

⁴⁸ Guilbert, *Danser avec le IIIe Reich*; Susan Manning, "Modern Dance in the Third Reich: Redux," in *The Oxford Handbook of Dance and Politics*, eds., Rebekah J. Kowal, Gerald Siegmund, and Randy Martin (Oxford, 2017) (Manuscript version courtesy of the author); Müller and Stöckemann, *...jeder Mensch ist ein Tänzer*.

⁴⁹ Manning, "Modern Dance in the Third Reich: Redux"; Karina and Kant, *Hitler's Dancers*; Kant, "Death and the Maiden: Mary Wigman in the Weimar Republic"; Kant, "German Dance and Modernity: Don't Mention the Nazis."

⁵⁰ See for example, Kaes, Jay, et al, *The Weimar Republic Sourcebook*; and Weitz, *Weimar Germany*. Weimar political historian Hans Mommsen flatly rejects the influence of culture in politics. "[The] new wave [of Weimar] artistic and intellectual modernity, however, did not have much impact upon the political life of the Weimar Republic, despite the strong political commitments of many of modernity's advocates. Confined to a largely autonomous segment of German society, the modernist movement was almost completely destroyed with the Nationalist assumption of power in 1933." Hans Mommsen, *The Rise and Fall of Weimar Democracy*, trans. Elborg Forster and Larry Eugene Jones (Chapel Hill, 1996), xi.

“neither as a unified vision nor a uniform practice.”⁵¹ In spite of this, they agree upon a set of major features across its different movements, which broadly summarized include: the rejection of narrative and linear temporality (including techniques of juxtaposition and montage); critical self-consciousness or aesthetic reflexivity; conditions of “paradox, ambiguity and uncertainty”; and the separation of the artist’s persona from creative production, in turn suggesting the autonomy of the work of art.⁵² Additionally, contemporary scholars of aesthetic modernism have shown how the physical body – in dance, literature, film, mass culture, and other performing arts – has served as an important site to redefine central features of modernist expression, including what Alys X. George has characterized as the “tropes of modernist body culture: animation, representation, and simulation.”⁵³ Such studies of aesthetic modernism draw our attention to how the physical body, in its protean capacity to speak to multiple audiences simultaneously on multiple registers, forms an especially powerful and elusive mode for socio-political critique.

As we will see, modern dance did not diverge all that much from the general criteria of aesthetic modernism. Dances by Duncan, Wigman, Gert, and Laban juxtaposed image, movement, and sound to break apart narrative and linear temporality. Some German modern dancers, such as Gert and Wigman, experimented with use of montage and theatrical masks. All

⁵¹ Eugene Lunn, *Marxism and Modernism: an Historical Study of Lukács, Brecht, Benjamin, and Adorno* (Berkeley, 1984), 33. For analyses of the key features of European modernism, see: Daniel Albright, *Untwisting the Serpent: Modernism in Music, Literature, and Other Arts* (Chicago, 2000); Marshall Berman, *All That is Solid Melts into Air: The Experience of Modernity* (New York, 1982); Brandstetter, *The Poetics of Dance*; Mary E. Davis, *Classic Chic: Music, Fashion, and Modernism* (Berkeley, 2006); Cathy Gere, *Knossos and the Prophets of Modernism* (Chicago, 2009); Mary Gluck, *Popular Bohemia: Modernism and Urban Culture in Nineteenth Century Paris* (Cambridge, 2005); Andreas Huyssen, *After the Great Divide: Modernism, Mass Culture, Postmodernism* (Bloomington, 1986); Rosalind Krauss, *The Originality of the Avant-Garde and Other Modernist Myths* (Cambridge, 1986). For a series of important primary debates about emergent forms of aesthetic modernism see: Theodor Adorno, Walter Benjamin, Ernst Bloch, Bertolt Brecht, and Georg Lukács in *Aesthetics and Politics*, ed. Frederic Jameson (Verso, 2007).

⁵² Lunn, *Marxism and Modernism*, 34 - 37.

⁵³ George, “Body / Culture,” v. See also Brandstetter, *Poetics of Dance*; and Carrie J. Preston, *Modernism’s Mythic Pose: Gender, Genre, and Solo Performance* (Oxford, 2011).

of these figures engaged through dance in a “reshuffling of the self.”⁵⁴ Through literary techniques, formal structure, and embodied action dancers critically self-reflected upon their actions, positions, and attitudes. Their improvisational methods and interest in Nietzschean philosophy illustrated their engagement with paradox and ambiguity. Through their approach to this latter category, German modern dancers established an engagement with time that distinguished them most from other modernists. Chapter 6 demonstrates how German modern dancers, particularly Brandenburg and Gert, believed that the experience of time – in history, onstage, or in everyday life – was an experience of the social, and it was through such “social temporality” that the truth of the social order revealed itself.⁵⁵ With the body as the locus for epistemology and order, German modern dancers believed in the fundamental knowability of human experience, organization, and encounter. Even Gert, who understood society as one based in chaos and disorder, thought that artistic representation adequately expressed “the truth” of modern social life. The founding premise of modernism, however, rejected such certitude: as Charles Baudelaire declared at the end of the nineteenth century, “the modern is the transient, the fugitive, the contingent.”⁵⁶ For European literary and artistic modernists working in this tradition, the transient, the fugitive, and the contingent discounted the power of expressive representation to capture the essence of the human – and the social – condition. German modern dancers disagreed.

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⁵⁴ Schorske, *Fin-de-Siècle Vienna*, xviii. Schorske’s reference is to work by Austrian psychoanalyst Heinz Kohut.

⁵⁵ William Sewell, “Theory, History, and Social Science,” in *The Logics of History: Social Theory and Social Transformation* (Chicago, 2005), 6.

⁵⁶ Charles Baudelaire, “Le Peintre de la Vie Moderne,” in *Œuvres Complètes de Charles Baudelaire: L’Art Romantique*, ed. Jaques Crépet (Paris, 1917), 66.

Embodied Conservatism: German Modern Dance and the Weimar Right

To explain the difference between German modern dance and other forms of European modernism, as well as to account for German modern dance's complex relationship to politics, this dissertation outlines what it labels as "embodied conservatism." The term refers to the efforts by modern dancers to actively shape society according to principles of harmonic order. As we will see, embodied conservatism was not a comprehensive program for politics or aesthetics, though by the mid 1920s it worked in service to a political agenda of the Weimar right by promoting values of nationalism, xenophobia, anti-Semitism, and a social hierarchy driven by heroic, cultivated leadership.⁵⁷ More fundamentally, embodied conservatism was a social theory that, through dance, accounted for the features of modern life. As a social theory, it proposed a set of principles for human action and encounter that fashioned the social body according to the movements of the individual, whose knowledge generated through physical action proved the "grounds of assent and social order."

According to embodied conservatism, these principled actions formed what this dissertation further labels as "metabolic movement." As the practical program for embodied conservatism, metabolic movement combined physical gesture with a conceptual orientation to

⁵⁷ For summaries of late Wilhelmine- and Weimar-era conservatism and features of the political right see: Stephen Aschheim, *The Nietzsche Legacy in Germany* (Berkeley, 1992); Hermann Beck, *The Origins of the Authoritarian Welfare State in Prussia: Conservatives, Bureaucracy, and the Social Question, 1815 – 70* (Ann Arbor, 1995); David Blackbourn, *Populists and Patricians: Essays in Modern German History* (London, 1987); Geoff Eley, *Reshaping the German Right: Radical Nationalism and Political Change After Bismarck* (New Haven, 1980); Peter Fritzsche, "Did Weimar Fail?" *Journal of Modern History* 68, vol. 3 (1996): 629 – 56 and Fritzsche, *Germans into Nazis* (Cambridge, 1998); Jeffrey Herf, *Reactionary Modernism*; Konrad Jarausch and Larry Eugene Jones, eds., *In Search of a Liberal Germany* (Oxford, 1990); Larry Eugene Jones, ed. *The German Right in the Weimar Republic: Studies in the History of German Conservatism, Nationalism, and Anti-Semitism* (Berghahn, 2014); Larry Eugene Jones and James Retallack, *Between Reform, Reaction, and Resistance: Studies in the History of German Conservatism from 1789 to 1945* (Oxford, 1993); George Mosse, *The Crisis of German Ideology: Intellectual Origins of the Third Reich* (New York, 1964); Kevin Repp, *Reformers, Critics, and the Paths of German Modernity: Anti-Politics and the Search for Alternatives, 1890-1914* (Cambridge, 2004); Fritz Stern, *The Politics of Cultural Despair: A Study in the Rise of Germanic Ideology* (Berkeley, 1961); Klaus Theweleit, *Männerphantasien* 2 Vols. (Roter Stern, 1978); Jonathan Wright, *Gustav Stresemann: Weimar's Greatest Statesman* (Oxford, 2002).

society that dancers taught to students and audiences through performances, critical writing, and classroom instruction. With these methods, metabolic movement transformed elements antithetical to alignment and order into forces necessary for balance and coordination; this, in turn, ensured the continued generation, maintenance, and protection of stable harmony of the individual and the collective. Like individual cells that transform chemicals into the fuel needed to generate additional cells, maintain cellular function, and expel cellular waste or harmful byproducts from these processes, the individual dancer metabolized elements that challenged bodily alignment – forms of chaos, disorder, tension – into the forces (fuel) for its coordination. Chapter 2 shows how the concept of metabolic movement crystallized in work by Duncan, who was inspired by theories of cellular motion articulated by her friend, embryologist Ernst Haeckel.

Defining German modern dancers as embodied conservatives helps explain modern dance's curious position relative to European modernism while drawing attention to the formation of dancers' conservative and right political affiliations during Weimar. To elucidate the connections between dance, modernism, and politics, this dissertation locates the origins of German modern dance at the end of the nineteenth century with a Swiss musician: Jaques-Dalcroze. Here, my dissertation departs from established historical narratives of German modern dance, which locate its origins with Wigman and Laban (as well as Duncan, to some degree) around 1914, and make only passing reference to Jaques-Dalcroze.⁵⁸ My dissertation revises these historical accounts to show how Jaques-Dalcroze's approach to music as embodied movement beginning at the fin-de-siècle established the foundation for embodied conservative thinking in Germany during Weimar. Chapter 1 shows how from 1890 to 1905 Jaques-Dalcroze

⁵⁸ Examples include: Guilbert, *Danser avec le IIIe Reich*; Howe, *Individuality and Expression*; Manning, "Ausdruckstanz"; Müller, *Die Begründung des Ausdruckstanzes durch Mary Wigman*; Müller, *Mary Wigman*; Müller and Stöckemann, *...jeder Mensch ist ein Tänzer*; Isa Partsch-Bergson, *The Makers of Modern Dance in Germany: Rudolf Laban, Mary Wigman, Kurt Jooss*, video (Dance Horizons, 2004); Preston-Dunlop, *Rudolf Laban* (1998); Norbert Servos, "Ausdruckstanz," *The International Encyclopedia of Dance*, ed. Cohen, online (2005).

described the movement of the body as the conservation of physical forces, which formed a model for social and political forces.. His ideas, inspired by the writings of the French Sentimental Enlightenment and Jean-Jacques Rousseau, give embodied conservatism its name and formed the basis for a dance school at Hellerau, the subject of Chapter 3, where modern dancers (including Wigman) received their training.

Here, my work takes cues from Marshall Berman's seminal study of European modernism. Just as Berman sees Rousseau as "the source of some of our most vital modern traditions, from nostalgic reverie to psychoanalytic self-scrutiny to participatory democracy,"⁵⁹ this dissertation situates Rousseau at the origins of German modern dance to understand its modern features. Berman's central question for Rousseau and his "*moderniste*" vision of eighteenth-century society was the same one German dancers asked – and answered – more than a century later: "How was the self to move and live in a whirlwind?"⁶⁰ Irrespective of their context, German modern dancers showed that to move at all required a foundation of physical coordination and alignment. To move in "in a whirlwind" required even more coordination and balance; to move *freely* in a whirlwind required the most coordination, balance, and control. For individuals in search of a freedom of movement during a stormy interwar Europe, the translation of physical harmony into the language of society and politics provided the answer. The history of German modern dance is the history of this movement for order and stable ground. As such, it challenges one of Berman's basic premises, that "to be modern is to live a life of paradox and contradiction."⁶¹

⁵⁹ Berman, *All That is Solid Melts into Air*, 17.

⁶⁰ Berman, *Ibid.*

⁶¹ Berman, *Ibid.*, 13.

Beginning this dissertation's historical account with Rousseau and Jaques-Dalcroze builds upon a body of scholarship that examines the transnational influences of Weimar culture and ideas, while also proposing alternative historical periodization of the late-Wilhelmine period and Weimar era, traditionally described from 1918 or 1919 to 1933.⁶² Scholars of German dance have only recently begun to reconsider how dance enables alternative historical chronologies and periodization.⁶³ Chapter 3 demonstrates how articulations of German modern dance as "German" were activated as part of a strategy of embodied conservatism to establish political unity among Hellerau's divided founders. Other chapters illustrate how dance critics, particularly Brandenburg, used national labels to make sense of how Jaques-Dalcroze, Duncan, and Laban – a Swiss, an American, and an Hungarian – could be considered the founders of an artistic movement that developed on German soil. Writing by Brandenburg and Laban in the 1910s and 1920s illustrates how their national designations for dance deliberately activated embodied conservatism in service to the politics of a pre-fascist, Weimar right. Although the scholarly literature on the Weimar political right and late Wilhelmine conservatism includes some analysis of culture, modern dance has yet to be considered within it.

This dissertation demonstrates that modern dance was founded upon the premise that knowledge generated through dance demanded rational, systematic analysis as much as embodied or felt expression. In fact, all of this dissertation's main figures defined modern dance through its rational "reduction" or systematic analysis of what they believed to be its most basic

⁶² Geoff Eley, Jennifer L. Jenkins, and Tracie Matysik, eds., *German Modernities from Wilhelm to Weimar: A Contest of Futures* (London, 2016); Gordon and McCormick, eds., *Weimar Thought*; Helmut Walser Smith, *The Continuities of German History: Nation, Religion, and Race Across the Long Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge, 2008).

⁶³ Elswit, "Back Again? Valeska Gert's Exiles" and Elswit, *Watching Weimar Dance*; Jens Giersdorf, *The Body of the People: East German Dance since 1945* (Madison, 2013); Manning and Ruprecht, eds. *New German Dance Studies*.

elements. This often took shape as scientific analysis, both in its English sense – dancers borrowed techniques and concepts from nineteenth- and early twentieth-century disciplines of natural science, physiology, psychology, and pseudoscience – and in its German sense, as “*Wissenschaft*” or “*wissenschaftlich*,” meaning the systematic pursuit of knowledge in contrast to its practical application. Historians of science and technology have examined the intersections in Europe between art, knowledge-production, and knowledge-systematization, particularly in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.⁶⁴ This body of literature, which focuses on music and the visual arts, contains slight but important references to dance, particularly in the study of physiological aesthetics; however, individuals such as Jaques-Dalcroze, Duncan, or Laban have not received full consideration as members within the movement.⁶⁵ Apart from recent scholarship on Laban Movement Analysis in the post-WWII era, scholars have yet to examine the links between American or European modern dance and the history of science.⁶⁶

In literatures on dance history, German cultural history, and histories of modernism, German modern dancers are considered neither intellectuals, nor scientists, nor social theorists. My dissertation considers them as all three. It also considers them as political activists in the sense that they actively sought to shape their world in accordance with a set of principles that dealt with the negotiation of power between people. With the exception of Gert, they embraced

⁶⁴ Lorraine Daston and Peter Galison, *Objectivity* (Zone Books, 2007); Lorraine Daston and Elizabeth Lunbeck, eds. *Histories of Scientific Observation* (Chicago, 2011); Peter Galison, “Aufbau / Bauhaus: Logical Positivism and Architectural Modernism,” *Critical Inquiry* 16, no. 4 (Summer 1990): 709 – 752; Hui, “Changeable Ears” and *The Psychophysical Ear*; Jackson, *Harmonious Triads*; Timothy Lenoir, *Instituting Science: The Cultural Production of the Scientific Disciplines* (Stanford, 1997); Anson Rabinbach, *The Human Motor: Energy, Fatigue, and the Origins of Modernity* (Berkeley, 1990); Voskuhl, *Androids in the Enlightenment*.

⁶⁵ Robert Michael Brain, *The Pulse of Modernism: Physiological Aesthetics in Fin-de-siècle Europe* (University of Washington, 2015); Brain, “The Pulse of Modernism: Experimental Physiology and Aesthetic Avant-Gardes circa 1900,” *Studies in the History and Philosophy of Science* 39 (2008): 393-417; and Robin Veder, “American Delsarte and Mensendieck Body Culture,” *Modernism / Modernity* 17, no. 4 (Nov. 2010), 819 – 838. Carrie J. Preston also references physiological aesthetics in her analysis of Duncan in Preston, *Modernism’s Mythic Pose*.

⁶⁶ Whitney Laemmli, “The Choreography of Everyday Life: Rudolf Laban and the Making of Modern Movement,” (Ph.D. Diss., University of Pennsylvania, 2016).

an anti-liberal, anti-democratic social order that eliminated dissent in favor of unanimous (and often unspoken) accord. Throughout the dissertation we will see numerous examples of how these acts replaced meaningful deliberation, which dancers saw as a challenge to social order.

Why did German modern dancers want to establish order? For them, social “harmony” ensured individual freedom. Defining for themselves the concept of freedom, modern dancers formed a theory of sovereignty through embodied conservatism, which addressed a basic problem in the history of western political thought: how to reconcile the demands of a free and self-legislating subject with those of a higher authority. Articulated most clearly by Mary Wigman, the “sovereign dancer” was, like Plato’s guardian, physically and emotionally attuned to the forces within and around her. This meant that she was fully trained in a system for dancing that brought “the motion of [her] limbs” into physical alignment while seamlessly – freely – combining them with her intellectual, emotional, and psychical efforts. An individual model for the social order, the balance within her body signaled the authority of harmonic law. Her deference to it demarcated a sovereign space for her that was both physical and spiritual. Situated within this territory, she was free to move. Its borders were assured, its existence acknowledged and respected by those around her. According to Wigman, this was the “*Reich* of the dancer,” a space in which the dancer moved as the expression of harmony, both as source *and* subject of its laws.⁶⁷ The dancer was ruler and ruled – state and subject – in one. Wigman’s teacher Jaques-Dalcroze articulated this slightly differently several years earlier: this was the place where one could “feel more free and secure, at once controlled and self-controlling, the

⁶⁷ Mary Wigman, “Tanz,” “Das Drehen,” “Der Raum,” in “Mary Wigman Heft,” *Der Keil* 1, Nr. 1 (April 24, 1924), 4-5.

master of himself and devoted to a greatness, something higher.”⁶⁸ Freedom of movement was not an individual right. Instead, it was a condition that came from an individual’s acceptance of law and order.

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To show how German modern dancers shaped their theories, constructed their systems, and defined their work as modern, this dissertation draws upon methods in intellectual and cultural history. This dissertation is based upon the simple premise that dancers are intellectuals and that dances are ideas. This project follows a recent turn in intellectual history towards histories of embodiment and materiality, particularly with respect to histories of science.⁶⁹ Scholars in dance history and dance studies have gone to considerable lengths to show the working minds behind the dancing bodies, and the concepts embedded within dances.⁷⁰ These are notions that other fields are slower to acknowledge, evidenced by its lack of attention to dance within intellectual histories of culture, politics, and aesthetics.⁷¹

⁶⁸ Émile Jaques-Dalcroze, “Die Hygienische Bedeutung der rhythmischen Gymnastik: ein Brief von Dr E Jaques Dalcroze mit einem Nachwort von Wolf Dorn,” *Gartenstadt Mitteilungen der deutschen Gartenstadtgesellschaft* Jg.5 H11 (Nov 1911), 154.

⁶⁹ See, for example, Pamela Smith, *The Body of the Artisan: Art and Experience in the Scientific Revolution* (Chicago, 2004); and John Tresch, “Cosmologies Materialized: History of Science and History of Ideas,” in Samuel Moyn and Darrin McMahon, eds. *Rethinking Modern European Intellectual History* (Oxford, 2014), 153 – 172.

⁷⁰ For examples that approach dancers within the Western theatrical tradition as intellectuals (narrowly and broadly defined), see Banes, *Terpsichore in Sneakers*; Copeland, *Merce Cunningham*; Ann Daly, *Done into Dance: Isadora Duncan in America* (Middletown, 1995); Garafola, *Legacies of Twentieth-Century Dance*; Martin Duberman, *Black Mountain: An Experiment in Community* (Evanston, 2009); Jennifer Homans, *Apollo’s Angels* (New York, 2010); Carrie Lambert-Beatty, *Being Watched: Yvonne Rainer and the 1960s* (Cambridge, 2008); Peter Stoneley, *A Queer History of the Ballet* (Routledge, 2007).

⁷¹ J.M. Bernstein, *The Fate of Art: Aesthetic Alienation from Kant to Derrida and Adorno* (Pennsylvania, 1992); Krauss, *The Originality of the Avant-Garde and Other Modernist Myths*; Martin Jay, *Force Fields: Between Intellectual History and Cultural Critique* (New York, 1993); Schorske, *Fin-de-Siècle Vienna*; Jerrold Seigel, *Bohemian Paris: Culture, Politics, and the Boundaries of Bourgeois Life, 1830 – 1930* (Baltimore, 1986) and *The*

German modern dancers, with their Hobbesian understanding of the individual as a model for the collective, imagined society in terms of large structures. According to H. Stuart Hughes, this urge for structural understanding defines the process of “social theorizing”: “However finite the problems to which [historical actors] might address themselves, what they were really after was the over-all structure of society.”⁷² Based in their understanding of individual experience, German modern dancers continually theorized this “over-all structure” through the embodied particularities of social representation, practice, knowledge, and transformation. Such schematic thinking and theorization has inspired this dissertation’s use of terms and concepts such as embodied conservatism, metabolic movement, and the dancer as a sovereign self. “In order to say something worthwhile about the history of ideas, one must not be afraid to advance hypotheses and proceed in a logically ordered fashion.”⁷³ Furthermore, as theorists of the social deeply attentive to issues of time and temporal experience, German modern dancers combined “what the historian knows” with what “the social scientist knows,” two bodies of knowledge that William Sewell identifies as “as crucial to for someone who studies the contemporary social world [...] as it is for someone who studies the past.”⁷⁴

This dissertation’s focus on German modern dancers as intellectuals and social theorists responds to a question posed by Samuel Moyn: “What would an intellectual history look like that

Idea of the Self: Thought and Experience in Western Europe since the Seventeenth Century (Cambridge, 2005); Gluck, *Popular Bohemia*. Importantly, recent scholarship on the concept of sovereignty has taken dance into account. See: Zvi Ben Dor Benite, Stefanos Geroulanos, and Nicole Jerr, eds. *The Scaffolding of Sovereignty: Global and Aesthetic Perspectives on the History of a Concept* (New York, 2017).

⁷² H. Stuart Hughes, *Consciousness and Society: The Reorientation of European Social Thought, 1890 – 1930* (New York, 1958), 22.

⁷³ Hughes, *Consciousness and Society*, 8.

⁷⁴ William Sewell, “Theory, History, and Social Science,” 13-14.

took account of the abolition of the frontier between what is intellectualized and what is not?”⁷⁵ With dance as an idea, and through the concept of embodied conservatism, this dissertation argues that German modern dance generated a continuum of thinking that extended from the most spontaneous movements of feet to the most carefully posed abstractions. This continuum formed a social imaginary – a world in which “there is no idea that is not social, and no society not ideationally founded”⁷⁶ – which served as the basis for political action. German dancers thus not only challenge those intellectual historians who understand “high” concepts to animate “low” culture, but those would restrict intellectual history to the study of texts in conversation with other texts, or of textual reference as the basis for understanding changes to ideas over time.⁷⁷

German modern dancers believed that knowledge about dance offered a knowledge of the nature of the universe that no other art, or science, could furnish. In this sense they were epistemologists. In order to make sense of the embodied epistemologies German modern dancers devised, this dissertation draws upon methods in the history of science and histories of the female body as a locus for knowledge about European politics, society, and culture.⁷⁸ For the

⁷⁵ Samuel Moyn, “Imaginary Intellectual History,” in Moyn and Darrin McMahon, eds. *Rethinking Modern European Intellectual History*, 121.

⁷⁶ Moyn, “Imaginary Intellectual History,” 117.

⁷⁷ See, for example, Dominick LaCapra, “Rethinking Intellectual History and Reading Texts,” *History and Theory* 19, no.3 (October 1980): 245 - 276; Arthur Lovejoy, *The Great Chain of Being: A Study of the History of an Idea* (Cambridge, 1936); Quentin Skinner, *Liberty Before Liberalism* (Cambridge, 1998) and *Visions of Politics, vol. I: Regarding Method* (Cambridge, 2002).

⁷⁸ Lorraine Daston, “The Naturalized Female Intellect” in *Historical Dimensions of Psychological Discourse*, ed. Carl F. Grauman and Kenneth J. Gergen (Cambridge, 1996), 165 – 193; Barbara Duden, *The Woman Beneath the Skin: A Doctor’s Patients in Eighteenth Century Germany*, trans. Thomas Dunlap (Cambridge, 1998); Paula Findlen, “The Scientist’s Body: The Nature of a Woman Philosopher in Enlightenment Italy,” in Lorraine Daston and Gianna Pomata, eds., *The Faces of Nature in Enlightenment Europe* (Berlin 2003); Kate Fisher, *Birth Control, Sex, Marriage in Britain, 1918 – 1960* (Oxford, 2007); Jan Goldstein, *The Post-Revolutionary Self: Politics and Psyche in France, 1750 – 1850* (Cambridge, 2005); Dagmar Herzog, *Sex After Fascism: Memory and Morality in Twentieth-Century Germany* (Princeton, 2005); Rebecca Messbarger, *The Lady Anatomist: The Life and Work of Anna Morandi Manzolini* (Chicago, 2010); Simon Schaffer, “Self-Evidence,” in *Critical Inquiry*, Vol. 18, No. 2 (Winter, 1992): 327-362; Stuart Strickland, “The Ideology of Self-Knowledge and the Practice of Self-

dancer as for the scientist, questions of disciplinary specialization, technical expertise, research, evidence, and observation were of prime importance. Scholars in the field of dance studies, which emerged in the mid-1990s under a trans-Atlantic influence of cultural studies and new historicism, often frame dance as culturally situated form of knowledge, marked by an attention to interdisciplinarity, the destabilization of codified or institutionalized meaning, alternative approaches to practice and representation, and an emphasis on the social context for the production of knowledge.⁷⁹ Work in the field of the Sociology of Scientific Knowledge (SSK) and the history of science and technology studies have examined the role of non-specialists, philosophers in the humanities, and “ordinary” people in the production of scientific knowledge, as well as the various scientific “languages” spoken within the process of such knowledge-production.⁸⁰ Combining these methods with dance studies, this dissertation approaches dance not as a timeless set of principles but as a contested body of ideas practiced among people.

Scholarship in the history of dance likewise attends to how dance has served as a contested body of thought. Works by Lynn Garafola, Deborah Jowitt, and David Vaughan, whose research and writing has shaped the field of dance scholarship since the 1960s, form

Experimentation,” in *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 31 (1998): 453 – 471; Judith Surkis, *Sexing the Citizen: Morality and Masculinity in France, 1870 – 1920* (Ithaca, 2006).

⁷⁹ For an overview of the discipline of dance studies, see, Gay Morris, “Dance Studies / Cultural Studies,” *Dance Research Journal* 41, No. 1 (Summer 2009): 82 – 100. For an overview of the subfield of German dance studies, see Ana Isabel Keilson, “New German Dance Studies, ed. by Susan Manning and Lucia Ruprecht (review),” *Dance Research Journal* 46, No. 1 (April 2014): 123- 129. See also Alexandra Carter and Janet O’Shea, eds. *The Routledge Dance Studies Reader* 2nd ed. (New York, 2010).

⁸⁰ Deborah R. Coen, *The Earthquake Observers: Disaster Science from Lisbon to Richter* (Chicago, 2013) and Coen, *Vienna in the Age of Uncertainty: Science, Liberalism, and Private Life* (Chicago, 2007); Lynn Nyhart, *Modern Nature: The Rise of the Biological Perspective in Germany* (Chicago, 2009); Jessica Riskin, *Science in the Age of Sensibility: The Sentimental Empiricists of the French Enlightenment* (Chicago, 2002); Crosbie Smith and M. Norton Wise, *Energy and Empire: A Biographical Study of Lord Kelvin* (Cambridge, 1989); Shapin and Schaffer, *Leviathan and the Air-Pump*.

particularly important examples.⁸¹ Vaughan’s analyses of dances by Frederick Ashton and Merce Cunningham, for example, illustrate how the formal structures of dance – from its narrative and non-narrative action, technical vocabularies, and stylistic cues of particular dance works – form dance’s conceptual content, which needs no interpretative mechanisms, such as “reading” dance as text, to decode it.⁸² For, Vaughan, dance is best understood, quite simply, as dance.⁸³ Alternately, Garafola’s work on the Imperial Russian Ballet and Diaghilev’s Ballets Russes demonstrates how only through careful attention to histories of society, politics, and culture can we fully grasp the significance of particular dance styles, techniques, and genre.⁸⁴ In addition to Garafola, other historians of dance in twentieth-century Europe, the Soviet Union, and the United States explore the intersections of dance and politics through the social cosmos of dance communities– from performers, dance-makers, and set designers, to audiences, critics, administrators, and advertisers.⁸⁵ These works all rely on a detailed examination of archival sources related to dance (e.g. artists’ notebooks, sketches, notational treatises, rehearsal notes, audience and observer reports, musical scores, costumes, production plans, souvenir programs, sets, outlines for educational practice, photographs, memoirs), often introducing or translating

⁸¹ Lynn Garafola, *Diaghilev’s Ballets Russes* (Da Capo, 1989); Garafola, *Legacies of Twentieth-Century Dance*; Jowitt, *Time and the Dancing Image*; David Vaughan, *Frederick Ashton and His Ballets*. 2nd ed. (Dance Books, 1999 [1977]); Vaughan, *Merce Cunningham*.

⁸² Vaughan’s work responds to scholars in dance studies who understand dances as literary texts. See, for example: Mark Franko, *Dance as Text: Ideologies of the Baroque Body* (Cambridge, 1993); and selected essays in Susan Leigh Foster, ed. *Corporealities: Dancing Knowledge, Culture and Power* (Routledge, 1996).

⁸³ Personal conversations with the author, 2009 – present.

⁸⁴ See Garafola, “The Diaries of Marius Petipa,” in *Legacies of Twentieth-Century Dance*, originally published as Garafola, Introduction to *The Diaries of Marius Petipa*, in *Studies in Dance History*, 3, no. 1 (Spring 1992).

⁸⁵ See, for example: Graff, *Stepping Left*; Mark Franko, *The Work of Dance: Labor, Movement and Identity in the 1930s* (Middletown, 2002); Giersdorf, *The Body of the People*; Susan Manning, *Modern Dance Negro Dance: Race in Motion* (Minneapolis, 2004); Naima Prevots, *Dance for Export: Cultural Diplomacy in the Cold War* (Middletown, 1998); Tim Scholl, *Sleeping Beauty: A Legend in Progress* (New Haven, 2004); Elizabeth Souritz, *Soviet Choreographers in the 1920s*, trans. Lynn Visson (London, 1990); John Perpener, *African-American Concert Dance*.

sources to audiences for the first time. This dissertation likewise introduces readers to previously unexamined and un-translated primary archival sources. This includes the analysis in Chapter 1 of Jaques-Dalcroze's *Méthode*; Duncan and Haeckel's correspondence in Chapter 2; the bulk of Wigman's writing discussed in Chapter 4; and finally Laban and Brandenburg's correspondence, early journalistic reviews, and critical writing analyzed in Chapters 5 and 6.

From the study of the emergence of Western theatrical dance in fifteenth century Italian courts to the examination of performances of Imperial ballets in the Soviet-era, archivally-based historical scholarship on dance attends to the synchronic and diachronic formation of historical actors categories, terms, and concepts. Importantly, it distinguishes between the political participation of dancers and the political content of their ideas, exposing dance's powerful – and all too often unacknowledged – position within society.

The history of German modern dance demonstrates how a polyphony of language, image, gesture, and idea combined to make dance a political, and elusive, source of social authority. Masking politics through common ways of moving, German modern dancers turned embodied movement into social thought. They also showed how social thinking began with a motion of limbs.

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Part I of this dissertation shows the foundations and early emergence of embodied conservative thinking in Switzerland and Germany from 1890 – 1913 by outlining how modern dancers first conceived of individual, physical motion as a model for society. Chapter 1 focuses on the work of Swiss music pedagogue Émile Jaques-Dalcroze and shows the origins of modern

dance in ideas from the French sentimental Enlightenment of the eighteenth century. Inspired by discourses on musical sentimentalism, effort and energy conservation, and work by political philosophers including Diderot, Montesquieu, and Rousseau, Jaques-Dalcroze defined a system of musical education based upon physical expression as the socially subjective experience of sense, intellect, and ease. Tracing the development of his ideas from his early travels in North Africa to his later career in Paris, Vienna, and Switzerland, Chapter 1 shows how Jaques-Dalcroze's approach to individual movement as a form of effortless alignment was not intended as a social metaphor but rather as an embodied practice of Rousseau's *contrat social*. Translating a language of physical forces into the language of political and social forces, Jaques-Dalcroze ultimately described a theory of social order and governance through dance.

Chapter 2 turns to Jaques-Dalcroze's American contemporary, Isadora Duncan, who believed that nature formed the basis of human society. To show this, it examines her career in Germany from 1903 to 1909. Though her lectures, performances, and her school for young girls founded in 1904, Duncan brought a tradition of "new dance" to Germans and to Germany. Inspired by evolutionary theories of the mid-nineteenth century, Duncan translated into movement theories of natural evolution, biogenetic law, and sexual selection articulated by embryologist Ernst Haeckel, her friend and confidante, as well as those of evolutionary theorist Charles Darwin. Focusing on Duncan's correspondence with Haeckel, this chapter shows how Duncan articulated the movements of the individual body as evidence of a natural harmonic order generated, maintained, and protected through embodied movement. Duncan's "metabolic movement" protected the "free" and natural movements of the dancer, who modeled Haeckel's theories of species inheritance and development. Duncan's interest in Haeckel's philosophical system known as monism formed an additional basis for her theories of social order, which she

and her sister instituted in practice at their school in Grunewald. This chapter also demonstrates how Duncan's audiences and critics nationalized her work by deemphasizing its origins in natural science and highlighting instead her connections to Nietzschean philosophy.

Chapter 3 turns to the life-reform community at Hellerau from 1906 to 1913, where questions of nature and creative agency came into conflict. Founded primarily by two groups of social democratic reformers – members of the *Werkbund* and members of the Garden City Movement – Hellerau was an experiment in life and labor reform oriented around the body. As part of this project, an institute dedicated to Jaques-Dalcroze's method, the Jaques-Dalcroze Institute [*Bildungsanstalt Jaques-Dalcroze*] opened in 1909, and dance quickly assumed a central role in the community. Divided between various political, social, and cultural agendas, Hellerau's organizers argued over the basic features of Hellerau's layout and organization. With its power to resolve tension in effortless balance, Jaques-Dalcroze's method became an important, practical force to establish social unity within the community. Looking at the daily activities of the Institute as well as the place of dance within larger debates among Hellerau's *Werkbund* and Garden City organizers, this chapter shows how the power of modern dance to transform tension into accord was put to the test.

Part II turns to modern dance during and after the First World War, when German modern dancers established embodied conservatism as a theory of social order. Mary Wigman, star student of Jaques-Dalcroze at Hellerau and the subject of Chapter 4, elaborated upon his ideas about effortlessness and the social contractual nature of physical movement. Describing dance through a mixture of knowable and unknowable features of the self, Wigman articulated dance as a form of subjective freedom that could solve a fundamental problem of political theory: the competing claims of higher authority with those of a sovereign and self-legislating

individual. Wigman's emphasis on consensus through dance hinged upon her transformation of physical space into a social space – in the theater and in the studio – where individual difference collapsed under the weight of an overarching, authoritative, totality.

Chapter 5 turns to work by Laban, Wigman's collaborator and colleague. Beginning with Laban's work at Ascona in 1914 and his activities in Zurich during WWI, this chapter traces Laban's efforts to establish a universal system for dance notation. Laban's search to devise a dance notational system, or "dance science," stemmed from questions about the nature of human agency, particularly regarding the dancer's ability to be a creative maker rather than "artist" (in its classical philosophical sense), or imitator. In his writings from the 1910s to the early 1920s, and in his early efforts towards a notational system, Laban articulated how the dancer's observance of harmonic law endowed him with powers of creative genesis. Reforming many ideas elaborated by Duncan years earlier, Laban cast the dancer – the male as well as female dancer – as a powerful social agent. To do this, he rallied embodied conservatism in support of an emerging Weimar political right. Shown through his correspondence with dance critic Hans Brandenburg, Laban described how the individual dancer modeled a set of explicitly conservative values for the social body, such as nationalism, hierarchized ability for leadership, and forms of heroic strength and rigor. Here we will see how Laban's concept of "second nature" explains the historical shift in definitions of choreography from its original usage before 1900 as the faithful reproduction (or imitation) of gesture to its "modern" connotation as the creative invention of movement.

Chapter 6 concludes the dissertation by looking at how embodied conservatism was alternately used and rejected in the formation of theories of social change. Through the work of Brandenburg and Valeska Gert, this chapter shows how both figures attended to dance's unique

relationship to temporal experience in an effort to explain basic social structures. For Brandenburg, this meant the historical emergence of modern dance, which he described as a modern iteration of Nietzschean tragic culture that contained the power to reform damaging social institutions and values. Brandenburg's relationship with Laban, detailed in the chapter, further demonstrates how Brandenburg, Laban, and others understood the "modernity" of German modern dance to reside in the practical administration of its conceptual vision: the reshuffling of institution, education, and culture according to embodied conservative principles. As a member of the Weimar political right, Brandenburg further infused embodied conservatism with attitudes of nationalism, anti-Semitism, and a belief in the erasure of political dissent. In contrast, Gert rejected embodied conservatism. For her, social relations and structure were based upon forms of social disorder and chaos, evident through the individual and collective experience of time as a heterogeneous, contextual, contingent, and often unpredictable phenomenon. Drawing on theories of social temporality articulated by William Sewell, this chapter contrasts definitions of modern dance by Brandenburg, the historian, and Gert, the social scientist.

Part I: 1890 - 1913

Chapter 1

The Moving Self and the Social Order: Émile Jaques-Dalcroze and the Origins of *Rythmique*, 1890 - 1905

“Then it seems, I said, that it is in music and poetry that our guardians must build their bulwark.”

Plato, *Republic*, IV. 424c

How is knowledge of the self knowledge of society? The history of German modern dance begins with this question, posed at the fin-de-siècle by a Swiss musician. Émile Jaques-Dalcroze (1865 – 1950, née Émile-Henri Jaques) is known as the founder of *Rythmique* (in English, “Eurythmics”), a system of movement-based musical education for children and young adults. Born, raised, and educated in Geneva, his ideas about music shaped the development of modern dance in Germany and Europe. In the early decades of the twentieth century, he reformed artistic education by demonstrating how the body in motion outwardly expressed inner sense, feeling, and thought. This moving, dancing self, he further showed, was a valuable member of society, whose movements reflected its values, generated its relationships and governing structures, and protected its freedoms. During the final decades of the nineteenth century and well into the twentieth, dancers, musicians, and performing artists of all stripes lined up to study these ideas. By 1926, for example, over 22,000 people had enrolled in *Rythmique* courses in Europe and across the globe.¹

¹ “History of the Dalcroze Method of Eurhythmics: Third Period – Geneva, 1915-1935.” *Music Since 1900*. eds., Laura Kuhn and Nicholas Slonimsky. 6th edition (New York, 2001), 916. Currently, courses, institutes, and certificate programs in the Jaques-Dalcroze method are taught in in over twenty countries across Europe, Asia, South and North America. The Geneva-based Institute Jaques-Dalcroze, founded in 1915, boasts a current enrollment of approximately 2,600 students and an alumni base of over 300,000 worldwide. “Eurhythmics in the World.” La Fédération Internationale des Enseignants de Rythmique, last modified, 2015, accessed online August 6, 2015. <http://www.fier.com/wordpress/eurhythmics-in-the-world/>; and “What is Eurhythmics?” Institut Jaques-Dalcroze, last modified, 2015, accessed online August 6, 2015. <http://www.dalcroze.ch/what-is-eurhythmics/>.

Why begin a history of German modern dance with a music pedagogue from Geneva? Established narratives about the origins of German modern dance often include mention of Jaques-Dalcroze, who, as we will see in subsequent Chapters, personally trained many of the founders of German modern dance, including Wigman. These narratives trace the legacy of European artistic expressionism at the fin-de-siècle, when, alongside French, German, Austrian, and American movements in the visual arts, poetry, and theater, a wave of female stage performers – including Loïe Fuller, the Wiesenthal sisters, Isadora Duncan and Ruth St. Denis – rejected academic dance technique (*danse d'école*) and introduced through new forms of gesture, musicality, and composition. Shortly before the First World War, Wigman and Rudolf Laban met at Ascona, an artists' community in southern Switzerland. Influenced by these earlier schools of solo dancing and rejecting the academicism of the Jaques-Dalcroze system, the two began making works that defined modern dance in Germany in the years to come.² Through their formal and stylistic innovations, their thematic content and narrative structures, work by Wigman and Laban work captured the essence of modern art, first described in the mid-nineteenth century.³

This dissertation tells a different story. Beginning with this chapter, this dissertation shows how work by Jaques-Dalcroze provided the conceptual basis for German modern dance,

² For narratives rehearsing this argument, see, for example, Deborah Jowitt, "Modern Dance Technique" in *The International Encyclopedia of Dance*, eds., Selma Jeanne Cohen and Dance Perspectives Foundation (Oxford, 1998), accessed online September 3, 2015; "Modern Dance (Contemporary Dance)," in *Oxford Dictionary of Dance*, 2nd ed., eds., Debra Craine and Judith Mackrell (Oxford, 2010), accessed online September 3, 2015; and, in German, Patricia Stöckemann and Hedwig Müller *...jeder Mensch ist ein Tänzer: Ausdruckstanz in Deutschland zwischen 1900 und 1945* (Gießen, 1993).

³ In particular, the autonomy of the work of art as contingent and thereby separate from the artist as creator. This was first articulated by French poet Charles Baudelaire in his 1859 essay, "The Painter of Modern Life." "The Modern," Baudelaire writes, "Is the transitory, the fugitive, the contingent." Charles Baudelaire, "Le Peintre de la Vie Moderne," in *Œuvres Complètes de Charles Baudelaire: L'Art Romantique*, ed. Jaques Crépet (Paris, 1917), 66. For a summary of the main criteria of modern art, as well as distinctions between concepts in art of "modern," "modernism," and "modernist," see Eugene Lunn, "Modernism in Comparative Perspective," Chapter Two in *Marxism and Modernism: an Historical Study of Lukács, Brecht, Benjamin and Adorno* (1982), 33 -74.

crucially shaped the ideas of Wigman and Laban, and established the foundation for their core practices in the 1910s and 1920s. Jaques-Dalcroze articulated in his vision of music the idea that embodied movement contained previously untapped information about human life, behavior, and organization. The concept of dance as a body of knowledge in need of systematization and theorization inspired Wigman and Laban to develop their own theories and systems, and served as a template they returned to throughout their respective careers. Finally, Jaques-Dalcroze's pedagogical system, oriented toward the image of an effortlessly moving self, formed a vision of social relations that grounded Wigman and Laban's respective approaches to society and remained central to debates among German dancers, critics, and theoreticians during the 1920s.

This chapter illustrates how Jaques-Dalcroze's musical experiences in Algeria, Vienna, and Paris beginning around 1890 led him to define music's origins in movement expression. Though not the first to draw links between physical movement and music, he was the first to show how music, conceived as embodied rhythm and physical expression, formed a model for the social contract. Music provided the necessary basis for what German modern dancers later articulated as "harmony" and the "harmonic": a state or quality of agreement and concord, primarily characterized by logic, order, and a hierarchy of formal structure. Musical harmony, a combination of the physical motion of sound waves and aural effect, demonstrated how embodied movement served as a demonstration of logic and order; it also showed body's imperative as an expressive medium to maintain and propagate these values. In contrast to a spiritual sense or metaphysical condition, harmony according to a musical and physical – i.e. embodied – definition emphasized material knowledge and practical effect. For those, such as Jaques-Dalcroze, driven to understand the social implications of aesthetic expression, harmony conceived as practical logic rather than metaphysical longing provided a promising line of

inquiry. Jaques-Dalcroze's vision of the body as a musical harmonic entity threw into stark relief an urgent social mission for movement: to create, maintain, and protect a stable social order through the conservation of physical force.

With *Rythmique*, Jaques-Dalcroze linked the aesthetic and the scientific to make claims, through the body, about the social. He thus belongs to a set of artists and scientists who sought to find new material grounds for artistic expression, which often involved devising new artistic, scientific, and philosophical languages. Contemporary schools of "physiological aesthetics," including work in the visual arts, photography, and sound psychophysics used information generated by the physical body to ground knowledge-claims about human life and behavior. Contemporary scholarship has shown how their various contributions – ranging from theories of biological diversity, history, and the human mind, to innovations in laboratory technology and experimental practices – have shaped the development of European artistic modernism.⁴ Existing historiographies of Jaques-Dalcroze often situate his influence within late nineteenth-century schools of European rhythmic gymnastics, *Körperkultur* (body culture), or educational or theater reforms. However, this chapter argues that Jaques-Dalcroze's physiologically-based theory of music advanced a vision of the human self that had more in common with the ambitions of nineteenth century scientific aesthetics than with his own music and movement contemporaries.

⁴ Robert Michael Brain, "The Pulse of Modernism: Experimental Physiology and Aesthetic Avant-Gardes circa 1900," *Studies in the History and Philosophy of Science* 39 (2008): 393 -417; Alexandra Hui, *The Psychophysical Ear: Musical Experiments, Experimental Sounds, 1840-1910* (Cambridge, 2012); Hui, "Changeable Ears: Ernst Mach's and Max Planck's studies of accommodation in Hearing," Special issue on Music, Sound and the Laboratory from 1750-1980, *Osiris* 28, no. 1. (January 2013): 119-145; Timothy Lenoir, "The Politics of Vision: Optics, Painting, and Ideology in Germany, 1845-95," in *Instituting Science: The Cultural Production of Scientific Disciplines* (Stanford, 1997), 131-179; Anson Rabinbach, "Etienne-Jules Marey and the Mechanics of the Body," chapter 4 in Rabinbach, *The Human Motor* (Berkeley, 1992), 84-120; Michael Zimmermann, *Les Mondes de Seurat: son Œuvre et le Débat Artistique de son Temps* (Paris, 1991).

In a sense, Jaques-Dalcroze was less concerned with art and aesthetics than he was with understanding the nature of embodied knowledge. As a theorist of movement, physiology, and human behavior, Jaques-Dalcroze devised an experimental system much like those of his physiological aesthetic counterparts, which were “concerned [primarily] with the sensory infrastructure of the human body, with questions of the nature and essence of art only arising as a secondary concern.”⁵ For Jaques-Dalcroze and other physiological aesthetes such as German embryologist and dance aficionado Ernst Haeckel, the subject of Chapter 2, aesthetics enabled “the body [to take] on its importance as a site from which values were derived, in clear opposition to the excessive claims of absolute reason.”⁶ The body as a source to generate values of empiricism, observation, and subjective social experience merged with efforts to systematize knowledge, theorize causality, and “put artistic practice on new, scientifically informed footing.”

Outlined in Part I of this chapter, Jaques-Dalcroze’s resistance to contemporary musical trends and his interest in knowledge-systematization allowed him to establish a system of musical pedagogy that theorized social relations and social values. The vision of the expressive student at the center of *Rythmique* was self-legislating but respectful of higher authority, which took a variety of forms, from the expressive power of musical and artistic masterpieces, to nature and the natural world, to history, tradition, and refined knowledge of skilled individuals. Authority could also be found in musical harmony, which modeled an ease of bodily motion that translated into social life, institution, and relations. Jaques-Dalcroze’s “discovery” of the body as the basis of rhythm was thus his realization that the purpose of music – the *raison d’être* of musicians – was the harmonization of the social order.

⁵ Robert Michael Brain, *The Pulse of Modernism: Physiological Aesthetics in Fin-de-Siècle Europe* (Seattle, 2015), xiv.

⁶ Brain, *The Pulse of Modernism* (2015), xvi.

The musical values of Jaques-Dalcroze contrasted to those of his musical contemporaries, many of whom belonged to schools of European musical romanticism. Jaques-Dalcroze codified his system in 1906 with the publication of the *Méthode Jaques-Dalcroze*; though it shares some ideas with his musical contemporaries, musical romanticism figured primarily as set of values against which he developed his ideas. His turn to the body rejected of a vision of music popular at the time, typified by the work of composers such as Wagner, Liszt, and Bruckner. In contrast to Jaques-Dalcroze, these figures cast music as an inherently *anti-social* phenomenon. For musical romantics, practices of strained attention and deep concentration led to transformative, often socially isolated, acts of self-revelation. Music for Jaques-Dalcroze reaffirmed lost connections between people, and helped individuals join together their brains and bodies. Jaques-Dalcroze invoked a vision of the self articulated by the sentimental Enlightenment – in particular, work by Jean Jacques Rousseau, who was himself a novelist and composer. Yet rather than his artistic works, Rousseau’s theory of the social contract conceptually anchored the student of *Rythmique* to show how the claims of a free and self-legislating subject could be reconciled with the relation to authority, order, and governance. In the case of Rousseau, this happened through the “the general will,” the management of individual expression into a state of democratic equilibrium.

This chapter shows how Jaques-Dalcroze articulated music, newly understood as physical movement, as a form of knowledge about the self that no other art, or science, could furnish. This knowledge formed the grounds for relationships between people. Translating social relations into a language of physical forces and bodily motion, Jaques-Dalcroze demonstrated how the musician, defined as a dancer, could make and maintain the social order.

I. Musical Beginnings

Born in Austria, raised in Geneva, and passing the early decades of his professional career in Paris, North Africa, and Vienna, Émile Jaques-Dalcroze received an eclectic musical education. Beginning with piano study, Jaques-Dalcroze entered at age twelve into Geneva's prestigious Conservatoire de Musique, where he would teach a decade later. He trained in acting – participating in Geneva's *Belles Lettres* society productions of Racine, Molière and Corneille – and movement, studying gymnastics as part of compulsory military training for Swiss citizens; he also completed significant physical education and “strength and endurance [training] through free-standing exercises; work on ladders, ropes, and the horizontal bar, jumping and running; and marching in formation drills.”⁷ Moving to Paris after graduation, Jaques-Dalcroze trained with leading French theater pedagogues, and continued his musical studies in *solfège* and harmony.⁸ Paris, he later recalled, was a city of music: “in every room, music resonated from morning until night.”⁹ Jaques-Dalcroze kept up on current trends in theater while earning money at the

⁷ Tibor Dénes, “Chronologie,” in Frank Martin, Tibor Dénes, et al, *Émile Jaques-Dalcroze: L'Homme, Le Compositeur, Le Créateur de la Rythmique* (Neuchâtel, 1965), 12; Selma Landen Odom, “Delsartean Traces in Dalcroze Eurhythmics,” *Mime Journal* (2004/2005), 139.

⁸ In Paris, Jaques-Dalcroze trained with a number of well-known theater pedagogues, including Edmond Fot and Talbot [aka Denis Stanislas Montalant], who was known for unconventional techniques in breath control. French actress Sarah Bernhardt, a Talbot student, recalled one such exercise, in which they “learned breath control and how to deliver their parts while lying flat with a marble slab on their stomachs.” For more on Jaques-Dalcroze's early training, see Odom, “Delsartean Traces in Dalcroze Eurhythmics,” 136-151; Daniel I. Rubinoff, “Émile Jaques-Dalcroze's Influence on Frank Martin: 1924-1937,” (Ph.D. Diss., York University, 2011); Irwin Spector, *Rhythm and Life: The Work of Emile Jaques-Dalcroze* (Stuyvesant, 1990); “Émile Jaques-Dalcroze,” In *The International Encyclopedia of Dance*, ed., Selma Jeanne Cohen (Oxford, 2005), accessed online August 7, 2015; and “What is Dalcrozian?” *Dance Research: The Journal of the Society for Dance Research* 10, no. 2 (Autumn, 1992): 121-131.

⁹ Émile Jaques-Dalcroze, Personal Recollection. Cited in Martin et al, *Émile Jaques-Dalcroze*, 13.

Comédie Française working in the claque, part of the audience paid to applaud at designated intervals.¹⁰

An invitation in 1886 from Swiss composer Ernest Adler to assistant-direct an orchestra at the Théâtre des Nouveautés in Algiers proved decisive to Jaques-Dalcroze's career. After spending the summer organizing musical productions at a hotel in Saint-Gervais-les Bains, the Swiss spa-town where he met and performed for Léo Delibes, the composer of important works for dance – notably *Coppélia* (1870) and *Sylvia* (1876)¹¹ – Jaques-Dalcroze arrived in North Africa to begin work as a musical director at the colonial off-shoot of its Parisian namesake, a variety house located along the Boulevard des Italiens.¹² What began as a step toward a career in musical direction turned out to be a step toward a career in movement pedagogy. The Théâtre des Nouveautés went bankrupt soon after Jaques-Dalcroze's arrival in Algeria; undeterred by the theater's financial failure and committed to performing, Jaques-Dalcroze left Algiers on an independent tour with “a native orchestra” [“une orchestra indigène”], a group he likely met while working at the Théâtre.¹³

On the tour, Jaques-Dalcroze discovered “countless occasions to connect with Arab musicians and to study the associations of their percussion instruments,”¹⁴ which expanded his

¹⁰ Claques were important sites in the social landscape of nineteenth century Parisian theaters: at the Paris Opéra, for example, audience members seeking entry into its complex system of patronage often filled the claques when otherwise denied invitations backstage to visit – and solicit – dancers. See Felicia McCarren, *Dance Pathologies: Performance, Poetics, Medicine* (Stanford, 1998), 73-74.

¹¹ Délibes was the student of composer Adolphe Adam, creator of influential scores for ballet, including *Giselle* (1841) and *Le Corsaire* (1856). Jaques-Dalcroze performed an original composition for Delibes, who allegedly encouraged the young composer to pursue a professional career. It was perhaps with Délibes' encouragement in mind that Jaques-Dalcroze accepted Adler's invitation. See Spector, *Rhythm and Life*, 12.

¹² Virginia Schwartz, *Spectacular Realities: Early Mass Culture in Fin-de-Siècle Paris* (Berkeley, 1999), 22.

¹³ Alfred Berchtold, *Émile Jaques-Dalcroze et son Temps* (Lausanne, 2000), 31.

¹⁴ Alfred Berchtold, *Émile Jaques-Dalcroze et son Temps* (Lausanne, 1965), 40.

approach to percussive instrumentation, rhythmic sense, and the relationship of movement to “musical sensibility.” Observing how the Arab musicians’ native training informed their rhythmic abilities, he noted that during performance he could not communicate with them using the conducting methods he had learned at the Conservatory. Through this gap in communication, Jaques-Dalcroze noticed the component parts of musical expression. “What struck me as peculiar was the sense of harmony of my musicians [in the native orchestra],” he remarked. “While the music that I was teaching them was in quarter time, the cymbal players, for example, played in 5/4 time, the flute players in 3/4...It was impossible for me to train them and teach them our methods.”¹⁵ In this example, the musical harmonies played by the Arab musicians grounded them a collective and enabled them to maintain a constant rhythm and keep time together, despite Jaques-Dalcroze’s conducting, which sought to alter their rhythms. Musical harmony thus enabled an harmonic social order, even though it was different than what Jaques-Dalcroze intended.

Shifting his directorial approach “to teach the notation for our measure [*mesure*]” Jaques-Dalcroze was struck by “the idea to interpret time through gesture. My musicians, before playing, were also marking the intended rhythm on a tambourine.” He observed that though the performers were “unable” to follow his gestures of 4/4 time – rather than the 5/4 and 3/4 rhythms played by the cymbal and flute sections – he could communicate through movement with them, transforming the differences in their technical backgrounds into collective musical expression. Movement bridged cultural and national divides, and activated individual musical knowledge in service to their collective work, in this case, “the notation for our measure” played by the group in performance. Despite his sense of the “[impossibility] to train them and teach them our

¹⁵ Alfred Berchtold, *Émile Jaques-Dalcroze et son Temps* (2000), 31-32.

methods,” Jaques-Dalcroze believed that a combination of rhythm and gesture enabled an ordered, controlled relationship between musical ensemble and conductor, as well as among the musicians themselves. While sources are unclear about the specific works the orchestra performed – whether it was repertoire from the Théâtre, original compositions by Jaques-Dalcroze, or work by another composer – his references to the group as “my musicians,” combined with the fact that their performances required rehearsals under his direction, suggest that they were performing compositions Jaques-Dalcroze had, at the very least, arranged.¹⁶

During this time, he also observed performances by Algerian musicians. These threw into relief the relationship between rhythmic structure and movement expression. Watching performances by the Aisawa, Islamic mystics hailing from fifth-century Morocco whose religious worship was characterized by polyrhythmic music and dance, Jaques-Dalcroze noticed features that illustrated how music gained expressive force through embodied rhythm.¹⁷ Jaques-Dalcroze first saw a structural relationship between the Aisawa performers’ musical sensibilities and the performance as a time-bound event, subject to a set of formal rules, logic, and structure. He noted,

¹⁶ While many sources on Jaques-Dalcroze reference his time in North Africa, very little information about the tour – such as the kinds of compositions they were performing – is actually provided.

¹⁷ Jaques-Dalcroze biographer Irwin Spector warns against drawing from Jaques-Dalcroze's experiences in North Africa inspiration for his later understanding of rhythm. Spector notes that the prevailing conception of meter in the “Islamic [musical] sense” was, in fact, the opposite of Jaques-Dalcroze's Western European one: for Jaques-Dalcroze, meter signified a fixed number of beats per measure, whereas in Islamic musical tradition meter meant a range of possibility for understanding or “feeling” the beat. In other words, Jaques-Dalcroze, both in his youth and in his later work, “considered the unit [i.e. the beat or note], whatever its size, as a whole,” while Islamic musicians considered the same unit in terms of “various combinations” (Spector, *Rhythm and Life*, 14). Spector explains this by stating that for Jaques-Dalcroze, 5 / 4 time signified five beats per measure, while “in the Islamic sense” five beats per measure “would be felt in various combinations totaling five pulses: 2+3, 3+2, 1+2+2, and so on” (ibid). Spector suggests that Jaques-Dalcroze's observation of the Aisawa should be seen as significant only insofar as it “taught Emile to think in different terms than he had been trained to do as a matter of habit.” As Selma Odom has pointed out, and as evidenced here by Spector’s generalization about “Islamic musical sense” as the basis for his analysis, historical inaccuracies and questionable interpretation of sources riddle his scholarship. For a critique of Spector’s biography of Jaques-Dalcroze, see Odom, “What is Dalcrozian?” 127.

Their rhythms are always binary, but the number of their repetitions is varied. A scansion of 4 measures in 2-time follows a series a series of 7 or 11, etc. Their dances are extremely violent, their jumps and contortions of an extraordinary originality and their instinct for acceleration is marvelously developed. Their dance becomes animated, little by little, accompanied by a crescendo on the tam-tams. The accelerando becomes intense and produces a diabolical effect, completed by the abrupt silence that follows it as the dances fall to the ground.¹⁸

Distinguishing the individual performers' rhythm ("always binary") from their sense of meter ("varied"), as well as from their use of repetition and emphasis (scansion of 4/2 followed by 7/2 or 11/2), Jaques-Dalcroze divided the performance event into three categories, each with a set of associated qualities. They included: the dance, which was "extremely violent"; the movements comprising the dance, marked by "an extraordinary originality"; and the dancer as a discrete individual characterized by an "an instinct for acceleration." The performance was the moment when these three categories combined to create drama and theatrical mood (a "diabolical effect").

Jaques-Dalcroze's observations show the contours of what would eventually become his approach to musical sensibility based in rhythm and physical movement. Jaques-Dalcroze cast the Aisawa's and Arab orchestra performances as events involving groups of people, whose individuals negotiated differences to affirm a larger sense of social cohesion and identity. The division of a performance into component parts (the work of art, the performer, the content) was an analytical model against which he discerned the inner mechanisms of expression and, in turn, distinguish them as unique phenomena transmitting information – such as language, gesture, or visual imagery. In other words, this model helped identify knowledge specific to musical

¹⁸ Émile Jaques-Dalcroze, *La Musique et Nous. Notes de Notre double vie* (Geneva, 1945), 19-20. Jaques-Dalcroze continues, with an ethnographic flair: "J'ai retrouvé ces accélérations dans un village hongrois où se forment les orchestres tziganes exécutant les fameux thèmes inspireurs des rhapsodies de Liszt" (20). Interestingly, this description reads similarly to Wigman's critics in the 1920s describing the effect of her performances.

expression and how the expression of particular individuals create something greater than themselves. It showed how individuals became social subjects, and how knowledge based in movement contributed to social unity. Ultimately, the force generated by encounters between individuals during performance gave music its power: “the sudden silence that follows as the dancers fell to the ground.” Musical expression rooted in the body not only bound people to each other, but it also exposed their collective emotions, feelings, and condition.

Over the next several decades, Jaques-Dalcroze would pursue this “discovery” of embodied rhythm as a way to harness the expressive energies in performance. Beginning in North Africa, he defined expression as the ability of individuals, shaped by the particularities of their skill and sense, to contribute to a greater whole. In some cases (such as in the native orchestra) the skills of a leader – i.e. the conductor – needed to mediate between differences in ability among the ensemble. Direction, in this sense, “governed” musicians, educating and restoring cooperation among individual musicians. Diversity and difference resolved into harmonic order thus characterized music as a social experience.

Jaques-Dalcroze awoke to a different tune when he returned to Europe in 1887.¹⁹ Vienna was hub of musical activity that championed the experience of social isolation over collectivity. At the time, “war” between the musical schools of Anton Bruckner and Johannes Brahms waged across the city. Despite their differences in style and approach to composition that their students claimed were irreconcilable, Bruckner and Brahms’ respective musical programs underscored values oriented around the individual: musical rigor, technical ability, strenuous effort, and focused concentration that developed a highly personalized experience necessary to play and

¹⁹ Jaques-Dalcroze returned to Europe with a new name: “Émile Jaques Dalcroze,” which he had created for himself after reuniting in North Africa with a former conservatory classmate, Raymond Valcroze, who agreed to let his friend adopt a variation for his *nom de plume*. Whether the name change emerged out of friendship, or to honor of their school days in Geneva – or simply from Jaques-Dalcroze’s desire for a new name – his professional identity became linked to personal experience rather than inherited tradition. Tibor Dénes, “Chronologie,” 14.

understand music. Musical romanticism, so-called, a movement lasting from about 1815 to 1915, encompassed a range of styles and schools. Some of them, including those of Bruckner and Brahms, took cues from Kantian metaphysics and emphasized the cultivation of expert performers, works, and listeners over the earlier notion of musical experience as one of ease, harmony, and sociability.²⁰ Sentimentalist schools of musical performance celebrated personal sense, sensibility, and the integration of musical practices into shared cultural spheres – homes, salons, schools – while mid- to late nineteenth composers saw music as a platform for political and social reform. As sentimentalist musical practices taught individuals to be social subjects, romantic music taught social subjects to seize and celebrate their individuality. Extending from its mission to transform a social order based in estates to one based in civic engagement, rights, and governance, “Sentimental sociability was a key element of the conception and creation of this new social order, and it was practiced in such diverse settings as music-making, the reading and writing of literature, friendship, travel, letter-writing, scientific inquiry, child-rearing, and theorizing about marriage.”²¹ Musical romanticism, in contrast, relegated musical performance and training to specialists, removed it from the amateurism and the domestic sphere, and became a site to challenge, rather than maintain, the status quo. Changes to lighting and stagecraft techniques, pedagogical methods (e.g. rote memorization), compositional innovations (e.g. the leitmotiv), and choices in thematic content: these practices promised individual freedom through

²⁰ For a general summary of musical romanticism, see Laura Kuhn, ed. “Romanesca,” in *Baker’s Student Encyclopedia of Music*, vol. 3 (New York, 1999): 80-81. Accessed online, Sep 30, 2015. See also Michael Riley, *Musical Listening in the German Enlightenment: Attention, Wonder and Astonishment* (Burlington, 2004). On the cultivation through music of social values, including a comparison of musical sentimentalism with romanticism and late (or “post”) romanticism, see Georgia J. Cowart, “Sense and Sensibility in Eighteenth-Century Musical Thought” *Acta Musicologica* 56, no. 2 (July- December 1984); 251-266; Hui, *The Psychophysical Ear* and Hui, “Changeable Ears”; Myles W. Jackson, *Harmonious Tryads: Physicists, Musicians, and Instrument Makers in Nineteenth Century Germany* (Cambridge, 2006); Adelheid Voskuhl, *Androids in the Enlightenment: Mechanics, Artisans, and Cultures of the Self* (Chicago, 2013).

²¹ Voskuhl, *Androids in the Enlightenment*, 128-129. For more on musical sentimentalism, see also Jessica Riskin, *Science in the Age of Sensibility: The Sentimental Empiricists of the French Enlightenment* (Chicago, 2002).

the transformation rather than restoration of social stability or order. As musicologist Matthew Riley notes:

The various notions of 'absolute music' and 'art religion' that arose in the early nineteenth century prompted demands for a kind of reverential attitude on the part of the listener that previously would have been more appropriate in a place of worship. [...] Close, sustained attention during the performance of such works would facilitate an experience of self-revelation by, as it were, re-directing the stream of perception back in the recesses of the listener's own soul.²²

Romantic practices reformed social hierarchy according to the concept of artistic genius. Musical masterworks and master players, endowed with cultural and spiritual esteem, became the authority and reference point for audiences in search of radical transformation, and new knowledge through music.²³

Politics played a significant role in the musical war between Brahms and Bruckner. Brahms, a German Protestant, affiliated with Vienna's liberal cosmopolitan guard, while Bruckner, a devout Catholic from Austria, was a "darling of the Viennese right wing," a supporter of pan-Germanism, and a member of the Wagner-cult.²⁴ In search of a teacher, Jaques-Dalcroze chose Bruckner. Bruckner had an unusual pedagogical approach to music that combined unconventional method with traditional technique. For example, when not drilling his students in harmony and counterpoint, Bruckner insisted that his students order their personal

²² Riley, *Musical Listening in the German Enlightenment*, 1.

²³ "As the century progressed," Riley notes, "[audiences] came to expect that the masterworks of newly established musical canon would express the depths of the human spirit with unparalleled authority" (1).

²⁴ Leon Botstein, "Brahms and his Audience: the Later Viennese Years, 1875 – 1897," in *The Cambridge Companion to Brahms* ed. Michael Musgrave (Cambridge, 1999), 72. Botstein notes that during the 1880s, Bruckner was the honorary head of Vienna's Wagner Society and Bruckner's devotion to the composer was fanatical. Bruckner's Third Symphony in D Minor, for example, was dedicated "To the eminent Excellency Richard Wagner the Unattainable, World-Famous, and Exalted Master of Poetry and Music, in Deepest Reverence." Interestingly, while Bruckner took creative inspiration from Wagner, the shape and content of his artistic production remained distinct: Bruckner's compositions, for example, differed considerably from Wagner's in both style and structure. See "Bruckner, (Josef) Anton," Slonimsky, ed. *Biographical Dictionary of Musicians*, vol. 1, 541-543.

lives entirely in service to music and required them to restrict their non-musical pursuits so as “not [to] dilute their work with him by reading or by discovering the other arts [...or having] romantic interests.”²⁵ Jaques-Dalcroze recalled that Bruckner was “a composer of genius, but a brutal and stubborn pedagogue, demanding from his students intense work, but hardly interested in their personalities and not searching to develop their emotional [*animiques*] faculties.”²⁶ Given that student and teacher held such conflicting values, it was little surprise that they fought. To Jaques-Dalcroze, Bruckner was the “enemy of the Latin spirit”; Bruckner, on the other hand, called the French-speaking Swiss the “dumb Frenchman.”²⁷ Whether frustrated by their conflict or curious to try something new, Jaques-Dalcroze left Bruckner for a series of different teachers, including Adolf Prosnitz, Robert Fuchs (also a student of Bruckner), and Herman Grädener.²⁸

After two years in Vienna, Jaques-Dalcroze returned to Paris, where debates about musical pedagogy took center stage. Many focused around a 1863 textbook, *Exercices de piano dans les tons majeurs et mineurs, à composer et à écrire par l'élève* [*Piano Exercises in Major and Minor Tones, Composed and Written by the Student*], by Mathis Lussy, a Swiss pianist who began a musical career after dropping out of medical school.²⁹ Lussy’s textbook described piano pedagogy with “scientific” exactitude and was hailed by many musical contemporaries, including Liszt and Rossini, as the best method to train students. In contrast to Bruckner’s pedagogical approaches, Lussy’s method combined rigorous technical training with principles of

²⁵ Spector, *Rhythm and Life*, 15.

²⁶ Berchtold, 2003, 37.

²⁷ Berchtold, 2003, 37.

²⁸ Dénes, “Chronologie,” 14.

²⁹ Mathis Lussy, *Exercices de Piano dans les Tons Majeurs et Mineurs, à Composer et à Écrire par L'Élève* (Paris, 1863). For a biography of Lussy, see Mine Dogantan, “Lussy, Mathis” in *Oxford Music Online*, accessed August 18, 2015; and “Mathis Lussy’s Theory of Rhythm as a Basis for a Theory of Expressive Performance” (Ph.D. Diss., Columbia University, 1997).

empiricism, experiment, and self-discovery to explain rhythm and musical harmony. In contrast to instruction that “from the perspective of the student, from his sense, from his purely mechanical faculties, and not from his intelligence [...] forget that the student is gifted with intelligence, with feeling [*sentiment*] and with desire [*volonté*],” Lussy emphasized that “the student understands that he is an active and intelligent collaborator with the teacher. He forms for himself musical thoughts [*pensées musicales*] and learns to express them on the instrument and in writing.”³⁰ In other words, Lussy saw that a harmonious relationship between student and teacher better enabled the acquisition of musical laws and their expression. This was beneficial for the student not simply as an aspiring pianist, but for her/him as an individual as well. As Lussy noted, for the student, “observation and analysis become a necessity of [the] spirit.”

Lussy’s approach captivated Jaques-Dalcroze for several reasons. Lussy’s method, “the first [system of piano instruction] to be occupied with the laws of expression and rhythm,”³¹ provided for a clear explanation of why musical expression relied upon a clear understanding of rhythm. In North Africa Jaques-Dalcroze began to think paradigmatically about the features of expression relative to rhythm, and Lussy’s system thus appealed as a form of rhythm-based musical instruction. Lussy showed how expression emerged from musical emphasis, such as the accent *metrique*, used to reinforce compositional structure (such as a melodic line); the accent *rythmique*, used for rhythmic emphasis (such as marking a downbeat); and the accent *pathetique*, or “agogic” accent, used to extend the duration, or delay execution. Lussy’s textbook further illustrated how these emphatic differences relied on a combination of fine motor skills and aural acumen – as well as empirical, embodied experience. Finally, Lussy argued that music was

³⁰ Lussy, *Exercices de Piano dans les Tons Majeurs et Mineurs*, ii and vi.

³¹ Denés, “Chronologie,” 15.

“[experienced] in terms of the psychological states associated with [its] activity, i.e. ‘struggle, agitation, nervousness,’ etc,” grounding his system in contemporary theories of psychology, as well as anatomical analogy and metaphor such as the physical movement of climbing uphill as a metaphor to explain musical *accelerando*.³² Lussy’s combination of musical metaphor resonated with Jaques-Dalcroze, who clarified his understanding of music’s power while observing the “instinct for acceleration” among the Aisawa. Finally, Lussy’ streak of independence and innovation – captured by his belief that his piano instruction formed the basis of a new branch of musicology³³ – inspired the younger musician.

As he began to investigate movement as the basis of music, Jaques-Dalcroze’s interest in rhythm took an explicitly physiological turn.³⁴ Jaques-Dalcroze began exploring at this time musical improvisational techniques.³⁵ Shifting Lussy’s psychologically-based explanation of musical expression into a physiological, or body-based, one, “psychological [accounts] of the rules, which was primary in Lussy’s theory, [was in Jaques-Dalcroze’s approach] replaced by anatomical explanations”; in other words, for Jaques-Dalcroze, musical structures were not metaphors or images, nor results of psychological states, but the sum of “mechanical forces that move the various sets of muscles.”³⁶ In other words, an *accelerando* was not the result of an emotional state associated with moving upwards but an entity propelled upward through physical

³² Dogantan, “Mathis Lussy’s Theory of Rhythm as a Basis for a Theory of Expressive Performance,” 190.

³³ Dogantan, “Lussy, Mathis,” accessed August 18, 2015.

³⁴ Émile Jaques-Dalcroze, *Rhythm, Music & Education*, trans. Harold F. Rubenstein (London, 1967), 34.

³⁵ Denés, “Chronologie,” 14-15.

³⁶ Dogantan, “Mathis Lussy’s Theory of Rhythm as a Basis for a Theory of Expressive Performance,” 190.

force.³⁷ According to Lussy, physical motion systematically explained musical principles. For Jaques-Dalcroze, physical motion was the essence of music.

More than a new definition of music was at stake. Jaques-Dalcroze's emergent theory of music endowed the physical body, understood as a social subject rather than an expressive individual, with the potential to act as an agent for harmonic, social order. For Lussy, the expressive capacities of the self were based in the mind, emotions, and psychology. Jaques-Dalcroze, however, was not so sure. The self, he believed, connected to the particularities of the physiological body, yet a complete understanding of the "self" in the context of society entailed multiple kinds of knowledge. On the one hand, there was knowledge generated and contained by the body. On the other hand, there was knowledge of culture, nation, and other people – knowledge, in other words, of what lay beyond the limits of one's physical, physiological being. This tension cut to the connection between the mind and the body that defined the self as a social subject, for as Jan Goldstein notes, "all human beings regard both their bodies and their minds as discrete, self-subservient entities. It is the individuated mental stuff, as well as the individual's own representation of it, that go under the name of self."³⁸ Social harmony was the effortless movement between these two forms of knowledge – of the self, and of the body. What system, then, revealed this movement, and what method taught it?

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³⁷ As Mine Dogantan explains, Jaques-Dalcroze's "translation" of Lussy's system had a number of conceptual holes: "How and why the acoustic signal coming from a rising contour would generate this particular kinesthetic sensation is, however, not explained." Dogantan, "Mathis Lussy's Theory of Rhythm as a Basis for a Theory of Expressive Performance," 190.

³⁸ Jan Goldstein, *The Post-Revolutionary Self: Politics and Psyche in France, 1750 – 1850* (Cambridge, 2005), 2.

II. Rhythmic Riddles

In 1890, Jaques-Dalcroze returned to Geneva, and one year later began teaching solfège at his alma mater. At this point, he had gained substantial recognition throughout Switzerland for his operas, chamber works, and piano songbooks published while he was in Vienna and Paris. His interest in Swiss national history society emerged. He presented on the Swiss Romande at musicological conferences, and pulled inspiration for lyrics and melodies from the culture, traditions, and the natural beauty of the French-Swiss Alps.³⁹ Jaques-Dalcroze also created works for the Swiss national stage: in 1896, at Geneva's Swiss National Exposition, he composed *Poème Alpestre*, charting the history of Switzerland, with historian and writer Daniel Baud Boyv. Several years later, he created a score for the *Festival Vaudois*, in Lausanne, for a cast of 2,500 performers, including groups of children and "non-professionals."⁴⁰

Jaques-Dalcroze continued to investigate the movement-based origins of music, while his interests increasingly moved toward more explicitly social practices of education and pedagogy. His festival compositions were pedagogical exercises that united professionals and non-experts in rehearsal and performance and encouraged inexperienced musicians to learn from others' expertise. This rejected musical expression as a domain of specialists and socialized younger musicians into a community of rehearsal and performance. Jaques-Dalcroze's piano songbooks were music lessons in miniature for the individual student, and they featured tunes requiring low levels of technical training catered to a range of musical skill. A far cry from Bruckner's monastic, musical dogmatism, Jaques-Dalcroze's compositions encouraged piano study as an easy, enjoyable part of life connecting the student to history, tradition, and the virtues of

³⁹ Denés, "Chronologie," 15.

⁴⁰ Spector, *Rhythm and Life*, 43.

provincial culture. Songs such as “Le Hameau” [“The Hamlet”], a waltz with three vocal parts, evoked a sense of social belonging and identity, while its forms of simple meter and rhyme lent toward memorization and aural recall – vital components of musical literacy.⁴¹ Exploring one or two structures, his songs introduced students in an stepwise, gentle manner to basic musical concepts and form.

In his conservatory lessons, Jaques-Dalcroze focused on the relationship of physical gesture to music. To do this, he shifted attention from the hands as a principle medium for learning and conveying rhythm – a standard pedagogical method – and looked down, to the feet. Allegedly, his attention was drawn to them one day while caught outside in a rainstorm: dashing for shelter alongside one of his students who had struggled in his rhythm course, Jaques-Dalcroze shielded his head from the rain. As the two ran together, he noticed how the student's steps effortlessly matched the rhythm of his own.⁴² At that time, Jaques-Dalcroze was teaching classes in solfège, an ear-training technique popularized in the previous century in France that used vocal exercises to sharpen harmonic recognition and tonal fluency.⁴³ After the run in the rain, however, Jaques-Dalcroze realized something more was needed in his instruction. Subsequently reconceiving his own pedagogical methods, he combined the three elements he believed key to a “musical sensibility”: solfège, physical gesture, and rhythm.

⁴¹ The text of “Mon Hameau” reads: “Quand je pense à mon village / Là bas au val d'Anniviers, / Ô lire dondé! Je n'ai plus goût à l'ouvrage / Et mon Coeur se met à pleurer. / Là haut, là haut, c'est mon hameau. / Que le temps me dure / Parmi la verdure de revoir mon hameau.” Émile Jaques-Dalcroze, “Mon Hameau,” *Chansonnier Jaques-Dalcroze: 130 Chansons Choisies parmi les Volumes: Chansons Romandes, Chansons Populaires, Chez Nous, Des Chansons, Chansons de l'Alpe, Chansons Religieuses, Infantines, Les Propos du Père “David la Jeunesse,” Les Chansons du Coeur qui Vole, Chansons de Route, etc* (Paris, 1905), 9.

⁴² Irwin Spector learned of this anecdote in 1965 through reminiscences of Jaques-Dalcroze students. Spector, *Rhythm and Life*, 56.

⁴³ Solfège first denoted a technique of syllabic vocalization using the words “Sol” and “Fa,” though it has since come to refer to a range of techniques for general ear-training. Jaques-Dalcroze learned solfège in Paris under Albert Lavignac, who had also trained Debussy, a composer Jaques-Dalcroze admired. See John R. Clevenger, “Conservatoire Training” (Part III: Documents), in *Debussy and his World*. ed., Jane Fulcher (Princeton, 2001), 301.

Around 1903 Jaques-Dalcroze began a series of musical “experiments” in Geneva with one of his students, the ten-year old Susanne Perrottet.⁴⁴ Continuing to push against values of his musical contemporaries, Jaques-Dalcroze situated personal experience at the center of his ideas, which were crystallizing into a formal system. To test out the utility of the feet as a pedagogical device, Jaques-Dalcroze gave Perrottet a set of instructions for basic stepping patterns, which were accompanied by a line of music denoting rhythm (e.g. two quarter notes, a quarter and half note). The patterns contained three or four notes, which Perrottet read and learned as discrete units. Then, she was asked to “decipher with her feet” a melodic line combining them. A brief “observation” followed, which described the effect of her foot placement on the balance of her body as a whole. In some cases, Jaques-Dalcroze included pen and ink drawings of Perrottet’s body positions.⁴⁵

The format of these experiments ensured a few things. Perrottet was only twelve-years old, and as both his experimental subject and research collaborator, his instructions needed to be straightforward and legible enough for her to understand them. These exercises were a springboard for communication between teacher and student, adult and child, man and young girl. As the basis for clear communication between these different social identities, such movement was elemental, basic, and in turned revealed the basic components of its parts (i.e rhythm). Jaques-Dalcroze’s clear communication with Perrottet confirmed, in a sense, the presence of musical harmony and order; it also had the potential to expose the formation of states of “equilibrium” and nature, which were both implicated in the study of effortless movement.

Though he did not define nature, his work suggested that it was something effortless, embodied,

⁴⁴ Perrottet would later become an important artistic collaborator – and romantic partner – to Rudolf Laban. At that time she was known in Geneva as an aspiring violinist and recognized for her “beauty and grace in movements.” Spector, *Rhythm and Life*, 57.

⁴⁵ Presumably, that Jaques-Dalcroze drew. To distinguish right from left, one leg was clad in a long black sock, while the other donned a white one.

and expressive. Just as the student’s instinctual footfalls enabled easy modulation of rhythm – and just as gesture allowed the Aisawa and the Algerian musicians to effortlessly shift between time signatures – Perrottet’s physical movements that required the least effort revealed music’s most elemental forms. The patterns were written without indication of key or tempo and left open a number of questions for her to answer through trial and error. When Perrottet “[placed] the right foot in front of the left,” for example, the distance between her feet was unspecified, as was the distance between her foot and the ground. Did it matter? Jaques-Dalcroze’s visual drawings gave some clues, however, and suggested a degree of turnout in the legs indicating spatial proximity of the feet.

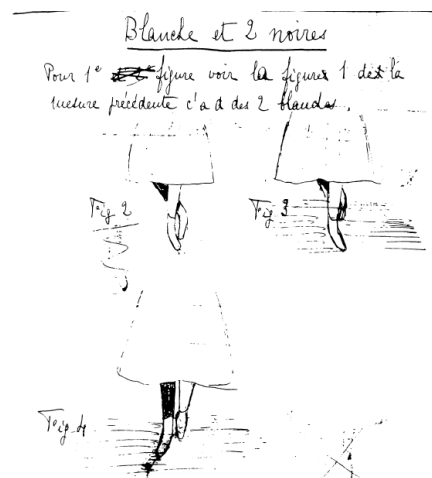


Fig. 1. Émile Jaques-Dalcroze, “Rythmique, first Sketches” (Plate 3 in Spector, *Rhythm and Life*, 60).

Ultimately, experience was the only way to solve these problems. Perrottet needed to activate the skills developed over the course of the exercise, including her sharpened connection between visual recognition and physical gesture, as well as a process of inward listening in which she “heard” the music in her mind and physically performed the steps. Here, a melody easily played on sight required a different strategy. Finally, given that these exercises required

solutions with equal parts body and brain, they ensured against mental strain, which, as was the case with the conservatory student, hindered rhythm.

If Jaques-Dalcroze's experience in North Africa was a turning point in his understanding of the connection between music and movement, his experiments with Perrottet signaled a shift in his understanding of effort as a force harnessed through movement education. Jaques-Dalcroze's emphasis on an equilibrium between mental processes and embodied action implied that musical understanding was not simply a matter of rational thought. For him, the feet "deciphered" the language of rhythm along with the brain. And if one could decipher through this balance of body and mind the language of rhythm, perhaps one could also decipher the language of an easy, effortless society.

As his pedagogical ideas crystallized over the next several decades into a formal system, Jaques-Dalcroze expanded his rhythmic riddles into a calculus of musical-movement problem-sets.⁴⁶ Still unresolved, however, was his definition of nature and the role of culture and society within educational methods. Jaques-Dalcroze returned to his personal experience to guide his research, which led him to question the bearing of nature and culture on individual musical understanding. In Algeria, for example, he had seen how culture enabled in musicians and dancers a natural sensitivity to rhythm, whereas in Geneva, education and culture hindered it at the conservatory. Given that education was his main concern, this question was crucial. How close was individual knowledge linked to social knowledge? Jaques-Dalcroze's findings across cultures suggested an important connection between individual effort, personal expression, and

⁴⁶ Examples of these exercises include students marching in 3/4 time, while clapping their hands in 4/4 time – and visa versa. For a discussion of these "rhythmic multitasking" exercises in the Jaques-Dalcroze method, see Marie-Laure Bachmann, "La Grammaire de la Rythmique," chapter 4 in Bachmann, *La Rythmique Jaques-Dalcroze: une Éducation par la Musique et Pour la Musique* (Neuchâtel, 1984), 175-261.

social relationships. To uncover this connection was the basis of his work over the next several years.

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III. The Sensing Self at Soleure

Jaques-Dalcroze was not the only one to question the physical body as the basis of musical knowledge. At that time in Europe, a wave of scientists primarily from German-speaking lands investigated how musical expression combined with “physical stimulation and psychical sensation” to form what scholar Alexandra Hui and other have labeled “the psychophysics of sound.”⁴⁷ Locating the origins of musical expression in a combination of human physiology, physics, and psychology, scientists including Gustav Fechner, Ernst Mach, Hermann Helmholtz, and Wilhelm Wundt challenged earlier notions that musical knowledge consisted of formal aesthetic structures, such as composition, harmony, and melody. They instead asserted that music combined physical phenomena (e.g. waveforms, vibrations, pressure exerted on material surfaces) with mental and emotional processes of the individual mind. Mach’s experiments in accommodation in listening, for example, or Wundt’s studies in tone differentiation, focused on the act of musical listening rather than the execution of musical performance, and showed that the origins of music lay within the “completely subjective and individual experience of the listener/experimental subject.”⁴⁸ Like Jaques-Dalcroze, sound psychophysicists articulated a different vision of the self from their romantic contemporaries. Unlike the self-revelatory listener of the Wagnerian *Gesamtkunstwerk*, able to change her behavior and relationships to others through strained and introverted focus, Helmholtz’s listener

⁴⁷ Hui, *The Psychophysical Ear*, xv.

⁴⁸ Hui, *Ibid.*, xiv.

in his sonic experiments could only partially control her relationship to the sounds she perceived. Distinguishing between “sound” versus “music,” scientists such as Helmholtz located the basic elements of music in the physical – and psychological – body; by doing so, they highlighted features of individual sense and feeling as valuable sources of musical knowledge.⁴⁹

Jaques-Dalcroze’s musician and listener were also experimental subjects. Like the sound psychophysicists, he understood that conventional experimental methods failed to fully account for individual aesthetic experience in a systematic explanation of musical form, including phenomena such as harmony and rhythm. Viewed in the context of his contemporary musician-scientists, we can see how Jaques-Dalcroze’s musical experiments challenged contemporary epistemologies of aesthetic expression, and in particular, the role of embodied movement in challenging “the excessive claims of absolute reason.” While the sound psychophysicists were arguably less concerned than Jaques-Dalcroze with theorizing the social role function of aesthetic experience, many of their claims (especially those of Mach and Max Planck) suggested explanations for historical transformation and social change through embodied experience, defined as a phenomenological, positivist, or universalist phenomenon.⁵⁰ Jaques-Dalcroze’s interest in embodied musical expression as the expression of social harmony also connected to questions of social progress, transformation, and history. Like the sheet music Helmholtz placed upside down on the piano bench for his experimental subjects to play, Jaques-Dalcroze’s “rhythmic riddles” for Perrotet sought to locate the precise moment when subjective experience

⁴⁹ This is a difference that eludes definition. In their introduction to “Music, Sound, and the Laboratory from 1750 to 1980,” historical musicologists Alexandra Hui, Julia Kursell, and Myles Jackson note, “Epistemologically, it is extremely difficult to differential between sound and music. Indeed, their definitions are historically contingent. Perhaps Pierre Schaeffer, one of the originators of *Musique concrète* in the 1950s, summed it up best: ‘For all that, traditional music is not denied any more than the theater is supplanted by the cinema. Something new has been added, a new art of sound. Am I wrong in still calling it music?’” Hui, Kursell, and Jackson, “Music, Sound and the Laboratory from 1750 to 1980,” introduction to *Osiris* 28, no.1, Special Issue on Music, Sound, and the Laboratory from 1750 to 1980 (January 2013), 7.

⁵⁰ Hui, “Changeable Ears,” 141-145.

split from physiology to transform the individual into a subject, or self: someone who was expressive, feeling, and social. Jaques-Dalcroze's combination of embodiment and psychology again underscores Goldstein's definition of the self as a mixture of "individuated mental stuff" – i.e. embodied matter and physiology – along with social representation; basing her own concept on anthropologist Marcel Mauss' notion that "there has never existed a human being, who has not been aware not only of his body, but also at the same time of his individuality, both as spiritual and physical," her definition here underscores the role of critical self-observation in the formation of social subjectivity. As we will see for Jaques-Dalcroze and throughout this dissertation, this "regard" enabled an individual's bodily expression within society to be the outward expression of the self's inner state: the defining feature of modern dance.

By challenging the foundations of musical knowledge, Jaques-Dalcroze's experiments also challenged the utility of earlier categories of musical observation and assessment. Here, in the context of his psychophysical contemporaries, a clearer picture of Jaques-Dalcroze's resistance to romantic values – in particular, those of specialization and social isolation – comes into view. Together, experiments by Jaques-Dalcroze and the sound psychophysicists showed that musical knowledge, its logic, structure, and order, lay in the particularities of the embodied self.

Around this time, schools of physiological aesthetics revealed the biological and physiological body as a source for information about aesthetic experience. Unlike the sound psychophysicists, physiological aesthetes such as Ernst Haeckel and Étienne-Jules Marey investigated the particularities of individual sense-perception to form general claims about the nature of human behavior and the natural world.⁵¹ Illustrating what Robert M. Brain notes as

⁵¹ Brain, "The Pulse of Modernism." On the specific connection in Germany and France between physiological aesthetics and neo-impressionism in painting, as well as its connection to the growth of a commercial art market, see

“sense externalized,” these scientists developed innovative approaches to visual recording, which incorporated repetition and pattern – “visual rhythms” – as expressions of unmediated physical sense. By doing this, their work endowed information generated by the body with a new form of authority: the “externalization of human physiology,” whose indexical qualities – such as “touch, [which serves] as the point of contact between an image and what it represents [and] demands a particular form of inferential reasoning, which begins with the acknowledgment that the inscription is before anything else a record of its own having been made” – cast body-based expression as objective, scientific truth. New knowledge claims based in the body formed the basis for many fin-de-siècle scientists’ discoveries about hereditary diversity and human physiology and grounded visual artists’ claims to the autonomy of the work of art – the founding principle of artistic modernism.⁵²

Jaques-Dalcroze also approached the physiological body as a source of authoritative knowledge about the self, its inward states and outward expressions. His particular understanding of physiology, however, contained a number of conflicting ideas about the body, which ultimately generated critical tension in his work. Around this time, his sense of physiology was primarily influenced by the work of French physiologist Fernand Lagrange, whose 1889 *Physiology of Body Exercises* Jaques-Dalcroze cites as one of only three sources in his bibliography to the 1906 *Méthode*.⁵³ Lagrange was an influential voice in “rational gymnastics,”

Robert Jensen, *Marketing Modernism in fin-de-siècle Europe* (Princeton, 1994); and Zimmerman, “Die Utopie einer wissenschaftlichen, sozialen Kunst: zur Theorie des Neo-Impressionismus und ihrer Aufnahme in Deutschland” in *Curt Hermann 1854 – 1929. Ein Mahler der Moderne in Berlin*, ed., R Bothe (Berlin, 1989): 264-283.

⁵² Brain, *ibid.*, 401. Brain notes the term “indexical” was first used by American pragmatist Charles Sanders Pierce, and, citing Carlo Ginzburg, further explains that methods in indexicality heralds a shift from a pre-nineteenth century epistemological emphasis on sight and visual perspective to a nineteenth century emphasis on touch and tactility. See also Carlo Ginzburg, “Clues: Roots of an Evidential Paradigm,” in *Clues, Myths and the Historical Method.*, trans John Tedeschi and Anne Tedeschi (Baltimore, 1989), 96-126.

⁵³ Fernand Lagrange, *Physiologie des exercices du corps* (Paris, 1889). In the book, Lagrange makes a case for the importance of physical exercise, though he himself understood rational gymnastics as separate from other kinds of

a late nineteenth century approach to body-training that reduced fatigue and conserved physical and mental effort.⁵⁴ Rational gymnastics advanced a vision of the body, whose movement “was no longer to be a disorganized and diffuse distribution of exhaustion or pain, but a rigorous, standardized set of activities based on the repeated and calculated deployment of physical energy.”⁵⁵ Lagrange, like fellow-rational gymnast Marey, saw the potential for forms of body-based education, including military conditioning, scientific research, and artist training, as the basis for understanding efficiency and effortlessness. In Lagrange’s system, rhythm was thus a process to achieve a “standardized set of activities,” and enabled generalizable claims about the features of physical universe, human biology, and aesthetic experience.⁵⁶

Jaques-Dalcroze saw rhythm liberation from standardization and a way to train individuals to achieve the self-conscious “regard” as social subjects. In contrast to Lagrange, rhythm did not standardize knowledge, but rather freed the self to embrace the effortless body as a source for knowledge. Influenced by psychologist Edouard Claparède, who had trained at Salpêtrière under Charcot and whose studies of childhood development took cues from Rousseau’s theories of education, Jaques-Dalcroze identified a rational and feeling self at the

more strictly physiological research, such as medicine. “Il reste au médecin à établir la valeur comparative de chacun des exercices usités, et à préciser, en s'appuyant sur des arguments physiologiques, la supériorité de chacun d'eux suivant les circonstances et suivant les sujets.” At the same time, he understood that the analysis of physical exercise was itself as a science, whose findings on effort were fundamental to an understanding about the health of the human organism: “C'est que tous les exercices du corps ont ce résultat commun de produire dans l'organisme une série d'effets généraux capables d'améliorer la santé et d'augmenter la force physique de l'individu.” See Lagrange, *Physiologie des exercices du corps*, vi-vii.

⁵⁴ Rabinbach, *The Human Motor* (Berkeley, 1990), 224.

⁵⁵ Rabinbach, *The Human Motor*, 224.

⁵⁶ One example of this difference is Marey’s visual recording techniques (e.g. his chronophotographic plates), in which movement analysis enabled universalist claims about temporal and spatial perception, as well as physical movement as “the central fact of life.” See Rabinbach, “Time and Motion: Étienne-Jules Marey and the Mechanics of the Body,” chapter 4 in Rabinbach, *The Human Motor*, 84 - 120.

center of his work.⁵⁷ Unlike the rational gymnasts and the physiological aesthetes, Jaques-Dalcroze was not interested in making universalist claims about individual sense. Rather, he sought to generalize how the self could move easily and effortlessly with others. His goal was not unlike scientists, like Haeckel, who feared a modern condition stripping individuals of sense, spirit, and feeling. Restoring power, knowledge, and practical value to mental and embodied sense, Jaques-Dalcroze was one of the new “educators of sense [and] as guarantors of calibrated senses throughout society.”⁵⁸ With musical harmony as a model for the movement of single selves and groups of selves, his system maintained a “calibrated,” sensible world through balance, equilibrium, and order.

By 1905, the figure of the embodied, sensing self emerged at the center of his musical pedagogy. Yet Jaques-Dalcroze still faced a number of unresolved issues. He was unclear as to the precise basis of knowledge allowing a student to “decipher” music with the body. He was equally unsure of where the location of that knowledge lay. In his courses, Jaques-Dalcroze creatively combined musical pedagogies, yet they were modes that did not account for rhythm as embodied movement. He questioned their efficacy and soon found solutions. Attending the Congress of Swiss Music Educators in Soleure that summer, Jaques-Dalcroze gave a lecture, “The Reform of Musical Education in Schools,” outlining his new methods. He noted that musical education was laden with social values, which, as the practice of musical education

⁵⁷ In 1901, Claparède, together with Theodore Flornoy, experimental psychologist whose research focused on parapsychology and spiritism, founded the Swiss *Archives de psychologie*. A strong advocate of a Rousseauian approach to education, Claparède helped create in 1912 the *Institut Jean Jacques Rousseau* (later re-named the *Institut des Sciences de L'Education*), which housed a research center on child psychology, experimental pedagogy, and programs for educators. Along with co-founder of the Institut and its inaugural director, Pierre Bouvet, Claparède trained a legion of influential pedagogues and child psychologists, including, most famously, Jean Piaget. For a background on the history of Swiss Psychology and Claparède, see part II of Michael Micale's study on Henry F. Ellenberger in Micale *Beyond the Unconscious: Essays of Henri F. Ellenberger in the History of Psychiatry* (Princeton, 1999), 1367-237.

⁵⁸ Brain, “The Pulse of Modernism,” 405.

showed, differed between musical educators and musical institution. Music, as a form of instruction, was also a form of social organization that indicated an orientation toward the world.

Let us be straightforward and prudent, brief and categorical: forgetting that everything that has to do with music has an irresistible tendency to take us to the skies or into the clouds, let us deal with it [as] the very important and very interesting question of musical instruction in such a way as we would discuss any other question of organization, and in so doing classify the elements in an objective manner and discuss essential points *grosso modo* [...].⁵⁹

No different than “any other question of organization,” discussions of music were discussions of the features of society. Urging his colleagues to put aside abstract aesthetic theories, Jaques-Dalcroze pointed that reforms to practical organization and training were necessary to develop theories and values. He summarized the main points of his lecture as a set of three questions: first, what was the practical use of music education? Second, what were the most effective methods of instruction? Third, what new methods were needed to replace ineffective ones? Jaques-Dalcroze explained that the utility of musical education lay in music’s connection to social progress – and order. “Obligatory musical education in school is a unique method to organize [*classer*] the vital forces of a country,” he noted. “If it is clearly understood, clearly organized, clearly given out among intelligent and capable teachers, children after two to three years, at the most, will be oriented in one sense or in another [...] Talent – says Montesquieu – is a gift that God gives us in secret and we reveal without knowing it!”⁶⁰ Led by teachers steeped in the values of the Sentimental Enlightenment, society – a nation – could realize and “organize” its “vital forces.” Jaques-Dalcroze approached musical talent as something egalitarian and democratic, potentially accessible to all. Music cultivated natural talents into refined skill among

⁵⁹ Émile Jaques-Dalcroze, *Reforme de L'Enseignement Musical à L'École* (Lausanne, 1905), 2.

⁶⁰ Jaques-Dalcroze, *Reforme de L'Enseignement Musical à L'École*, 8-9.

members in society and slotted them into a social hierarchy by filtering students who showed artistic promise from those better suited for non-artistic pursuits. Music thus ensured for society that the energies of its members would not turn into wasted effort or fruitless ambition. Rather, it would serve to ease progress and celebrate the aesthetic, intellectual, and physical capabilities of the human being.

National context was key. Citing the examples of Germany, whose “scholastic authorities” ignored the cries of reformers like Karl Storck, musicologist and author of *Der Tanz* (1903), and France, whose preoccupation with “decadent” choral music and “an absolute lack of mixed society, the invasion of café-concerts, and the crisis of oratorio” blocked reforms to education, Jaques-Dalcroze argued society often divorced musical practice from the cultivation of civic values. As a result, young children students suffered the most. Holland and Belgium were exceptions, and he noted that their music educators were realistic about the relationship between practice and theory and “underst[ood] the importance of a well-ordered pedagogical system.”⁶¹ Nevertheless, Jaques-Dalcroze noted that in light of these national variations Swiss methods had the potential to serve as a model of musical values for all of Europe.

Jaques-Dalcroze answered his second proposition as an imaginary dialogue with a “Mister Ordinary” [“Monsieur Quelconque”] who punctuated his French sentences with German prepositions. In response to Mister Ordinary’s uncomprehending cries (“But wait! But wait!”), Jaques-Dalcroze explained that music balanced rational thought and feeling. Current methods in education, however, did little to develop this. Rote memorization trained students to imitate musical patterns rather than understand musical concepts, and institutional educational programs showed little regard for the psychology and development of children. A sound musical education, in other words, was impossible without consideration for how individuals experienced

⁶¹ Jaques-Dalcroze, *Reforme de L'Enseignement Musical à L'École*, 15.

themselves in society. A new critical approach to teaching music was vital. These included: “to record [...] an easy melody that one sings for the first time and another, more difficult, melody that they know by heart”; to improvise and recognize tonal modulation; to differentiate forms of musical prosody (including meter, pattern, and accent); to list composers and their important works; to identify basic compositional forms (e.g. a sonata versus a symphony).⁶² To the still-disbelieving Mister Ordinary (“But they are too difficult!”), Jaques-Dalcroze explained that this new musical literacy, based in Solfège and gestural movement, required surprisingly no effort. “Not at all, Mr. Ordinary, oh not at all! They are the most elementary. Solfège teaches all of these [...] A good Swiss does not need six years of historical study to speak about William Tell, Winkelried, Herzog, Durfor or M. Currant!”⁶³

Jaques-Dalcroze proposed that Swiss educators reorient education around values associated with musical listening rather than musical performance. Jaques-Dalcroze differentiated between “listening” [*entendre*] and “hearing” [*écouter*], the former denoting a critical response to feeling and stimulation, while the latter denoted a mental process of recognition translated into simple action – in other words, simple repetition, or obedience. Listening honed a student’s “aesthetic feeling” [*sentiment esthétique*] necessary for the individual student to comprehend “that the studies he is undertaking address his soul as much as his brain, and that he must learn to *love*, not just *understand*” [ital. original]. This comprehension connected to what Jaques-Dalcroze labeled “absolute audition” [*l’audition absolue*] – “the innate and natural perception of the place of each sound [*son*] in the spectrum of sounds [*sonorités*].”⁶⁴

⁶² Jaques-Dalcroze, *Ibid.*, 18.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 20.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 29, 38.

Absolute audition, as a self-conscious recognition of logic, order, and form, turned the musical self into a social self: it was the outward expression to and with others of one's inward state. Music required attention to one's soul and intellect, *and* the attentive demonstration to others of individual feeling, such as love. These feelings formed the basis for social engagement, respect of social codes, behaviors, ethics and moral judgment. Musical education made the self complete self by refining one's "inner perception" with one's outward capacity for movement, joining the two in musical, and social, harmony. "Every good musical method must be based on the 'audition' of sound as well as on the emission," Jaques-Dalcroze noted.⁶⁵ In this model, knowledge of social behavior came from attention to one's internal feeling and sense, "as well as on the emission," or outward expression.

Jaques-Dalcroze proposed a problem-based education to achieve this among students. He advocated solfège based on a *gamme d'ut*, or "moveable-do," system, in which pitch was taught in context rather than as a static model.⁶⁶ Moveable-do taught pitch recognition as a series of notes played collectively, as a process of trial and error for the student.⁶⁷ Solfège was not the only method for reform: educational methods also needed to emphasize rhythm, the element "of the highest importance" in music. Citing "the marvelous theoretician, our compatriot Lussy," Jaques-Dalcroze explained that rhythm could be taught through physical movement, which engendered salutary effects on the body, such as increased stamina, fatigue reduction, and

⁶⁵ Ibid., 38

⁶⁶ In a "fixed-do" system pitch is always connected to the same series of notes, typically in the key of A Flat Major, regardless of context.

⁶⁷ In the moveable-do system, a student learns variations in pitch (such as melody or chord progressions) relative to a tonic, i.e. the "do" set at the beginning of the exercise. In a moveable-do system, any note can act as the tonic. Contemporary Dalcroze methods employ both systems, though the rationale for both follows Jaques-Dalcroze's 1905 description moveable-do; Katy Thompson, contemporary Dalcroze educator, explains that "Dalcroze solfège sensitizes the ear to the tonal system, and that is a matter of content and methodology more than language [of moveable- versus fixed-do]." Katy M. Thompson, "Hearing is Believing: Dalcroze Solfège and Musical Understanding." *Musical Educators Journal* 98, no. 2 (December 2011), 70.

improved posture.⁶⁸ Physical movement, he added, was an excellent way to assess student ability to control and intuit rhythm. “If the student is not able to voluntarily accentuate one step versus another, it is not the feeling of natural rhythm.”⁶⁹ Properly, critically grasped by the student, rhythm ensured that students differentiated between their rational or “voluntary” movement and unthinking or “involuntary” action.

Jaques-Dalcroze presented voluntary versus involuntary rhythm as a model for social order and stability, on the one hand, and chaos and disorder, on the other. Rhythmic education was thus the maintenance of balance and equilibrium through feeling, sense, and movement. Jaques-Dalcroze did not explicitly define concepts of “sense” or “sentiment,” yet his constant allusions to Enlightenment philosophy – Diderot, Montaigne, Montesquieu, Pascal and Rouchefoucauld – made his meaning clear. For Enlightenment sentimentalists like Diderot and d’Alembert, “sentiment” indicated “an emotional ‘movement’ in response to a feeling”; the concept of “sensibility” referred to the expansion of this movement into an appreciation of nature, beauty, and moral action.⁷⁰ As a school of thought and “culture of sensibility,” Enlightenment sentimentalism rooted individual experience in the physical body and “in physical sensations, and the conviction that sentiments were in turn the foundation of life.”⁷¹ In this

⁶⁸ Jaques-Dalcroze, *Reforme de L'Enseignement Musical à L'École*, 46. He noted this had important bearing upon military exercises: perhaps recalling his own experience in the Swiss military, he explained that the common “one-two” march placed the same accent each time on the same foot, increasing physical fatigue. “Essayez donc, Messieurs les instructeurs,” he noted, “de faire marcher vos soldats en partant alternativement du pied droit et du pied gauche, le fusil changeant d'épaule; faites-leur aussi accentuer leur marche de trois en trois pas, de quatre en quatre, de cinq en cinq, de six en six, puis alternez ces accentuations et vous nous direz ensuite si vous n'obtenez pas ainsi une marche moins mécanique et par conséquent moins fatigante, et si ses exercices ne rendent pas vos hommes plus souples et plus délurés.” *Reforme de L'Enseignement Musical à L'École*, 44.

⁶⁹ Jaques-Dalcroze, *Reforme de L'Enseignement Musical à L'École*, 43.

⁷⁰ Riskin, *Science in the Age of Sensibility*, 1.

⁷¹ Riskin, *Science in the Age of Sensibility*, 8-9.

process, music, particularly as an embodied practice, functioned as a process of theorization. As Adelheid Voskuhl notes, this approach to sentiment enabled artists and thinkers to articulate new philosophies of the social self through an “increased attention to the 'inner life' of individuals and to the individuation of feeling in contrast to earlier periods when human affects in general and their moral, political and epistemic relevance had been a concern to moral and natural philosophers.”⁷² The music room was a laboratory to theorize, observe, and explain the social order. More than that, it was a way to connect theory to practice, and philosophy to action.

The Jaques-Dalcroze music class offered the same space to consider the social, scientific, and philosophical implications of affect, embodiment, and expression. Music’s emphasis on sense and sentiment shaped the relationship between social selves. The individual physical body grounded Jaques-Dalcroze’s efforts to theorize music and its movements formed the basis for his discussion of social values. Jaques-Dalcroze’s sentimentalist predecessors had shown how artistic expression affirmed civil society and maintained order in the exchange between individual feeling and behavior; inspired by them, he cast embodied rhythm as the vehicle for such Enlightenment values in the twentieth century. Music teachers were not just teaching music; they were teaching students to become Enlightened members of society. “The progress of a people depends on the education given to its children. If one wants musical taste, instead of being a prerogative of upper classes, to penetrate into the most profound layers of society [...] musical education must – like scientific and moral instruction – be given in school.”⁷³ Transforming feeling individuals into compassionate citizens, music-as-movement was the key to social progress.

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⁷² Voskuhl, *Androids in the Enlightenment*, 148.

⁷³ Jaques-Dalcroze, *Reforme de L'Enseignement Musical à L'École*, 7.

IV. The Moving Self and the Social Order: the 1906 *Méthode Jaques-Dalcroze*

The Soleure lecture laid the groundwork for the *Méthode Jaques-Dalcroze*, his formal system of musical education published in 1906 as a single volume, the *Méthode Jaques-Dalcroze. Vol I: Gymnastique Rythmique*.⁷⁴ By 1916, the system expanded to include ten separate volumes in six parts, each combining written text, technical exercises, sheet music, and commentary “for the development of rhythmic instinct, aural sense [*sens auditif*], and tonal feeling [*sentiment tonal*].”⁷⁵ A massive undertaking, part I alone contained 30 musical lessons and exercises, 120 photographs, 80 drawings, 10 anatomical plates, and sheet music for 160 rhythmic marches, and vocal and piano songs.⁷⁶ The lessons, sub-divided thematically, contained plans for training in “the decomposition of musical values” and “the development of musical instinct in rhythm and harmony, of the sense of plastic harmony and the equilibrium of movements, and for the regularization of motor habits.”⁷⁷

The *Méthode* translated into a formal technical system his vision of the self as a social subject, steeped in Enlightenment values of social harmony and sociability, progress, and a balance of rational thought and embodied feeling. Part I of the *Méthode*, “*Gymnastique Rythmique*” and “*La Rythmique*,” taught basic rhythm through the development of motor skills, balance, and physical control. Containing movement and breathing drills, and exercises in imitation and improvisation, these volumes taught students to differentiate between rhythms and to “translate” via movements and gestures such as marching, waving one’s arms, or clapping. They also introduced students to basic principles of musical composition, such as metrical,

⁷⁴ Émile Jaques-Dalcroze, *Méthode Jaques-Dalcroze. Vol I: Gymnastique Rythmique*. 1st ed. (Paris, 1906).

⁷⁵ Émile Jaques-Dalcroze, “Preface to *La Rythmique, La Plastique Animée et de la Danse*.” *Méthode Jaques-Dalcroze. Vol I: La Plastique Animée* (Lausanne, 1916), 20.

⁷⁶ Jaques-Dalcroze, *Méthode Jaques-Dalcroze. Vol I* (Paris, 1906).

⁷⁷ Jaques-Dalcroze, *Méthode Jaques-Dalcroze. Vol I* (1906), 5.

harmonic, and contrapuntal structures. Part I concluded with exercises in relaxation and massage, including a commentary on the importance of rhythmic training for physical health and hygiene.

Still clearly influenced by Lagrange, Jaques-Dalcroze placed effort conservation at the heart of his method. His understanding of effort and physical force, however, was unique. Unlike the ideas and systems of rational gymnasts, “the science of effort” for Jaques-Dalcroze did not streamline the range of feeling produced by physical sensation, but instead expanded, and liberated, it. Individual sense, when properly connected to physical movement, expanded an individual’s recognition of musical harmony, defined principally as ease or agreement achieved through order, logic, and formal structure. In this sense, Jaques-Dalcroze students modeled the experience of a Kantian moral universe: they were subjective agents who discovered objective law through the through a self-conscious observation of their own actions.

Like the musical romantics, Jaques-Dalcroze stressed the necessity of individual attention to feeling and action. Ironically, ease and freedom of motion were taught through repetitive exercises that honed fine motor control and physical multitasking. Presenting the human body as harmonious and serene (rather than a motor or machine) the *Méthode* used qualities of order, control, and regularity to teach students an awareness of the easy connection between rational thought and embodied, or intuitive, states.

The multiplicity of human feelings to be expressed require the multiplicity of physical means of expression. When they have been developed in isolation, this will not unify and combine advantageously for the expression of thought. It should be possible, thanks to special gymnastic training, to guarantee a facility for voluntary action (tension and relaxation) for each isolated muscle, just as in neutral rest when its action is not necessary for the whole of movement.⁷⁸

⁷⁸ Jaques-Dalcroze, *Méthode Jaques-Dalcroze. Vol I*, viii.

This passage illustrates Jaques-Dalcroze’s faith in the commensurability of inward and outward expression, and the possibility for “the multiplicity of physical means of expression” to match the range of human emotion, thought, and experience. For Jaques-Dalcroze, the ordered, logical – harmonic – coordination of muscles, bones, and joints could match and make physically legible “the multiplicity of human feeling.” At no point did he question the power of physical movement to conserve effort or ease, or to articulate metaphysical ideas or urges. Physical harmony was the condition of spiritual ease.

Passages in the 1906 edition of the *Méthode* emphasize principles of “harmony,” the status of the “soul,” and the “eternal rhythm” undergirding complex forms of movement.⁷⁹ Breathing patterns, massage, and relaxation techniques helped students execute these movement forms, and in doing so, attain a sense of physical, spiritual, and mental ease. This sense of ease was experienced not only by individual students, but between them, as well as between students and their teachers. In order to facilitate this sense of ease, Jaques-Dalcroze required that students wear loose practice clothing, including knee-length pantaloons and short-sleeved, scooped necked blouses without corsets.

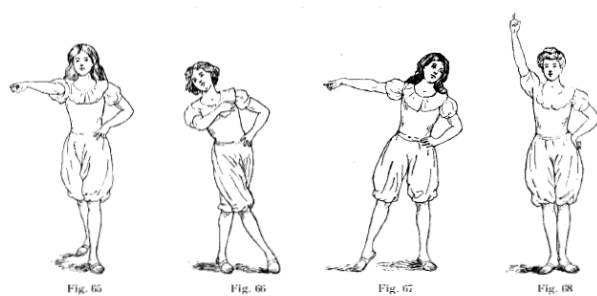


Fig. 2. D'Artus, “Exercises de Marche” from *Méthode Jaques-Dalcroze. Vol I* (1906), 66.

⁷⁹ Jaques-Dalcroze, *Ibid.*, vii – viii.

Dance scholars note that the Jaques-Dalcroze uniform belonged to a contemporary trend of costume reform among expressive movement schools, including the Isadora and Elizabeth Duncan School, Delsartism, and the Genevieve Stebbins method.⁸⁰ The “Jaques-Dalcroze style,” which recalled the peasantry of late eighteenth-century France, differed from these contemporary schools, whose students donned loose fitting togas and tunics inspired by Greek Antiquity. With her individualized coiffure and clothing, the Jaques-Dalcroze student was fit to march in revolutionary spectacle rather than the halls of the Parthenon, thus emphasizing her commitment to the social contract over classical aestheticism.

The visual vocabulary of the *Méthode* mixed line prints, drawings, and photographs and underscored sentimentalist social values through physical movement and effort-reduction. Scholar Selma Odom notes the aesthetic similarities of the *Méthode*'s visual plates to those of nineteenth-century technical manuals by Delsarte, particularly his images of exercises in effort-reduction through walking, kneeling, and lying down.⁸¹ In contrast, the visual images of body positions in the *Méthode* evoked emotions and mental states: “photographs of attitudes with corresponding texts [demonstrate] how thoughts and feelings such as happiness, adoration, deception, sorrow, shame, disdain, curiosity, sadness, and fatigue can motivate slow movements.”⁸² The *Méthode* visually affirmed the connection between individual mental processes, feeling, and bodily expression, in contrast to images, such as the chronophotographic prints by Marey, that distinguished between movement shared between all bodies from the particularities of individual, embodied, experience.

⁸⁰ Both Spector and Odom make this case. See: Spector, *Rhythm and Life*, 57; and Selma Landen Odom, “Delsartean Traces in Dalcroze Eurythmics,” *Mime Journal* (2004-2005): 136 – 151.

⁸¹ Odom, “Delsartean Traces,” 46.

⁸² Odom, 146.

In the *Méthode*, images of corporeal cohesion and fracture were also images of social cohesion and fracture. The text did this gradually, through discrete examples focusing on particular regions of the body. The image of a young girl illustrating arm exercises (Fig. 3) is a model of balance, equilibrium, and corporeal effortlessness. The turnout of her legs and the presentational aspect of her shoulders and head suggest traces of academic ballet technique – order and logic – whereby upper body angles, turnout, and diagonal lines visually ground movement and present gesture as an extension of negative space around the individual.



Fig. 3. D'Artus, "Exercices d'Independence des membres," 80

Other images showed the body as a series of disembodied, fractured units (Fig. 4). Small anatomical plates by E. Cacheux illustrate marching and clapping exercises show hands and feet as dismembered, free-floating agents:

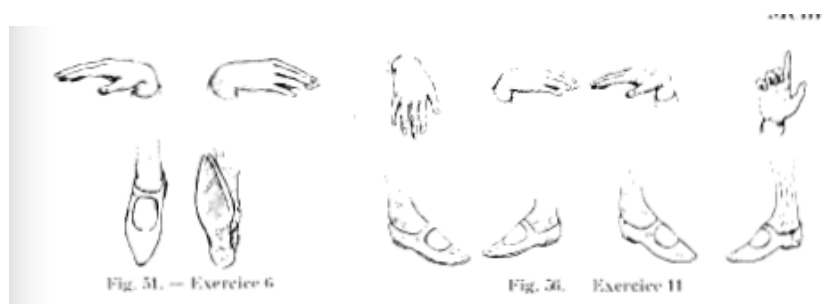


Fig. 4. E. Cacheux, "Exercices d'Independence des membres," *Méthode Jaques-Dalcroze. Vol I* (1906), 44.

Other plates depicting breathing exercises divided the body into parts, separating its interior and its exterior (Fig. 5).

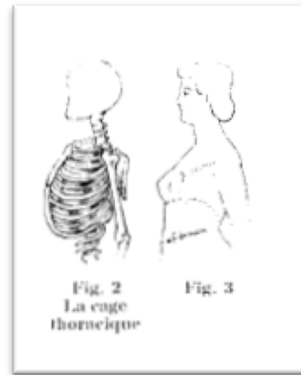


Fig. 5. E. Cacheux, “Règles générales de Respiration,” *Méthode Jaques-Dalcroze* (1906), 5.

Finally, numerous plates in the text showed body as a static entity, whose movement appeared as a broken progression rather than an organic flow (Fig. 6).

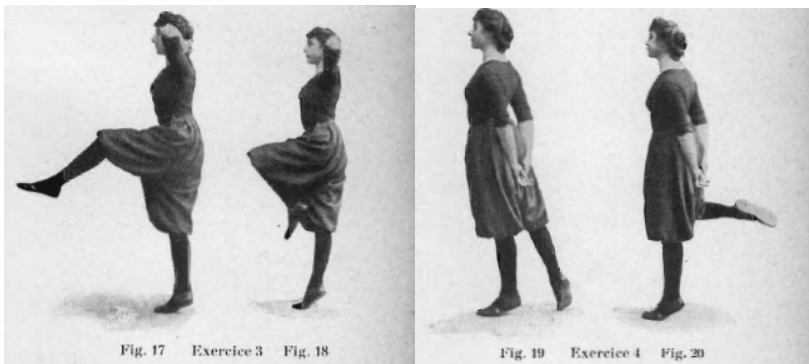


Fig. 6. Boissonnas, “Exercices généraux d'équilibre des mouvements,” *Méthode Jaques-Dalcroze* (1906), 15.

These images gestured toward a series of questions. Was one’s social “reach” limited to the physical area encompassed by one’s arm (Fig. 3)? Did the externalization of inward states in (Fig. 5) define the social body? Was progress of the social body stepwise (Fig. 6), or was it more fluid, as the basic principles of the *Méthode* affirmed? The diversity of these images suggested that Jaques-Dalcroze understood physical effort as something that varied from individual to

individual, which was once again highlighted by the Méthode’s visuals. The range of individual students featured as models, and the range of styles of dress (e.g. individualized hair-dos, ribbons, and accouterments) underscored the centrality of personal sensibility. Photographic images throughout the text exposed bodily surfaces, depth, and dimension – a savvy use of photography as a technical medium capturing subtleties of light, shadow, and texture (Fig. 7). Did these images also have analogs as social model or metaphor? In contrast to the simple ink lines of d’Artus’ graceful girl, photographed students stand or kneel awkwardly away from the viewer, exposing unusual bodily surfaces suggesting alternative expressive dimensions revealed in the practice of the exercises:

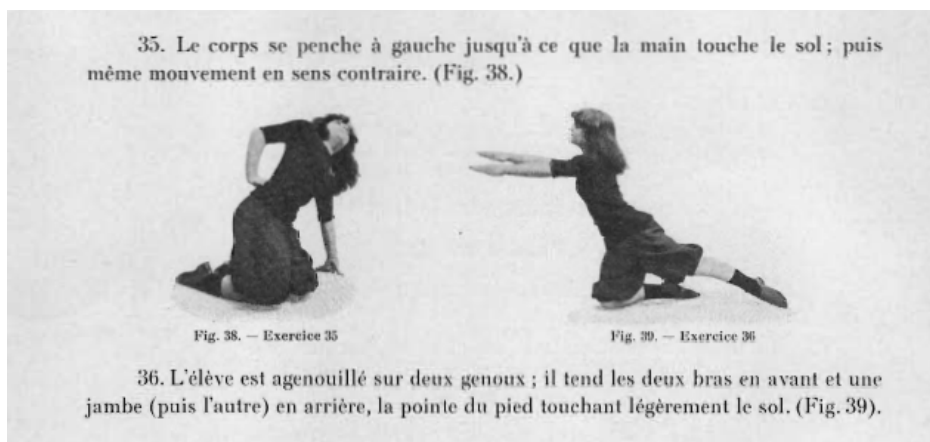


Fig. 7. Boissonnas, “Position agenouillé: les bras tendues en bas et en arrière,” 24.

The social application of these images begged a series of questions about the nature of embodied movement, with the potential to upset order and stability. What hidden, and possibly awkward, encounters and experiences emerged through movement? Could movement reveal new sides of the self?

Méthode did not resolve these questions, and left open an additional set regarding movement and effort. Was rhythm and muscular relaxation first achieved through bodily presentation or through kinetic progression? To understand harmonic movement, was it better to

rationally recognize, or to physically sense, the combination of separate body parts? What explained incongruities between mental and physical states, such as mental agitation felt during an attitude of physical repose? What was one to do if this happened? Deference to the authority of harmony, Jaques-Dalcroze implied, would resolve any of these issues. In the volume's prefatory note, he explained that his visual models, who were adolescent girls rather than children (his target demographic), possessed this deference to harmony. "If the majority of subjects [...are] young girls and not children, it's because it appeared to us that the most perfect harmonization of their gestures and attitudes offered to readers the clearest and most convincing models, as opposed to those [subjects] that would have presented an incomplete corporeal education to children. When it comes to small children, at least 2 or 3 years of lessons are necessary to ensure a perfect corporeal education."⁸³ The visual appearance of the *Méthode*'s "subjects" captured its mission: the "harmonization of gesture and attitude." As Perrotet was the model of "grace and beauty in movement," the *Méthode*'s young girls were "the most perfect" models of logic, order, and balance. Through their easy movements, "absolute audition," and critical-self regard, the knowledge of themselves was knowledge of society. They were model social subjects.

Jaques-Dalcroze cast movement as determinable, occurring in regular, recognizable, patterns, disciplinary features of what he understood as "science." In his later career, he pushed these concepts further, transforming his views of embodied movement into a physiognomic theory of race and rhythm. Literary scholar Michel Golston notes that Jaques-Dalcroze's approach to rhythm particularly in later works, such as *Rhythm, Music, and Education* [1921], relied on the concept of embodied knowledge as the basis for this racially hierarchized approach

⁸³ Jaques-Dalcroze, *Méthode Jaques-Dalcroze. Vol I: Gymnastique Rhythmique* (1906), 10.

to dance. In his system, the collapse of brain and body enabled “the ‘conscious’ and ‘sub-conscious’ [to] finally be reunited in a cult of natural rhythm.”⁸⁴ Somewhat ironically, by pushing the concept of knowledge systematization, his later, racialized version of the social contract abandoned a musical or physical definition of harmony in favor of a spiritual or metaphysical one. In the words of Jaques-Dalcroze, his mature system “reveals the secret of the eternal mystery that has ruled the lives of men throughout the ages; it imprints on our minds a primitive religious character that elevates them, and brings before us past, present, and future.”⁸⁵ Harmony was no longer the easy maintenance of logic and structure, but a mystical “revelation” of ambiguous power, “the eternal mystery that has ruled the lives of men.” His system of embodied rhythm before 1920 was an occasion to theorize movement as the maintenance of social order, and his later work transformed this into a pseudo-science, with race replacing harmony the basis of movement and behavior, and a justification for institution, values, and hierarchy.

Traces of this later system were evident in 1906. In North Africa, Jaques-Dalcroze distinguished musicians according to national or ethnic types, as well as their natural musical capacities and aptitude for physical movement. His early work revealed the sensibilities of nineteenth and early twentieth century ethnography and anthropology to understand free individual expression in the context of collective life. For him, physical movement trained and expressed social subjectivity, and helped to maintain stability. Physical movement was the faithful reproduction of “the harmonization of gesture and attitude,” which was effortless and enabled individuals effortlessly relate to others. The *Méthode* thus presented movement as

⁸⁴ Michael Golston, *Rhythm and Race in Modernist Poetry and Science: Pound, Yeats, Williams and Modern Sciences of Rhythm* (New York, 2008), 32.

⁸⁵ Jaques-Dalcroze, *Rythme, Musique et L'Education* (1921); cited in Golston, *Rhythm and Race in Modernist Poetry and Science*, 32.

“choreographed” in its original meaning as the faithful reproduction of steps – a definition and practice which emerged around the fifteenth century in Italian courts as part of the maintenance of the social order.⁸⁶ In fact, dance practice and construction was so tied to the reproduction of given forms (e.g. musical patterns, geometric shapes, maps of the cosmos or harmonic spheres) that thought and imagination were embodied exercises in logic, order, and structure: in Baroque dance, for example, performers and “dancing masters thought in terms of steps.”⁸⁷ By the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the meaning of choreography had changed. No longer denoting forms of movement repetition, choreography referred to a processes of creative invention. This shift in meaning was not unlike a shift Jaques-Dalcroze and Perrotet underwent as they performed and experimented with their “rhythmic riddles.” In 1890, the slight variations in Perrotet’s movements were not connected to her motor skills needing refinement or relaxation, but were instead an effect of her aesthetic experience. In 1906, Jaques-Dalcroze used a different set of criteria to understand movement, in which the faithful execution of physical steps and exercises were used to evaluate effortlessness, natural ability, and expressive sensibility.

In other words, Jaques-Dalcroze’s understanding of expression maps inversely onto historical definitions of choreography, which, ironically, conflicted with his sentimentalist affiliations. As dance historian Lynn Garafola has shown, the idea of choreography in Europe at this time underscored the instability of movement as the content for artistic expression; discussing work by late Imperial ballet master Marius Petipa, she points out that choreography did not signal originality or artistic genius but instead formed “the most fluid or unstable (though

⁸⁶ On the social context for early theatrical dance and choreographic practices, see Jennifer Nevile, ed. *Dance, Spectacle, and the Body Politik, 1250 – 1750* (Bloomington, 2008).

⁸⁷ Ken Pierce, “Choreographic Structure in Baroque Dance,” in Nevile, Ed. *Dance, Spectacle, and the Body Politik*, 185.

this was not a term [Petipa] would have understood) element of a ballet.”⁸⁸ In the next chapters, we will see how dancers encountered questions of instability, spontaneity and an “openness of form”⁸⁹ and found ways in their expressive systems to limit what they perceived to be unpredictable, unstable, or chaotic movement forms. Not only was such movement incompatible with harmonic order; it threatened the conception of harmony as the basis for social relations.

In 1906, the *Méthode* “choreographed” an individual’s experience of movement in its dual meanings: as something creatively generated *and* rationally reproduced. In Jaques-Dalcroze’s system, the social collective – the classroom, the rehearsal, the performance, the nation – provided the space for seemingly irreconcilable definitions to converge. Unstable movement could still reflect harmonic order. Movement of the body and of society conserved effort, which ensured that inward feeling was commensurate with its outward expression. This hinged upon a sentimental approach to expression that accommodated for contingency and turned it into order. The *Méthode*’s basic tenets of discovery, empiricism, critical self-reflection, celebrated this “openness of form” in its service to balance and equilibrium, and sought to contain it when it challenged a stable status quo. For all of its contradictions, Jaques-Dalcroze’s theories of the moving self and the social order was powerful inspiration to others seeking to theorize the movement of the self in society. This movement was fixed yet fluid, controlled yet free, stable yet spontaneous, unique yet not alone.

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⁸⁸ Lynn Garafola, "The Diaries of Marius Petipa," in *Legacies of Twentieth-Century Dance* (Middletown, 2005), 20. Originally published as the introduction to *The Diaries of Marius Petipa*, in *Studies in Dance History*, 3, no. 1 (Spring 1992).

⁸⁹ Garafola, "The Diaries of Marius Petipa," 20.

Conclusion

The shifting approach to movement as repetition or creative invention undergirds two major themes in this dissertation. First is what this dissertation labels as “embodied conservatism,” a commitment to the maintenance of a stable social order through physical movement. Emphasizing values of balance, ease, effortless, and equilibrium, embodied conservatives beginning with Jaques-Dalcroze modeled visions of society on conceptions of musical and physical harmony as the logical ordering of form. While embodied conservatism was not a political program, it made itself available as a platform for politics, in which visions of social order were means to achieve discrete, particular ends. Chapters 3 through 6 chronicle various examples of this; in particular, we will see in Chapter 3 how the embodied conservatism of Jaques-Dalcroze’s system outlined in this Chapter accrued a set of politics during his time in Hellerau from 1909 to 1914. Chapters 4, 5, and 6 will demonstrate how the embodied conservatism of Wigman, Laban, and others folded into political programs on the Weimar right after 1919.

The second major concept in this dissertation that builds upon the shifting definitions of choreography as either creative invention or faithful reproduction is what I label here as “metabolic movement.” A mechanism of embodied conservatism, metabolic movement refers to the discrete movements systems – its steps, techniques, theoretical justifications, and conceptual visions – transforming forms of unpredictability and ambiguity into clarity, logic, and order. Like cells, whose actions and chemical processes convert fuel into energy to maintain cellular function, generate new cells, and expel waste, modern dancers understood dance and movement systems similarly. Dance transformed physical force into the basic gestures and steps, embodied entities that maintained movement. Dance transformed physical force into a kind of creative

energy, which in turn stimulated more movement. And dance harnessed incorrect or damaging physical forms into proper technique, protecting movement. Performed in service to embodied conservatism, a stable balance that ensured dance expression as the basis of social relations, metabolic movement combined principles of creative invention with faithful repetition to turn forces perceived as harmful or threatening into a vital part of itself.

The contradictory meanings of choreography in Jaques-Dalcroze's also reveal his attempt to reconcile a number of potentially incompatible goals. His theorization of the relationship between physical movement and the individual affective state of the mover conflicted with the theories of contemporary physiology and psychology he often invoked; such theories posited emotion as physiological, and therefore involuntary, phenomena determinative of social behavior. This notion of human behavior challenged the idea of sensibility and questioned the possibility of the interiority of the self. In this sense, Jaques-Dalcroze's vision of the body stood in conflict with his sentimentalist affiliations. His concept of "absolute audition," central to his work after 1906, made the case that knowledge about movement was rooted in personal sense and feeling, not contingent upon the translation or decipherment of the knowledge forms into alternative mediums. Yet the *Méthode* was precisely that, namely, the abstraction of harmony into embodied, physical form.

In conclusion, through his movement based system of musical education, Jaques-Dalcroze advanced an understanding of individual aesthetics as social subjectivity. The basis for individual freedom and social behavior was the management of different forces (physical, emotional, intellectual, artistic), experienced by the physical and physiological body. The management of this was based in the effortless "harmonization of gesture and attitude" – the outward expression of one's inner state. In this, contingency of feeling, action, and emotion

could always be linked to a place within harmonic order. The *Méthode* thus advanced a practice for social relations, in which individual bodies were equally legitimate, potential sources for knowledge about the collective. Each individual expanded and liberated the social fabric. How this vision unfolded in practice is another theme of subsequent chapters.

Beginning with his experiments around 1890, Jaques-Dalcroze theorized the social contract by defining music as dance. In this model, movement freed individuals to become sovereign subjects of social harmony; they were no longer isolated, atomized independent movers. Through movement-based music, Jaques-Dalcroze joined together the sides of Rousseau's theories of society and politics, showing how a dance class of easy moving *Émiles* could enact, and not just represent, the general will. "Finally," Rousseau writes, "since each man gives himself to all, he gives himself to no one; and since there is no associate over whom he does not gain the same rights as others gain over him, each man recovers the equivalent of everything he loses, and in the bargain he acquires more power to preserve what he has."⁹⁰ In the case of *Rythmique*, the moving self ensured stable freedom.

⁹⁰ Jean Jacques Rousseau, *The Social Contract*. Trans Maurice Cranston (New York, 1968), 61.

Chapter 2

The Metabolic Movement of Isadora Duncan and Ernst Haeckel, 1899 - 1909

All blossom free from the heart of Isadora,
Mother of music, of melody in motion;
She, recreator of long-vanished wonder,
Mother of happiness! Mother of beauty!
Charlotte Perkins Gilman, "To Isadora Duncan" (undated)¹

"Weil aber die Materie nie ohne Geist, der Geist nie ohne Materie existiert und wirksam sein kann..."
J.W. Goethe, *Explanation to Aphorisms on Nature* (1828)

This chapter turns to Isadora Duncan, a contemporary of Jaques-Dalcroze and a central figure in the history of American and European modern dance. This dissertation argues that Duncan is also a central figure in the history of German dance. From 1902 to 1909, Duncan performed, taught, and lectured in Germany. During this time, she theorized the nature of the self and society and developed an approach to embodied movement that, like *Rythmique*, sought to maintain a stable social order based in the concept of harmony. Duncan's understanding of harmony resembled that of Jaques-Dalcroze, who defined harmony according to features of balance, logic, and structural alignment. While Jaques-Dalcroze turned to the ideas and musical practices of the Sentimental Enlightenment for inspiration, Duncan looked to a different source to understand knowledge of the self as social knowledge: developmental biology.

This chapter demonstrates how Duncan modeled her vision of order and society on mid- to late- nineteenth-century theories of species development and evolutionary heredity established by embryologist Ernst Haeckel, with whom Duncan corresponded from 1904 to 1910. As we will see, Haeckel's ideas about evolution, movement, and nature shaped Duncan's vision of dance as the expression of a stable harmonic order. Both dancer and scientist believed that physical and

¹ Gilman composed this in the later part of her career, and was less personally enamored with Duncan as inspired by Duncan's dancing: the original manuscript of the poem contains a handwritten note by Gilman that reads, "Sent a copy to [Duncan] and she never even said thank you." In Charlotte Perkins Gilman, *The Later Poetry of Charlotte Perkins Gilman*, ed. Denise D. Knight (Newark, 1996), 141 and 189.

physiological movement unlocked knowledge of the natural world, as well as knowledge about aspects of the human psyche that lay beyond the reach of empirical observation, rational comprehension, or biological determinism. This encompassed knowledge of human desire, spirituality and existential longing, as well as concepts of the soul, the will, and human perception. Haeckel articulated many of these ideas in his philosophical system of monism, outlined in his final monograph, *The Riddle of the Universe* [1899]. A careful reader of Haeckel's work, Duncan turned her performances, teaching, and lecturing into a platform to elaborate the place of the feeling, moving self within natural and social orders.

American and European dance scholars agree upon Duncan's centrality in the history of modern dance on both sides of the Atlantic, yet her time in Germany remains little examined in scholarly research. To date, there is only one monograph in German or English exclusively on Duncan's career in Germany: an exhibition catalogue assembled by dance historian Frank-Manuel Peter following a 2000 exhibition at the Tanzarchiv Köln.² Research by Duncan biographers Peter Kurth and Ann Daly provides crucial information about her activities in Germany, yet their work focuses on the French, Soviet, and American contexts as most important for her career and ideas.³ Other scholars, such as Carrie J. Preston, examine Duncan's engagement with European, and primarily French, forms of artistic modernism, highlighting her formal approach to dance rather than her sociological, intellectual, or political commitments.⁴

² Frank-Manuel Peter, ed. *Isadora and Elizabeth Duncan in Deutschland; Isadora and Elizabeth Duncan in Germany* (Köln, 2000). The exhibition was entitled "Das Land der Griechen mit dem Körper suchend: Isadora und Elizabeth Duncan."

³ Ann Daly, *Done into Dance: Isadora Duncan in America* (Middletown, 1995); Peter Kurth, *Isadora: A Sensational Life* (Boston, 2001).

⁴ Carrie J. Preston, *Modernism's Mythic Pose: Gender, Genre, and Solo Performance* (Oxford, 2011).

While some of these authors reference Duncan's interest in natural science and her relationship to Haeckel, none of them examine them in any detail.

This chapter clarifies Duncan's place within the development of modern dance in two ways. First, it focuses on her activities in Germany to show how her time in Germany was both crucial for her career as well as crucial for the development of German modern dance. Although Duncan is often associated with the development of German modern dance, she is not understood as central to its origins. Second, this chapter foregrounds Duncan's connection to natural science to show how many of her formal innovations, such as her use of movement improvisation and her approach to movement as a "flow" rather than a series of fixed steps or positions, extended from her intellectual engagement with Haeckel – as well as ideas of sexual selection and eugenicist notions of rational reproduction. Duncan's bare-foot solos, group works, and dances for young children, most without narrative content, departed from earlier forms of solo dancing, including work by Loïe Fuller, Ruth St. Denis, the Wiesenthal Sisters, and works by the ballet master Michel Fokine.⁵ Duncan's dances captured feeling and evoked emotional states, which in her early work relied on techniques of "pictorialization" – the physical restaging of scenes evoked in music, the plastic and visual arts, and poetry. Wearing loose-fitting tunics, Duncan reformed stage costume to capture what she called as "the natural gravitation of [the] will of the individual, which in the end is no more nor less than a human translation of the gravitation of the universe."⁶ As we will see, this notion was fundamental to her vision of dance. It was also her interpretation of Haeckelian evolutionary theory.

⁵ Susan A. Manning, "Isadora Duncan," *The International Encyclopedia of Dance*, ed. Selma Jeanne Cohen (Oxford, 1998).

⁶ Isadora Duncan, *Der Tanz der Zukunft [The Dance of the Future]* (Leipzig: Eugen Diederichs, 1903), 13. [Hereafter referred to as "TZ".]

Duncan's interest in natural science combined with her geographical mobility to shape her approach to dance as a "worldview," an orientation of the self towards society, and as the outward expression of inner states. These were attitudes Duncan held throughout her life, and, as explained in this dissertation's introduction, were also foundational principles of modern dance. Duncan was born in San Francisco, and largely self-educated under the supervision of her divorced mother. She traveled constantly, forging throughout her peripatetic career relationships with diverse intellectual communities. Beginning with her arrival in 1900 in London, Duncan was a larger-than-life personality in the European cultural and theatrical worlds. In addition to Haeckel, her engagement with the continental philosophy, politics, literature, history, and archaeology – including a visit to Arthur Evans' 1910 dig at Knossos⁷ – underscored her intellectual curiosity, creativity, and eclecticism. Duncan joined themes and styles from Botticelli, Beethoven, and Brahms, to the idealism and existentialism of Kant, Nietzsche, and Schopenhauer. Through dance, she theorized the complexities of philosophy, art, society, and science.

Duncan's dancing displayed for her audiences otherwise restricted by disciplinary convention or tradition alternative ways to explain nature, science, and society. Such was the case with Haeckel, who saw in Duncan a living, breathing model of his theories, which further pointed the way to a solution to "the world problem": a "philosophy of nature" in which "both methods of research, the empirical and the speculative, naturally converge."⁸ As Haeckel himself wrote to Duncan in 1904, her embodied movement captured in material terms the theories about

⁷ Cathy Gere, *Knossos and the Prophets of Modernism* (Chicago, 2009), 94-95.

⁸ Ernst Haeckel, *The Riddle of the Universe at the Close of the Nineteenth Century*. trans Joseph McCabe (London, 1900), vi. The text is referred to throughout the chapter as "RU." References to the German edition are from Ernst Haeckel, *Die Welträtsel: Gemeinverständliche Studien über monistischen Philosophie*. 2 Afg. (Stuttgart, 1921 [1899]) [Hereafter referred to as "WR"]. This chapter mainly cites from the English edition, as that is what Duncan likely would have read.

nature and species development he had investigated for decades. “As the author of *Anthropogeny*,” he noted, making reference to his 1874 text, *Anthropogeny, or the Evolutionary History of Man*, “I would be delighted to marvel at the highest masterwork of developed nature in the harmonic movement of your graceful self.”⁹

Haeckel believed that the power of dance lay in its material display of natural order and its affirmation of evolutionary processes that he elaborated in his research. Similarly, for Duncan dance illustrated natural order; it also showed the transformation of material relationships between people. Duncan believed that embodied movement transformed society, not unlike Jaques-Dalcroze. For Duncan as for her Swiss contemporary, this social transformation began with the individual. What kind of society did Duncan envision? Duncan saw society according to a stable, determined “harmonic” order – a vision she formed from reading Haeckel. For both thinkers, a hierarchy of life-forms from most basic to most complex composed both social and natural harmony. Haeckel outlined this in his “biogenetic law,” known widely as “ontogeny recapitulates phylogeny.” In it, he stated that organisms demonstrated through individual development (ontogeny) the development of their species as a whole (phylogeny); physical, physiological, and psychical movement figured as crucial forms of evidence for his theory of species’ evolution and the emergence of individual traits. For Haeckel, as well as for Duncan, embodied movement affirmed natural order and also displayed man’s ascendant status, though in all cases, man was ultimately subject to the law, logic, and power of “harmony.” This chapter shows how Duncan’s system of dance, including its principles of movement improvisation, feminist views, and its rejection of static gesture, reflected this.

⁹ Ernst Haeckel, Letter to Isadora Duncan. Bordighera, 2 May, 1904. New York Public Library, Jerome Robbins Dance Division, Irma Duncan Collection of Isadora Duncan Materials [Hereafter referred to as “NYPL IDC/IDM”]. (S) *MGZMC: Res. 23, Folder no. 93.

Within a fixed, determined natural order, is freedom of movement possible? Both Haeckel and Duncan asked this question, in light of Haeckel's research. Duncan's system and theories of dance hinged upon the notion that movement liberated people – and in particular, women – from staid tradition, the degenerate affects of popular attitudes towards health and hygiene, and outmoded social convention. Duncan turned theories of rational reproduction to argue that dance effected social progress through the free movement of women, whose powers of reproduction assured social progress within a fixed, stable natural order. Duncan's "the dancer of the future" was a *female* social leader and visionary: biology endowed her with mobility, knowledge, and creative potential fundamentally inaccessible to men. In later chapters, we will see how Duncan's vision of the female dancer influenced Wigman and Laban's respective approaches to individual expression, and in particular, Laban's notion of "second nature."

Duncan's time in Germany supplied her with a momentum, professional visibility, notoriety, and credibility that solidified her role as a founder of modern dance in Europe and enabled her professional success throughout the 1910s and 1920s in Europe, the United States, and the Soviet Union. In 1903, she delivered a lecture to the Berlin Press Club, "The Dance of the Future," a treatise on dance, which is one of only a few works by Duncan preserved in its entirety. This lecture, examined in Part I, is unlike her other writings, which have been excerpted and reprinted in various forms by audiences, scholars, students beyond recognition. Writing by Haeckel, including his *Riddle of the Universe* and *Natural History of Creation*, as well as by Darwin, inspired her interest to create a system for a dance based upon his theories of species development and individual trait inheritance, outlined in her 1903 speech.¹⁰ Part I charts within

¹⁰ Isadora Duncan, Letter to Ernst Haeckel. 16, Feb 1904. Isadora Duncan / Ernst Haeckel Collection, Ernst Haeckel Haus, Institut für Geschichte der Medizin, Naturwissenschaft, und Technik, Universität Jena [Hereafter referred to as "ID/EHC"].

Duncan's lecture the influence of Haeckel's ideas, specifically those he outlined in *Riddle* to highlight how she theorized and elaborated his ideas through dance.

Part II demonstrates that reading Haeckel alongside Duncan dance throws into relief the role of embodied movement in his natural scientific and philosophical claims. Duncan's dancing demonstrated to Haeckel the scientific and aesthetic bearing of movement in the theorization of natural law; this chapter here offers its most significant contribution to secondary literatures in dance and the history of science, both of which have paid only scant attention to the Duncan-Haeckel exchange.¹¹ Highlighting Haeckel and Duncan's mutual interest in movement as evidence for scientific law and "truth" contributes to discussions among scholars such as Nick Hopwood, Daston and Galison, and Knox Peden about the bearing of Haeckel's aesthetics on histories of major concepts, such as scientific evidence (and fraud), objectivity, and causality.¹² Robert J. Richards, in his biography of Haeckel, describes his exchange with Duncan in the context of monism's appeal to a "liberal emancipated public," to which Duncan belonged as a "free-lover and dancer"¹³; as we will see, her vision of dance provided the foundation for her embodied conservatism, what this dissertation labels as an approach to society according to a stable order of ability and value. Richards is not alone in assuming Duncan's politically liberal and/or progressive commitments, especially in light of her performance and pedagogical activities in the Soviet Union, her marriage to Russian poet Sergei Esenin, and her association

¹¹ In the secondary literature on dance, Ann Daly and Peter Kurth reference Haeckel but do not consider his intellectual exchange with Duncan. In histories of science, Robert M. Brain, in his study of physiological aesthetics, of which Haeckel was a key figure, makes passing reference to dance – to Jaques-Dalcroze, and Laban, but not to Duncan. See Daly, *Done into Dance*; Kurth, *Isadora: A Sensational Life*; Robert M. Brain, *The Pulse of Modernism* (Seattle, 2015).

¹² Nick Hopwood, *Haeckel's Embryos: Images, Evolution, and Fraud* (Chicago, 2015); Lorraine Daston and Peter Gallison, *Objectivity* (New York, 2007); Knox Peden, "Alkaline Recapitulation: Haeckel's Hypothesis and the Afterlife of a Concept," *Republic of Letters* 4, No. 1 (October 2014): 1-15.

¹³ Robert J. Richards, *The Tragic Sense of Life: Ernst Haeckel and the Struggle Over Evolutionary Thought* (Chicago, 2008), 11.

with Communist Party, all of which led to her loss of American citizenship in 1923.¹⁴ Yet as the Duncan-Haeckel exchange shows, anti-liberal views of law, power, and order informed her vision of dance. Haeckel's politics prove equally contentious: historians of science, such as Daniel Gasman, argue they are conservative and proto-Fascist, while others, such as Richards, identify them as liberal.¹⁵ This chapter contributes to this debate by demonstrating Haeckel's – as well as Duncan's – embodied conservatism. This chapter shows that Haeckel's theories did not affirm a particular set of politics but was instead platform for a social vision, based in movement, of the conservation of order, stability, and motion. Part II concludes by showing how Duncan's embodied conservative views accrued a nationalist political agenda as a result of work by her German translators and reviews by her early critics.

In 1904, Duncan and her sister Elizabeth opened a school for dance in the Berlin suburb of Grunewald, the subject of Part III. The school, which was exclusively for young girls and many of them orphans, materially enacted Duncan's Haeckelian vision of natural and social harmony. To do this, classes and the daily life at the school taught students forms of “metabolic movement,” whose function was similar to the metabolic movement taught by *Rythmique*. Like actions and chemical processes within a cell that transformed fuel into the building blocks for its maintenance, protection, and generation, the dancer transformed elements around her into the actions and attitudes instrumental for social progress and order. From 1905 to 1909 at the Duncan School, these young girls, also known as the “Isadorables,” learned to become embodied conservatives. As part of the school's activities, they performed regularly throughout Germany,

¹⁴ See Preston, FN 68, *Modernism's Mythic Pose*, 298. On Duncan in the Soviet Union and her school in Russia, see Elizabeth Souritz, “Isadora Duncan's Influence on Dance in Russia,” *Dance Chronicle* 18, No. 2, Special Issue: “Aspects of Dance: Essays in Honor of Selma Jeanne Coen” (1995): 281 – 291. See also Irma Duncan and Allan Ross MacDougall, *Isadora Duncan's Russian Days and her Last Years in France* (New York, 1929); and Kurth, *Isadora*.

¹⁵ Daniel Gasman, *Haeckel's Monism and the Birth of Fascist Ideology* (New York, 1998).

as well as in Poland, the Netherlands, St. Petersburg, London, Paris, and Finland.¹⁶ Although Duncan was largely absent from the school's daily operations due to her independent touring schedule, the school became a highly visible, effective method to spread her embodied conservatism, based in Haeckelian natural science, through a national population. The Duncan school relocated several times, to Frankfurt, Dresden, Darmstadt, Potsdam, and Munich, where it remained operative until 1935.¹⁷ In addition to its geographical reach, in each of these locations the school held performances and lecture demonstrations for the German public. This chapter thus shows how, through Duncan, embodied conservatism grew solid roots in Germany.

*

I. The Human Translation of Nature

Duncan's career began in the United States with a series of rejections. At the turn of the century, popular stage revues and sensationalist productions dominated American theatrical dance. Works like *The Black Crook*, which premiered in 1866 and was performed 474 times, were known for their "spectacular special effects" and "costuming – or lack of costuming – of its dancers."¹⁸ Such performances involved lighthearted narratives, popular musical tunes, and large

¹⁶ Kay Bardsley, "Isadora's First School: Performances of Pupils," *CORD Dance Research Annual X*, "Dance Research Collage," (New York, 1979), 236 – 237.

¹⁷ "Chronology," in Peter, ed. *Isadora and Elizabeth Duncan in Deutschland; Isadora and Elizabeth Duncan in Germany*, 174 – 178.

¹⁸ Barbara Barker, "La Scala to 'The Black Crook,'" chapter 3 in Barker, *Ballet or Ballyhoo* (New York, 1984), 47. Barker notes that "[b]ecause of the *Black Crook's* immense popularity, theatre historians often cite it as the first American musical comedy as well as the progenitor of American burlesque and the lavish twentieth-century revues of Florenz Ziegfeld. Actually, there was little that was original in the *Black Crook*. It was merely an enlarged version of an already popular form, the spectacular musical melodrama" (Barker, 47). In a sense, Barker's study looks at the reverse case of Duncan: the migration of European dancers to the United States and their contributions to the development of a national form (early American ballet).

female casts, who danced a sexualized vision of woman through their “shapely legs, unveiled silhouettes, smiles, availability.”¹⁹ Duncan made and understood dance differently. Growing up in San Francisco, Duncan was likely exposed as a young girl to the work of François Delsarte, whose movement-based exercises for singing and stage acting arrived from France to the United States around 1870. Based on Delsartean principles of physical movement as a series of organic shapes and curved lines, Duncan’s dances eschewed outward displays of sexuality and instead featured simple, repetitive movements inspired by everyday life of men, women, and children: skipping, running, falling, swings of the arms, and hand gestures imitating the bouncing of ball, or the tossing of fabric in the air.²⁰ Traveling swiftly across the stage, her dances were set to canonical works by Brahms, Chopin, and Beethoven, and through movement rendered the atmosphere of the music, rather than a linear narrative or a character study. Her dances were at times improvised, and “[she] never set her dances permanently; rather, she changed their structure over the years as she reworked her physical response to the expressive qualities of the music”²¹ – an approach that is, to some extent, true of all dance-works.²² Delsarte and his

¹⁹ Ann Daly, *Done into Dance: Isadora Duncan in America* (Middletown, 1995), 159.

²⁰ On Duncan technique, see Irma Duncan, *The Technique of Isadora Duncan as Taught by Irma Duncan* (New York, 1970). Irma Duncan belonged to the first group of Duncan’s students at Grunewald, beginning in 1904. Duncan left no written descriptions of her training exercises, and Irma Duncan’s manual, based on her personal reminiscences, is considered authoritative. For the history of debates surrounding the preservation of Duncan’s “original” teaching, see Andrea Mantell Seidel, *Isadora Duncan in the 21st Century: Capturing the Art and Spirit of the Dancer’s Legacy* (North Carolina, 2016). On the practice of Duncan technique, see Julia Levien, *Duncan Dance: A Guide for Young People ages Six to Sixteen*, VHS/DVD (Dance Horizons, 1994); and Julia Levien and Andrea Mantell Seidel, dirs., *Isadora Duncan Technique and Repertory*, VHS/DVD (Dance Horizons, 1994).

²¹ Manning, “Isadora Duncan,” 4.

²² Thank you to Lynn Garafola this reminder.

students had often staged scenes from classical antiquity as *tableau vivants*, a performance technique that Duncan adopted as part of her lifelong interest in Hellenism.²³

Duncan's dances thus contrasted with the kicklines and musical dancing comedy of American popular theater, and it was no surprise that theater producers found little lucrative promise in her solos. Strains of American and European feminism at the turn of the nineteenth century shaped her rejection of dance as entertainment and convinced her of the form's potential social contributions. Daly suggests that ideas by nineteenth-century American feminists, such as Abba Woolson and Victoria Woodhull, influenced Duncan's approach to the female body, which Duncan envisioned as a site for physical power rather than sexual "availability" or fragility. Duncan's view fit into her wider mission to "rais[e] society, through woman, to a higher standard of morals."²⁴ Duncan also aspired to "raise the status of the dancer in American culture," which affirmed for Duncan dance as force for social progress and its power to transform social values.²⁵

In the spring of 1899, Duncan, accompanied by members of her family, quit the United States for Europe. From 1900 to 1902, she traveled to Paris, Budapest, and Vienna, before eventually arriving in Germany in January 1903.²⁶ Duncan performed that month at the Berlin New Royal Opera House, and prior to her concert, she had given a private lecture at the Prussian Academy of Arts. During her early months in Germany she combined dancing and lecturing, which included "select performances [...] for architects, sculptors, conductors, museum

²³ Susan A. Manning, "Isadora Duncan," *The International Encyclopedia of Dance*, ed. Selma Jeanne Cohen (Oxford, 1998), 2.

²⁴ Victoria Claflin Woodhull, *The Human Body the Temple of God; or, the Philosophy of Sociology* [1890]. Cited in Daly, *Done into Dance*, 162.

²⁵ Daly, *Done into Dance*, 159.

²⁶ Duncan's European travels in 1902 are the subject of a controversy between herself and Loie Fuller, the French performer known as "the human butterfly." Both women presented largely apocryphal and conflicting accounts of their encounter, which are chronicled – and clarified – in Peter Kurth's biography of Duncan. See Kurth, *Isadora*, 84 – 91.

directors, and a variety of art and music critics,” whose reactions placed her in the spotlight of Berlin’s cultural audiences.²⁷ Duncan’s visible presence within the German art scene coincided with the increased activities in Berlin and Germany of feminist groups, such as the *Mütterschutz* (“Mother Protection”) movement, which worked to improve the lives of women and children through social reform. In contrast to the goals of American feminists, who largely focused on the political rights of the individual woman, German feminists advocated for structural transformation to institution, culture, and values. Social change, rather than political legislation, was the basis for reform. To this end, they promoted social issues, such as marriage equality, consensual love, the availability of contraception, and welfare and economic support for single-mothers.²⁸ Duncan arrived within this politically charged, reformist milieu. “Isadora’s Berlin speeches can be read only in the light of a changing social reality, a vision of women’s dignity and freedom that had little to do with aesthetics and everything to do with power.”²⁹

Absorbing the German feminists’ value-based approach to reform, Duncan saw dance as a way to connect individual movement to social movement, individual change to social change. In March, she delivered a lecture at the Berlin Press Club on her theories of dance. She titled her lecture, in English, “The Dance of the Future,” a reference to Wagner’s 1849 revolutionary manifesto “The Artwork of the Future.” Published a year later as a monograph by Eugen Diederichs, Duncan began her talk with a description of dance as the extension of an eternally recurring natural order. “If we seek the real source of the dance, if we go to nature,” she observed, “we find that the dance of the of the future is the dance of the past, and the dance of

²⁷ Kurth, *Isadora*, 103.

²⁸ Daly notes the biographical undertones that potentially drew Duncan to German feminism and the *Mütterschutz*: “Surely Duncan’s own early childhood, overshadowed by the shame of her parents’ divorce and the void of an absent father, made the German feminists’ ideas all the more resonant” (Daly, *Done into Dance*, 165).

²⁹ Kurth, *Isadora*, 103.

eternity and has been and will always be the same. The movement of the waves, of winds, of the earth is ever in the same lasting harmony.”³⁰ Referencing “my most revered teachers Mr. Charles Darwin and Mr. Ernst Haeckel,” she specified that all organic life shared certain features of this “eternal” natural movement. At the same time, however, different species moved in ways that distinguished them as unique.

We realize that movement peculiar to [a species’] nature is eternal to its nature. The movement of the free animals and birds remains always in correspondence to their nature, the necessities and wants of that nature and its correspondence to the earth nature. It is only when you put free animals under false restrictions that they loose [sic] the power of moving in harmony with nature and adopt a movement expressive of the restrictions placed about them.³¹

A stable hierarchy of individual organisms that moved in “correspondence” to their species’ nature thus comprised an equally stable, “lasting harmony.” In this vision, species moved according to an intrinsic nature but their movements were also adaptive. “Under false restrictions,” for example, organisms “adopted a movement expressive of the restrictions placed about them,” much like domesticated pets trained to walk on a leash, or sing in a cage.

Humans, she argued, were no different. Social convention had caused them to alter their natural, “naked,” movement, which, in its ideal form, had historically given rise to civilization, peaceful collective life and social progress. However, human adaptation had gone too far in the present: society had placed too many “false restrictions,” through culture and convention, on man’s naked, intrinsic, movement in an effort to civilize and cultivate him. A “return” to natural harmony was therefore in order. “Man, arrived at the end of civilization, will have to return to nakedness, not to the unconscious nakedness of the savage, but to the conscious and acknowledge nakedness of the mature Man, whose body will be the harmonious expression of

³⁰ Duncan, TZ, 12.

³¹ Duncan, Ibid.

his spiritual being.”³² Social reforms to dress, education, and health and hygiene would return humans to a “place of constant touch with Nature” and reorder collective life according to “the power of moving in harmony with nature.”

This transformation, while structural, occurred first through each individual. Each dancer, as a “mature man,” possessed a “will” that connected to her mind and psyche, including forms of spiritual and existential longing, in which she questioned the meaning of nature, natural order, and her place and movements within it. Her will included powers of imagination and aesthetics, and the ability to speculate about the connection of individual feelings and behavior to features of beauty and harmony. However, the will, which distinguished man from animal, and man from “the savage,” was not a metaphysical entity or a sign of higher intelligence. Instead, it was a form of embodied movement, connected to the natural world, which could be expressed in dance.

The movement of the universe concentrating in an individual becomes what is termed the will; for example, the movement of the earth, being the concentration of surrounding forces, gives to the earth its individuality, its will of movement; as creatures of the earth receiving in turn these concentrated forces in their different relations, as transmitted to them through their ancestors and to those by the earth, in themselves evolve the movement of individuals which is termed the will. The dance should simply be then the natural gravitation of this will of the individual, which is in the end no more nor [sic] less than a human translation of the gravitation of the universe.³³

Informed by inherited (“transmitted”) traits and adaptive circumstance – the “concentrated forces in their different relations” – the individual will “evolved” over time. In its individual movement, it demonstrated “natural gravitation”: its adherence to the laws of physics and

³² Ibid.

³³ Ibid., 13.

physical motion. Through its metaphysical and material movement, Duncan's "human translation" of nature was not an abstract vision of harmony but an embodied, biological self who proved the authority of cosmic order.

Duncan's notion of a human translation of the will may have sounded strange to some listeners. But for those familiar with her "revered teacher" Ernst Haeckel, it was an innovative application of his ideas of heredity and species development that he had articulated in works such as *General Morphology of Organisms* [1866], *Natural History of Creation* [1868], and *Anthropogeny, or the Developmental History of Man* [1874], and *The Riddle of the Universe* [1899]. At the time, Haeckel was known in Germany and across Europe as a preeminent champion of Darwinian evolution, as well as a natural scientist, embryologist, and philosopher in his own right. Through his major works such as he drew upon Darwinian concepts and diverged from them in key ways. In particular, Haeckel elaborated upon Darwin's theory of selective adaptation through "biogenetic law," also known as his "theory of recapitulation," which, based on his massive body of research in marine biology, embryology, anthropology, and botany, stated that the development of a single organism recapitulated on an individual level the development of the species as a whole.³⁴

Pithily summarized as "ontogeny recapitulates phylogeny," Haeckel's biogenetic law modeled for Duncan how the dancer replicated on an individual level human development as a whole. It also modeled for her how the dancer demonstrated the evolution of the "species" of dance as an artistic form. Duncan explained this with an example from Greek antiquity: a statue of the god Hermes taking a step before launching into flight. Duncan explained that the sculpture demonstrated a series of successive movement, rather than static poses, affirming human body's

³⁴ For discussions of Haeckel's biogenetic law, see Hopwood, *Haeckel's Embryos*; and Peden, "Alkaline Recapitulation."

natural capacity to maintain, generate, and protect life. Hermes' lift-off to flight modeled in marble an organic, physical, and physiological cycle of motion that was self-sustaining, self-generating, and self-protecting. Importantly, this cycle was clear, logical, and ordered. "The Greeks were the greatest students of the laws of nature, wherein all is the expression of unending ever increasing evolution, wherein are no ends and no stops."³⁵ Through their observance of logic and order, the Greeks had devised a system of movement that conserved physical effort and in doing so sustained natural harmony. Duncan's dances, inspired by her understanding of Greek aesthetics, captured its values of momentum, gravity, and fecundity. Pendular swings of her arms and arches of her upper back moved toward and away from the earth, demonstrating Hermes' "successive evolution [of] action." Similarly, her shifts of weight in walking, running, jumping, and skipping cyclically transformed one movement series into another, which in her view was nothing more than Hermes' natural motion and harmonic order of life.³⁶

Liberated from the restrictive corsets of the nineteenth century, Duncan's dancer combined heredity and circumstantial adaptation in her movement. Reframing biogenetic law through dance, she explained that in the hierarchy of biological life, humans, like other animals, were composed of information passed onto them from their ancestors and accrued through contingent life circumstances. The resulting organism expressed, through the dance, individual traits and species' traits. "The movements of the beetle correspond to its form. So do those of the horse. Even so the movements of the human body must correspond to its form. They should even correspond to its individual form. The dance of no two persons should be alike."³⁷ A mix of

³⁵ Duncan, TZ, 17.

³⁶ Irma Duncan, *The Technique of Isadora Duncan*; Seidel, *Isadora Duncan in the 21st Century*; Levien, *Duncan Dance*; and Levien and Seidel, *Isadora Duncan Technique and Repertory*.

³⁷ Duncan, TZ, 17.

intrinsic nature and adaptation made life-forms unique; this mixture also granted each individual organism a place in the universal order of nature.

Duncan noted that her human translation of nature was something new. It was “the dance of the future” and the “dancer of the future.” She clarified that her dance were not reconstructions or imitations of movement, but rather captured a set of principles championed by the movement of Ancient Athens – those of proportion, beauty, and unending movement. “And here I want to avoid a misunderstanding that might easily arise. From what I have said you might conclude that my intention is to return to the dances of the old Greeks or that I think the dance of the future will be a revival of the antique dances or even those of primitive tribes. No, the dance of the future will be a new movement, a consequence of the entire evolution which mankind has passed through.”³⁸ Duncan’s “new dance” was new not on creative grounds, but because it expressed in a new, previously unrecognized, way an existing natural order. Duncan’s “dance of the future” was new to its contemporary social context, though it contained within it information of its historical evolution, stretching back to ancient Athens.

In addition to his biogenetic law, Haeckel articulated the human will, as well as human behavior and the psyche, as embodied movement. Influenced by Kantian philosophy and Goethe’s concept of polarity, in which “there is no matter without spirit, nor spirit without matter,”³⁹ Haeckel merged his earlier theory of species development with his search at the end of his career to better understand the human mind, including its non-conscious, non-willed

³⁸ Ibid., 24.

³⁹ “Weil aber die Materie ni ohne Geist, der Geist ni ohne Materie existiert und wirksam sein kann, so vermag auch die Materie sich zu steigern, so wie sichs der Geist nicht nehmen läßt anzuziehen und abzustoßen [...]” J.W. Goethe, “Erläuterung zu dem Aphoristischen Aufsatz die Natur” (1828) in *Die Schriften zur Naturwissenschaft*, Hrsgs., K Lothar Wolf, Wilhelm Troll, Rupprecht Matthaei, Wolf von Engelhardt, und Dorothea Kuhn. Ab1, B11, “Aufsätze, Fragmente, Studien zur Naturwissenschaft im Allgemeinen” (Weimar, 1970), 299.

dimensions. He did this through monism, “Darwinian theory as a kind of theological doctrine.”⁴⁰ Outlined in *The Riddle of the Universe*, Haeckel’s monism rejected institutionalized religion but accommodated spirituality and existential longing – the rational search to understand one’s place in the universe and vis-à-vis nature – as a crucial part of empirical research and speculative, or philosophical, reasoning. As a philosophical and scientific “world-view” as opposed to a dogma or fixed set of principles, monism demonstrated the unity of all life-forms in a universal totality.⁴¹ Haeckel applied monism to his earlier theories of species development to uncover the origins of unconscious, potentially non-rational, movement within a species’ history. Species development, recapitulated on an individual level, illustrated its essential features, an awareness of which was potentially inaccessible to individuals themselves – either through the limitations of individual memory or forms of conscious self-recognition. The Duncan dancer offered a potential solution. Displaying through dance, which combined conscious movement with gestures and physical motion that were non-willed and unconscious, the dancer also displayed qualities of her biological or psychical nature, which linked to traits characteristic of her species. Haeckel’s recapitulation theory could thus potentially pinpoint through dance the origins of non-willed, non-conscious behavior.

The German title of *Riddle of the Universe* translated directly as “The World Problem,” which referenced a series of questions about the meaning of life posed in 1880 by Haeckel’s teacher, physiologist Emil Du Bois Reymond. According to Haeckel, the “world problem” was how to devise a “philosophy of nature” that joined empirical and speculative methodologies and which explained the role of the human soul within nature and society. Haeckel did not use

⁴⁰ Richards, *The Tragic Sense of Life*, 11.

⁴¹ Todd H. Weir, “The Riddles of Monism: An Introductory Essay,” in *Monism: Science, Philosophy, Religion, and the History of a Worldview*, ed., Todd H Weir (Palgrave, 2012), 4.

Duncan's terminology ("human translation of nature"), yet his model of embodied motion showed how metaphysical concepts, such as a "will," merged with the material in observance of harmonic law. Haeckel concluded that the will, the soul, philosophical speculation, and human perception, functioned as any other material, biological life-processes. "What we call the soul is, in my opinion, a natural phenomenon: I therefore consider psychology to be a branch of natural science – a section of physiology," he noted, clarifying for his readership his position on the fundamental knowability of human desire, feeling, emotions, and drives.⁴² The features of the human mind and spirit were thus subject to the universal "law of substance" of matter and force.

Like all other natural phenomena, the psychic processes are subject to the supreme, all-ruling law of substance; not even in this province is there a single exception to this highest cosmological law. The phenomena of the lowly psychic life of the unicellular protist and the plant, and of the lowest animal forms – their irritability, their reflex movements, their sensitiveness and instinct of self-preservation – are directly determined by physiological action [in the protoplasm of their cells] – that is, by physical and chemical changes which are partly due to heredity and partly to adaptation.⁴³

As Duncan had demonstrated, Haeckel's theory of biogenesis proved that individuals combined hereditary and adaptive information in their evolutionary histories. Haeckel explained minute, wave-like disturbances in an organism's cellular fluid, or "protoplasm," contained this body of information. He had elaborated his theory decades earlier in *The Perigenesis of the Plastidule, or the Wave-motion of Life-Parts* [*Die Perigenesis der Plastidule oder die Wellenzeugung der Lebensteilschen*] [1876], which included visual models charting the movements and wave formations within cellular liquid accounting for such hereditary difference. His visual theoretical models gave powerful conceptual and aesthetic evidence for "the unbroken continuity [that]

⁴² Haeckel, RU, 89.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 91.

connected all persons, all living organisms with the great pattern that could be traced back to the beginning of life, a wave pattern that the organism recapitulated in individual development”: grounds for his monist theories elaborated in *Riddle*.⁴⁴ As Robert M. Brain has shown, Haeckel’s visual diagrams bolstered concepts of aesthetic autonomy central to the development of late nineteenth- and early twentieth century theories of modern art.

Haeckel applied his theory of protoplasmic movement to the soul, to man’s willed and conscious strivings, and to the non-conscious, non-rational aspects of the mind. In a series of chapters entitled “the Nature of the Soul,” “Psychic Gradations,” “The Embryology of the Soul,” “The Phylogeny of the Soul,” and “the Immortality of the Soul,” Haeckel explained that these features moved like any other physiological body comprised of protoplasm. As with biological matter, movement of the soul generated unique information – in the case of the soul, it was psychical experience. “All the phenomena of the psychic life are, without exception, bound up with certain material changes in the living substance of the body, the *protoplasm*.”⁴⁵ He noted that his research into “the albuminoid carbon-combinations which are at the root of all vital processes”⁴⁶ pointed to a similar liquid housing an organism’s psyche, its “psychoplasm,” or “soul-substance.” The liquid’s wave-motions resulted in psychology, consciousness, and thought.

We have given to that part of the protoplasm which seems to be the indispensable substratum of psychic life the name of *psychoplasm* (the “soul-substance” in the monistic sense); in other words, we do not attribute any peculiar ‘essence’ to it, but we consider the *psyche* to be merely *a collective idea of all the psychic functions of*

⁴⁴ Brain, “The Pulse of Modernism: Experimental Physiology and Aesthetic Avant-Gardes circa 1900,” *Studies in the History and Philosophy of Science* 39 (2008), 403.

⁴⁵ Haeckel, RU, 109.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 91.

protoplasm. In this sense, the ‘soul’ is merely a physiological abstraction, like ‘assimilation’ or ‘generation.’⁴⁷

Metaphysical entities, such as the psyche and the soul, were nothing other than “physiological abstractions” of movement. As material substance, the psychoplasm was subject to physical laws of matter and force, which empirical evidence from research in chemistry, physics, astrophysics, and thermodynamics demonstrated displayed a “unity of forces of the entire universe” [“Die Einheit der Naturkräfte im ganzen Universum”].⁴⁸ In other words, metaphysical and psychical entities belonged to a universal harmonic totality that was evidenced through movement. Like Duncan’s dancer, the psychoplasm physically embodied an idea, or in the case of the human psyche, a “collective idea.” Body and idea merged the speculative with the empirical – the rationally sensible with the non-willed, or unconscious.

Psychoplasmic movement occurred in three stages, which varied in complexity according to the organism. This system maintained, created, and protected life, much like cellular metabolism, whose component actions converted fuel into the basic building blocks of cell structure; which converted fuel into energy to maintain cell processes; and which expelled waste from the cell (i.e. protected it). Haeckel thus concluded, “the activity of the psychoplasm, which we call the ‘soul,’ is always concerned with metabolism.”⁴⁹ Importantly, the presence of man’s soul (or his will) did not distinguish him from lower organisms, such as single-celled protozoa. Instead, a “higher degree of integration or centralization, of association or combination of functions” enabled his “ideas and consciousness”⁵⁰ – in other words, his observance of harmony

⁴⁷ Ibid., 109.

⁴⁸ Ibid., RU, 3; WR, 2.

⁴⁹ Ibid., RU, 109.

⁵⁰ Ibid, 91.

and the recognition of component parts within a logical, stable order. This recognition of harmony was rooted in matter, which in turn was infused with spirit. Invoking Goethe's romantic notion of polarity, Haeckel declared, "Our conception [of the mind] is, in this sense, materialistic. It is at the same time empirical and naturalistic, for our scientific experience has never yet taught us the existence of forces that can dispense with a material substratum, or of a spiritual world over and above the realm of nature."⁵¹ All was fixed. All was material, spirit, and embodied substance.

Haeckel defined the human will in this way in order to clarify the progressive role of science in society. In his view, methodological debates among scientists hindered the quest for truth about the nature of the universe and human behavior, which had direct bearing upon society and culture as a whole. "The steady increase of this effort of man to attain knowledge of the truth is one of the most salient features of the nineteenth century," he noted, which was stymied by a "fatal opposition" between science (the empirical) and philosophy (the speculative). "What stage in the attainment of truth have we actually arrived at in this closing year of the nineteenth century? What progress have we really made during its course towards that immeasurably distant goal [of a 'philosophy of nature' in which "both methods of research, the empirical and the speculative, naturally converge"]?"⁵²

Haeckel argued that an understanding of natural history and evolution as embodied matter in motion offered a clearer picture of collective life, and thus served as a better basis from which to establish social reform. Society failed to supply men with a proper knowledge of their bodies and themselves; this, in turn, caused society to suffer. "[Judges] have but a superficial

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Haeckel, RU, vi.

acquaintance with that chief and peculiar object of their activity, the human organism, and its most important function, the mind [...] In a great measure [the] evils [of the modern political world] are due to the fact that most of our officials are jurists – that is, men of high technical education but utterly devoid of that thorough knowledge of human nature which is only obtained by the study of comparative anthropology and the monistic psychology.”⁵³ Knowledge of the physical body and the motion of its proto- and psychoplasm enhanced research into human association and interaction, as was the case in fields such as anthropology. Informed by this research, the knowledge of man’s embodied movement could improve social practices of jurisprudence, education, and politics. “We can only arrive at a correct knowledge of the structure and life of the social body, the State, through a scientific knowledge of the structure and life of the individuals who compose it, and the cells of which they are in turn composed.”⁵⁴

Taking her cues from Haeckel, Duncan understood this embodied approach to biology and evolution as the basis for social reform. Haeckel’s statesman possessed knowledge of movement that enabled his (better) knowledge of politics; Duncan’s dancer, as the human translation of harmony, possessed knowledge of nature that enabled her (better) knowledge of society. The human being, she declared, was a “free animal” unjustly subject to “false restrictions,” such as social or religious dogma, cultural convention, and political institution that hindered its natural (“naked”) abilities. Ballet and social dance clearly demonstrated this. In contrast to Hermes’ step into flight, such codified cultural practices emphasized “unnatural” static positions, which were “an expression of degeneration,” “living death” and “sterility.”⁵⁵ Women’s tight corsets, shape-altering costumes, and “skirts and tricots” weakened physical

⁵³ Ibid., 8.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Duncan, TZ, 12.

power and sapped the body's natural beauty and strength. "But look – under the skirts, under the tricots are dancing deformed muscles," she dared her listeners. "Look still farther – underneath the muscles are deformed bones: a deformed skeleton is dancing before you."⁵⁶ The culture of the ancient Greeks formed a model to aspire to, as their practices of dance, music, and physical fitness cultivated values of natural harmony via the aesthetic appreciation of proportion, symmetry, and balance. Like Jaques-Dalcroze and her early Delsarte teachers in the United States, Duncan sought to remedy these constraints through loose fitting shifts and tunics as practice clothing and performance costume.⁵⁷ Like Hermes, Duncan kept her feet bare, or donned leather sandals. These reforms enabled the dancer to "express what is the most moral, healthful and beautiful in art": "the mission of the dancer, and to this I dedicate my life."⁵⁸ Duncan's social mission, rather than her mission of aesthetic innovation, thus stimulated one of her most well-known innovations – dancing bare foot – to dance as a "modern" and "modernist" form.

For Duncan, dancers were Plato's modern-day guardians, the leaders responsible for social harmony of the polis. In *The Republic*, Plato outlined how these people, endowed with natural ability and education grounded in the musical and physical arts, made them the protectors of social and political order. They were the "complete guardians, [who] will guard against external enemies and internal friends, so that the one will lack the power and the other the desire to harm the city."⁵⁹ For Plato's guardians, as for Duncan's dancer, the ability to intuit harmonic structures of nature, music, or dance as structures for social order affirmed their political

⁵⁶ Ibid., 14.

⁵⁷ Robin Veder, "American Delsarte and Mensendieck Body Culture," *Modernism / Modernity* 17, no. 4 (Nov. 2010), 819 – 838.

⁵⁸ Duncan, TZ, 15.

⁵⁹ Plato, G.M.A. Grube, and C.D.C Reeve. *Plato's Republic* (Indianapolis, 1992), III. 414b, 90.

authority. “Then the person who achieves the finest blend of music and physical training and impresses it on his soul in the most measured way is the one we’d most correctly call completely harmonious and trained in music, much more so than he who merely harmonizes the strings of his instrument,” Socrates points out to Glaucon when describing the guardians’ educational qualifications.⁶⁰ “Then, won’t we always need this sort of person as an overseer in our city, if indeed its constitution is to be preserved?” Dance, health, and physical virtuosity distinguished this special class of rulers. “Should we enumerate the dances of these people, or their hunts, chases with hounds, athletic contests, and horse races?”⁶¹

For Plato, men and women had equal abilities as guardians. For Duncan, only women qualified. For Duncan, as in *The Republic*, the question of guardianship began with the question of education. “This is a great question. It is not only a question of true art, it is a question of race, of the development of the female sex to beauty and health, of the return to the original strength and natural movements of the woman’s body. It is a question of the development of perfect mothers and the birth of healthy and beautiful children.”⁶² Slipping seamlessly from education to sexual reproduction, Duncan suggested that the education and development of the individual female body contained, generated, and protected information for an entire species – the “development of perfect mothers” (plural). The survival of society hinged upon dance and the individual and species traits it contained. Duncan’s “new dance” had little to do with formal or stylistic innovation but was a “new” method to maintain, protect, and generate order for the social body.

⁶⁰ Plato, III.412b, 88.

⁶¹ Plato, Ibid.

⁶² Duncan, TZ, 22.

For those listeners who still found it hard to imagine that Duncan's dances were not a recreation of the ancient Greek chorus, she offered an alternative explanation. Her interest in antiquity was merely a method to demonstrate natural order and biogenetic law. Repeating her description of the human will as embodied movement, she noted,

The dancer of the future will be one whose body and soul have grown so harmoniously together that the natural language of that soul will have become the movement of the body. The dancer will not belong to a nation, but to all humanity. She will not dance in the form of a nymph, nor fairy, but in the form of woman in its greatest and purest expression. She will realize the mission of woman's body and the holiness of all its parts.⁶³

Echoing Plato's description of harmony as the effortless combination of body and soul, Duncan described how biology enabled women to "realize" through dance the "natural language" of harmonic order. Free of tension and combining adaptive and hereditary traits, women stripped power from its contemporary social context and exposed its origins in natural law. With restrictive social roles ("fairies" or nymphs") rendered obsolete, women emerged as leaders of an harmonic order. Through the dance, they made clear "the mission of [their] body and the holiness of all of its parts." In an early draft of this passage, likely written in preparation for her lecture, Duncan described the embodied guardianship of this natural social order slightly differently. "The dancer of the future will [be] [she] whose body & soul have grown so harmoniously together that the natural language of that soul will have become the [*instrument*] of the body"⁶⁴ [*ital. mine*]. Although in the final version Duncan replaced the term "instrument" with "movement," her emphasis was the same. Abiding by the laws of physics and music,

⁶³ Ibid., 24-25.

⁶⁴ Isadora Duncan, Unpublished Notebook, ca. 1900-1903. NYPL IDC/IDM (S) *MGZMC – Res. 23, folder 141.

woman's embodied movement demonstrated the seamless accord of component parts – of a discrete or individual physiological body, of nature, and of society.

In addition to having read Haeckel, Duncan also read Darwin, and possibly work by Darwin's half-cousin, eugenic theorist Francis Galton.⁶⁵ Sources are unclear about which texts, though her interest in the reproductive capacity of women suggests her familiarity with Darwin's *Descent of Man and Selection in Relation to Sex* [1871], which outlined his theory of sexual selection. A companion theory to his theory of natural selection, sexual selection explained the presence of aesthetic traits among individual organisms and of species, such as the colorful plumage of male birds that heightened their allure for females as potential mates. Apart from its explanation of certain physical or behavioral characteristics within the animal kingdom, "sexual selection through female choice provided Darwin with an explanation for a variety of aesthetic phenomena he could not explain through survival [i.e. natural selection] alone: the presence of beauty in animals, differences between males and females of the same species, and racial differences within a species." This, Erika Lorrain Mila notes, shaped contemporary European attitudes about women as social agents, who were thus seen as naturally endowed with powers of aesthetic intuition and sensibility. "For late nineteenth-century biologists, female choice presupposed both a sense of aesthetic appreciation and an ability to choose rationally based upon this aesthetic sensibility – mental attributes they were hesitant to ascribe to animal minds."⁶⁶

Haeckel did not elaborate much on the issue of sexual selection, though he agreed with Darwin that sexual selection demonstrated how "animal mentality differed from the human only

⁶⁵ Kurth, *Isadora*, 103, 31.

⁶⁶ Erika Lorraine Milam, *Looking for a Few Good Males: Female Choice in Evolutionary Biology* (Baltimore, 2010), 2.

in degree, not in kind.”⁶⁷ For Haeckel, sexual selection was important insofar as it supported his theories of natural determinism, outlined in his descriptions of Psychoplasmic and protoplasmic movement. In *Riddle*, Haeckel described how slow, basic movements served as a frame of reference to analyze the evolution of individual organisms. In his study of the “Psychic Gradations” of the psychoplasm, for example, Haeckel classified movements along a spectrum of complexity, beginning with tiny, single-celled organisms and culminating with human gesture. Slow “movements of growth” in lower species progressed into “a kind of creeping or swimming motion” in slightly higher ones. Movement of organisms, such as jellyfish and hydrophora was characterized by a “floating” and “squeezing-out of air,” which caused them to ascend and descend in their liquid environments; this evolved into movements of a “change of pressure” in plant-life, resulting in forms of dynamic tension, or a “strain of the protoplasm.” Finally, forms of “contraction and expansion,” the “most important of all organic movements,” defined the movements of all species, in particular the muscular actions of man and animals.⁶⁸ Haeckel subdivided the latter category into types according to species’ complexity: “a) amoeboid movement (in rhizopods, blood-cells pigment cells, etc); b) a similar flow of protoplasm within enclosed cells; c) vibratory motion (ciliary movement) in infusoria, spermatozoa, ciliated epithelial cells); d) muscular movement (in most animals).”⁶⁹

The motion of the psychoplasm mirrored this hierarchy. Like the undulations, expansions, and bursts of jellyfish, plants, or man’s lungs, psychic life was composed of movements of expansion and contraction, tension and release, creeping, crawling, flowing, and vibration. This, Haeckel argued, proved the deterministic nature of the universe.

⁶⁷ Richards, *The Tragic Sense of Life*, 158.

⁶⁸ Haeckel, RU, 111-112.

⁶⁹ Haeckel, *Ibid.*, 112.

The great struggle between the determinist and the indeterminist, between the opponent and the sustainer of the freedom of the will has ended to-day, after more than two thousand years, completely in favor of the determinist. The human will has no more freedom than that of higher animals, from which it differs only in degree, not in kind. The nineteenth century has given us very different weapons for its definitive destruction – the powerful weapons which we find in the arsenal of comparative physiology and evolution. We know now that each act of the will is as fatally determined by the organization of the individual and as dependent on the momentary condition of his environment as every other psychic activity.⁷⁰

Despite of man's best efforts – through philosophy, religion, and science – to distinguish himself from “lower” life forms as unique, the movement of his mind affirmed a determined natural order. Like biological sex, the human will “differed only in degree, not in kind” from other embodied, biological functions.

If human life ultimately “differed only in degree, not in kind” from single-celled organisms, how unique was human life? Duncan's solos to Debussy or Beethoven affected something more than a mere “change of pressure,” “movement of growth,” or a “squeezing out of air.” Together with the music, her weight shifts, pauses, rhythmic and dynamic shifts, and displays of momentum laid bare a physical and musical harmonic order; they also affirmed the aesthetic sensibility endowed by her biological sex. In his earlier career, Haeckel had argued that female aesthetic intuition and choice formed the basis for sexual selection, which further shaped how the human mind evolved over time: “Haeckel maintained that within advanced races, females would select men of higher mental caliber, thus continually increasing brainpower in the species. In like fashion, active male choice would increase female beauty.”⁷¹ This process of

⁷⁰ Ibid., 130 – 131.

⁷¹ Richards, *The Tragic Sense of Life*, 158.

sexual selection, he noted in 1866 in *General Morphology*, published half a decade before Darwin's *Descent of Man*, caused the "harmonic interdependency" ["harmonischer Wechselwirkung"] between the sexes, which the social institution of love-based marriage helped to maintain.⁷²

Duncan's approach to sexual selection presented a different case for women's social agency and challenged Haeckel's notion that institutional marriage was necessary uphold harmony. As outlined in her lecture, Duncan's vision of woman as the "dancer of the future" effectively separated female aesthetic intuition from its role in sexual selection, in turn stripping the power ascribed to it by Darwin's (and to a lesser extent, Haeckel's) theory and putting it to use in a different, yet equally social, context. Duncan believed that free-love, not just marriage, maintained harmonic order; her relationship to theater director Edward Gordon Craig, which began shortly after her arrival in Germany, and the birth of her children out of wedlock highlighted her sense that alternative social practices – of single mothering, for example – could effect social harmony apart from conventional forms of marriage, or traditional, sex-assigned domestic roles. As we will see in Part III, the absence of men at the Duncan School affirmed the social power of woman, apart from her selection of a male life-partner, through her movement, her aesthetic appreciation of beauty, her natural physique, and her intellectual abilities. These, the program at the school demonstrated, created, maintained, and protected domestic stability.

In addition to woman's ability to achieve lasting social reform, her capacity for aesthetic intuition had the potential to reform politics, and in particular, notions of political statehood. Dance argued that through dance, biological "humanity" could ultimately replace "a nation." A

⁷² Ernst Haeckel, "VII: Züchtung oder Selection," in *Generelle Morphologie der Organismen, allgemeine Grundzüge der Organischen Formen-Wissenschaft, mechanisch begründet durch die von Charles Darwin reformierte Deszendenz-Theorie*, 2te Band (Berlin, 1866), 247.

society's estimation of what is "moral, healthful and beautiful in art," she noted, illustrated how "travelers coming into a country and seeing the dancers should find in them that country's ideal of the beauty and form of movement."⁷³ National borders and identity could thus be redrawn according to natural harmony, which once again was created, maintained, and protected by society's female, dancing guardians.

Duncan concluded her lecture with a vision of freedom, realized in this "new" social collective of dance. Appealing to the idea of constant motion, Duncan noted the "dancer of the future"

will dance the changing life of nature, showing how each part is transformed into the other. From all parts of her body shall shine radiant intelligence, bringing to the world the message of the thoughts and aspirations of women. She shall dance the freedom of women. O what a field is awaiting her! Do you not feel that she is near, that she is coming, this dancer of the future!⁷⁴

Women's movements, bodies, and "radiant intelligence" made them the powerful leaders of future societies and the arbiters of law and order. Cloaked in the high drama of messianism, they arrived at the "end of civilization" to save society and conserve its efforts by reinstating natural law. Naturally endowed with reproductive capacities making them fit to rule and bear "the children of the future," women were "the highest intelligence in the freest body!"⁷⁵ As the guardians of the polis, they thus embodied perfect freedom within a perfect order.

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⁷³ Duncan, TZ, 23

⁷⁴ Ibid., 25.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

II. The Dancer of the Future and the Child of the Nineteenth Century

For Duncan, the female dancer solved Haeckel's "world problem" by joining philosophy and aesthetics with science and empiricism. For Haeckel, the solution was less clear-cut. For him, monism merely suggested possible, but not definitive solutions to the reconciliation of speculative truth with empirical research. "My strength is no longer equal to the task, and many warnings of approaching age urge me to desist. Indeed, I am wholly a child of the nineteenth century, and with its close I draw the line under my life's work."⁷⁶ His encounter with Duncan had perhaps offered a new way to understand this world problem within a determined universe, a fixed natural order in which man "differed only in degree, not in kind" from lower organisms. Her dance affirmed man's – *woman's* – sensible appreciation of beauty, which was an inherited product of her animal evolution.

Duncan first contacted Haeckel in February, 1904, nearly a year after her Berlin lecture and while on tour across Germany. Writing to him in German and in honor of his seventieth birthday – an event celebrated among many social circles – Duncan struck a reverential tone as she extolled the virtues of his work. "On your birthday, you are thinking of the thousands of thankful hearts of men, taken from darkness by the light of your genius. Would you permit me to add my voice to this general joy? Your work has also given me understanding and religion, which are more essential than life."⁷⁷ Haeckel responded enthusiastically to Duncan's letter, and he evidently wrote to her multiple times between February and March.⁷⁸ Duncan, who received his reply en route to performance engagements in Hannover and Mannheim, requested that he send her his portrait, as well a collection of his writing – although she informed him that she

⁷⁶ Haeckel RU, ix.

⁷⁷ Isadora Duncan, Letter to Ernst Haeckel, 16 Feb, 1904. Rapallo. ID/EHC, Document No. 1, 1.

⁷⁸ Isadora Duncan, Letter to Ernst Haeckel, 7 April, 1904. Berlin. ID/EHC, Document No. 2, 1-3.

“[had] the marjoirty [sic] of them anyway.”⁷⁹ She told him of her desire to perform for him outdoors, or, as she put it, “im Freien unter Bäumen” [“freely, under the trees”]. She also noted that her physical movement was no match for the depths to which his ideas had inspired her, as “my dances would only be a poor method to express all of my thanks and love.”

Duncan’s “free” dance had its basis not just in its stage environment but in its technical approach to movement gesture. Specifically, this was the use of movement improvisation, or the spontaneous generation of gesture, in both performance and composition. As we have seen in Part I, Duncan distinguished her work from her contemporaries through improvised movement, and we will now see how it formed a vital aspect of her approach to dance as the expression of natural order, sexual selection, and biogenetic law. Haeckel argued in *Riddle of the Universe* that spontaneous movement affirmed the presence of life: the capacity for an organism to move suddenly and without premeditation distinguished it from inorganic matter. “All living organisms without exception have the faculty of *spontaneous movement*, in contradistinction to the rigidity and inertia of unorganic [sic] substances (e.g. crystals),” he explained. Though difficult to detect in smaller organisms, Haeckel noted that spontaneous movement could be observed through his visual, “inferential,” models for protoplasmic movement. “These active vital movements are partly discovered by direct observation and partly only known indirectly, by inference from their effects.”⁸⁰ In later chapters we will see how, in contrast to Haeckel and Duncan, Rudolf Laban affirmed harmonic order through his appeal to crystalline form (i.e. inorganic matter) in addition to organic life.

⁷⁹ Isadora Duncan, Letter to Ernst Haeckel, 7 April, 1904.

⁸⁰ Haeckel, RU, 111.

Duncan founded her technique and pedagogy on the human capacity for spontaneous movement. Duncan elaborated this in her Berlin Press Club lecture, in her plans to open a school for dance. Though at the time of the lecture the school had yet to open, its mission was clear. “In [my] school I shall not teach children to imitate my movements, but to make their own, I shall not force them to study certain definite movements, I shall help them to develop those movements which are natural to them.”⁸¹ With improvisation, Duncan mapped onto her system for dance Haeckel’s principle of metabolic movement, in which movement of the proto- and psychoplasm maintained, generated, and protected life. Through improvisation, the dancer generated and protected her natural movements, which freed her from force or “false restrictions” – i.e. the imperative to imitate, or artificially reproduce, the movement of another person or being. Spontaneous gesture thus reflected the “correspondence” of a dancer’s nature in accordance with her species’ developmental history, as well as the development of the history of dance as a form. Dancing like Hermes in an unending, successive cycle of motion, Duncan’s “dancer of the future” brought to life the social values, cultural practices, and political order of Ancient Athens, the apogee of human civilization. Duncan’s translation of biogenetic law thus liberated the dancer to freely express herself while assuming her place in natural and social order. As we have seen in Part I, the dancer’s biology affirmed her embodied conservatism and role as a social guardian. Her dance metabolized disorder, conserved stability, and ensured harmony.

In addition to principles of improvisation, Duncan technique, like the Jaques-Dalcroze method, began with the fundamental elements of movement free of tension, such as slow

⁸¹ Duncan, TZ, 22.

walking, stepping, raising an arm, bending a knee, or lying on the floor.⁸² These exercises gradually progressed to faster, more complex physical and rhythmic forms, including running, jumping, and skipping, as well as forms of fall and recovery, and swings of the arms, head, and upper body. In each of these examples, simple movements “evolved” into more complex, or “higher” forms, demonstrating the dancer’s developmental history as human and as woman. Similar to *Rythmique*, Duncan’s dance emphasized effortlessness in its slow movements – not unlike the slow movement of the psychoplasm Haeckel identified in *Riddle of the Universe*. Duncan’s slow arm motions, for example, indicated effortlessness. In a description of a Duncan arm exercise, a description reads: “Start [by] raising your arms slowly sideways from the shoulders. Without raising the shoulders the forearms and hands must hang loosely. When you have lifted the upper arms to shoulder height as slowly as possible, raise forearms, hands drooping from wrists. PUT NO EFFORT INTO YOUR HANDS.”⁸³ [caps original] Through the simple act of lifting her arms, the dancer’s drooping wrist indicated (to herself and to her audience) crucial information about her individual nature and ability. This simple foundation grounded the dancer as her movements increased in physical complexity and dynamic range. With her movements, the dancer moved freely, without tension, and in “accordance to [her] nature.” Once again, she affirmed developmental history, natural harmony, and social progress.

Haeckel and Duncan corresponded throughout the spring of 1904. Haeckel was eager to see Duncan perform and to witness firsthand how her movement – her improvisation, gestures, and her “classical art” and “veneration of the Greeks” – displayed natural harmony. “As the author of *Anthropogeny*,” he wrote in May, 1904, “I would be delighted to marvel at the highest

⁸² Duncan, *The Technique of Isadora Duncan as Taught by Irma Duncan*; Levien, *Duncan Dance*; Levien and Seidel, dirs., *Isadora Duncan Technique and Repertory*; Seidel, *Isadora Duncan in the 21st Century*.

⁸³ Duncan, *The Technique of Isadora Duncan*, 11.

masterwork of developed nature in the harmonic movements [*harmonischen Bewegungen*] of your graceful self.”⁸⁴ Based upon their communication and his likely reading of her Berlin lecture Haeckel situated Duncan’s Hellenism according to her translation of natural law.

Duncan’s interest in Hellenic themes defined her public persona and her artistic work, and it served as an important frame of reference for her audiences and critics, many of whom were not versed in dance. Historian Cathy Gere notes in her study of Nietzsche and artistic modernism that Duncan’s audiences often failed to identify the interpretive anachronisms within her Hellenism. Evidenced most strongly during her visit in 1910 to Arthur Evan’s archaeological excavation at Knossos – itself was a creative reimagining of ancient history – Duncan’s creative, danced appropriation of Hellenic life and culture merged contemporary feminist politics with Nietzschean philosophy. “As she whirled up and down the grand staircase with her bare toes and her wispy garb – her dancing amply supported by the strength of ferro-concrete [of Evan’s built structures] – she perfectly embodied the Dionysian significance of the reconstruction. Here was a place where the most outlandish expressions of post-Nietzschean enthusiasm for the modernity of the Greek spirit could find expression, and where liberated femininity (clad in the unrestricting folds and pleats of Duncan’s completely un-Minoan “Greek” costume) could insinuate itself into the new tragic age.”⁸⁵

Critics often associated Duncan’s creative work with Nietzschean philosophy and stripped it from its origins in natural science in an attempt to made her ideas relevant to a wider German public. A range of German philosophers interested Duncan, including Kant, Schopenhauer, and Nietzsche. She was also interested in Wagner, whose treatise on art and

⁸⁴ Ernst Haeckel, Letter to Isadora Duncan. Bordighera, 2 May, 1904. NYPL IDC/IDM (S) *MGZMC: Res. 23, Folder no. 93.

⁸⁵ Gere, *Knossos and the Prophets of Modernism*, 95.

political revolution inspired the title of her Berlin lecture and led her to stage the Bacchanal sequence in a revival of *Tannhäuser* overseen by Cosima Wagner, the composer's widow, that summer at Bayreuth. Duncan invited Haeckel to join her at the festival, where he could see her dance, and they could enjoy time together, exchanging ideas "im Freien unter Bäumen" and over glasses of wine.⁸⁶ Haeckel, who had never been to Bayreuth, eagerly accepted. Writing to her in July from his home in Jena, he qualified his acceptance by stating that his knowledge of "higher music" was limited – likely an attempt at sarcasm, or a hint of his preferred, aesthetic interests.⁸⁷ Given that there is no evidence that Haeckel had ever seen a dance performance before watching Duncan, his familiarity with opera was in all likelihood far more sophisticated than his knowledge of modern dance.

Duncan recalled their initial meeting that at Bayreuth with affection. "We had never met, but we recognized each other at once," she wrote in her memoirs. "I was immediately enfolded in his great arms and found my face buried in his beard. His whole being gave forth a fine perfume of health and strength and intelligence, if can speak of the perfume of intelligence."⁸⁸ Other visitors at Bayreuth received Haeckel's "perfume" with less warmth. His criticism of the Catholic Church in *Riddle of the Universe* had not gone unnoticed by Cosima, a devout Catholic whose rosary and crucifix, Duncan noted, "were not merely ornaments."⁸⁹ Duncan was indignant that Haeckel, "the man who had written 'The Riddle of the Universe,' and who was the greatest

⁸⁶ And milk. Among the archival holdings included in the Duncan/Haeckel Collection of the Ernst Haeckel Haus, Jena, is dinner receipt for the theater restaurant at Bayreuth, which includes two glasses of wine, one glass of water, and a glass of milk. ID/EHC, Document No. 6, front side.

⁸⁷ Duncan noted in her memoirs the effect of her first meeting with Haeckel at the train station in Bayreuth. "The great man descended from the train. Although over sixty, he possessed a magnificent, athletic figure, with a white beard and white hair. He wore strange, baggy clothes, and carried a carpet bag." Isadora Duncan, *My Life* (New York, 1927), 153.

⁸⁸ Duncan, *My Life*, 153.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 154.

iconoclast since Charles Darwin, whose theories he upheld, could not find a warm reception at Villa Wahnfried.” She pressed Cosima to treat him as one of the festival’s important guests. “In a direct and naïve manner, I expiated on the greatness of Haeckel and my admiration for him,” she noted, eventually persuading “Frau Cosima” to reserve for the embryologist a “coveted place in the Wagner Loge” for a performance of *Tannhäuser*.⁹⁰

Haeckel’s response to the performance was mixed. Watching his reactions to the performance, Duncan evidently missed Haeckel’s hints in his letters of his aesthetic preferences, and failed to understand why “Haeckel was very quiet during the unfolding of *Tannhäuser*. Not until the third act did I understand that all this mystic passion did not appeal to him. His mind was too purely scientific to admit the fascination of a legend.” In addition to Haeckel’s response, Duncan’s staging was met with mixed reactions by audiences, as well as Cosima.⁹¹

His distaste for Wagnerian opera aside, in addition to dance Haeckel had a keen interest in the arts. He was an accomplished artist, draftsman, and print-maker. He often placed aesthetic experience at the center of his research, and to this end, he used ink drawings, prints, and sketches as visual accompaniment and demonstration of his theories. This strategy, as Hopwood, and Daston and Galison have shown, caught him in a number of controversies surrounding claims based upon his empirical research and evidence. Most famously, this included allegations of scientific fraud led by embryologist Wilhelm His in the 1870s.⁹² Haeckel’s embrace of artistic media, including his drawing and printmaking, thus defined him as “an artists in scientists’ clothing” whose visual representation of scientific phenomena presented a “version of truth-to-nature that was altered by the existence of – and sometimes rivalry with – mechanical

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ Kurth, *Isadora*, 120.

⁹² Hopwood, *Haeckel’s Embryos*; Daston and Galison, *Objectivity*.

objectivity. Haeckel's arguments and persona were pressed into the plane defined by the axes of objectivity and subjectivity. His spirited defense of 'ideas in images' went hand in hand with an intense appreciation of the aesthetics of natural forms."⁹³ As we have seen with Duncan, similar "axes of objectivity and subjectivity" defined embodied movement as a source for knowledge. Haeckel's emphasis on the visuality of natural forms as a point of departure for truth-claims was also crucial for Duncan, who likewise presented her own "truth-to-nature" that was at odds with mechanical objectivity and the practice of science as an independent, autonomous discipline. Through movement and the knowledge-claims it enabled, dance combined the speculative and the empirical into an embodied "philosophy of nature." Duncan-Haeckel exchange shows how dance was an occasion for the scientist to observe natural law in the context of society, as well as an occasion for the dancer to theorize society in the context of natural science.

Duncan's dance was also an occasion for reviewers, critics, and audiences to expound on a range of other issues unrelated to natural science, such as the role of music in her work and the national character of her dances. Although Duncan had declared that she danced "all humanity" rather than "a nation," audiences mused on the national character of her work. Duncan made a concerted effort to fit into her German surroundings. Her reading and writing skills in German were highly proficient – allegedly, she was reading Schopenhauer in German⁹⁴ – though she had more difficulty with the spoken language. Prior to the Berlin lecture, Duncan delivered a speech in Munich "in her charming English-German," while her first students recalled her "halting German" in the studio.⁹⁵ Duncan had acquired her language skills much like the rest of her education, which combined formal schooling with self-taught knowledge. As a young girl in

⁹³ Daston and Galison, *Objectivity*, 247.

⁹⁴ Kurth, *Isadora*, 101.

⁹⁵ Kurth, *Ibid.*, 101; Duncan, *Duncan Dancer*, 10.

California, for example, Duncan was tutored in German (as well as French) and surrounded by German-speakers at the German-American *Turnverein* club in Oakland, where she took her first dance and gymnastics classes and evidently absorbed the language on her own.⁹⁶

Karl Federn, Duncan's translator of the Berlin lecture, was one of the earliest German art critics to situate Duncan within a German national tradition. Federn wrote the short introduction to the 1903 Diederichs translation of *Dance of the Future*, in which he situated dance within a longer history of the development of artistic forms. In contrast to painting, music, and literature, Federn declared that dance had a unique path, which was due to its features of spontaneous or improvised movement; Haeckel and Duncan had both identified this as an essential characteristic of natural harmony and organic life. Federn noted that dance, the "ur-Form of rhythm and of poetry," retained the power of "spontaneous" expression, and it was an aesthetic feature that characterized all art forms but that had been lost over time due to convention, institution, and failed attempts at originality by generations of artists.⁹⁷ As an American, Duncan had the ability to reclaim this expressive quality. He suggested that that this was because her own nature mirrored "American" features of invention, discovery, and newness; thus, her "national nature" [my term] allowed her shed the "unnatural rules and conventions and [transform] into 'high art' this spontaneous and individual expression" [*Ausdruck*].⁹⁸

Interestingly, Federn took Duncan's American spontaneity as evidence of the Nietzschean character of her work.⁹⁹ Linking her project to Nietzsche rather than to Haeckel,

⁹⁶ Daly, *Done into Dance*, 69.

⁹⁷ Karl Federn, "Einleitung," in Duncan, TZ, 6.

⁹⁸ Federn, *Ibid.*, 7.

⁹⁹ On the connection between Nietzsche and America, see Jennifer Ratner-Rosenhagen, *American Nietzsche: A History of an Icon and his Ideas* (Chicago, 2011). On the Christian traces of Nietzschean philosophy in Duncan's

Darwin, or even Schopenhauer (who Duncan specifically referenced in her discussion of the “human translation of the will”), Federn explained that “what Nietzsche divined and saw in artistic-poetic recognition, Isadora Duncan has made in dance. If he says, ‘In dance only I know how to speak in parables of the highest things’ – her dance attempts to be [the] parables of the highest things.”¹⁰⁰ Federn was personally acquainted with Duncan, at the time had allegedly “instructed” her in Nietzschean philosophy, and was later responsible for devising the academic program for Duncan’s school at Grunewald.¹⁰¹ He pursued this Nietzschean connection in his later writing on her, including in an expanded introduction to the second edition of *Tanz der Zukunft*, republished by Diederichs in 1929. In it, he described at length Duncan as a kind of Zarathustrian “Overman” [*Übermensch*], who created in her solos inspired by Greek mythology a theatrical presence, sense of play, and cycle of creation and destruction akin to Nietzsche’s dancing hero. Duncan’s bodily movement, like Zarathustra’s embodied language, jolted society out of its blind adherence to habit and convention. “A simple scene...a green carpet and a spacious gray-blue backdrop...almost childish and laughable seems this stage décor until she appears, for then the scene changes with each of her dances and becomes real,” Federn wrote. “So powerful is the mood she creates [...that] the spectator feels a cold shiver run up and down his spine. Everyone has sensed the awesome presence of the destroyer.”¹⁰² Omnipotent as a deity, Duncan’s performance signaled the death of God.

work, see Kimerer LaMothe, *Nietzsche’s Dancers: Isadora Duncan, Martha Graham, and the Reevaluation of Christian Values* (Palgrave 2006).

¹⁰⁰ Federn, “Einleitung,” 7.

¹⁰¹ Duncan, *Duncan Dancer*, 34; Preston, FN 75, *Modernism’s Mythic Pose*, 299.

¹⁰² Federn, “Nach Fünfundzwanzig Jahren,” (1928) introduction to Duncan, *Tanz der Zukunft: eine Vorlesung* 2te Auf. [Jena, 1929], iii – iv. Translation by Irma Duncan.

Duncan herself toyed with the idea of creative destruction and its relationship to natural harmony. Around 1905, after reading Craig's *On The Art of the Theater*, she considered how Craig's theatrical reforms emphasized authentic, embodied expression within society and overlapped with her own. "This book seems to me to contain in [it a little] Bomb for an immense explosion of all things which exist as we know them in the Theatre" she wrote in an unpublished journal. Craig's theater, much like her dance of the future, was

An upheaval so general & so deadly at first it presents to our minds eye the entire Theatres of the world suddenly heard sky high in the air together peaces [sic] of the Building shreds of their scenes, tatters of their costumes & finally separate legs arms – bodies yea Heads of their [Actors] [11] What the theatre should be. The Brain and Heart of the Nation. The reflection point of the Nations highest intellect – the Constant Mirror of its Noblest strivings towards the Highest Beauty. What was the theatre once. A coming together of thought in its highest form.¹⁰³

Dance was not the only embodied form capable of demonstrating "the highest intelligence in the freest body" within the state, society, or nature. Oriented toward embodied movement and "the volcano in you," Craig's theater was, like dance, a force to create, maintain, and protect order.¹⁰⁴ When necessary, it was also a force for destruction that would effect lasting social change. Destruction, though abrupt and radical, also served an existing, stable, totality. Writing in a final stream-of-consciousness description, she noted, "the present great Incubus the Present Theater [13] Share of Honor – an Equal Share – making up a Perfect Harmony an Absolute Balance Presenting to the Audience an Entire whole – was well as the Highest Ideal possible of the development & Culture of mankind –."¹⁰⁵

¹⁰³ Isadora Duncan, "I have just finished reading a book even now published..." [Journal Entry] Unpublished Notebook, ca. 1905. NYPL IDC/IDM (S) *MGZMC-Res. 23, Folder 142.

¹⁰⁴ Edward Gordon Craig, *On The Art of the Theater* (New York, 1956 [1904-1910 / 1911], 7.

¹⁰⁵ Isadora Duncan, "I have just finished reading a book even now published..."

Federn may have overemphasized Duncan's Nietzschean elements in order to appeal to a German public, for dancegoers were likely more versed in music than in dance. Yet his translation took relatively few liberties with her language. In the first edition of *Tanz der Zukunft*, he translated English terms such as "harmony" ("The movement of the waves, of winds, of the earth is ever in the same lasting harmony") as "Harmonie," and the adjectival use of "harmonic," as "harmonisch." Elsewhere, Federn directly translated key terms such as "the will," "nature," and "movement" as "Wille," "Natur," and "Bewegung." He translated more ambiguous terms, such as "force" and "power," according to context: both words most often appear in German as "Kraft," though Federn also translated "power" as "Gabe," or "ability."¹⁰⁶ In one key passage, for example, Federn took interpretive liberty with Duncan's phrase, "false restrictions" ("It is only when you put free animals under false restrictions that they loose [sic] the power of moving in harmony with nature and adopt a movement expressive of the restrictions placed about them"), translating it as "die Schranken unsere Zivilisation," or "the restrictions of our civilization." Federn reframed Duncan's general notion into an more precise argument about the failure of society to grasp the truth of its historical condition. Duncan was fluent enough in German to recognize, and consent, to these changes.

Federn was not the only one to link Duncan to debates about national character, questions of art historical development, or social progress. In contrast to Federn, others saw Duncan's newness as evidence of her social and cultural import not tied to a specific nationality. "One says that Fanny Elssler dances Hegel," wrote a Berlin-based *Vossische Zeitung* critic in 1904, drawing a comparison between Duncan and one of the most famous Romantic-era ballerinas. In contrast,

¹⁰⁶ Federn translates Duncan's full statement as "Erst wenn wir Menschen die Tiere zähmen und aus ihrer Freiheit in die Schranken unsere Zivilisation sperren, verlieren sie die Gabe, sich in Harmonie mit der großen Nature zu bewegen, und ihre Bewegungen werden unnatürlich und unschön." (29)

“Miss Duncan dances new society [*neue Gemeinschaft*] [...] [Her] art gilds the present. Miss Duncan dances the past and, as she hopes, the future. Thus it is no longer dance, but rather a lecture [*Kolleg*].”¹⁰⁷ Interestingly, the nineteenth-century Austrian ballerina with her “Hegelian” dances had a deeper connection to German tradition than Duncan’s “new society” or danced “lectures.”

Other critics debated the formal implications of Duncan’s “free” dance. Some flatly rejected her solos as dilettantism, frivolous divertissement, or a far cry from the “highest masterwork of developed nature.” Another reviewer for the *Vossische Zeitung*, appalled by Duncan's dancing, remarked that her lack of musicality indicated her ignorance of aesthetic harmony and formal musical structure. Duncan’s interpretation of Beethoven proved “the lady Duncan is wholly unmusical [...] Ms. Duncan has no idea of rhythm. She often tries to orient her gestures to some kind of rhythmical relationship to the music but does not achieve it.”¹⁰⁸ Duncan’s body was “unmusical” because its component parts failed to accord with one another: it thus lacked harmonic order. Her movements were out of time and lacked a correspondence of artistic forms (i.e. music and dance). “Fraulein Duncan did know that the F-Scherzo had ended, that the last chord had rung, yet she ‘danced’ on.” He noted, likely reacting to her improvised gesture combined with her expansive sense of musical timing. “Her movements do not correspond to the content of the piece: occasionally they are deficient in the attack and have nothing in common with the musical crescendo, with the musical impression, which is, by and by, more or less energetic.”¹⁰⁹ At Bayreuth, Cosima commented that Duncan’s relationship to

¹⁰⁷ M.H. “Miss Duncan,” *Das Theater* (1903/4), page number not available. Tanzarchiv Köln Isadora Duncan Sammlung [hereafter referred to as “TK IDS”], 2.6.1, “Newspaper Articles, 1902-1905.”

¹⁰⁸ Author not given, “Theater und Kunst,” *Vossische Zeitung*, Berlin, 25. März, 1904, page number not available.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, “Theater und Kunst.”

music, though flawed, demonstrated her artistic merit. “While she thinks about the music, she is not musical, and does not dance rhythmically...She belittles the importance of the right costume and surely her figure needs a flattering costume. Nevertheless, contradictions, stubbornness, limitations notwithstanding, we have a personality before us of true artistic importance.”¹¹⁰ According to Cosima, the significance of Duncan’s work was bound entirely to Duncan herself, and not to her conceptual or practical system of dance.

Duncan, as we have seen, understood harmony differently. Physical nature formed the context for understanding the logic, structure, and features of harmony. Spontaneous movement was proof of life: it was musical, harmonic, and true to nature. As a woman, she was biologically and evolutionarily endowed with an aesthetic intuition and a rational intelligence that granted her creative expression – as a dancer, and as a mother – unique social power. Dance endowed Duncan with a role to lead others. Dance endowed Duncan with an authority to legislate disagreement and to mediate consensus. And so, in spite of those who questioned the merits of her work or the nature of her movements, Duncan danced on.

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III. The Social Laboratory of the Duncan School

Duncan’s school for dance was an experiment in social reform. The School, which admitted only young girls, opened in 1904 in a quaint villa in Grunewald, a Berlin suburb. Duncan’s friend Engelbert Humperdink, a composer of children’s operas who lived nearby,

¹¹⁰ George R. Marek, *Cosima Wagner* (MacRae, 1983), 229. Cited in Kurth, *Isadora*, 120.

suggested the location to her.¹¹¹ Duncan and her sister Elizabeth privately financed the school, which was responsible for the room, board, primary education, and dance classes for its students, many of whom came from socially disadvantaged backgrounds. The rest were from middle class, bourgeois families. Isadora and Elizabeth originally purchased forty beds in anticipation of a robust student enrollment, though their ambitions for the school outstripped reality: during its three-year tenure in Grunewald, the school never housed more than twenty students at any given time.¹¹²

The students, some as young as four years old, were chosen through a semi-public audition process and selected personally by Duncan. The criteria for selection was opaque. Based on the memoirs of former students and individuals, such as Craig, who attended the auditions, the girls were chosen for a range of qualities, such as physical fitness, their apparent youthfulness and vitality, and the “look” in their eyes.¹¹³ Duncan’s attention to the dancers during the audition was, like the criteria for their selection, inconsistent. During the audition process, Duncan demonstrated movement material to the students, but during her demonstrations shifted her attention from her pupils’ movements to her own. “She watched me closely as I imitated her gesture,” one Grunewald student recalled in a description of her first audition, “and then, after a while, she seemed no longer to pay attention to me. A faraway look came into her eyes as, lost in the music, she raised her beautiful arms and with a swaying motion of her body moved them gently side to side like the branches of a tree put in motion by the wind.”¹¹⁴

¹¹¹ Kurth, *Isadora*, 166.

¹¹² Kurth, *Ibid.*, 168.

¹¹³ Hedwig Müller, “Unser Tanz besteht wirklich nur aus der Schönheit der herrlichen Natur...” in Frank-Manuel Peter, Hrsg. *Isadora and Elizabeth Duncan in Deutschland* (Köln, 2000); Irma Duncan, *Duncan Dancer* (New York, 1980), 89.

¹¹⁴ Duncan, *Duncan Dancer*, 11.

Dance lessons at the Duncan school reinforced the idea that spontaneous movement was a distinguishing feature of harmony. In practice, however, Duncan's lessons conveyed confusing messages about the relationship of movement improvisation, creatively generated by the individual, to set gestures or movement sequences. This was largely due to Duncan's own teaching style. Duncan's approach to the classroom was not unlike her behavior during auditions. Duncan's teaching was a contradiction in terms: while spontaneous movement was supposed to be "natural" and not premeditated, students first needed proper technical training and a basis of strength and control. Careful study, in other words, developed the faculty for intuited spontaneity. This relied on a clarity of demonstration and communication, which Duncan, as an educator, failed to provide. Her students noted that she would demonstrate material to them, only to immediately forget what she had shown. Unable to replicate her steps for her students, Duncan grew impatient. She turned instead to those students who could recall her original movements having seen them only once (a skill even the most advanced professionals struggle to achieve). These students would teach the movement to the remainder of the class. The disconnect between Duncan and her students was so extreme that even the musical accompanist tried to help out. "I remember once," wrote Irma Duncan, one of Duncan's first German students, "when she had shown us a particularly intricate and rapid combination of steps without obtaining any results at all from us, the pianist suggested that she repeat it slowly for our benefit. She tried, failed completely and was utterly amazed. I remember her words, 'How strange, I created it, and I can dance it, but I cannot teach it!'"¹¹⁵

Duncan and her students thus recast her pedagogical shortcomings as proof of her professional skill and of her creative nature. Duncan's failure to remember her own movement

¹¹⁵ Duncan, *The Technique of Isadora Duncan*, xii.

also underscored the conflicting visions of harmony Duncan presented through dance. Duncan's improvised movement reflected her individual, "developed" nature and her aesthetic sensibilities, which Part II demonstrated was connected to her biological sex as a woman. At the same time, her inability to remember or intuit the logic, order, and structure of her movement underscored the presence within it of chance, randomness, and chaos: elements antithetical to harmony. Moreover, the structure of the exercise – Duncan performs a series of movements, which are observed and then performed (i.e. imitated) by her students – likewise broadcast a confusing message about individual nature and ability. Students were taught to venerate spontaneous creation; they were also rewarded for their imitative faculty and rapid recall.

This conflicting approach to spontaneity and harmony marked the school as a whole. "The daily routine [at the Duncan school] was regulated from dawn to dusk by a detailed schedule," which included instruction in basic primary school subjects (including natural science) – for which the students received report cards – as well as physical fitness (calisthenics), music (singing), the visual arts (drawing), and dance.¹¹⁶ In addition to academic coursework designed by Federn, students performed menial tasks, such as sweeping, tidying, and polishing boots.¹¹⁷ Students had a primarily vegetarian diet, eating meat only twice a week and prunes for dessert.¹¹⁸ Like Isadora, they wore simple tunics made of a light cheesecloth and had bare legs and feet, even in winter, which elicited sympathetic responses from neighbors living nearby.¹¹⁹ The public viewed the students with a combination of admiration, amusement, and pity, and nicknamed them the "*Duncaninchens*," or "Duncan Bunnies."

¹¹⁶ Müller, "Unser Tanz besteht wirklich nur aus der Schönheit der herrlichen Natur..." 99.

¹¹⁷ Müller, *Ibid.*, 98.

¹¹⁸ Duncan, *Duncan Dancer*, 33.

¹¹⁹ Kurth, *Isadora*, 170.

Despite the school's mission of social reform, the Duncan school's activities were far from a model of social progress. Troublingly, the school engaged in ethically questionable treatment of its students. From 1905 to 1909, Duncan students toured internationally to Germany, Russia, France, Holland, Belgium, Finland, and Great Britain.¹²⁰ In 1905, the students' heavy performance schedule as well their costumes mired the school in scandal, when it faced allegations of child labor law violations. Berlin police required that the school halt its student performances; in protest, a number of Duncan's "prominent supporters," including Kaiser Wilhelm's favorite author, Ernst von Wildenbruch, wrote to municipal authorities requesting the ban be lifted. Their appeal was successful, and the students resumed their exhausting performance schedule.¹²¹ More troublingly, perhaps, the Duncans, with the help of the police, devised a method to preempt any future scandal. "In order to circumvent all of the problems [of child labor laws] the police authorities themselves suggested that an association be founded and to have all of the children's performances put on by this association, since this would not be in conflict with [recently amended labor] law," dance historian Hedwig Müller notes in her history of the Duncan school.¹²² As a privately run association, the Duncan school would no longer be subject to municipal law. There is no indication that the students received monetary compensation for their performances, even though their audiences, particularly those at established theater houses, paid for tickets. Many students viewed these uncompensated performances as exchange for their room, board, and education. However, some perceived their circumstances as exploitation. "I must mention that despite the frequent paid performances we

¹²⁰ Kay Beardsley, "Isadora's First School," *Dance Research Collage*, *CORD Dance Research Annual 10* (New York, 1979): 219-249. See chronology, 236-237.

¹²¹ Müller, "Unser Tanz besteht wirklich nur aus der Schönheit der herrlichen Natur..." 101.

¹²² Müller, *Ibid.*, 102.

children gave, none of us ever received any weekly allowance or pocket money,” Irma Duncan recalled. “We got not even a penny’s worth to buy an occasional lollipop or a ribbon for our hair. Naturally, with our strict upbringing, we did not ask for any. Even small sums sent from home by our parents were frowned upon. Thoughts of filthy lucre had no place in our spiritual education dedicated to the true dance.”¹²³ Though critical of her teachers, Irma Duncan’s testimony also underscores how values of natural harmony and romantic anti-capitalism were cultivated among the students in order to justify and normalize their abusive treatment.

It is unclear how much total revenue the Duncan school performances generated. Student performances, when not attended by paying ticketholders, were also used as a fundraising tool. Isadora often experienced financial distress and she frequently invited wealthy patrons and members of the Prussian gentry, to Grunewald to elicit donations.¹²⁴

Either in spite or because of this treatment, students at the school developed close relationships through living, working, and dancing together. Duncan’s strong personality defined the school, yet she was often absent from it due to her busy performance schedule. Daily instruction and direction fell to her sister Elizabeth, known by the students as “Tante Miss,” temperamentally different than Isadora and toward whom the students felt both derision and respect.¹²⁵ Students hailed from a range of national origins. In addition its German students, many students came to Grunewald from across Europe, especially Poland Belgium, Holland, and Switzerland.¹²⁶ (The one American at the school was Duncan’s niece, Temple.) The school’s

¹²³ Duncan, *Duncan Dancer*, 82 -83.

¹²⁴ Isadora Duncan, Unpublished Notebook, ca. 1905. NYPL IDC/IDM (S) *MGZMC-Res. 23, Folder 142, pp 5-7.

¹²⁵ See, for example, Duncan, *Duncan Dancer*, 30-31; and Müller, “Unser Tanz besteht wirklich nur aus der Schönheit der herrlichen Natur...” 93.

¹²⁶ Duncan, *Duncan Dancer*, 10-17.

inaugural class included six dancers (Irma, Anna, Theresa, Erika, Lisa, and Gretel), later known as the “Isadorables,” who, taking Duncan’s surname, performed her dances extensively across Europe and the United States, and for the next several decades they were the principle teachers of her method and ideas.¹²⁷ Visitors to the school quickly perceived the close-knit atmosphere among the students, and observed how Duncan’s vision formed the basis for its classes and communal life. Surrounded by décor – statues, furniture, drapery, carpets – mixing neoclassical and Renaissance styles, the Duncan students lived in a time-warp, removed from the reality of a rapidly modernizing metropolis a short train ride away. Victor Ottman, a writer for *Der Tag* observed in 1906, “the visitor [to the school] quickly takes away a captive feeling, that [...] all of humanity here has more than a certain taste [*Geschmack*], behind which stretches an idea, yes, perhaps even a world-view [*Weltanschauung*].”¹²⁸ Duncan’s students were her “children of the future” and her “human translations” of harmony. Trained to move freely, spontaneously, and effortlessly, their metabolic movement affirmed order – of nature and of the school. In doing so, dance joined a “world view” with lived experience. Dance joined social representation with embodied practice in a unity that was as apparent to visitors and non-dancers as to Duncan and her students.

Among the visitors to the Grunewald school was Jaques-Dalcroze, who around 1905 observed a dance class. He allegedly displayed an “infectious enthusiasm” for a set of slow

¹²⁷ On the history and legacy of the Isadorables, see Irma Duncan, *Duncan Dancer*; Kurth, *Isadora*; Seidel, *Isadora Duncan in the 21st Century*. Training received under the Isadorables remains the legitimizing marker of Duncan technique. Currently, for example, Duncan technique is mainly taught in the United States by Lori Belilove, who has a “direct lineage” to first and second generation Duncan dancers, including original Isadorables Anna and Irma. See “Who’s Who?: Lori Bellilove Artistic Director,” Isadora Duncan Dance Foundation, last modified 2012, accessed online February 16, 2017. <http://www.isadoraduncan.org/the-company/dancers/lori-belilove>. Belilove’s own company, which performs Duncan reconstructions and Duncan-esque original works, is named the “Beliloveables.”

¹²⁸ Victor Ottmann, “Im Haus der Isadora Duncan,” *Der Tag* 17 August, 1906. Reprinted in “Verein zur Unterstützung und Erhaltung der Tanzschule von Isadora Duncan e.V.” TK IDC 2.9.5, 10-11.

movement exercises performed by the students. Unable to refrain himself from “constant interruptions,” “what fascinated him the most were the kinetics involved in what Isadora called the ‘scale of movements,’ which started with a slow walk, gradually accelerating into a fast and faster pace til it evolved into a run, and from there by degrees reverted to a slow walk again.”¹²⁹ Jaques-Dalcroze asked Elizabeth Duncan, who was in charge of the class, if he could accompany the students at the piano, improvising as he played. In her recollections of his visit, Irma Duncan declared that Jaques-Dalcroze’s system was a direct replica of Duncan’s system. Though untrue, it is nevertheless a telling observation of the similarities of the two systems by a student versed in Duncan’s method.

Further professional overlap existed between Jaques-Dalcroze and the Duncans. Duncan students performed at the International Hygiene Exhibition in Dresden in 1911, where Jaques-Dalcroze students also performed. Karl Osthaus, a patron of the arts and founder of the *Folkwang Museum* in Hagen had established in 1909 the German Museum for Art in Trade and Industry, a traveling exhibition sponsored, in part, by the *Deutscher Werkbund*. The exhibition was “intended to present contemporary industrial products, awaken interest, and influence and develop the tastes of producers and consumers.”¹³⁰ As we will see in the next chapter, this project to reform industrial manufacturing and consumer industry included training in bodily health and hygiene – as well as Jaques-Dalcroze’s method for dance. Osthaus had courted both the Jaques-Dalcroze and the Duncan schools to participate in the exhibition. After Osthaus “lost” his bid for Jaques-Dalcroze, who had affiliated his school with Hellerau, the garden city of near Dresden, he turned to the Duncans. After several years of negotiations, and despite the Duncans’

¹²⁹ Duncan, *Duncan Dancer*, 38 – 39.

¹³⁰ Frank Manuel-Peter and Rainer Stamm, “Die rhythmische Gestaltung und freie geistige Entfaltung aller Kräfte...” in Manuel-Peter, Hrsg, *Isadora and Elizabeth Duncan in Deutschland; Isadora and Elizabeth Duncan in Germany* (Köln, 2000), 129.

disdain of material consumerism, he prevailed. In 1914, Elizabeth Duncan and Max Merz, who assumed direction for the school after Isadora quit Germany for Paris, arranged for Duncan students to perform with the traveling Museum on a stop in Hagen. The students' performances were entirely sold out.¹³¹

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Conclusion

Duncan and Haeckel did not meet again after Bayreuth, though they continued their correspondence for the next several years. Between 1908 and 1909, the Grunewald school closed, temporarily relocating to Darmstadt. Duncan had left Germany for Paris, where she opened a new school at her studio in Neuilly. During this time, she continued writing to Haeckel, referring to him as her “beloved master.” In her letters, she described the intimate details of her life, including the birth of her second child, Patrick, in May of 1910. Though Duncan characteristically revealed to her audiences and friends the intimate details of her life, which she often riddled with fabrications, her correspondence with Haeckel was different. Monism as a world-view, or the natural scientific origins of her approach to dance, was never far from her mind. Duncan's letters emphasize their mutual commitment to monism – to its embodied conservatism and principles of harmonic order – and her prose expressed a candor not typical of her other writing. “This boy will be a Monist,” she wrote Haeckel, only a week after Patrick's birth. “And who knows, perhaps there is something of your great and beautiful spirit in him.”¹³² Although Haeckel believed in institutional marriage as necessary to maintain the “harmonic

¹³¹ Manuel-Peter and Stamm, “Die rhythmische Gestaltung und freie geistige Entfaltung aller Kräfte...” 132.

¹³² Isadora Duncan, Letter to Ernst Haeckel, May 1910. Paris. ID/EHC, Document No. 12, 1-2.

interdependence” between the sexes, they had evidently come to terms with their differences. Duncan did not shy away from describing how her personal choices embodied her faith in his work, in monism as the solution to the “world problem,” and to women’s reproductive capacities as proof of their intellect and aesthetic intuition apart from their rational choice of a mate. In spite of their differences, Haeckel’s continued encouragement of Duncan’s engagement with his research suggests that he accepted, and respected, the many challenges she posed to his ideas.

Their final communication was two months later, in June of 1910. Haeckel had sent Duncan a set of books, and she wrote to him thanking him for the gift and informing him of Patrick’s growth. “My baby is progressing finely,” she reported, this time in English. “He is strong and lovely – I am nursing him at present and he demands every minute of my time – but when he looks up in my face – with his blue eyes, I feel richly rewarded.”¹³³ Duncan also congratulated Haeckel on the opening of his “Phyletic Museum” in Jena, which he had built in 1908 with royalties from *Riddle of the Universe*. Haeckel had sent her news of the museum, a “temple to the philosophy of nature,” which housed his materials, instruments, and specimens, as well as an educational center for research in evolution and evolutionary theory, and a gallery for his prints and drawings.¹³⁴ Duncan informed him that she hoped to visit.

Duncan would not travel to Jena, and tragically, Patrick would not grow up to be a monist. Three years later Patrick died in a car accident, together with Deirdre, Duncan’s seven year old daughter from her relationship with Craig. They were survived by their many adopted siblings: Duncan’s students, her children of the future.

¹³³ Isadora Duncan, Letter to Ernst Haeckel, June 1910. Paris. ID/EHC, Document No. 13, 1.

¹³⁴ Richards, *Tragic Sense of Life*, 421.

Chapter 3

Nature, Man, Movement: Dance and the Institute Jaques-Dalcroze at Hellerau, 1906 – 1913

“Outside, upon the steps of the temple, they crowded about the creator of ‘Eurythmics.’ Emile Jaques-Dalcroze was his name, a stocky, solidly built man with the sharply pointed black beard and mustache of a Frenchman and the black Windsor tie which marked the artist of those days. He had taken the musical patterns of Gluck’s *Orpheus* and reproduced them with the bodies and bare arms and legs of children; the art lovers would go forth to tell the world that here was something not only beautiful but healing, a way to train the young in grace and happiness, in efficiency and coordination of body and mind.”

Upton Sinclair, *World’s End* (1945), 5.

What is the basis of the social order? Is its structure given by nature, or a created, contingent artifact of history? This chapter turns to a diverse group of social reformers, political activists, architects, and entrepreneurs who, in the years leading up to the First World War, proposed different solutions to these questions. Though not dancers themselves, they used dance and embodied movement to forge unity in light of political disagreement and social fracture that emerged during the creation of Hellerau, a “Garden City” built on the outskirts of Dresden between 1906 and 1914. Established in response to industrial change in Germany at the end of the nineteenth century, Hellerau was an experiment in social reform that aimed to transform collective life through cooperative living, business enterprise, gardening and agriculture, design, industrial manufacturing, and health and hygiene. As its founders articulated and initiated reforms through these practices, they disagreed about the basic issues structuring the community, including its politics, social mission, and physical layout and construction.

These disagreements underscored more fundamental differences about how relationships between Hellerau’s members formed and maintained social order. Did the bonds between the community’s individuals mirror an order found in nature and the natural world? Or were they specific to humankind, modeled after the features of man’s built environment? Some of Hellerau’s founders, such members of the *Werkbund*, located a creatively constructed, material

life as the basis for community and social encounter. Others, such its members of the Garden City Movement, viewed the land, the soil, and visions of natural harmony as the basis for collective life. As we have seen in Chapter 2, natural agency enabled some individuals, like Isadora Duncan and Ernst Haeckel, to define harmony according to physical and scientific structures, as the accordance of component parts within a complete system. Chapter 1 demonstrated how music enabled a similar definition of harmony according to musical, physical principles of logic, order, and structure.

In this chapter, we will see how Jaques-Dalcroze's system, transplanted in 1909 from Geneva to Hellerau, shifted attention from one set of questions to another and emphasized the stabilization of social order over an investigation of its origins. Dance provided an opportunity to ease political disagreement in favor of social participation within the community as simultaneous experience of freedom and order, in which one could "feel more free and secure, at once controlled and self-controlling, the master of himself and devoted to a greatness, something higher."¹ This feeling was identical to what Duncan identified through her "human translation of nature" analyzed in the previous chapter. It was also a feeling that Mary Wigman, student of Jaques-Dalcroze at Hellerau, used as the basis for her "sovereign self," which is examined in the chapter that follows.

At Hellerau, *Rythmique* and Jaques-Dalcroze's approach to the self framed questions about individual nature as questions about the imperatives of society; these, as his system showed, could be solved through participation in dance. Translating a language of social relations into a language of physical forces and bodily movement, *Rythmique* turned the management of individual, expressive freedom, defined either according to the natural world or

¹ Émile Jaques-Dalcroze, "Die Hygienische Bedeutung der rhythmischen Gymnastik: ein Brief von Dr E Jaques Dalcroze mit einem Nachwort von Wolf Dorn," *Gartenstadt Mitteilungen der deutschen Gartenstadtgesellschaft* Jg.5, H11 (Nov 1911), 154.

according to the built environment, into the management of the social whole. Regardless of the origins of relationships between people or the basis for the negotiation of power between them, dance folded the individual seamlessly into a state of democratic equilibrium with others.

Though the members of Hellerau focused on the details of their building designs, the kinds of plant species cultivated on their grounds, the stipulations of their housing rental agreements, or the guidelines for labor in their communal furniture factory, these discussions concerned the basic premises of their community's collective order. This was a question of intent. Did one agree to the rules of collective life out of natural duty or a sense of obligation? Or was one guided by feelings of consent, which extended from one's agency, creative capacity, or ability for choice? Modern life highlighted this distinction. Forms of rationalization, most evident in modern culture, labor, and social institution, threatened to eradicate meaningful social order altogether as man became machine. Alongside such processes of rationalization, forms of reified belief, institution, and specialization threatened the search for knowledge about nature and the universe, turning science and art into lifeless, disembodied pursuits. "Today youth feels [...that] the intellectual realm of science constitute a realm of artificial abstractions, which with their bony hands they seek to grasp the blood-and-sap of true life without ever catching up with it. But here in life, in what for Plato was the play of shadows on the walls of the cave, genuine reality is pulsating; and the rest are derivatives of life, lifeless ghosts, and nothing else."² The shift towards urbanization accompanying the rise in industrial technology escalated these fears, particularly for those who lived in Dresden, a traditional seat of the Prussian gentry that was

² Max Weber, "Science as a Vocation" [1918/1919], in H.H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills, eds., *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology* (New York, 1946), 135 - 136.

quickly growing into an urban center at the turn of the century.³ Faced with class divisions, cultural conflict, and social welfare needs not being met, many Germans saw Hellerau as an attractive solution. Life in the Garden City offered a number of hopeful alternatives, all based on renewed, healthy relationships between nature, man, and men.

This chapter is divided into two parts. Part I focuses on the activities of the Jaques-Dalcroze Institute, to show how Jaques-Dalcroze's original vision of *Rythmique* adapted to its new, German, home while retaining its core values of order, stability, and social harmony. Part II turns to the political divisions among Hellerau's founders: its members of the *Werkbund*, on the one hand, and its members of the Garden City Movement, on the other. Despite their disagreements about many fundamental aspects of the community these groups found common ground through dance. Dance provided a common language of stability, harmony, and order across political difference.

In light of modernity's many unknowns, Dance was the embodied language that enabled freedom while also establishing order. Dance cared for body and soul. Dance protected sense and feeling against the machine. Dance cultivated collective life, a "*Gemeinschaftsleben*" whose meaning and purpose came from embodied movement, rather than policy, politics, or institution. Dance, as metabolic movement, was also a kind of social metabolism that transformed disagreement into accord, conflict into unity. In the process, it generated, maintained, and protected Hellerau's collective social order. Dance "lift[ed] rhythm up to the level of a social institution, [with] a force to educate and cultivate people [*Volksbildenden und Volkserziehenden*

³ Volker Helas, "Dresdener Ballhauskultur um 1900," in *Dresdener Hefte* Jg26, H95, "Sprache des Körpers Tanz in Dresden," Hrsg. Hans-Peter Lühr (September 2008): 15-22.

Kraft”].²⁴ In Hellerau, dance took shape as embodied conservatism. As both a practice and a way of representing society, embodied conservatism was an available platform for different sets of politics, or political agendas. And regardless of its politics, it provided not just a metaphor for the social contract, but its material practice.

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I. Dance in the *Gartenstadt*

Hellerau was founded in 1906 by a diverse group of German social reformers, industrialists, and business investors, many of whom were inspired by the ideas of English social reformer Ebenezer Howard, the founder of the Garden City movement. Hellerau’s founding figures included Karl Schmidt, founder of a Dresden-based furniture factory also known as the German Workshops for Craftsmanship [*Werkstätten für Handwerkskunst*]; Friedrich Naumann, Protestant social reformer and politician; Hermann Muthesius, architect, social theorist, and leading figure in the German Association of Craft Artists, or *Werkbund*, an organization founded in 1907 by artists, industrialists, and businessmen seeking new models for the creation and export of German goods and manufacturing; and Wolf Dohrn, industrialist, academic, and heir to Felix Anton Dohrn, a marine biologist who had studied with Ernst Haeckel before founding the world’s first zoological research station in Naples, Italy.⁵ The younger Dohrn served as the first

⁴ E.B., “Vom Gemeinschaftsleben in Gartenstädten,” *Gartenstadt Mitteilungen der deutschen Gartenstadtgesellschaft* Jg. 5, H 11 (Nov 1911), 153.

⁵ Haeckel allegedly found the elder Dohrn “recalcitrant” and “difficult.” (Robert J. Richards, *The Tragic Sense of Life: Ernst Haeckel and the Struggle Over Evolutionary Thought* (Chicago, 2008), 221.) Dohrn’s research facility, the Stazione Zoologica, provided a model for marine research stations throughout the world, including the Marine Biological Laboratory (MBL), founded in 1888 in Woods Hole, MA. Given Dohrn’s affiliation with Haeckel, a champion of Darwinian theories of evolution, it is somewhat ironic that MBL was founded in honor of natural historian – and Darwinian challenger – Louis Agassiz. Not surprisingly then, the MBL makes no mention of Dohrn or Haeckel in its promotional materials. See “History of the MBL,” last modified 2017, accessed online January 31, 2017. <http://www.mbl.edu/history-of-the-mbl/>

secretary of the *Werkbund* and played an especially important role in Hellerau's creation. Dohrn fiercely championed Democratic Socialism: before moving to Hellerau had campaigned for the National Social Association (NSA), a political party founded by Naumann as an alternative to the Social Democratic Party. Combining social welfare with support for the Prussian monarchy and stripes of German nationalism, the NSA "attempted to fuse working-class interest politics with deference to throne and altar" with the goal of uniting Wilhelmine liberals, wary of modern industry, with progressive, working-class socialists.⁶ In 1903, the NSA, supported by an enthusiastic Dohrn, won 30,000 votes in the Reichstag elections but failed to gain political traction, largely due to opposition by Catholic Conservatives who made up the majority in parliament.⁷ After the NSA's dissolution later that year – and Dohrn's completion of his doctoral thesis, "Artistic Representation as an Aesthetic Problem," on Goethe's *Sorrows of Young Werther*"⁸ – Naumann and Dohrn turned their attention to other possibilities for reform. Together with Muthesius, Schmidt, and others, they conceived of Hellerau as a "green" experiment in social change.

Schmidt had acquired the land for Hellerau, which he had originally planned to use for a housing colony for workers in his furniture factory.⁹ Hellerau, which was originally financed by Schmidt, was an independent business venture, whose revenue was largely based on the sale and

⁶ Helmut Walser Smith, *German Nationalism and Religious Conflict: Culture, Ideology, Politics, 1870 - 1914* (Princeton, 1995), 125 – 126.

⁷ Walser Smith, *German Nationalism and Religious Conflict*, 126.

⁸ Marco de Michelis and Vicki Bilenker, "Heinrich Tessenow and the Institut Dalcroze at Hellerau," *Perspecta* 26, special issue on "Theater, Theatricality and Architecture" (1990), 170.

⁹ On the history of Schmidt and the *Werkstätten für Handwerkskunst*, see Peter Peschel, "Karl Schmidt und seine Werkstätten für Handwerkskunst," *Dresdener Hefte* Jg15, H51, "Gartenstadt Hellerau – der Alltag einer Utopie," ed. Hans-Peter Lühr (Feb 2007): 4-12.

lease of its residences and would finance the community.¹⁰ Importantly, in Hellerau, land speculation was abolished, which was a core principle of the Garden City Movement.¹¹ A number of smaller governing bodies and committees were established to lead the construction and regulation of the community. One important example was the Building and Crafts Commission [*Bau-und-Kunstkommission*], whose members included Muthesius, along with architects and industrial designers Richard Riemerschmid and Theodor Fischer, who were to oversee the community's architectural designs and the manual construction of its built environments.¹²

Dance arrived in Hellerau three years later, and it quickly became central to the community. In 1909, Dohrn had attended a performance of Jaques-Dalcroze students in Dresden, where he was acquainted with *Rythmique* for the first time. Captivated by the dancers' rhythmic gestures and Jaques-Dalcroze's approach to music as embodied rhythm, Dohrn persuaded his co-directors of the necessity for a dance school in the Garden City. Dohrn traveled to Geneva and so impressed Jaques-Dalcroze, who was taken by the network of professional opportunity an institute at Hellerau afforded, that the Swiss musician agreed to relocate the center of his educational operations to the outskirts of Dresden. "Dohrn, the founder of Hellerau, came to visit me and left me and [my wife] Nina with the best impression," Jaques-Dalcroze noted in a letter to his colleague and future collaborator at Hellerau, the French theater director Adolphe Appia.¹³ "He's the kind of man who understands everything and who has committed his life to the

¹⁰ de Michelis and Bilenker, "Heinrich Tessenow and the Institut Dalcroze at Hellerau," 148.

¹¹ Teresa Harris, "The German Garden City Movement: Architecture, Politics, and Urban Transformation, 1902 – 1931" (Ph.D. Diss., Columbia University, 2012).

¹² de Michelis and Bilenker, *Ibid.*

¹³ Frank Martin, Tibor Dénes, et al, *Émile Jaques-Dalcroze: L'Homme, Le Compositeur, Le Créateur de la Rythmique* (Neuchâtel, 1965), 429.

propagation of ideas that please him...he has business associations with the best electrician in Germany and I believe that you can be sure that this someone by the name of Behrens will understand you...” Jaques-Dalcroze here referenced Peter Behrens, architect and member of the *Werkbund*, who the musician evidently knew only as an employee for A.E.G., the electrical manufacturing company slated to build the lighting and technical systems for a theater Dohrn had promised.¹⁴

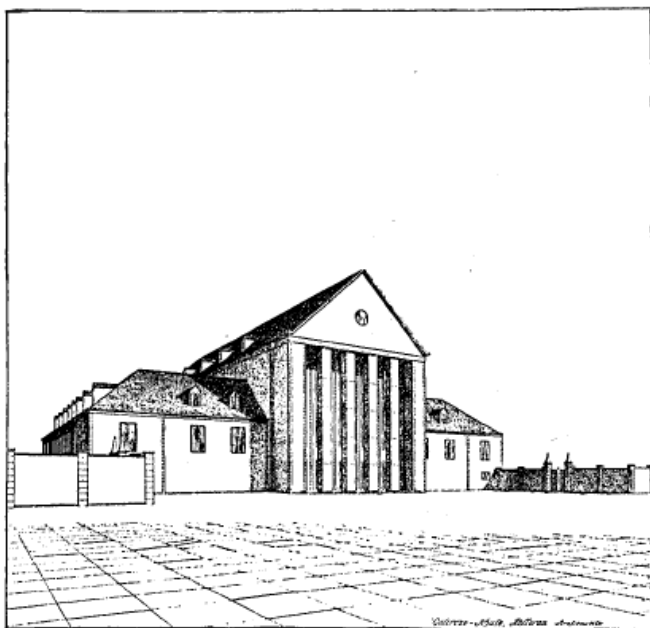
Construction of the building for the Institute Jaques-Dalcroze [*Bildungsanstalt Jaques-Dalcroze*] finished in April, 1911, though classes had begun in temporary spaces within the community a year before.¹⁵ To finance the construction of the *Festspielhaus*, the Institute, and their operations, Dohrn secured the patronage of over 100 Saxon elites, which he did through the help of a certain Count von Seebach, first president to Hellerau’s “Committee for the Foundation of the Institute for Musical-Rhythmic Formation.” Dohrn had secured additional funding for the Institute from the city of Hellerau itself.¹⁶ The school was housed in Heinrich Tessenow’s *Festspielhaus*, a hulking, modernist building stood just past the community’s main gate. The location of the school announced the centrality of dance within the community, while the iconography on the exterior of the building and its interior layout announced its social mission. The top center of the *Festspielhaus* featured the “eye of Hellerau,” a yin-yang design symbolizing harmony. Inside the building, network of spaces, including rehearsal studios, practice rooms, a library, and a “refreshment room,” encircled a main theater space. The design and architecture of the school facilitated a set of values enacted through the rehearsal and performance of dance: education and instruction, cultivation and leadership, and practical

¹⁴ de Michelis and Bilenker, 155.

¹⁵ Christine Staumer, “Wie alles begann – das Festspielhaus Hellerau 1910 – 1914,” *Dresdener Hefte* Jg26, H95, “Sprache des Körpers Tanz in Dresden,” Hrsg. Hans-Peter Lühr (September 2008), 23.

¹⁶ de Michelis and Bilenker, 155 – 156.

engagement and staged representation. Each value was balanced by the presence of counterpart, as symbolized by the “Eye of Hellerau.” The theater itself was equipped with a state-of-the-art lighting system designed by Alexander Salzmann, and was designed to showcase the music, drama, and dance collaborations of Jaques-Dalcroze and Appia.¹⁷ (Figs. 3 and 4).



Die Bildungsanstalt Jaques-Dalcroze in Hellerau, Architekt Heinrich Tessenow

Fig 3: “Die Bildungsanstalt Jaques-Dalcroze in Hellerau. Architect Heinrich Tessenow.” In *Die Gartenstadt Hellerau* (Dresden, 1911), 62.

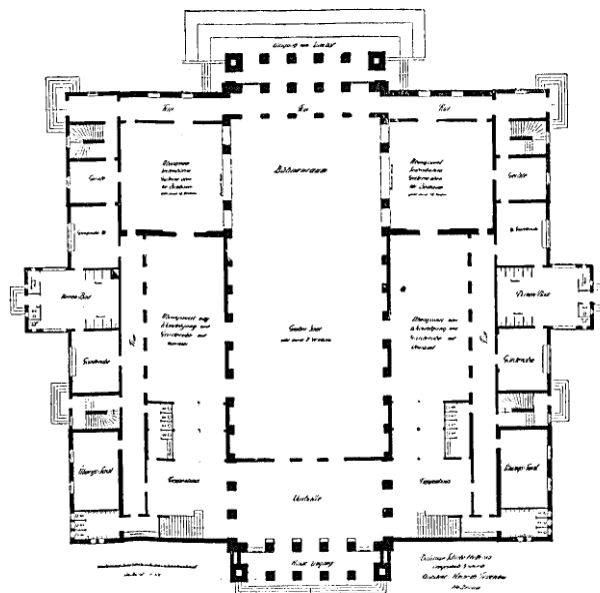


Abb. 3.

Fig 4: Blueprint for Festspielhaus theater and its adjacent rehearsal studios. From “Die hygienische Bedeutung der rhythmischen Gymnastik: ein Brief von Dr. E Jaques-Dalcroze mit einem Nachwort von Dr. Wolf Dohrn,” *Gartenstadt Mitteilungen der deutschen Gartenstadtgesellschaft* Jg. 5, H 11 (Nov 1911), 156.

In addition to the Eye of Hellerau, the symmetrical layout and even visual rhythms of the Festspielhaus’ built environment, such as the functionalist columns lining the main entrance and the building’s interior floor-plan, emphasized harmony, which was characterized by principles of logical order, stability, and balance. This further presented dance as a tripartite system of production that was balanced by its various branches: creation / fabrication, product production,

¹⁷ On the collaboration between Jaques-Dalcroze and Appia see Gernot Giertz, *Kultus ohne Götter: Émile Jaques-Dalcroze und Adolphe Appia, der Versuch einer Theaterreform auf der Grundlage der rhythmischen Gymnastik* (München, 1975); Martin, Dénes, et al, *Émile Jaques-Dalcroze: L’Homme, Le Compositeur, Le Créateur de la Rythmique* (1965).

and consumption. Dance training and rehearsal (creation / fabrication), the formation of dance-works (the product), and dance performance (consumption) occurred in even balance within a single space. The *Werkbund*'s mission for industrial- and life-reform, which equally emphasized all aspects of industrial production and which sought to better represent workers alongside of their factory directors, was clearly evidenced in the *Festspielhaus*.

The opening ceremony for the Institute was held on April 22, 1911 and drew strong connections between *Rythmique* and the community of Hellerau. Although Jaques-Dalcroze's system was not new to Hellerau or to Germany, the ceremony emphasized how Hellerau's native land was home to the Swiss-born system for dance. It did this by showing how *Rythmique* as a model for a new, harmonious culture of industry, society, and nature – the overarching themes of Hellerau since its inception. Dances, songs, and speeches lauded Hellerau as the “new German Olympus.”¹⁸ Surrounded by Hellerau's collectively grown vegetable patches, wood houses, and quiet, shady glens, these performances presented the Institute as a model for Hellerau's thriving, balanced, and progressive culture. For example, one performance as part of the ceremony featured a child symbolically striking a hammer against the buildings' first stone, which underscored the importance of education, manual labor, and theatrical performance.¹⁹ Children sang a song describing their hope for the deep roots that the Institute and *Rythmique* would take in Hellerau's soil : “All of our hopes / all of our striving / rest upon you,” they sang. “Give it space / give it strength and room to grow / exclaim the highest worth from this work / and give it solid ground.”²⁰ Built upon Hellerau's collectively owned and cultivated land, the children's song

¹⁸ Heinrich Harr, *Die Vermählung von Stadt und Land. Ein soziales Experiment*, Flugschrift n.2 (Berlin, 1904); cited in de Michelis and Bilenker, 150.

¹⁹ Irwin Spector, *Rhythm and Life: The Work of Emile Jaques-Dalcroze* (Stuyvesant, 1990), 80.

²⁰ Karl Knoll (libretto) and Émile Jaques-Dalcroze (music), “Gesang zur Grundsteinlegung der Bildungsanstalt Jaques-Dalcroze in der Gartenstadt Hellerau bei Dresden,” *Rhythmus: Ein Jahrbuch* Jg. 1-4, H1 (Jena, 1911), 96.

suggested that the Institute would enriched the soil, enable creativity, and ensure stability. Dohrn, the Institute's patron saint, gave a speech extolling the virtues and uniqueness of the Institute. "Honored attendees! Our Institute distinguishes itself from the majority of teaching and educational institutes because it serves a very particular idea: the recovery [*Wiedergewinnung*] of rhythm in education [*Erziehung*], in the development [*Bildung*] of character [*Persönlichkeit*], and in art and life."²¹ Dohrn's speech was later reprinted in several forms, including as a monograph by Eugen Diederichs, and as article in the Institute's annual newsletter, *Der Rhythmus*.

Although the opening ceremony was held in April 1911, classes at the Institute were already underway. Even before it moved into its permanent home, the Institute instilled in its students such values of "rhythm in education" and "development of character" through its technical exercises of self-control, mastery, and rigor. With nearly ninety classes per week, the Institute was a hub of constant activity. Courses for its students ranged from *Rythmique*, *solfège*, plastic dance, anatomy, and improvisation, to physical conditioning and calisthenics, though the latter was available only to men. Classes were punctuated with two-hour afternoon "relaxation sessions" and a break for lunch. Jaques-Dalcroze was assisted by a teaching staff of eight instructors, including Susanne Perrottet, with whom Jaques-Dalcroze had first developed *Rythmique* in Geneva, dancer Nina Gorter, and a young polish student named Myram Ramberg, later known as "Marie Rambert," the founder of the British Ballet.²² The Institute's training program was demanding: classes were held from morning until night and tested the stamina of

²¹ Wolf Dohrn, "Die Aufgabe der Bildungsanstalt Jaques-Dalcroze: Niederschrift nach einer Rede zur Grundsteinlegung des Institutes, gehalten im alten Landhaus zu Dresden am 22. April 1911," *Der Rhythmus* (1911), 2.

²² Selma Landen Odom, "Mary Wigman at Hellerau," *Ballet Review* 14, no.2 (Summer, 1986): 41-55.

students and teachers alike.²³ The class schedule lasted six days out of the week, with Fridays reserved for related pursuits that were organized as group activities or independent study, such as music and visual art classes, or trips to concerts and museums in Dresden; additionally, students kept journals chronicling their experiences and observations, and collaborated on their own dance and performance works.²⁴ Many students practiced *Rythmique* principles and physical exercises outside of class, and students were “urged to stretch and do deep breathing exercises with the window open before walking in the fresh air to school.”²⁵ Hellerau’s fresh air served as easy inspiration for the students’ own ease of breath and motion – as well as that of their audiences, who attended class demonstrations and performances in the *Festspielhaus* theater. Playwright George Bernard Shaw, who visited the school in the summer of 1913, remarked on the light, airy feel of the theater, which was achieved by a combination of hung fabric and Salzman’s lighting design. “The Dalcroze school at Hellerau, which is what we came to see, is very interesting. The theatre has walls and roof of white linen with the lights behind the linen.”²⁶ Shaw was so taken with its effect that he returned for a closer look. “This afternoon we went again and saw the lighting installation – the acres of white linen and the multitude of lights behind and above it. It needs only a transparent floor with lights beneath it to make it capable of anything heavenly.”²⁷

²³ “Stundenplan für 1910/1911 Der Bildungsanstalt Jaques-Dalcroze im Alten Landhaus zu Dresden,” *Der Rhythmus* (1911), 80-81.

²⁴ Odom, “Wigman at Hellerau,” 45.

²⁵ Odom, *Ibid.*

²⁶ George Bernard Shaw, Letter to Mrs. Patrick Campbell (Dresden, June 30, 1913). In George Bernard Shaw and Stella Campbell, *Their Correspondence*, ed. Alan Dent (New York, 1952), 137 – 138.

²⁷ Shaw, Letter to Mrs. Patrick Campbell (Dresden, June 30, 1913), 139.

Jaques-Dalcroze was a committed educator and taught regularly during the week. According to memoirs of his students, he was “the dominant personality of the school,” though his presence was an important part of his teaching: “as a teacher he conveyed his ideas directly through his [musical accompaniment at the piano], using few words, in an atmosphere of fun in which people actually worked very hard.”²⁸ Jaques-Dalcroze taught classes daily, such as one-hour sessions in *Rythmique* that were attended by many of the Institute’s advanced students, including a young Mary Wigman. This involved *Rythmique*’s core exercise in which the accompanist (i.e. Jaques-Dalcroze) on the piano performed a musical sequence for the students who then, after careful listening, “played” the rhythmic patterns of the melody with their feet by marching, walking, and stepping; “often exercises involved singing as well as listening and moving, so that patterns and whole phrases might be stepped together, the students becoming the source of both sound and movement.”²⁹ Outlined in Chapter 1, these “rhythmic riddles” were the exercises Jaques-Dalcroze, along with Susanne Perrottet, first developed as the basis for his later system of *Rythmique*. These exercises in physical multitasking taught students to quickly change musical tempos and rhythms, turning the body into an impressive model of shifting musical polyrhythms. “The children can beat 4 in a bar with one hand and 3 in a bar with the other simultaneously, and they can change instantly in marching from 4 and 3 and 6 [...] to 5 and 7.”³⁰

Such marching exercises formed the basis for student examinations at the Institute. In addition to his tour of the *Festspielhaus*, Shaw attended classes for young children, as well as a *Rythmique* examination for older students, which tested their knowledge of musical harmony, as well as skills in pitch, ear-training, improvisation, conducting, their translation of musical

²⁸ Odom, “Wigman at Hellerau,” 46.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Shaw, Letter to Mrs. Patrick Campbell (Dresden, June 30, 1913), 138.

rhythm into physical movement, and their ability to perform complex rhythmic multitasking.

Shaw observed,

Both examinees confronted the examiners, a row of elderly gentlemen [...each played] rhythms for [the students] on the piano and made them march to it. Then they had to pick up impossible themes written off a blackboard, and harmonise [sic] them on the piano straight off. They had to improvise variations on them; to modulate into all keys on demand of the examinees then to listen to Dalcroze modulating wildly and name the key he had come into. Finally they had to conduct a choir, first with a stick in the ordinary way, and then with the poetic movements of the whole body. This last was extraordinarily effective. I foresee the day when there will be no more [Hans] Richters and [Arthur] Nikischs, but instead, beautiful figures bowed to the earth or raising their hands to heaven [...].³¹

Shaw further noted the ease with which the Jaques-Dalcroze students performed such tests and exercises in public. Even the youngest students handled the spotlight with confidence and seeming effortlessness. “There is no discipline, absolutely no nervousness, and no sulking when [the students] cant [sic] pick up the rhythm though there are 700 strangers looking on.”³²

There is no evidence to suggest that Jaques-Dalcroze had ever heard of Hellerau, the Garden City Movement, the *Werkbund*, or the *Werkstätten* before moving to Dresden. Nor had he expressed any previous interest in Saxony as a particularly fitting natural environment for an Institute, or as the cultural or social context for a *Rythmique*-based education. The circumstances of the Institute’s relocation were, in other words, random, and based almost entirely upon Dohrn’s interest, resources, and impulses. While the Institute and Jaques-Dalcroze was welcomed by Hellerau’s community – and even though for some, like Dohrn, the link between Hellerau’s life and labor reforms and Jaques-Dalcroze’s principles of embodied rhythm and

³¹ Shaw, Letter to Mrs. Patrick Campbell (Dresden, June 30, 1913), 139 – 140.

³² Shaw, *Ibid.*

harmony were self-evident – justification for the Institute’s presence and the community’s financial investment in it was necessary. Additionally, Hellerau was built upon principles of careful collaboration and planning, which Dohrn’s more or less independent decision to invite Jaques-Dalcroze violated.

Dohrn and Jaques-Dalcroze publicly emphasized the conceptual links between *Rythmique* and Hellerau in an effort to justify the Institute’s presence . In his a speech to students following the opening of the Institute, Jaques-Dalcroze adopted many the ideas, language, and rhetoric of Hellerau’s organizers, which in turn revised *Rythmique* as vehicle for values of the Sentimental Enlightenment. Like the organizers of the opening ceremony, Jaques-Dalcroze linked the sensibilities taught by *Rythmique* to the built environment of the Garden City. Speaking to an assembly of first-year students shortly after his arrival, he described Hellerau as *Rythmique*’s spiritual and material home. “Now I have trained students who will know and test out the indissoluble singularity [*Einheit*] of rhythm in time and space,” he declared, adding,

I am certain that, thanks to [your] special education, one day we will be capable of communicating all human impulses, melodies, and harmonies, be they plastic [“physical,” *plastisch*] or musical, with the help of our movements and group-arrangements on levels or on graduated planes, on [stage risers] or staircases. My aesthetic ideas will only take form in the Garden City of Hellerau.³³

The design and features of Hellerau’s material objects and spaces – from its staircases, stage risers, and platforms – enabled dance to be the language for “all human impulses” and “harmonies,” which were both material (plastic), and immaterial (musical). By participating in *Rythmique*, students discovered an ease of motion, social harmony, and proof of the “indissoluble singularity” of the community at large. His method thus appealed to groups who

³³ Émile Jaques-Dalcroze, “Was die Rhythmische Gymnastik Ihnen Gibt und Was Sie Von Ihnen Fordert,” *Der Rhythmus* (1911), 49.

were primarily drawn to Hellerau's landscape, communal life and culture, as well as to those drawn more to its emphasis on individual cultivation, health, and spiritual renewal.

Rythmique in Hellerau retained its principles of Enlightenment sentimentalism, but at the Institute, Jaques-Dalcroze expanded it to include other concepts not fully explained by the system. For example, the 1906 *Méthode* described a balance between brain and body, or feeling and rational intellect, necessary to reduce force, but in the explanation for this was vague, and fraught with contradictions. In the text, he noted that the “status of the soul” hinged upon bodily movement and effortlessness but did not explain how individuals navigated between verbal languages of rational behavior (which would articulate thought, feeling, action) and the language of embodied expression, which was non-verbal and more closely linked to the soul.³⁴ By 1911, Jaques-Dalcroze noted a more precise connection between body and soul through rhythm. “What is rhythm? Something of the soul? Something of the body? Very certain, both.”³⁵ Newly relocated to Hellerau, Jaques-Dalcroze clearly stated that rhythm unified rational articulation with embodied expression. Rhythm was its own language, that united different languages of body and soul into a single, coherent system that unfolded in time and space.

There is no rhythm that is not somehow manifested spatially, and the rhythm of sounds [*Töne*,” also translatable as “notes”], which musicians make through their movements when they play instruments, requires the rhythm of limbs. Thus one can say that all rhythm is somehow corporeal. But it is also spiritual; thus each rhythm means [*bedeuten*,” also translatable as “indicates”] an order, a regulated series – one occurring in time that is fixed by spatially elapsing movement.³⁶

³⁴ Émile Jaques-Dalcroze, *Méthode Jaques-Dalcroze. Vol I: Gymnastique Rythmique* (Paris, 1906), vii – viii.

³⁵ Émile Jaques-Dalcroze, “Die Hygienische Bedeutung der rhythmischen Gymnastik: ein Brief von Dr E Jaques Dalcroze mit einem Nachwort von Wolf Dorn,” *Gartenstadt Mitteilungen der deutschen Gartenstadtgesellschaft* Jg.5 H11 (Nov 1911), 154.

³⁶ Jaques-Dalcroze, “Die Hygienische Bedeutung der rhythmischen Gymnastik,” 154.

The physical, material force of one's dancing limbs combined with the "spiritual," metaphysical force of sounds and affect to create "an order, a regulated series": musical and physical harmony. This was unified, effortless, and free of tension, thus displaying the accordance of disparate parts within a single system. Jaques-Dalcroze further specified that this accord was "hygienic": it was a force to renew both body and soul "freed from the intellectualism of the nineteenth century."³⁷ At the turn of the century Jaques-Dalcroze had celebrated rational intellect. In Hellerau a decade later, he warned of an overly rational, "intellectualized," approach to movement that was detrimental to both body and spirit.

Jaques-Dalcroze also articulated in his earlier work that a balance of effortless forces in dance modeled effortless forces in society. The *Rythmique* classroom, he showed, formed a stable, ordered model for a Rousseauian general will in which "each man gives himself to all, he gives himself to no one."³⁸ Though he outlined in his pedagogical lectures how his method enacted social harmony his early work generally presented *Rythmique* as a social model through allegory or metaphor, suggesting in its embodied exercises values of democratic engagement, social leadership, republicanism, and civic responsibility. Jaques-Dalcroze took a different approach for his audiences at Hellerau, and a different angle on the social question. Dance and embodied rhythm, he told his German audiences, "invigorates and disciplines, it controls the masses and gives each within the mass a feeling, which is aroused and to be controlled completely individually. It is therefore never a model, but rather life."³⁹ No longer an abstraction or what Max Weber would later refer to a "derivative of life," dance embodied the flesh and

³⁷ Jaques-Dalcroze, *Ibid.*

³⁸ Jean Jacques Rousseau, *The Social Contract*. Trans Maurice Cranston (New York, 1968), 61.

³⁹ Jaques-Dalcroze, "Die Hygienische Bedeutung der rhythmischen Gymnastik," 155.

blood of a new social order based on a balance of individual feeling and self-control rather than unthinking rationalization. This balance enabled the experience of freedom.

And the further rhythmic education continues, the more intimately the body follows each movement of the rhythm, so that [the student] feels more free and secure, at once controlled and self-controlling, the master of himself and devoted to a greatness, something higher – yes, almost [the] miraculous.⁴⁰

Dance was thus a kind of sovereignty: it individual to be self-legislating yet respectful of harmonic law, order, and stability. The dancer was “more free and secure, at once controlled and self-controlling”; she could be master of herself and mastered by another. Lacking physical restraint or impediment, she was endowed with clear purpose, direction, and a “devotion,” or fidelity, to higher order. As if to further emphasize concepts of self-control and freedom, Jaques-Dalcroze further reformed his class uniforms: instead of the pantaloons and wide-brimmed collars inspired by the eighteenth-century French peasantry, students were required to wear black leotards or short, simple tunics, as well as “voluminous kimonos in various colors” for classes that required them to move frequently between standing and sitting.⁴¹

This embodied experience of freedom and order was social and personal. It happened through feelings and emotions, such as the subjective experience of joy, spiritual satisfaction, and wholeness. Dance thus brought together physical, emotional, and social forces into a unified vision of freedom and order. For those still unconvinced by its practical applications and benefits to social life, Jaques-Dalcroze outlined how a balance of physical mastery and spiritual devotion transformed society and stayed against the growing tide of rationalization, specialization, and

⁴⁰ Ibid., 155. The original text reads: “Und je weiter die rhythmische Ausbildung geht, je intimer der Körper jeder Bewegung des Rhythmus folgt, um so mehr fühlt er sich frei und sicher, beherrscht und herrschend zugleich, Herr seiner selbst und hingegeben an ein Größeres, Übergeordnetes – ja fast Übernatürliches.”

⁴¹ Landen Odom, “Mary Wigman at Hellerau,” 45.

fracture in mass culture. *Rythmique*, which helped “the renunciation of intellectualism and the revitalization of the spirit” through its dancing, “growing social body,”⁴² prevented people from becoming “today’s ‘divided men’ [*Teilmenschen*], specialists, vessels for knowledge and skill.”⁴³ *Rythmique* had a clear mission in the contemporary moment: to remake, through dance, the individual as a unifier of opposing forces in service to a effortless, harmonic order.

*

II. Better Chairs or Bigger Carrots?: Divided Politics at Hellerau

Jaques-Dalcroze’s description of his system captured many of the core tenets of the *Werkbund*, whose members, including Muthesius, Dohrn, and Schmidt, were lead organizers at Hellerau. The *Werkbund*, as well as Schmidt’s furniture factory, the German Workshops for Craftsmanship [*Werkstätten für Handwerkskunst*], promoted the renewal of daily life through the encounter with material objects, whose austere designs and simple aesthetics cultivated within consumers values of the importance of skilled craft, handwork, and utility.⁴⁴ These objects which daily life and physical encounters with users, and redefined culture as an holistic, alternative, approach to divided or reified process of production and consumption.

The practitioners of the *Werkbund* program linked the definition of culture to its application within the pragmatic pursuits of modern life, to the reconciliation of aesthetic form and the usefulness of its products [...] The projected harmonizing of production, product, and consumption was conceived as a step into a new era, not just a new style. Its centers lay outside of the universities and were

⁴² Dohrn, “Hellerauer Schulpläne,” 87.

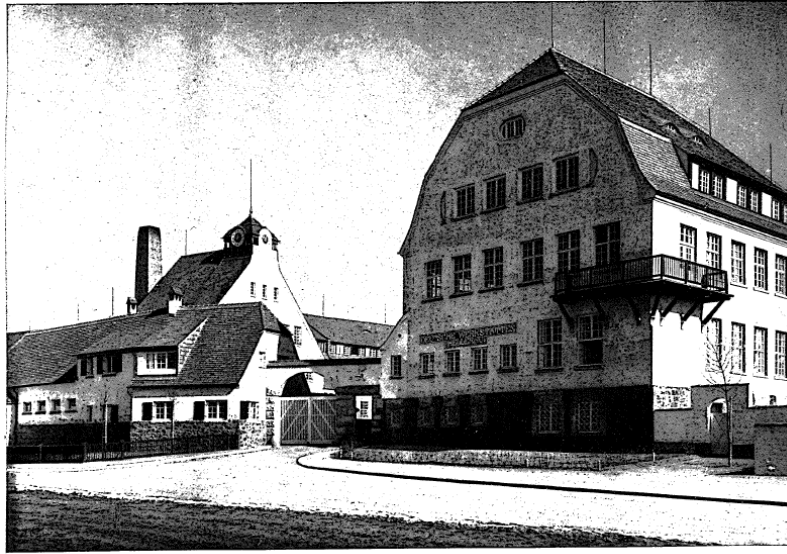
⁴³ Jaques-Dalcroze, “Die Hygienische Bedeutung der rhythmischen Gymnastik,” 155.

⁴⁴ Peschel, “Karl Schmidt und seine Werkstätten für Handwerkskunst.”

connected with industry, craft firms, and state-sponsored institutions such as craft-schools and academies.⁴⁵

The project of “harmonizing of production, product, and consumption” found model expression at the Institute and in Hellerau, located on periphery of Dresden, and its established institutions, commerce, palaces, and university. Hellerau’s communal activities turned laborers from faceless producers in a factory into meaningful craftsman, who were also valuable consumers of culture, health, and hygiene. In addition to physical activity and dance training, Hellerau emphasized a healthy approach to the body. Alcohol and tobacco were banned, and a vegetarian diet, including dishes made of the produce from Hellerau’s community gardens, was encouraged. Freeing themselves from dependencies on substances or unhealthy food, individuals at Hellerau became the living, breathing, embodied products of its reformed way of life. Schmidt’s factory, the *Werkstätten* (Fig. 1), and Hellerau’s residential homes, communal spaces, and objects, such as chairs, tables, and benches, were designed by members of the *Werkbund* and industrial designers for the *Werkstätten*, including Tessenow and Riemerschmid; their designs ensured the community continually engaged in the “reconciliation of aesthetic form and the usefulness” of material objects, their users and their surroundings. Individuals constantly experienced this culture of art-meets-life, as the smallest details of physical objects and physical spaces reiterated the harmony between production, product, and consumption. Blueprints for residential homes, for example, included precise instructions for the location of each piece of furniture within each room, including such small details as washstands and bedside tables (Fig. 2).

⁴⁵ Frank Trommler, “The Creation of a Culture of *Sachlichkeit*,” in Geoff Eley, ed., *Society, Culture, and the State in Germany, 1870 – 1930* (Ann Arbor, 1996), 469.



Fabrik der »Deutschen Werkstätten«, Architekt Professor Richard Riemerschmid

Fig 1. “Fabrik der ‘Deutschen Werkstätten.’ Architekt Professor Richard Riemerschmid.” In *Die Gartenstadt Hellerau*, 13.

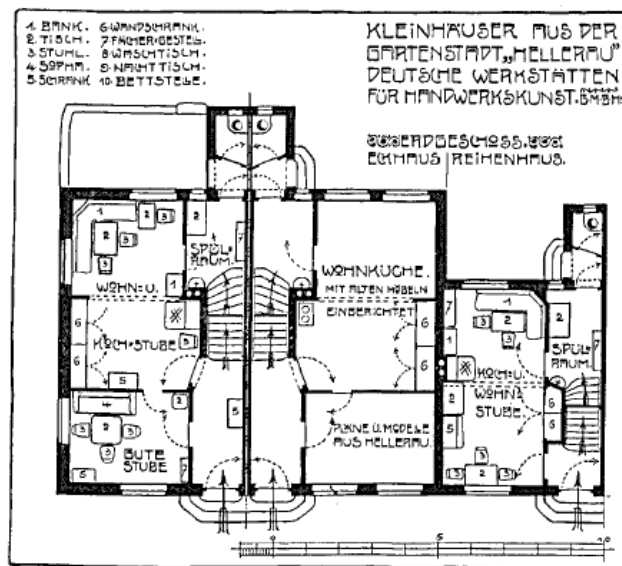


Fig 2. Blueprint of small-sized residence at Hellerau by German Werkstätten für Handwerkskunst. The small numbered boxes in the diagram correspond to various pieces of furniture listed in the key in the upper left-hand corner. In Wolf Dohrn, *Die Gartenstadt Hellerau – ein Bericht von Wolf Dohrn* (Jena, 1908), 16.

Hellerau’s reformist mission absorbed the *Werkbund*’s political values. The *Werkbund* promoted a vision of factory laborers, who, though involved in the production of mass goods, were craftsmen rather than cogs on an assembly line; this vision contrasted with Taylorist methods and

“scientifically managed” factories elsewhere in Europe and the United States.⁴⁶ Nationalist attitudes about German industry as the marker of civilizational and social progress also infused this “healthier” and “balanced” approach to manual labor. “In the understanding of industrialization as the manifest destiny of the German nation, [the *Werkbund*’s] modernism was as much a pattern of behavior, the expression of a modern attitude (*Haltung*), as it was an aesthetic structuring of political and economic pursuits.”⁴⁷ Through its promotion of this new, enlightened culture of labor, Hellerau promoted social progress as a German national project, which was its “manifest destiny.” For Muthesius in particular, this had economic implications. The “harmonizing of production, product, and consumption” through the export of German manufacturing was a strategy to strengthen the nation’s political and economic power within an increasingly global network of trade and commerce. “If Muthesius had his way, ‘tasteful’ products of high-quality would be made in unprecedented quantities for coordinated, worldwide distribution as German national exports in an expanding *Weltwirtschaft*, or global economy.”⁴⁸ Economics, social reform, culture, and national ambition thus converged at Hellerau, under the direction of those creating policy through the *Werkbund* and those determining details of industrial production and distribution at the *Werkstätten*.

Muthesius’ project to harmonize production, product, and consumption relied on a balance of embodied experience and rational knowledge. Hellerau’s culture of the body, including classes at the Institute, instilled this value throughout the community. On the one hand, the creation and consumption of “‘tasteful’ products’ relied on the physical movement of its

⁴⁶ Rabinbach, *The Human Motor: Energy, Fatigue, and the Origins of Modernity* (Berkeley, 1990).

⁴⁷ Frank Trommler, “The Creation of a Culture of *Sachlichkeit*,” 469.

⁴⁸ John V. Maciuika, “The Prussian Commerce Ministry, the *Deutscher Werkbund*, and Germany’s Global Commercial Ambitions,” in Geoff Eley, Jennifer L. Jenkins, and Tracie Matysik, eds. *German Modernities from Wilhelm to Weimar: A Contest of Futures* (London, 2016), 173.

makers and consumers – as well as on their subjective feeling and personal sensibility as individuals assembled, used, and manipulated material objects in their jobs and throughout their daily life. At the same time, in order to adopt the values of the *Werkbund*, individuals also needed a rational appreciation of an object and its qualities – of a chair as sturdy and well designed, for example.

As Muthesius’ “launch pad for a new kind of industrial culture,” Hellerau also modeled Naumann, Dohrn, and Schmidt’s reformist vision of a “‘third way’ between industrial progress and the healing potential of nature.”⁴⁹ Hellerau regulated building density on its grounds to preserve communal green spaces and conserve its natural environment. Yet despite this, the community was under constant construction. In 1911, for example, which was the year that initial construction began for the *Festspielhaus*, an additional 150 new buildings were built, including 25 single-family cottages (as shown in Fig. 2), as well as a “guest house.”⁵⁰ Many of its founding members designed them, including Fischer, Richard Riemerschmid, and Tessenow. These architects transformed public and private spaces, such as hallways, rooms, windows, bathing areas, into a pleasant, healthy experience by maximizing natural light, air, and emphasizing visual forms of symmetry and order.⁵¹

Hellerau’s physical layout also eased class differences that plagued Germany and nearby Dresden. Dresden was known as the “jewel box of Saxony,” and its ornate palaces were striking

⁴⁹ Maiken Umbach, *German Cities and Bourgeois Modernism* (Oxford, 2009), 119.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 90.

⁵¹ On the history of Hellerau’s architecture, see: Harris, “The German Garden City Movement”; Ralph Lindner und Hans-Peter Lühr, Hrsgs. *Gartenstadt Hellerau: Die Geschichte ihrer Bauten*, (Dresden: 2008); John V. Maciuika, *Before the Bauhaus: Architecture, Politics, and the German State, 1890 – 1920* (Cambridge, 2005); Marco de Michelis and Vicki Bilenker, “Heinrich Tessenow and the Institut Dalcroze at Hellerau,” *Perspecta* 26, special issue on “Theater, Theatricality and Architecture” (1990): 143 - 170; Maiken Umbach, *German Cities and Bourgeois Modernism*.

visual symbols of the many, historical, social and political divisions among its population. In addition to its factory workers and its Prussian elites, Dresden was home to populations of liberals and social democrats and liberals working to modernize industry, on the one hand, and political conservatives who supported Wilhelmine-era policy, values, and tradition, on the other. At Hellerau, in contrast, cooperative housing and rental agreements fostered socio-economic diversity within the community, particularly among lower and middle-class Germans. A 1910 census report, for example, noted that among Hellerau's 800 residents, one-quarter of them were employed at Schmidt's factory. This figure included factory laborers, as well as white-collar personnel ["Angestellten"], who were likely wealthier and better educated.⁵² Despite these social and class differences, however, at Hellerau, workers, administrators, and factory owners lived, gardened, and danced together.

Another set of values supported life at Hellerau. In contrast to the members of the *Werkbund*, who saw man-made environments and material life as the basis for the social contract, members of the Garden City Movement emphasized nature as the basis for collective life and relations. For them, nature and natural order modeled social harmony and determined the rules governing life at Hellerau. "We of the Garden City report that not only new and beautiful houses, streets, and residences are being built with a new spirit [*Geist*]. Rather, if we want to convey an image of how such a spirit operates in the houses and residences we build, we have to provide a picture of the people within them."⁵³ Embodied individuals who were properly connected to nature, they argued, possessed a desire to create, a "*Schaffenslust*," that supplied the energy and grounds for communal life, or "*Gemeinschaftsleben*," in contrast to rationally

⁵² Anonymous, "Rundschau: Hellerau," *Gartenstadt Mitteilungen der deutschen Gartenstadtgesellschaft* Jg.5, H7 (Juli 1911), 90.

⁵³ E.B., "Vom Gemeinschaftsleben in Gartenstädten," *Gartenstadt Mitteilungen der deutschen Gartenstadtgesellschaft* Jg. 5, H11 (Nov 1911), 153.

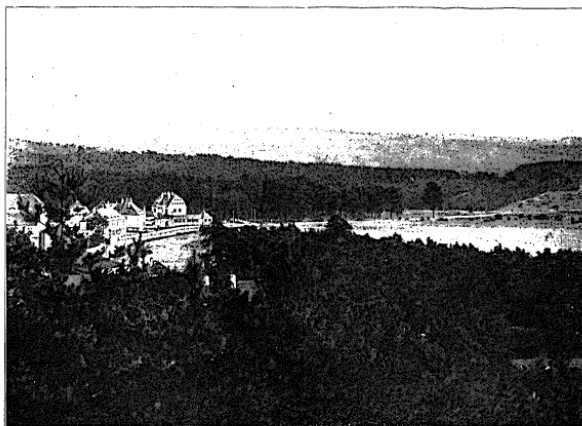
planned cities and administered life. Garden City organizers, like members of the *Werkbund*, believed that the mission of the community was the harmonization of social relations. In contrast to the *Werkbund*, however, the Garden City organizers argued that social harmony emerged from a felt, embodied experience, based in nature. By developing man's desire to create, nature better inspired man's desire for social reform, and his ability to practically enact it. "An urge to create has developed in the task of cooperative production and production management in Garden Communities, and will, like a new, long lost and forgotten collective sense, continue to grow, and in service to the whole [...]"⁵⁴ Though reforms to built environments were important, the social collective needed to be firmly grounded in an awareness of nature and a sense of natural harmony.

Elsewhere, Hellerau's members of the Garden City movement emphasized the connection between man and nature rather than man and material object as the basis for the community. "In the soil, it is said, there is the impression that all human achievements, at base, are communal achievements. The soil, therefore, belongs to the community!"⁵⁵ With this slogan, the Garden City organizers sought to bring individuals closer to the land at Hellerau, while uniting them into a harmonious social collective. The movement, inspired by the writing of its founder Ebenezer Howard, emphasized nature as the basis of society; like Howard's model for the English Garden City, the connection between man and a "greener," natural environment

⁵⁴ Anonymous, „Die Entwicklung der englischen Gartenstadtbeuegung“ *Gartenstadt Mitteilungen der deutschen Gartenstadtgesellschaft*, „Gartenstadt Mitteilungen der deutschen Gartenstadtgesellschaft Jg. 5, H11 (Nov 1911), 152.

⁵⁵ Anonymous, "Die Gartenstadtgedanke und Hellerau," *Die Gartenstadt Hellerau: Ein Bericht über den Zweck, die Organisation, die Ansiedlungs-Bedingungen, die bisherigen Erfolge und die Ziele. Mit 130 Plänen, Grundrissen und Photographien* (Dresden, 1911), 3. The original German is, „Im Boden, so sagt man, komme zum Ausdruck, daß alle Menschenleistung im letzten Grund Gemeinschaftsleistung sei. Den Boden also der Gemeinschaft!“ I have taken some liberties here with the translation in order to better capture the feeling of the passage.

formed the basis of the community.⁵⁶ Hellerau's founders saw the community's natural environment as a vital method to ease class tension, bridging cultures of rich and poor, industrialists and workers, together in the great outdoors. Images used in promotional materials after in 1911 show the community tucked inside a sweeping natural landscape, emphasizing its natural context above and beyond its man-made, or constructed spaces (Fig. 3). Other promotional materials display Hellerau's residential offerings as part of a continuum with nature, foregrounding Hellerau's serene woods as much as its prospective housing options (Fig. 4).



Blick vom oberen (210 m über N.N.) auf den unteren Teil (185 m über N.N.) von Hellerau

Fig 3. "View from above (210 m above N.N.) of the lower part (185 m above N.N.) of Hellerau," in *Die Gartenstadt Hellerau* (Dresden, 1911), pp 3.

Fig. 4. "from the cottage district, architect Heinrich Tessenow," in *Die Gartenstadt Hellerau* (Dresden, 1911), pp .



Aus dem Landhäuserviertel, Architekt Heinrich Tessenow

Hellerau's founders banned the practice of land speculation, which was as much an approach to social organization as it was a restriction on business practice or economic development. Members of the Garden City movement believed that the division of land into small units, which were then assigned particular monetary values and sold, exacerbated social divisions: splitting land into parcels elevated the private over the collective good and further

⁵⁶ Harris, "The German Garden City Movement."

increased social divisions through wealth-based inequality. In turn, the division of the land into saleable properties sapped the power of people as a body, as builders and organizers of collective life, and as contributors to a common culture. The extraction of monetary value from the soil, an element with minerals and nutrients, as well as a tradition, heritage, and history, stripped land of its organic and spiritual power. Only a collective, social organization could stop this.

Growth [*Wachstum*] and labor confers onto every speck of the earth a particular value, which contingent and exclusive value [*bedingte Monopolwert*] splits from the beloved ground. This land-value must be like any other economic value, yet it belongs to the collective [*die Gesamtheit*], and not to the individual that produced it; rather, land-value belongs to the collective power [*Zusammenströmen*; also “collective gush,” “collective surge,” or “collective current”] of men within an area [...] Accordingly, a [housing] settlement should from the outset steer clear of speculation.⁵⁷

The social whole [*Gesamtheit*] possessed a unique collective power, a “*Zusammenströmen*,” rooted in the land. Difficult to render adequately in English, the term referenced a material, as well as metaphysical energy. Thus, a community that abolished speculation protected this whole, maintained its natural order, and harnessed its *Zusammenströmen* through its social practices such as the building of homes, the tilling of the soil, healthy living, and celebrations of its romantic beauty through leisure and the arts. Grounded in nature and reflective of its harmony, *Zusammenströmen* formed the basis of social relations between individuals at Hellerau, tasked with conserving and protecting the inherent worth of “every speck of land.”

Through nature, Hellerau’s Garden City organizers merged the values of German romanticism and Enlightenment sentimentalism with modern theories of labor efficiency and effort-reduction. Describing Hellerau’s land, they cited Karl Bücher’s 1896 text *Work and*

⁵⁷ Anonymous, “Die Gartenstadtgedanke und Hellerau,” 3.

Rhythm, a treatise on embodied rhythm as the basis for social and industrial reform.⁵⁸ Bucher's text had inspired Dohrn, who recognized that the Institute modeled Bücher's vision "of rhythm as the educator of humanity throughout the ages, among all peoples."⁵⁹ Garden City organizers took this a step further and described how embodied labor through dance had the potential to preserve essential, "natural" elements of humanity: the "blood and glow" ["Blut und Glut"] of children, and the "vital element" of natural rhythm, threatened by "life in our machine age."⁶⁰ Here, they again emphasized that nature formed the basis for the individual and collective experience of the community, rather than manmade objects or new models of production and consumption. "[T]he goal of all of our Garden City associations [...] is not only to create good residences with gardens but also the 'collectively used features ["*Einrichtungen*" – also translatable as fixtures, facilities, or provisions] of all types, which serve to care for the body and soul."⁶¹ The built environment, in other words, was a space to care for the body and soul, a union which was first based in nature and preexisted its reformed context in Hellerau. Here, the Institute offered a vital link to train individuals to recognize, through rhythm and dance, the connection between body and soul, the material and immaterial.

Hellerau's social order mirrored this model for land ownership. Its guidelines limited private speculation and encouraged collective industry, through the *Werkstätten* as well as shared gardens. In addition to healing divisions between educated bourgeois liberals and the progressive, likely uneducated, laboring classes – which were groups Naumann and Dohrn

⁵⁸ Karl Bücher, *Arbeit und Rhythmus*. 3rd edition (Leipzig: 1902).

⁵⁹ Wolf Dohrn, "Die Aufgabe der Bildungsanstalt Jaques-Dalcroze: Niederschrift nach einer Rede zur Grundsteinlegung des Institutes, gehalten im alten Landhaus zu Dresden am 22. April 1911," *Die Gartenstadt Hellerau und Weitere Schriften*. Reprint (Dresden, 1992), 49.

⁶⁰ E.B., "Vom Gemeinschaftsleben in Gartenstädten," 154.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 154.

sought to join through the political activities of the National Socialist Association – the abolition of land speculation facilitated economic growth. “Thus, first, it is possible to consolidate land meaningfully and cheaply for development, and second, through [housing] settlement one can expect an increase in multiple forms of land-value that ensure the benefit of the community.”⁶² “Development” referred to housing development. By 1913, Hellerau boasted 418 single and multiple family homes, with all but six of them unoccupied.⁶³ As early as 1907, Hellerau’s directors revealed elaborate plans for agricultural development, with plots of land designated throughout the community for “farming growth” (e.g. potatoes, rye, barley, oats, red clover, wheat), “forest growth” (e.g. pine, birch, spruce, beech trees), “fruit trees” (e.g. grapes, cherry, peaches, nuts, plum, apple), and “garden growth” (e.g. asparagus, strawberries, other vegetables).⁶⁴ While it is unclear how much revenue Hellerau’s strawberries yielded – no archival documents suggest that the community generated income through produce sales – the root vegetables grown in its gardens achieved considerable fame within the national Garden City movement, which sponsored Garden City communities across the country. According to one report published by the movement’s official newsletter, the *Garden City Reports of the German Garden City Society* [*Gartenstadt Mitteilungen der deutschen Gartenstadtgesellschaft*], Hellerau’s yield in the fall of 1912 included a 62 pound squash, kohlrabi “the size of a small child’s head,” and carrots “with the strength of a coffee cup.”⁶⁵

⁶² Ibid., 3.

⁶³ Census Report, “Rundschau Hellerau,” *Gartenstadt Mitteilungen der deutschen Gartenstadtgesellschaft* Jg.7, H.3 (März 1913), 56.

⁶⁴ Anonymous, “Erklärung der Schraffierungen der Bodenkarte (aufgenommen durch Prof. J. Hazard, Königl. Sächs. Sektionsgeolog u. Agronom (Herbst, 1907))” in *Die Gartenstadt Hellerau* (1911), 18.

⁶⁵ Anonymous, “Rundschau: Hellerau,” *Gartenstadt Mitteilungen der deutschen Gartenstadtgesellschaft* Jg.6, H 10 (Oktober 1912), 176.

The conservation of the “natural worth” of the land through Hellerau’s business practices and the connection to nature encouraged by its approach to healthy living merged with dance to create a society maintained embodied movement. Culture in Hellerau “sought to enrich urban life with the positive psycho-social characteristics attributed to living in close contact with nature,”⁶⁶ and this connection structured relationships between people within the community. The single family cottages and multiple family homes, which could be rented out or purchased, facilitated regular encounters between individuals over shared garden plots. Collective gardens turned physical labor into public and social events. In addition to the Institute, a culture of group leisure and entertainment cultivated healthy bodies and creative minds. Shared meals, sports, music classes, an amateur orchestra, and a chorus encouraged *Zusammenströmen* through physical activity and aesthetic appreciation.⁶⁷

The community’s emphasis on healthy living was not unique to the area. By the 1910s Dresden was the epicenter of Germany’s health and hygiene movement, also known as its “Health Enlightenment” [*Gesundheitsaufklärung*]. In 1911, the city hosted an international Hygiene Exhibition, which attracted over 5 million visitors from across Germany and throughout Europe.⁶⁸ Members of Hellerau attended and participated in the Exhibition’s festivities, which included lecture-demonstrations by students from Institute, as well as by students from the

⁶⁶ Umbach, *German Cities and Bourgeois Modernism*, 113.

⁶⁷ Wolf Dohrn, Nachwort, “Die Hygienische Bedeutung der rhythmischen Gymnastik: ein Brief von Dr E Jaques Dalcroze mit einem Nachwort von Wolf Dorn,” *Gartenstadt Mitteilungen der deutschen Gartenstadtgesellschaft* Jg.5, H 11 (Nov 1911), 156.

⁶⁸ Klaus Vogel, “Von der Totalität des Wissens zur Universalität des Menschen. Das Deutsche Hygiene-Museum 100 Jahre nach der Internationalen Hygiene-Ausstellung 1911,” in “Hygienebewegung in Dresden – Karriere einer Idee,” ed. Hans-Peter Lühr, *Dresdener Hefte* Jg.29 H.108 (April 2011), 86. See also Nicola Lepp, Martin Roth, Klaus Vogel, eds., *Der Neue Mensch – Obsessionen des 20. Jahrhunderts* (Cantz, 1999); and Sybilla Nikolow and Thomas Steller, “Das Lange Echo der I. Internationaler Hygiene-Ausstellung in der Dresdener Gesundheitsaufklärung,” also in “Hygienebewegung in Dresden – Karriere einer Idee,” ed. Hans-Peter Lühr, *Dresdener Hefte* Jg.29 H.108 (April 2011): 16 – 27.

Duncan school. A year following the exhibition, Karl August Lingner, who was a successful developer of an antibacterial mouthwash called “Odol,” emerged as a central figure within the national hygiene movement and eventually founded the Dresden Hygiene Museum. The Museum first remained a series of travelling exhibitions until 1930, when it settled into a permanent home, a massive building designed by Wilhelm Kries on the northwest corner of Dresden’s *Großer Garten*.⁶⁹

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Despite certain overlaps, the values and politics between these two organizing groups clashed, and *Rythmique* provided the community an optic through its social, economic, and cultural activities appeared as a single, united project. By 1910, dance was desperately needed. Despite the community’s emphasis on social harmony, stability, order, and ease, political differences divided Hellerau from its inception. “Hellerau quickly became the locus of hotly contested debates between different factions of the Werkbund and the German Garden Society,” as its Schmidt, Muthesius, Riemerschmid, Fischer “clashed with younger [organizers] whose ideas about modern architecture and art were at cross-purposes with the pragmatic, business-oriented approach of the senior Wilhelmine figures.”⁷⁰ This conflict, however, did not result from the enactment of policy over the years but was fundamental to the community’s original vision. “Hellerau’s initial conception had already been marked by an unresolved tension between a

⁶⁹ Walter A. Büchi, “Karl August Lingner als Aktivist der Hygiene-Bewegung,” in “Hygienebewegung in Dresden – Karriere einer Idee,” ed. Hans-Peter Lühr, *Dresdener Hefie* Jg.29 H.108 (April 2011): 4-15; and Nikolow and Steller, “Das Lange Echo der I. Internationaler Hygiene-Ausstellung in der Dresdener Gesundheitsaufklärung,” 22.

⁷⁰ Maciuika, *Before the Bauhaus*, 217.

progressive and a nostalgic impulse.”⁷¹ In the daily operations, planning, and governance of the community, political divisions thus emerged between those devoted to “strongly individualistic expressions of art,” like Dohrn, and those devoted to an older vision of culture and social reformism, such as Muthesius.

Disagreement also arose over practical issues, such as the community’s physical layout and overall atmosphere, which was a crucial component to its mission of social harmony and ease. Hellerau’s architectural aesthetic, for example, which included the late-addition of the Festspielhaus, created considerable conflict, particularly between Behrens (who was originally slated to design the Institute), Riemerschmid, Dohrn, and Tessenow.⁷² Combined with Muthesius and Fisher, these men all disagreed about the final form of the community’s spaces, clashing regularly through endless rounds of blueprints for a single building. As a result, by 1913, Hellerau’s built environment contained a mixture of styles lacking a clear vision or direction. Some buildings, such as the quaint wooden cottages (“Landhäuser”) with arched doorways, Rococo or *Dürerzeit* façades, were “architectural anachronisms”; other buildings, like the Festspielhaus or Hellerau’s multiple-family residential units, rejected ornament, embraced functionalism, and celebrated modernism.⁷³ Incorporating older styles alongside newer ones, Hellerau’s buildings thus broadcast confusing messages about the community’s connection to history, culture, and bourgeois society. Attuned to subtle cues and values conveyed by her physical surroundings, the Hellerauean asked herself a set of basic questions. Should she celebrate the values of the eighteenth- and nineteenth-centuries, or reject them in favor of modern ones? Was the built or the natural environment most important? Were the visual cues

⁷¹ Umbach, *German Cities and Bourgeois Modernism*, 114-115.

⁷² de Michelis and Bilenker, 157.

⁷³ Ulrike Schlosser, “ ‚Maschinenhäuser‘ – Holzhäuser aus und in Hellerau,” *Dresdener Hefte* Jg.15, H51, “Gartenstadt Hellerau – der Alltag einer Utopie,” Hrsg. Lühr (März 2007): 20 – 26.

indicated by these buildings and its furniture reminders of the community's mission for social reform, or signs that their attempts had failed? Were the traces of older aesthetics intended to ground Hellerau's mission for reform in a longer, explicitly national, tradition of civic duty, rigor, and responsibility?

In other words, was nature, or man, the basis of the community? Each implied a different approach to the social collective: nature, for example, suggested that the social contract was something obligatory, or duty-based, while man, on the other hand, suggested that one entered freely, and through agreement, into society. This remained open to debate and, though not explicitly articulated by members of the community, fueled their continued disagreements. Concern also arose about Hellerau's finances and its future economic plans. After 1911, Hellerau suffered financially as its emphasis shifted away from its business-oriented venture of factory production at the Werkstätten, and instead towards art, dance education, and performance.⁷⁴ By 1912, Hellerau's residences were filled almost to capacity, though a census report published one year later by the Garden City Society noted that Hellerau failed by nearly thirty percent to meet its yearly projection of residential growth.⁷⁵ (The flip side of this was that Hellerau boasted an infant mortality rate three times lower than other major urban centers, including Dresden, Chemnitz, and Leipzig.) The report mentioned upcoming improvements to the street car connection between Hellerau and Dresden, suggesting that what may have appeared as an easy commute from Dresden to the Garden City – likely advertised as a draw to prospective residents – was in practice more difficult than imagined.⁷⁶

⁷⁴ Umbach, *German Cities and Bourgeois Modernism*, 114.

⁷⁵ "Rundschau: Hellerau" [Census report], *Gartenstadt Mitteilungen der deutschen Gesellschaft* (März 1913), 56.

⁷⁶ *Ibid*, 56.

The decline in Hellerau's permanent resident population was related to the opening of the Jaques-Dalcroze Institute. As Hellerau's reputation as a center for the arts grew, its population shifted from permanent residents to a transient, seasonal crowd of artists, dancers, music students, and theatergoers. A year after the opening of the Institute, 200 dance students from Germany and across Europe enrolled in its courses, though they were not considered official residents of Hellerau, at least within census reporting.⁷⁷ Enthusiasm for the Institute inspired Dohrn and other advocates to see it as a sign and source for future growth. Dohrn assured his fellow directors that despite the decline in its full-time residents, Hellerau would enjoy a substantial revenue stream from the Institute and its tuition-paying students. "It is good to begin all pedagogical reform with a financial calculus," he noted in an article published in the Garden City society's newsletter.⁷⁸ Many students paid their own tuitions, which were not cheap, and some, including Mary Wigman, worked additional hours as private music instructors as well as journalists for local newspapers, to cover their fees.⁷⁹ Dohrn analyzed Hellerau's operating budget between 1909 to 1912 and projected that the seven million Marks that had gone into the community's housing construction, canalization, and street paving would, through the addition of the Institute and the construction of its associated spaces (such as festival theaters, parks, and a "Volkschule") accrue yearly capital gains of between 1.6 and 8 percent.⁸⁰ This financial growth, he concluded, naturally extended from Hellerau's "growing social body, within which it has already balanced some opposition to personalities and [social and political] denominations." The

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ Wolf Dohrn, "Hellerauer Schulpläne," *Gartenstadt Mitteilungen der deutschen Gartenstadtgesellschaft*, Jg.6, H5, (Mai 1912), 86.

⁷⁹ Odom, "Mary Wigman at Hellerau," 45.

⁸⁰ Dohrn, "Hellerauer Schulpläne," 86.

Institute was the “most elemental-life condition of the social body”⁸¹ and possessed the power to heal these divisions: the *Zusammenströmen* to restore order and stability among individuals. Dohrn thus recognized that a major benefit of the Institute was not just its income, though considerable. It was its power to ease political tension and unite disparate groups into a single “social body.”

By 1912, a single social body was vital. Hellerau’s changing population, many of whom were drawn to its culture and lifestyle rather than its economic or social mission, transformed the politics of the community. Some visitors, for example, divided their time between Hellerau and Ascona, the anarchist life reform colony located along the shores of Lago Maggiore, Switzerland.⁸² These included dance critic Hans Brandenburg, artist Rudolf Laban, and Susanne Perrottet and Mary Wigman. Many Asconians held anti-liberal views on the political left and right, while some, Brandenburg, Laban, and Wigman included, developed largely anti-democratic political affiliations that combined mysticism, Nietzscheanism, and romantic anti-capitalism. Such views clashed with Hellerau’s orientation towards liberalism and social democracy, as well as its values of domesticity, a rational approach to bodily health and hygiene, “tasteful” consumerism, and an abiding faith in the social benefits of mass culture and production. Hellerau’s population became increasingly diverse: during the summer of 1912, 5,000 artists and audiences members from across Europe flocked to Hellerau to see the premiere of Jaques-Dalcroze and Appia’s staging of Christoph Willibald Gluck’s 1762 opera *Orpheus*. Visitors included artistic luminaries from across the political and national spectrum, including George Bernard Shaw, Max Reinhardt, Rainer Maria Rilke, Oskar Kokoscha, Hugo von

⁸¹ Ibid., 87.

⁸² Martin Green, *Mountain of Truth: The Counterculture Begins, Ascona, 1900-1920* (Hanover, 1986).

Hofmannsthal, Stefan Zweig, Darius Milhaud, Sergei Rachmaninoff, Upton Sinclair, and Constantin Stanislavski.⁸³ Director of the Ballets Russes, Serge Diaghilev, and principal dancer Vaslav Nijinsky, visited Hellerau in 1912, and the two subsequently engaged Marie Rambert as a rhythm coach for their dancers in Nijinsky's upcoming premiere, *Sacre du Printemps*.⁸⁴

Within this mixture of politics, cultures, and social missions, dance provided an embodied language for members of Hellerau to “speak” a language of the social contract despite their disagreements. *Rythmique*'s principles of metabolic movement and values of embodied conservatism enabled different groups to maintain their different bases for the social order – nature or man – while co-existing within an ordered collective. Tensions between “nostalgia” and “progressivism” plagued Hellerau's vision from the outset, yet dance joined them into stability and order. All of Hellerau – from Dohrn, Jaques-Dalcroze, the Institute's students, and visitors, to its non-artists, Werkbund members, *Werkstätten* workers, and organizers of the Garden City movement. Garden City organizers, for example, hailed dance for its progressive and its nostalgic features by declaring it both modern and “one of those hidden forces, which for thousands of years in the economic and social development of humanity has come into effect.” Other members of Hellerau lauded Jaques-Dalcroze's writings on educational reform, which were published the Institute's journal, *Der Rhythmus* [*Rhythm*]. His ideas and his system for dance appealed “not just for those particularly interested in artistic specialties, but also for each of those, in whom blazes the longing for a renewal of our folk life, which yearns for a Stein, Fichte, Pestalozzi.”⁸⁵ The institute's classes were miniature laboratories for experiments in social

⁸³ Richard C. Beacham, *Adolphe Appia: Artist and Visionary of the Modern Theater* (Harwood, 1994) 104- 105.

⁸⁴ Lynn Garafola, *Diaghilev's Ballets Russes* (New York, 1989), 60 - 61. Garafola notes that Nijinsky was likely already familiar with *Rythmique* and had possibly seen a demonstration in early 1911 of Jaques-Dalcroze students in St. Petersburg (61). See also Lynn Garafola, “Forgotten Interlude: Eurythmic Dancers at the Paris Opéra,” *Dance Research* 13, No. 1 (Summer, 1995).

harmony: they were a training ground for the values of the Sentimental Enlightenment in the context of modern politics and reform.

With its emphasis on rigor and skill, *Rythmique* cultivated key values of craft and design of the Werkbund ideology, as well as notions of manual labor and creativity associated with the Garden city movement. Dance connected attitudes embodied force – alternately referred to by individuals as “*Kraft*” [“force,” or “power”] and “*Strömen*” [“current,” “surge,” “flow”] – as the basis for a preexisting natural order, as well as products made from a human, creative genesis. Dance tied concepts of a creative urge, *Schaffenlust*, and collective power, *Zusammenströmen*, to natural harmony and a manmade, or built, order. The institute’s rigorous schedule reinforced what architectural historians Marco de Michelis and Vicki Bilenker note was Hellerau’s overriding mission: the internalization of social imperatives into individual or private ones, which occurred through the “renewal of human existence through the assumption and practice of a new hierarchy of cultural values. [Hellerau] was, then, a ‘self-reform,’ a kind of privatization of the social question [...] He transforms the authoritarian and hierarchical principles that govern the educative systems and the productive structures of modern civilization into principles of community cooperation and of self-management.”⁸⁶ The Institute’s students studying movement from morning until night quickly learned to intuit and reproduce such principles of self-management.

Dance also healed tensions between competing aspects of Hellerau’s founding mission. Founded upon principles of democratic participation, *Rythmique* bridged the multiple “unresolved tensions” of Hellerau, such as the rifts between its generational divides. This

⁸⁵ „Die Entwicklung der englischen Gartenstadtbewegung“ *Gartenstadt Mitteilungen der deutschen Gartenstadtgesellschaft* Jg.5, H11 (Nov 1911), 153.

⁸⁶ de Michelis and Bilenker, “Heinrich Tessenow and the Institut Dalcroze at Hellerau,” 149.

included the gap between its policies geared towards social democratic reform, and the anti-liberal politics of its seasonal artistic population. *Rythmique* appealed across the generational divide for two reasons. First, *Rythmique*'s progressive, unconventional attitude towards music as embodied movement attracted a younger generation of activists and artists concerned with social and cultural reform through the alignment of brain, body, and soul in contrast to reification, rationalization, and mass culture.⁸⁷ Because of its roots in principles of Enlightenment sentimentalism, *Rythmique* appealed to the “nostalgic impulse” of liberal traditionalists, who were concerned with the preservation of particular values, such as rationality, progress, and the refinement of skill. Dance satisfied the needs of those who rejected a rational, administered way of life, as well as those averse to radical change or risk. The bodies of students dancing, singing, marching, skipping, and walking in unison provided visual and conceptual unity for spectators confused by range of architectural styles dotting Hellerau's horizon and its competing social objectives. Dancers exuded a confidence and faith in the community's urge towards nature and creativity—its *Schaffenslust* – and its collective power – its *Zusammenströmen* – to create order and stability.

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Conclusion

When WWI broke out, Hellerau closed its gates and remained an experiment not to be repeated. Some understood this as a sign of its failure to serve as practical program for social reform. The Jaques-Dalcroze Institute, however, provided a model for artistic experiments

⁸⁷ Such criticism caused Jaques-Dalcroze to leave the music conservatory in Geneva where he was on faculty and which enabled him to accept Dohrn's offer to move to Hellerau. Around 1900, Jaques-Dalcroze reminisced that while he was developing *Rythmique*, his colleagues from the Conservatory joked and declared his method to be a form of “monkeyshines.” Other music educators in Geneva criticized his approach to music through embodied movement as the “revival of decadent Latin spectacles”: the first step in a downward spiral of social disintegration and moral decay. See Émile Jaques-Dalcroze, *La Musique et Nous: Notes sur notre double vie* (Geneva, 1945), 143.

undertaken during and after WWI by its first wave of “new” or “modern” dancers, including Wigman, Perrottet, and Laban, who would go on to form a style known as “German modern dance.” These dancers developed the politics of *Rythmique* in a variety of ways, but retained its basic orientation towards stability, order, and the conservation of effort: embodied conservatism. Through practices of metabolic movement, which transformed social disagreement into consensus, disorder and chaos into systematic logic and accord.

To conclude, dance in Hellerau had a political function. It reframed collective and individual relationships as one in which individuals, as “free and secure, at once controlled and self-controlling, the master of himself and devoted to something higher,” no longer disagreed with each other despite obvious and potentially irreconcilable difference. Dance transformed disagreement into a feeling of “grace and happiness, in efficiency and coordination of body and mind.” Dance instilled within the individual a feeling of purposeful freedom and creative desire, teaching those who might have been otherwise tempted to voice dissent outwardly to look inward instead. Personal, embodied experience became self-regulation. Dance became an embodied force for order, and muted debate.

Part II: 1913 – 1927

Chapter 4

Mary Wigman and the Sovereign Self, 1913 – 1927

“According to modern linguistic usage, the state is the political status of an organized people in an enclosed territorial unit. This is nothing more than a general paraphrase, not a definition of the state. Since we are concerned here with the nature of the political, such a definition is unwarranted. It may be left open what the state is in essence – a machine or an organism, a person or an institution, a society or a community, an enterprise or beehive, or perhaps even a basic procedural order. These definitions and images anticipate too much meaning, interpretation, illustration, and construction, and therefore cannot constitute any appropriate point of departure for a simple and elementary statement.”

Carl Schmitt, *The Concept of the Political* (1932)¹

Is it possible to ensure a space within society where movement is truly free? Beginning around 1913, Mary Wigman, a star pupil of the Jaques-Dalcroze Institute, answered this question by articulating dance as a form of subjective freedom that, even in light of an essentially unknowable human nature, secured a unique, exceptional place for dance *and* enabled social order. She showed this through her performances, her critical and literary writings, and her system for dance education. The freedom she described was self-legislating, effortless, and “natural,” on the one hand, and deliberate and deferent to authority, on the other. In each instance, her theorization of dance as representation and practice was driven by her sense that physical movement offered insight into the nature of the universe and human behavior that no other art, or science, could furnish. This connection of theorization to practice endowed the dancer with sovereignty and a sovereign territory – and it allowed her to act.

Wigman inherited from Jaques-Dalcroze the notion that knowledge of the self through movement was knowledge of society. At the Institute at Hellerau, Wigman learned conflicting notions about the basis for relationships between people: they arose either from nature and sense of duty, or from something man-made and consensually agreed upon. Like Hellerau’s organizers,

¹ Carl Schmitt, *The Concept of the Political*, trans. George Schwab (Chicago, 1996 [1932]), 19.

Wigman learned that dance formed a practical and conceptual language to resolve disagreements over this question and to establish social harmony, defined according to its physical and musical contexts as the accord of component parts within a logical system or whole. From Isadora Duncan, as well as Jaques-Dalcroze, Wigman approached the dance stage and studio as a laboratory to experiment with questions about the nature of individual behavior and social order.

Represented on the stage, on the page, and in the classroom, Wigman's dancer embodied a range of values about human behavior. S/he was a sensible, rational observer, yet s/he was also driven by non-rational desire. Capable of effortless expression yet possessing depths of intensity and focus, s/he folded seamlessly into the world yet empirical sense formed the most meaningful context for her/his expression. In all cases, Wigman's dancer shifted between representations of the self as performer, student, creator or participant in different environments, from the studio, to the stage, to the world. Rooted in this epistemology of "dance-knowledge," this dancer accessed unmediated knowledge of the self and others. Ultimately, Wigman determined that the social collective was necessary for the individual to experience freedom. It was through this freedom that the dancer, like her fellow-students at Hellerau, could "feel more free and secure, at once controlled and self-controlling, the master of [herself] and devoted to a greatness, something higher."²

The previous chapter has analyzed Wigman's time at Hellerau. This chapter traces her ideas and artistic work as they developed after 1913. From 1913 to 1927 Wigman developed a distinctive understanding of knowledge about dance expression that broke in crucial ways with her predecessors. Whereas Jaques-Dalcroze understood expression as part of an Enlightenment sentimental tradition, Wigman saw thought as part of a more complicated relationship between

² Émile Jaques-Dalcroze, "Die Hygienische Bedeutung der rhythmischen Gymnastik: ein Brief von Dr E Jaques Dalcroze mit einem Nachwort von Wolf Dorn," *Gartenstadt Mitteilungen der deutschen Gartenstadtgesellschaft* Jg.5 H11 (Nov 1911), 154.

desire and the embodied experience of emotion, both phenomena not subject to rational logic. Taking her cues from *Rythmique* yet subverting many of its original presuppositions, Wigman placed a free-moving, irrationally desiring individual at the center of her system. For Wigman, the dancer reconciled the conflict between two discrete sources of authority: human feeling and individual freedom. Once again, Jan Goldstein's definition of the self frames the discursive spaces Wigman traversed to construct this vision of selfhood in the context of social order: "all human beings regard both their bodies and their minds as discrete, self-subservient entities. It is the individuated mental stuff, as well as the individual's own representation of it, that go under the name of self."³ Borrowing from anthropologist Marcel Mauss' assertion that the awareness of bodily presence and materiality comprises the self as social subject, Goldstein continues, using this combination of presence and matter as the baseline from which to historicize concepts of the self: "there has never existed a human being, who has not been aware not only of his body, but also at the same time of his individuality, both as spiritual and physical." Wigman's image of the self, captured by the figure of "the dancer," had a capacity for self-awareness as the coordination of individuated organic material and particular, individuated expression. This self, rooted in a mind and body that could be alternately mapped onto one another, unified the forces guiding its representation. The dancer engaged freely in a process of critical observation – Goldstein's "regard" – that for Wigman defined her status as sovereign.

Wigman, like Jaques-Dalcroze, defined harmony as a musical principle. Wigman used "harmonic" to indicate something orderly, precise, and unchanging: a "harmonic spatial scale" [*harmonische Raumskala*] and "harmonic gradations of force" [*harmonischen Kraftnuancen*], for

³ Jan Goldstein, *The Post-Revolutionary Self: Politics and Psyche in France, 1750 – 1850* (Cambridge, 2005), 2. This excerpt by Marcel Mauss is taken from Mauss "A Category of the Human Mind: The Notion of the Person; The Notion of the Self" [1938].

example, were the basic principles of movement that comprised the set of laws governing dance as a complete, orderly system.⁴ Throughout her writing and career, “harmonic” indicated regularity, while “harmony” was synonymous with stability and order. Wigman’s definition of harmony enabled no conflict between the forces of psychological feeling and the force of controlled, embodied motion. In fact, through the “harmonic” language of dance, Wigman theorized irrational feeling and rationally calculated physical action as equal partners in the larger picture of social order, even though their origins – either as products of nature or of rational intellect and human genesis – remained unclear. As she observed in her dances, her writing, and her teaching, the realities of communal engagement inhibited individual feeling and bodily freedom and narrowed the scope of human experience.

To resolve this, Wigman developed an understanding of dance based in intuition. Through what she described as the harmonic convergence of rational thought and felt desire, the feeling mind, rather than the effortless physiological body, ruled the self. Human thought encompassed intellect and feeling, both of which were stimulated by movement in response to bodily sense. These combined to form an individual’s intuition. Yet rather than situate the combination of sense and rational thought as key to effortless balance – as Jaques-Dalcroze had done – Wigman located dance within the reciprocal relation of intellect to intuition. In this process, intuition replaced sense, and effortless movement became a conduit, rather than an endpoint, for dance expression.

Intuition provided crucial information about the nature, laws, and logic of movement. As the product of unmediated knowledge emanating from the self, intuition reconciled the relationship between an individual and her surroundings into stable balance. In this process,

⁴ Mary Wigman, “Der Körper ist das Instrument des Tänzers,” (undated, c. November 12, 1913 – December 13, 1913), 62 - 63. “Tagebuch 1913,” Akademie der Künste, Berlin, Mary Wigman Collection [hereafter referred to as: “AK MWS”], 2.3 Tagebücher, S 439.

dance rendered obsolete problems posed by an unknowable human nature as the basis for society: physical movement subsumed questions of either duty to nature or to consensual agreements between people, rendering them instead as questions of individual freedom in the context of harmonic order. This differed from Jaques-Dalcroze's conception of the relationship between an individual and the environment; it also differed from Isadora Duncan's vision of an effortless balance of internal feeling and external expression based in a natural, biological order. According to Duncan, biology and nature governed individual action, sense, and thought; the acceptance of the limited scope of expressive ability enabled the experience of freedom in harmony with universal laws of beauty, nature, and art.

Wigman's notion of intuition generated a different discourse on social and political authority than we have seen in this dissertation. This discourse centered around a figure labeled here as the "sovereign self," whose claim to knowledge was her claim to power. Through her approach to physical freedom, the dancer generated new social relations through movement, including ways to negotiate, legislate, and maintain this power. Dance established meaningful connections between individuals and taught them why they were valuable. Dance showed how individual freedom hinged upon social stability. For dancers attuned to harmonic forms – an awareness of which came through rigorous training in dance – physical movement granted the dancer sovereign status. This status enabled the dancer to shape her social identity, representation, engagement, and commitments as both social subject and social agent.

This chapter is divided in three parts. Part I surveys Wigman's early career and traces the emergence of her ideas about human psychology and psychological force after she moved from Hellerau to Ascona around 1914. In these communities Wigman encountered forms of experimental psychology – such as the work of Hanz Prinzhorn and Otto Gross – that shaped her

belief that the non-rational psyche could distinguish knowledge of harmonic order from other kinds of knowledge. This ranged from knowledge about the general (i.e. spiritual or aesthetic ideals, universal laws, social structures) to knowledge about the particular (i.e. individual wants, needs, or opinions, emotions, personal desire, discrete events or material phenomena). Wigman's approach here illustrates a relationship of the general to the particular in the process of theory-formulation used by German scientists in the nineteenth century for epistemological classification, which distinguished between *Kunde* ["knowledge" or "studies"], knowledge about discrete phenomena used to frame general theories, and *Wissenschaft* ["science"], knowledge shaped first by general claims that in turn organized information about the particular.⁵ *Kunde*, a kind of knowledge commonly circulated within fields of natural history and practices of citizen science, gave way to the latter as disciplinary specialization championed forms of *Wissenschaft*, for which "the general did not necessarily refer to causes or constraints [...] but to perspectives by which one could characterize or analyze the special objects of attention."⁶

Wigman's approach to knowledge theorization resembled the earlier, *Kunde*-model and was crucial to her concept of sovereignty. For her, knowledge and theory did not universalize individual particularity but showed how "topics in the general [...] were partial angles on the material [to be investigated]. What made them general was not that they posited constant laws understood to hold true for all [beings], but rather that they constituted those categories of questions that could be asked of all organisms."⁷ As we will see in Part I, Wigman's conceptualized the individual through a general lens with new "categories of questions," which

⁵ Lynn Nyhart, "*Wissenschaft* and *Kunde*: The General and the Special in Modern Science," *Osiris* 27, no. 1 "Clio Meets Science: The Challenges of History (2012): 250-275.

⁶ One aspect of Nyhart's claim is that the *Kunde* form of knowledge is a model for contemporary visions of "interdisciplinary" scholarship.

⁷ Nyhart, "*Wissenschaft* and *Kunde*," 258.

was rooted in the particularities of the self yet “could be asked of all organisms.” These questions enabled her to see the individual as a subject, who, through dance, possessed authority and knowledge about the social order. This gave her power within the collective, and it made her responsible for the maintenance of its stable order.

Part II turns to Wigman’s work during and after her 1919 German tour. As Wigman’s solos attracted critical attention across Europe, she observed her own behavior as the basis for theoretical claims. She articulated through these observations a general concept of the sovereign self. Distinguishing between open categories of “human life” versus the “human self,” Wigman demonstrated how dance formed a critical space in which individuals grasped their innate expressive freedom. This freedom formed through an embodied process of action and reaction mixed with self-recognition; the combination of these formed the basis of negotiation between individuals and forms of authority. Part II includes examples of Wigman’s stage performances, such as *The Seven Dances of Life* (1921), as well as her critical reception by writer Hans Brandenburg, whose works on German modern dance set an important precedent for commentary about Wigman in later decades.

For Wigman, moments of self-realization were moments of sovereign recognition. How was this recognition possible? The presence of other people was crucial. Part III turns to her educational programs of the 1920s to show how her theories of dance-making and her theories of dance education reconciled the mandates of mind and body while elaborating upon (historical) definitions of “choreography” either as a process of rational reproduction or of creative invention. Like dancers at Hellerau, Wigman merged these competing definitions in her vision of the classroom as a social utopia, where the confluence of expressive force as reproductive *and*

inventive was possible – and orderly. Through this approach students learned to maintain social order via metabolic movement, much like students of the Duncan and Jaques-Dalcroze methods.

Wigman's sovereign self advanced a vision of dance with distinctly modern and "modernist" values. Some scholars argue that Wigman's modern contributions to dance lay in the aesthetic techniques of bodily exposure and concealment (such as her use of masks and costuming), as well as rhythmic or musical fracture (such as her use of percussion)⁸; other scholars argue that Wigman's approach to representation advanced a politics of "mutability" based the uncertainty felt by Germans towards Weimar's "balance of power."⁹ Kate Elswit, for example, notes that dance critics who identified politics operative in Wigman's work, including characterizations of her dances as "pacifist," were not designations of politics per se but rather analytic modes to "critique [the] relationship between form and content" in her dances – a key principle of artistic modernism.¹⁰ Earlier scholars and biographers, such as Walter Sorrell and Hedwig Müller, defined the politics of Wigman's work by interpreting her dances, writing, and pedagogy as evidence of her political agnosticism; here, they largely echo Wigman's post-WWII designation of her own work as "apolitical."¹¹ Yet as historians of the Weimar period note, it was this precisely the position of "apoliticism" that defined conservatism and the right after 1919.¹²

⁸ Karl Toepfer, *Empire of Ecstasy: Nudity and Movement in German Body Culture, 1910-1935* (Berkeley, 1997).

⁹ Kate Elswit, "The Politics of Watching: Staging Sacrifice Across the Atlantic," Chapter 4 in *Watching Weimar Dance* (Oxford, 2014), 97-98. See also: Susan Manning, *Ecstasy and the Demon: Nationalism and Feminism in the Dances of Mary Wigman* (Minnesota, 2006).

¹⁰ Elswit, "The Politics of Watching," 98. On the major principles of artistic modernism, including the aesthetic self-reflexivity of structure and in the relationship of form to content, see Eugene Lunn, "Modernism in Comparative Perspective," chapter 2 in *Marxism and Modernism: An Historical Study of Lukács, Brecht, Benjamin, and Adorno* (Berkeley, 1982), 33 -74.

¹¹ Walter Sorell, *The Mary Wigman Book* (Connecticut: Wesleyan University Press, 1975).

¹² See, for example, Stephen Aschheim, *The Nietzsche Legacy in Germany* (Berkeley, 1992); George Mosse, *The Crisis of German Ideology: Intellectual Origins of the Third Reich* (New York, 1964); Kevin Repp, *Reformers,*

Since the 1990s, a number of German, English, and French scholars have significantly revised their histories of Wigman. These scholars largely concur that Wigman's work, in which "visions of right and left did not conflict,"¹³ was rooted in a conservative political agenda. Such features include her romantic anti-capitalism, the cultivation of bodily and spiritual health, and the longing for an utopian social order based on an image of the *Volksgemeinschaft* that contained the promise of individual and collective rebirth.¹⁴ All of these scholars take variations of these features to be explanation for her affiliation with the Nazi party beginning in 1933.

This chapter builds upon their observations about the general contours of Wigman's political conservatism to take them a step further. A politics of uncertainty about human behavior infused Wigman's definition of the individual and the collective, and her effort to resolve this uncertainty defined her approach to dance. In other words, Wigman's approach to dance was based in an ideology of embodied conservatism. After 1919, this commitment formed a platform for her and others to articulate discrete political programs, particularly those on the Weimar political right. Wigman and Brandenburg embraced political and spiritual holism and Nietzschean life-reformism, which by 1919 had shed their left-sympathies and merged with the right.¹⁵ Wigman's appeal to social values (rather than social rights) and her disengagement with

Critics, and the Paths of German Modernity: Anti-Politics and the Search for Alternatives, 1890-1914 (Cambridge, 2004); and Stern, *The Politics of Cultural Despair: A Study in the Rise of Germanic Ideology* (Berkeley, 1961).

¹³ Manning, *Ecstasy and the Demon*, 29.

¹⁴ Marion Kant and Lillian Karina, *Tanz Unterm Hakenkreuz* (Henschel, 1999) [in English: *Hitler's Dancers* (Berghahn, 2003)]; Laure Guilbert, *Danser avec le IIIe Reich: Les danseurs modernes sous le nazisme*, (Brussels, 2000); Patricia Stöckemann and Hedwig Müller *...jeder Mensch ist ein Tänzer: Ausdruckstanz in Deutschland zwischen 1900 und 1945* (Gießen, 1993). For a concise overview of this historiography, see: Susan Manning, "Modern Dance in the Third Reich, Redux," forthcoming in *The Oxford Companion to Dance and Politics* [Manuscript version]; and Susan Manning and Lucia Ruprecht, "Introduction: New Dance Studies / New German Cultural Studies," in *New German Dance Studies*, ed., Susan Manning and Lucia Ruprecht (Illinois, 2012), 1-16.

¹⁵ On politics and proto-fascism in schools of holistic science, see Anne Harrington, *Reenchanting Science: Holism in German Culture from Wilhelm II to Hitler* (Princeton, 1996).

social reality – with Weimar’s many economic inequalities, for example, or its stark political divisions – as the basis to establish social stability defined her political conservatism. She shared this approach with center and right artists and thinkers, such as painter Emil Nolde, writers Ernst Jünger and Gottfried Benn, theorist Oswald Spengler, and political philosophers Carl Schmitt and Joachim Ritter, the latter a foundational member of what Jürgen Habermas has characterized as Weimar’s “Young Conservatives.”¹⁶ Her emphasis on skill and rigor, self-cultivation, and the overall maintenance of a stable, harmonious social order free from dissent were also values commonly championed by ideologues on the conservative and political right.

Finally, Wigman’s engagement with politics through the lens of the general, the mythical, and the symbolic formed a core feature of what Carl Schmitt described as “political romanticism,” whereby “every political activity – regardless of whether its content is merely the technique of conquest, the claim or the expansion of political power, or whether it rests on a legal or moral decision – conflicts with the essentially aesthetic nature of the romantic [...] In such a world, all political or religious distinctions are dissolved into interesting ambiguity.”¹⁷ We will see how Wigman emphasized this “interesting ambiguity” as central to her concepts of the social. Her ideas, which were rooted in aesthetic intuition rather than the details of legal, political, or cultural debates, thus demonstrates the “quicksilver eloquence” of the political romantic,” whereby, “at the center of this web of phrases and poses was a conservative, reactive habitus desperate to avoid the mental discipline of political commitment.”¹⁸

¹⁶ Jürgen Habermas, “Neoconservative Cultural Criticism in the United States and West Germany,” in *The New Conservatism*, ed., Richard Wollin (Cambridge, 1989), 31-32.

¹⁷ Carl Schmitt, *Political Romanticism*, trans. Guy Oakes (M.I.T, 1986 [1919]), 158.

¹⁸ Gopal Balakrishnan, *The Enemy: An Intellectual Portrait of Carl Schmitt* (London, 2000), 21.

Through her embodied conservative worldview, Wigman invented through “eloquence” and ambiguity a new language of “poses” for the expression of political conservatism in Weimar. This movement language articulated sovereign power as the reconciliation of individual freedom to authority and order. For many Germans, disillusioned by trench warfare and a fragmented Republic, this was an attractive solution. For artists and cultural figures, this enabled them to “[scorn] individual or class interest and [stress] instead certain ethical values and utopian communal ideals such as spiritual freedom, the creative personality, or social solidarity.”¹⁹ Wigman imagined the social collective as a dance of embodied conservatives, those self-legislating individuals who, through education, values, and action, were deferent to order. Together with Duncan’s dancer of the future, Wigman’s sovereign self was a guardian of the polis.

*

I. Sovereign Starts, 1913-1918

“Now dance, dancer, on your path” Wigman wrote in the winter of 1913-1914. “Dance your life, dance your Self.”²⁰ Wigman’s short poem was declaration of intent to pursue a career in dance. Wigman decided this after returning from a summer at Ascona, the Swiss artists’ colony where she had studied with Rudolf Laban upon the recommendation of expressionist painter Emil Nolde, Wigman’s friend and member of the Dresden-based movement, *Die*

¹⁹ Gary D. Stark, *Entrepreneurs of Ideology: Neoconservative Publishers in Germany, 1890 – 1933* (Chapel Hill, 1981), 7.

²⁰ Mary Wigman, “Der Freie Tanz,” (untitled poem) (December 13, 1913), 55. “Tagebuch 1913,” AK MWS, 2.3 Tagebücher, S 439.

Brücke.²¹ Wigman was deeply influenced by her summer at Ascona. A relative neophyte to dance, Wigman began her dance training at the age of twenty-four, and the bulk of her training was under Émile Jaques-Dalcroze, founder of *Rythmique*, at the *Bildungsanstalt Jaques-Dalcroze* in Hellerau (Dresden). Trained from a young age as a classical pianist, she quickly established herself as a star pupil and in her spare time had begun her own dance experiments. Stimulated by her growing interest in movement expression, and wary of a career as a *Rythmique* instructor, Wigman left Hellerau. Nolde's recommendation inspired Wigman, curious to try something new, to travel from Dresden to the southern Swiss "Mountain of Truth" in pursuit of an independent career.

Laban's name was not unfamiliar to Wigman. She knew of the expatriate Hungarian dance artist through Susanne Perrotet, Wigman's classmate at the Jaques-Dalcroze Institute who Wigman described as the "Idol" [*Abgott*] of *Rythmique*.²² On the shores of Lago Maggiore at Ascona, Wigman shifted her attention from techniques of *Gymnastik* and western music to the dance as an independent form. Taking courses and performing in dance works by Laban, who was at the time developing his own theories and style of movement, Wigman experimented in dance and theater with visual, literary, and stage artists settled there for the summer. Many of Wigman's collaborators infused their work with radical anti-liberal politics on both the left and the right.²³ Wigman chronicled her summer in her journals, which was likely a practice she

²¹ Nolde's recommendation was based on his observation that Wigman, like Laban, created dances in silence. Nolde understood this as a stylistic technique and conceptual affiliation the two dancers shared. "He moves like you and dances like you," he explained to Wigman, "without any music." See: Mary Wigman, "Ascona" (undated), 2. AK MWS, 1.4.1 Manuskripte Artikel, Vorträge, Reden, S 529.

²² Mary Wigman, "Gespräch mit Mary Wigman, Gret Palucca, Gerhard Schumann" [Interview by Gerhard Schumann with Mary Wigman and Gret Palucca], recorded Nov. 28, 1972. Tanzarchiv Leipzig Mary Wigman Collection [hereafter referred to as "TL MWS"], K3 Nr.7, 26.

²³ Martin Green, *Mountain of Truth: The Counterculture Begins, Ascona, 1900-1920* (Hanover, 1986).

began while in Hellerau.²⁴ In her writing, her observations of the “the dancer” as an artistic persona, a professional career, and as a social individual, endowed with discrete values, skills, and knowledge. Wigman’s poetry at this time was an effective, and deeply personal, method to articulate her ideas about the role of individual experience within dance and society.

Through poetry, Wigman explored dance as knowledge of society, and how it turned self-expression into freedom from authority or constraint. The dance and the dancer, she asserted, were linked in a symbiotic relationship, in which the individual creatively generates movement that defines her as a dancer and stimulates her to continue dancing. Harnessing physical force as a source for creative generation, rather than violence, destruction, or brutality, Wigman noted that for the dancer, embodied force was linked to life: “Now, dance, dancer, on your path. / Life itself dances with you.”²⁵ Dance uncovered for the dancer a sense of purpose, or “path.” Dance expressed individual identity as social engagement, and the recognition of oneself vis-à-vis others. Dance remained rooted in the self and thus anchored expression as an extension of individual ability, values, and sensibility. Dance, finally, was a category of knowledge rooted in the self and an aesthetically intuited appreciation of nature and the world.

Wigman maintained key influences from Jaques-Dalcroze. Her growing body of ideas at this time built upon concepts of effort-reduction and ease of motion as the basis for the legitimization of knowledge about dance. As we have seen in Chapter 1, Jaques-Dalcroze’s system of *Rythmique* translated physical movement into a language of social relations through techniques of effort-reduction and the conservation of embodied force. Wigman’s intensive study of *Rythmique* in Hellerau sharpened her awareness of such effort-conservation as the basis of the social contract, with concepts of natural and musical “harmony” as synonymous for social

²⁴ Selma Landen Odom, “Mary Wigman at Hellerau,” *Ballet Review* 14, no.2 (Summer, 1986), 45.

²⁵ Mary Wigman, “Der Freie Tanz” [Untitled Poem], (December 13, 1913), 56.

order. In an essay likely written around 1913, “The Body is the Instrument of the Dancer,” Wigman noted how dance expression entailed an individual awareness of the physical self and the legislation over the physical body. “The dancer must know [*kennen*] his body, if he wants to control it,” she wrote. “He must learn the different muscular functions in order to discover, to regulate – he must learn his body in order to rouse [*erwecken*] movement.”²⁶ Differentiating between processes of “knowing” [*erkennen*] and “arousal” or “awakening” [*erwecken*], Wigman contrasted forms of innate understanding with active or conscious recognition. Together, they enabled the dancer to exercise “control” while engaging in “learning” and “discovery” – actions with seemingly opposite ends. This harmonization of “Gesture and Attitude,” as Jaques-Dalcroze described in his 1906 *Méthode*, constituted dance. She noted that dance, as the sum of physical movement gesture, could be subdivided into discrete forms of “harmonic” bodily “position, gesture, and steps,” each with “its own laws of time, space, and force [*Kraft*].”²⁷

The dancer stood at the center of this trinity of “space, time, and force.” Wigman developed sets of practical of exercises to develop them. Such exercises included stepping patterns across the studio or rehearsal space; movement series from *Gymnastik* (including “stretching, bending, and turning”); breathing techniques; and exercises differentiating between voluntary and involuntary movement and meant to either tense, or relax, muscular groups.²⁸ Although Wigman made no mention of Jaques-Dalcroze, these were core pedagogical practices of *Rythmique*. Further, her articulation of dance as the sum of various subsets of laws of force mirrored his system. Wigman explained effort reduction reconciled control, with its impulse towards direction and tension, and discovery, which was looser, and open-ended. “All exercises

²⁶ Mary Wigman, “Der Körper ist das Instrument des Tänzers,” (undated, c. November 12, 1913 – December 13, 1913), 58. “Tagebuch 1913,” AK MWS, 2.3 Tagebücher, S 439.

²⁷ Wigman, “Der Körper ist das Instrument des Tänzers,” 61.

²⁸ Wigman, *Ibid.*, 58 – 60.

should follow one another in such a way that Force and Acceleration evenly develop through one another,” she wrote. “The dancer should place most importance on exercises in equilibrium, which can help him achieve control over his body in ways that no other [methods] can.”²⁹ The contours of the dancer as a sovereign self emerged here. Actualized through forms of acquired skill and innate knowledge, the dancer’s self hinged on an harmonious balance of physical (material) and metaphysical (immaterial) power, enabling him to freely legislate his actions and thoughts, while remaining subject to the set of broader laws governing movement (“time, space, force”).

Over the next several years, Wigman added psychology to this mixture of forces comprising dance. After 1913 Wigman cut her professional and educational ties with Jaques-Dalcroze. Her interest in psychology piqued while she was living in Hellerau with Ada [van der Rohe] and Erna Hoffman, girlfriend of Hans Prinzhorn, psychiatrist and author of *Artistry of the Mentally Ill* (1922), whose work impressed Wigman, and she began to consider the interplay between the human psyche and movement.³⁰ Once again, Wigman elaborated through poetry the creation of movement through the convergence of emotions with irrational desire. Wigman composed a mythic “scenario” featuring the Roman goddess Diana, who “dances on her meadow” while out hunting.³¹ Wigman depicts Diana, known in mythology for her ability to communicate with animals, as an individual driven equally by forms of hidden power and visible displays of force. Diana derives her power from her physicality, her rational cunning, and her

²⁹ Wigman, *Ibid.*, 59-60.

³⁰ Mary Wigman, “Gespräch mit Mary Wigman, Gret Palucca, Gerhard Schumann,” Nov. 28, 1972. TL MWS K3 Nr.7, pp 23. Wigman also noted that she was romantically involved with Prinzhorn. Interestingly, in the interview, which was conducted when Wigman was 86, she says that Prinzhorn’s book was a major influence on her while Hellerau from 1910 - 1913; the book, however, was not published until 1922. See also Silke Röckelein, *Hans Prinzhorn (1886 – 1933): Dokumentation mit Bild- und Textzeugnissen zum Leben und Werk* (Hemer, 2003).

³¹ Mary Wigman, “Diana Wälder,” (April 15, 1913), 37. AK MWS, 2.3 Tagebücher, S 439.

intuition. These skills grant Diana's freedom of movement that respects to the rules of the hunt. The contours of Wigman's approach to sovereignty and embodied conservatism emerge here: Diana's powers of self-legislation, rooted in values of natural order and stability, respect the rules that govern her.

At the end of her studies in Hellerau, Wigman created movement studies without music, a choice she made from necessity. As a young student, Wigman did not have enough money to pay for an accompanist and she realized that this freed her creatively; dancing without formal accompaniment was, she recalled, "a wonderful thing."³² She performed her movement studies for Jaques-Dalcroze, who was an eager audience for her experiments, accepting an invitation to see her dances with the enthusiastic reply, "Aber gerne!" ["Of course!"].³³ In November 1913, Wigman quit Hellerau and taught for Laban at his school in Munich, and she remained there for the fall and winter before leaving Germany to travel to Rome and throughout Italy: her own *italienische Reise* inspired by Goethe and Romantic tradition. As it was for Haeckel in the 1850s, Italy was for Wigman "a warm, vivifying balm."³⁴ That spring, Wigman returned to Munich and joined Laban's student ensemble to perform in his new dance compositions, as well as her own.³⁵ That summer, Wigman returned to Ascona. No longer a new member of the community – and no longer limited to performing in Laban's work – Wigman branched out and collaborated with Hans Brandenburg, the Munich-based poet, dramaturge, journalist, and friend of Laban's. Wigman and Brandenburg's culminating work of the summer was an evening-length dance

³² Mary Wigman, "Gespräch mit Mary Wigman, Gret Palucca, Gerhard Schumann," 27.

³³ Mary Wigman, "Gespräch mit Mary Wigman, Gret Palucca, Gerhard Schumann," 22.

³⁴ Robert J. Richards, *The Tragic Sense of Life: Ernst Haeckel and Struggle Over Evolutionary Thought* (Chicago, 2005), 55.

³⁵ Performance Program, "Aufführung der Labanschule am 28.4.1914." Munich, April 28, 1914. AK MWS 1.1.1 Werkphotos, Solotanz. S 1. Front page.

drama, *Sieg des Opfers* ["Victory of the Victims"], based on a series of texts by Brandenburg with psychological themes, such as incest and "the monstrous power of a father who lusts after his own daughter" – with the father played by Wigman, masked, *en travesti*.³⁶ *Sieg Des Opfers*, however, never saw the curtain up, for war broke in July and the performance was canceled.³⁷ War came as a surprise to some Asconians, Wigman, Laban, and Brandenburg among them, who passed the summer isolated from political tensions across Europe. For them, August 1914 was a time marked by wasted creative effort, and not by fear about Europe's uncertain political future. Some at Ascona, including anarchist Peter Kropotkin and its radical feminist founders Henry Oedenkoven and Ida Hoffmann, understood their artistic efforts as part of an anti-liberal project to redefine power and the social order, while others, such as Wigman, saw Ascona as a retreat from politics into romantic utopianism. Such retreat from social reality was a common feature of right conservatism that championed nature, rather than industry or institution, as the basis for collective life and social engagement.³⁸ Wigman herself later summarized this "apolitical" stance by juxtaposing the world of Ascona, full of light, with the darkness of political reality. "During all of these blissful weeks [of the summer of 1914]," she noted, "we had not heeded the world around us, we had not realized the ever darkening shadow on the political horizon."³⁹

³⁶ Green, *Mountain of Truth*, 142.

³⁷ Brandenburg apparently tried to arrange a performance in Cologne of a revised version of the work, which was to include an additional first act by Laban. See Green, *Mountain of Truth*, 142.

³⁸ Herf, *Reactionary Modernism: Technology, Culture, and Politics in Weimar and the Third Reich* (Cambridge, 1984), 26 – 30. Herf distinguishes between forms of conservative romanticism in the prewar and those after 1919, noting that neoconservative postwar romanticism "entailed subtle yet important shifts in the meanings attributed to romantic words and symbols. For example, when Carl Schmitt and Ernst Jünger referred to romanticism, they referred to the idea of will and decision, rather than to anti-industrial agency. Both Schmitt and Jünger were critics of what they saw as romanticism's passive and effeminate aspects. They argued that political romanticism was the product of the war, rather than of pastoral poetry" (30).

³⁹ Mary Wigman, cited in Walter Sorell, *The Mary Wigman Book* (Connecticut, 1975), 47.

Turning her head away from Europe's dark horizon, Wigman looked to Laban for guidance. This was vital for her early career. Wigman's affiliation with Laban enabled her to pass the war in Switzerland, where she continued teaching at his dance school, newly relocated to Zurich from Munich. Meanwhile, through her connections to Laban, Wigman performed her solos in Zurich's emergent Dada scene, all the while refining her skills as a dance-maker and performer. Following a failed attempt in 1915 to open an Asconian-style artists' retreat in the Swiss countryside,⁴⁰ Laban resumed teaching in Zurich along with Maja Lederer and Suanne Perrotet, both of whom were his artistic collaborators, lovers, and mothers of his growing number of children. Wigman, who likely did not join Laban and the others in the countryside, was based in Zurich from 1916 until the end of the war. She participated in Laban's courses and movement experiments at his studio on Seegartenstraße, and toured with his student groups. As Laban planned the official curriculum for his Zurich school, he intended to institute courses in *Rythmique* and *Gymnastik*, with Wigman and Perrotet, respected Jaques-Dalcroze practitioners, as instructors.⁴¹ This was strategic for a number of reasons. In addition to making good use of Wigman and Perrotet's respective skills, by 1914 seven thousand students enrolled across Europe courses in courses in the Jaques-Dalcroze Method.⁴² Such courses were more likely to appeal to prospective students than a curriculum solely based on Laban's experimental methods. A tactic not unlike Jaques-Dalcroze's own approach in 1890 – whereby he introduced *Rythmique*

⁴⁰ Evelyn Dörr, *Die Schrift des Tänzers: Rudolf Laban, ein Portrait* (Norderstedt, 2005), 95-96.

⁴¹ Rudolf Laban, "Vertrag zur Labanschule A.G Zürich" [Teaching contract for Susanne Perrottet and Mary Wiegmann, Laban School Zürich] (undated). Tanzarchiv Leipzig Rudolf Laban Collection [hereafter referred to as "TL RLS"] Rep.028. I.a3. Nr.16. front page. The unsigned contract, which ran until July 1, 1921, stipulated that Wigman was engaged to teach dance, pantomime, "artistic" [*künstlerischen*] *Rythmique* and *Gymnastik*. Whether the later two courses were intended as courses in academic Jaques-Dalcroze Method or as Wigman's own interpretation and approach to them, is unclear.

⁴² Green, *Mountain of Truth*, 143.

along with traditional courses in solfège and ear-training – Laban, similarly, introduced students to his own approach to dance while cultivating a desperately needed student base. His experience with the Labangarden and its failure to generate enrollment proved instructive.

Wigman’s musical training complimented her skills as a Laban instructor. Her musicality was central to her approach to dance and distinguished her style of dancing from Laban’s in the coming years. Her 1917 application form for a teaching position with Laban, which was likely a formality, given how well the two knew each other by that time, lists her educational goals from March to July as “voice training.”⁴³ In addition, her sense of the physical body as “the instrument” of expression points to her interest in analyzing dance from the vantage point of musical metaphor and analogy, critical techniques she developed throughout the war and the course of her career. Wigman defined harmony in its musical sense: her essay describing the dance as the “instrument” of the dancer, notes how a “harmonic spatial scale” [*harmonische Raumskala*] and “harmonic gradations of force” [*harmonischen Kraftnuancen*] undergirded the laws of dance, which, as a complete system, was the expression of a “melody of force” [*Kraftmelodie*].⁴⁴

A 1925 program for dance teacher training echoed many of the ideas and images from that essay, “The Body as the Instrument of the Dancer,” particularly in its discussion of the “transformation of the body [Körper] from body [*Leib*] to instrument” forming the point of departure from which “one can speak about dance.”⁴⁵ It was precisely through the body’s status as an “instrument” that “the language of dance comes to life.” Wigman’s notion that dance

⁴³ Mary Wiegmann, “Anmeldung für Labanschule 1917” [Application for Laban School], Zürich (March 1, 1917). TL MWS S KX. Nr. 3.

⁴⁴ Mary Wigman, “Der Körper ist das Instrument des Tänzers,” (undated, c. November 12, 1913 – December 13, 1913), 62 - 63. “Tagebuch 1913,” AK MWS, 2.3 Tagebücher, S 439.

⁴⁵ Mary Wigman, “Lektion II: Die Wandlung des Körpers vom ‘Leib’ zum ‘Instrument’”: “Theoretisch- praktischer Übungskurs für werdende Lehrer” (Sep 1925), pp1-3. AK MWS, 2.4 Mary Wigman Schule, S 1381.

functioned as a language implied one's knowledge and control; the communicative potential of movement, therefore, acted like words, which hinged on the dancer's controlled yet effortless – i.e. fluent – ability to string together component sequences, phrases, and relationships to convey meaning. In an essay from the late 1920s entitled, “The Dance and his Instrument,” Wigman used musical metaphor to describe the various simultaneous processes (expressive, physical, and physiological) involved in movement, which was similarly subject to universal laws of space, time, and force. Making thinly veiled references to core practices of the Jaques-Dalcroze Method such as breathing, “inner hearing,” and pedagogical methods using the feet (“staccato foot-rhythms”), Wigman elaborated through musical imagery her vision of expression rooted in the self, a social subject respectful of musical (i.e. harmonic) order, natural law, and ease.⁴⁶ By “speaking the language” of the Jaques-Dalcroze method, Wigman showed how embodied movement could theorize the relationship between individual freedom and submission to authority. Through dance, one could theorize sovereignty.

Wigman's early solos performed in Zurich are the clearest examples of her use of musical imagery as a critical language to theorize sovereignty. These solos were an important critical space for her to experiment with ideas about the nature of human psychology and its role in movement expression. From 1914-1916 Wigman created a cycle of short solos entitled *Dance Poems (Tanzdichtungen)*⁴⁷ that “translated” different expressive forms into dance. The solo-cycle contained three different kinds of sound accompaniment, including music by “sound instruments” [*Geräuschinstrumente*] (which probably included gongs), silence, and short works arranged for piano and flute by musical romantics Debussy, Chopin, and Berlioz, in addition to

⁴⁶ Mary Wigman, “Aus: Der Tänzer und sein Instrument” *Tanzgemeinschaft*. Berlin (October 1929): 1-3. TL MWS. “Schulprospekte Mary Wigman,” Triebisch-Hoerisch Nachlass. S KII. Nr. 2.

⁴⁷ Manning translates Wigman's dance as “Dance Songs,” and which the work is thus commonly referred to as in English-language scholarship. However, for reasons of linguistic accuracy, I use the translation “Dance Poems.”

Sibelius' "Valse Triste" and Cécile Chaminade's "Zingara."⁴⁸ Wigman divided the performance thematically. Part I, "Music" featured two solos in which Wigman "interpreted" music through dance. Part II, "Visual Arts," consisted of movement interpretations, performed in silence, of "Painting," "Sculpture," performed with rhythmical accompaniment; and "Drawing," also danced in silence. These sections were then separated by musical interludes by Debussy ("Jardin sous la pluie") and Berlioz ("Irrlichtertanz"). Part III, "Dance," formed the culmination of the evening: it was a "dance poem in two parts" about themes of "Pain" and "Joy." Danced in silence, the section began with an interlude of Chopin's Prelude in E-minor – mirroring the somber mood of Wigman's interpretation of the subjective experience of pain – and concluded with his Prelude in G-major, likewise mirroring the lighthearted, happy experience of joy.⁴⁹ Wigman's alternation between silence and classical music illustrated two frames to understand individual movement and individual freedom. The latter, guided by rules and regulations of musical composition, served as a guide for Wigman's movement, which was structured by the regularity of rhythm, harmony, and formal structure. On the other hand, the former was an open-ended backdrop against which variations in gesture, rhythm, and tempo were not subject to any external influence. In silence Wigman "listened" to her intuition and freely explores expressions of her inner self.

Laban must have attended Wigman's performance of *Dance Poems*, as he jotted notes and sketches on the backside of a performance program, and his presence there suggests that

⁴⁸ "Programm Aufführung von Tanzdichtungen Mary Wiegmanns." January 2, 1916. TL MWS, KI, folder II, Nr. 2, front page. The sound accompaniment listed in the program give no performer or composer, suggesting that they were likely composed and performed by Wigman herself.

⁴⁹ Performance Program, "Programm Aufführung von Tanzdichtungen Mary Wiegmanns," January 2, 1916. Front page. TL MWS, KI, folder II, Nr. 2.

Wigman danced the solo-cycle while touring with his student group.⁵⁰ In contrast to her earlier solos presented at the Laban school's "Dance without Music" program – including her "Movement Study," "Zweitanz" ["Two-Dance"], "Dreitanz" ["Three-Dance"], and "Hexentanz" ("Witch Dance," which she later revised in 1926) – Wigman's 1916 solo-cycle also illustrates a departure from Laban and Jaques-Dalcroze's respective approaches to music. For Jaques-Dalcroze, an Enlightened sentimentalist, musical romanticism hindered artistic expressivity that body-based rhythm and movement facilitated. Wigman's embrace of Debussy and Chopin, whose works were popularized by other dance creators including members of the Ballets Russes, underscored her understanding that danced representations were not reliant on the feelings or sentiments evoked by particular forms, styles, or historical aesthetic schools. Through its various configurations of movement and sound, *Dance Poems* proposed a range of possibilities for what the relationship between dance and music could look like, and a set of rules to govern it. The performance also proposed a vision for how the dancer negotiated her own status within this set of rules. Music and dance, for example, could exist side by side as structurally discrete or stylistically independent modes, as Part III demonstrated. They could also interact to create new possibilities, shown in Part II. In both cases, the dancer entered into the system, freely expressing yet respectful of law and order.

Here, Wigman's ideas about the connection between music and dance diverged from Laban's ideas that emancipated dance from music. Laban understood musical and rhythmical accompaniment as secondary to dance, as hindrances to dance's formal autonomy. Laban's performances for his student ensembles, including those featuring Wigman, were performed in silence yet had titles with musical references – a reminder, perhaps, of the struggle for dance's

⁵⁰ Rudolf Laban, "Farbige Skizzen zum Ikosaeder" [Color drawings for Ikosaeder]. Bern (Feb 26, 1916). TL RLS Rep. 028 III-2a. Nr.5.1., backside of page.

formal autonomy in an history of art that, since the ancient Greeks, had excluded it from the pantheon of artistic forms. “Dance without music or with rhythmical direction, which bodily movement and its laws adapt themselves to, is a necessary development of modern artistic dance,” Laban declared to his audience in a 1914 program note for a student performance. “Movement series and shape-images [*Formgebilde*], which are performed today as free, independent and not determined by dance expression reliant on musical rhythm, develop not from pantomime but rather from spatial-rhythmic feeling [*Empfindung*].”⁵¹ For Wigman, silence liberated expressions of the inner self. Laban likewise liberated dance, and it emerged from a “spatial-rhythmic feeling” independent of the laws of “musical rhythm.” Laban’s concept of “spatial-rhythmic feeling,” articulated as part of a set of formal laws undergirding all movement expression, differed substantively from Wigman’s notion of individual feeling as constituted by a combination of rational thought and irrational desire. For Laban, “feeling” was the extension of a dancer’s ability for expression, and his system for dance (“Labanotation” or “Laban Movement Analysis”) made it rationally analyzable. Within this system, the purpose of feeling was not the discovery of new knowledge about the self, nor was it the basis to theorize the nature of an experience shared among individuals – as it would soon become for Wigman. Although both Laban and Wigman understood dance as governed by a series of immutable laws of time, space, and physical force, Laban’s concept of feeling followed Nyhart’s *Wissenschaft* (rather than *Kunde*) model of the relationship of the special to the general. As set of fixed laws, dance framed the particular as confirmation of a universalist theory of expression.⁵²

⁵¹ Anonymous, “Der Freie Tanz.” Performance Program: “Aufführung der Labanschule am 28.4.1914.” Munich, April 28, 1914. AK MWS 1.1.1 Werkphotos, Solotanz. S 1. Front page.

⁵² In this sense, Wigman and Laban’s interest in the relationship of the particular to the general as the basis for the formation of theory reflect two major trends among German natural scientists in the nineteenth century: knowledge “collectors” (those interested in particular information as a way to make general claims) versus “scientists” (those interest in general information as the basis for theories about particular phenomenon, or experience). Wigman, in

Finally, *Dance Poems* illustrates how music was a critical backdrop for Wigman's systematic analysis of movement. This was not unlike Jaques-Dalcroze's reflections on North African musical performances as the background for his systematic understanding of expression. Wigman's combination different musical forms on the same program presented music as an expressive montage; it also provided her audiences with a range of possibility to hear musical works, including those by Chopin or Debussy, which were familiar to them. Wigman's juxtaposition of music thus functioned as a powerful form of suggestion: following a lush work by Debussy with a dance in silence, she reiterated the value of a new approach to dance by highlighting the expressive features that distinguished it as an independent form. Articulating this relationship through a third method of expression, the visual arts, Wigman affirmed the close connections between these three aesthetic modes. By "dancing" the visual arts and music, Wigman presented dance's power to heal the various formal, critical, and stylistic divisions between them. Wigman's critical gesture was not without personal motives. A shrewd self-promoter, she placed her own danced compositions alongside those of Sibelius, Chopin, Debussy; like her predecessor Isadora Duncan, Wigman hinted by virtue of suggestion that her dances warranted similar merit.

Wigman's performance of these forms can also be read as a modernist's interest in critical reflection about the nature of aesthetic form, or content. However, Wigman's work did little to sever the work of art from her persona as its maker, or to dislocate the viewer from forms of logic, linearity, or cohesion – all features of artistic modernism. Instead, her critical reflection on form reinforced social connections, particularly those between herself and her audience. *Dance Poems* was an exercise in critical reflection, and the thematic progression of the evening –

this sense, belongs to the latter category, while Laban belongs to the former. See Nyhart, "*Wissenschaft and Kunde*," 250-275.

from music to visual art to dance – suggested dance as the final, best, examination of individual experience. A work staged on her own body, *Dance Poems* demonstrated how to differentiate between the object of knowledge (the self) and one’s wider social context. Within this space Wigman liberated the audience by allowing it to shift its expectations about given artistic forms. At the same time, Wigman guided viewers through the frames of reference (formal, stylistic, thematic) for seeing dance. Wigman’s sovereign dancer emerged: this time, she was sitting in the audience. The viewer of *Dance Poems* freely associated between modes of artistic expression, yet he respected the laws and logic of the solo onstage. No tension between these two imperatives existed.

Wigman’s turn to Nietzsche around this time showed how she began to accept indeterminacy about the grounds for the social contract. Following *Dance Poems*, Wigman created a series of solos that interrogated themes of human psychology and emphasized her preoccupation with human nature, rather than the natural world, and emotion and desire as central to dance. In February 1916, for “her first performance in front of her friends from the Dada Circle” of the Cabaret Voltaire, Wigman performed a solo entitled *Zarathustra’s Dance Song (Zarathustras Tanzlied)*.⁵³ As Wigman biographer Hedwig Müller notes, the dance was based on her “favorite book at this point in her life” and underscored how her intellectual and artistic sympathies were “closer to Dada than to Futurism.”⁵⁴ Wigman’s emphasis on the self as a locus for dance’s content allowed her to develop a new compositional form: the “dance-song,” or “*Tanzlied*,” which she would expand upon in the following years. Wigman was not the first modern dancer to draw inspiration from Nietzsche’s 1883 text, which, in addition to a number of

⁵³ Hedwig Müller, *Die Begründung des Ausdruckstanzes durch Mary Wigman* (Ph.D. Diss., University of Cologne, 1986), 52.

⁵⁴ Müller, *Die Begründung des Ausdruckstanzes durch Mary Wigman*, 52.

his other writings, had a lasting influence on dancers, musicians, and artists in Germany, Europe, and the United States.⁵⁵ Furthermore, many of Nietzsche's central philosophical concepts – in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* as well as *The Birth of Tragedy*, *The Genealogy of Morals*, and *The Gay Science* – hinge on depictions of embodied movement. In *Zarathustra*, Nietzsche's concepts of self-overcoming, the will to power, and his critique of Christian morality employ bodily metaphors, allusions, and images. Nietzsche's depiction of dance as a metaphor for the moribund effect of convention and social order on creative, individual thought is often invoked by dancers: “only in dance do I know how to speak the parables of the highest things – and now my highest parable remained unspoken in my limbs!”⁵⁶ As we have seen in Chapter 2, this same passage was invoked by Duncan's critics in an effort to affirm the links between her system of dance and its German national context.

Nietzsche's *Zarathustra* is structured as a montage of poetic episodes rather than as a linear, expository text, and it appealed to Wigman, who was interested in poetry as an analytical form, in embodied expression, in dance as a metaphor for social relations, and in miniature and juxtaposition as compositional devices. Like the figure of Zarathustra, characterized by Nietzsche through his shape-shifting and acts of concealment and exposure, Wigman donned a mask for her solo. In the dance, she performed movements that were energetic and emanated outward toward the audience; she also performed intimate movements that suggested the deeply personal. This combination inspired an anonymous reviewer (likely Hans Brandenburg)⁵⁷ to describe *Zarathustra's Dance Song* as “maximal hot temperament, maximal impulsive

⁵⁵ On the influence of Nietzsche in American modern dance, see Kimerer Lamothe, *Nietzsche's Dancers: Isadora Duncan, Martha Graham, and the Reevaluation of Christian Values* (Palgrave, 2006).

⁵⁶ Friedrich Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*. trans Adrian del Caro (Cambridge, 2006 [1885]), 87.

⁵⁷ Manning, *Ecstasy and the Demon*, 61.

movement,” in which “everything is personal suggestion, instinctive desire and expression of personal views [*Meinungsäußerung*].”⁵⁸ Moving between the inward and the outward, the individual and the social, Wigman’s solo translated into physical movement obedience to oneself in pursuit of the authentic expression of feeling, thought, and embodied action: Nietzsche’s concept of self-overcoming. In his text, self-overcoming functioned as a way to ask the previously unanswerable, to harness the unknown and indeterminate in service to a theory of society and the self.

For Wigman, the figure of Zarathustra helped resolve to a problem that was central to the history of western political thought. As Nietzsche and Wigman understood it, this was the conflict between the imperatives of a self-legislating, embodied individual and the demands of a higher authority. For both thinkers, this conflict shaped the experience of society. For Nietzsche, a solution lay in the reevaluation of the nature of individual commitment, rather than the transformation of discrete behavior. As scholar Robert Pippin, notes, Zarathustra

was much more interested in the qualitative characteristics of [commitments to self-overcoming] than with their content. The quality he is most interested in turns out to be extremely complex: on the one hand, 'whole-heartedness' and an absorbed or passionate 'identification' with one's higher ideal; on the other hand, a paradoxical capacity to 'let go' of such commitments and pursue other ideals when the originals (somehow) cease to serve self-overcoming and self-transcendence, when they lead to complacency and contentment.⁵⁹

Like Zarathustra, Wigman’s dancer sought freedom and control. She was able to balance control and “letting go,” two actions shown through contrasting movement states. Through dance, Wigman articulated the tension between an individual’s drive to freely express inner desires and

⁵⁸ H.B., Untitled Review of Performance by Mary Wigman (Mary Wiegmann), *Berliner Tagblatt* (Feb 1, 1916), pp NA. Cited in Müller, *Mary Wigman: Leben und Werke der große Tänzerin* (Berlin, 1997), 58.

⁵⁹ Robert Pippin, Introduction to Friedrich Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, trans. Adrian del Caro (Cambridge, 2006 [1885]), xxviii.

her recognition of harmonic order. Her movements connected her to the social, and granted her agency within collective life. For Wigman, this lay at the center of the question of sovereignty.

On November 10, 1917 at the Laban School in Zurich, Wigman, inspired by Nietzsche, presented *Ecstatic Dances*. Advertised as “the first evening of ritual performance art [*Vortragskunst*],” the solo concert, which was a series of solos exploring character types, was inspired by “a conference on the occult” held at Ascona earlier that year and Wigman’s observation of Laban’s involvement with masonic practices.⁶⁰ The mood inside of theater drew the audience into a mystical world removed from everyday life – not to mention the war raging across Europe at the time. Filled with candles and incense, the theater, likely a small rehearsal studio, evoked an intimate atmosphere of ritual contemplation. Wigman’s physical movements in the dance expressed a series of visceral, emotive states. Berthe Trümpy, one of Wigman’s first company members and founding members of the Wigman School in 1920, recalled “Nun,” the opening solo of the evening.

Half of the room was hung with black cloth, tall wax candles, frankincense, Wigman in a grey gown and a red robe, the snow-white face of a medieval ecstatic – arms lift heavily, hands crooked in pain fall, protecting breast and womb – everything becomes ice-cold, the cold, which emanates from the face’s snow-like pallor, kills, kills everything – somewhere in the poor body, a tremor – quiet, quiet, rigid, ice-cold quiet – the hands swing upwards, tender ornament of a god-like coving [*Volute*].⁶¹

The sections that followed – “Dervish,” “Idolatry” and “Victim” [*Opfer*] also: “Sacrifice”] – similarly combined psychological, spiritual, and physical states. As the nun, Wigman portrayed emotions and psychology (“ecstasy,” “pain,” “tender,” “god-like”) alongside physical and

⁶⁰ Manning, *Ecstasy and the Demon*, 62.

⁶¹ Bibi [aka] Berthe Trümpy, “Am 10 November 1917 war der erste Tanzabend Mary Wigmans....” Zürich, c.1917 (?). AK MWS 6. Fremde Manuskripte. S 776, 1. A “coving” is an architectural term referring to an arched or concave-shaped molding located at the point where a wall joins a ceiling.

physiological transformations, such as death, changes in temperature, and physical convulsions (“a tremor”). These were accompanied by Wigman’s shifts in physical and spatial position (her hands falling down along her side or swinging upward). In each instance, Wigman’s body remained the focal point of the dance and provided a frame of reference against which the audience could observe transformations to her physical and emotional states. Trümpy, for example, observed how Wigman’s dancing effected external changes to the theater-environment, such as the “cold” atmosphere on stage at the end of one section. She also noted how Wigman’s shifts remained rooted in her physical body and her inner feelings: the same cold of the theater “emanate[d] from the snow-like pallor” of Wigman’s face, an expression that was affect of her status as “medieval ecstatic,” or an individual known for her/his spiritual and psychological interiority.

In *Ecstatic Dances*, Wigman presented the self as the outward expression of inward states, which were a mixture of rational and non-rational drives. As Wigman’s body transcended its material circumstances, it remained grounded in the particularities of her self – as a dancer, performer, and individual; Wigman’s solo reminded her audience that dance was social knowledge. Her dance showed the uniqueness of the self within the social collective. Wigman’s characters and archetypes relinquished her individuality within a social context. The dance thus captured Pippin’s “paradox” of the Nietzschean process of self-overcoming: the necessity to both embrace and abandon the self. While Wigman’s solo proposed no immediate answers to this dilemma, *Ecstatic Dances* suggested that a *détente* was possible. It also evidenced Wigman’s qualities of self-sufficiency, for her solo was reliant only on her movements, gestures, and her ability to communicate with her audience. The dance featured minimal props (such as curtains or incense), no set pieces, or other dancers. Bringing a series of relatively minimal elements

together into a single danced work, Wigman showed how a complex process of material and metaphysical transformation stemmed from individual forces that were physiological and psychological in origin.

Wigman's search for order and stability stemmed from her belief in the indeterminacy of the grounds of human behavior. It also fit into a larger wave of artistic and scientific holism beginning in the nineteenth century. *Ecstatic Dances* premiered as World War I crescendoed to a macabre frenzy and participated in the "rebellion against the fortress of rigor" demanded by pre-WWI advocates of industrialization, progress, and technology. Many, including Wigman, saw this "Machine Science" as a threat to human life. Inspired by Kant's *Critique of Reason*, such thinkers including scientists Hermann von Helmholtz, Rudolf Virchow, and Emil Du Bois-Raymond, explained human behavior and expression through causal, physiological terms.⁶² Wigman, in contrast, rejected a mechanistic worldview, and saw a social and spiritual whole as the necessary condition for an entry into the political. In this, a balanced relationship between inner and outer appearances, rational thought and non-rational desire, and material realities and metaphysical forces structured human governance and enabled society to flourish. An important and unacknowledged member of a group of holist theorists including Jünger, Martin Buber, Ludwig Klages, and Kurt Goldstein, Wigman demonstrated how fixed order and indeterminacy cohered to form a stable collective (*Gemeinschaft*). Opposed to an administered and structurally divided organization (*Gesellschaft*), Wigman's *Gemeinschaft* conserved the efforts of its members, and was created, maintained, and protected by their embodied – metabolic – movements. Wigman thus crafted a unique place for dance "under the banner of Wholeness," that challenged "not only the empirical inadequacies of the nineteenth century 'Machine Model'

⁶² Harrington, *Reenchanted Science: Holism in German Culture from Wilhelm II to Hitler*, xiv.

of life and mind, but also the epistemological and methodological inadequacies of the science that had created the model in the first place.”⁶³

After 1919, Wigman’s commitment to the search for stable social order cohered as embodied conservatism. In doing so, it challenged the binary of the *Gemeinschaft/Gesellschaft*, of a collective versus administered social order. Wigman enlarged her vision of the individual dancer to a vision of a total society, in which a value-based education instilled in its members principles of hierarchized leadership, rigor, and skill; this showed how the formation of a peaceful, stable *Gemeinschaft* required considerable compromises to the *Gesellschaft*. At this time, Wigman moved away from solos towards group dances and founded a school for dance, which became a laboratory for experiments in social organization. Like Duncan and Jaques-Dalcroze, dance education was an occasion to observe and transform social behavior.

In her writing on dance during the 1920s, Wigman refined her vision of the sovereign subject and explicitly connected it to the operation of power that regulated relationships between bodies. As we will now see, Wigman’s original image of a free, self-legislating subject, a dancer who combined her inner desire and rational thought to achieve transcendent artistic expression, supported her vision of a new social order. This dancer was, like Duncan’s dancer of the future, the guardian of the polis: she was the bearer of politics. Over the course of the 1920s, Wigman’s dancer increasingly sought stable order, and to do so she merged with tactics from the political right. Wigman appealed to myth, heroism, and metaphor to achieve social stability, to balance power among members of the collective, and to reconcile of the competing demands between individual freedom and higher authority.

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⁶³ Harrington, *Reenchanted Science*, xvii.

II. Turning Eyes into National Ears: Solo Tours and Critical Reception in Germany, 1919 - 1921

A landmark year for world politics, 1919 was an important year for Wigman. Months of diplomatic efforts, political and economic restructuring had swept across Germany and Europe. For Wigman, 1919 inaugurated a year-long sweep of a solo-tour across Switzerland and Germany. This was a fresh start for her, in contrast to most Germans, who were still mired in the daily reminders of the past. Having spent much of 1918 at a sanatorium in the Swiss Alps recovering from a bout of depression, Wigman left Zurich, quit Laban, and embarked on a solo career that embraced the “path” she first recognized in 1913.⁶⁴ Eager to separate her new career from the associations of her youth, she changed her surname from Wiegmann to Wigman, not unlike Laban, who had simplified his original, Hungarian name (Rudolf Jean Baptiste Attila Laban de Varalja) in favor of one more “German” sounding, or Jaques-Dalcroze, who had changed his before returning to Europe as a professional artist. Although Wigman’s motives for the change are unclear – Manning, for example, notes its “Anglicized” sound⁶⁵ – it nevertheless represented her belief in personal identity as mutable and subject to change through deliberate, controlled acts of self-fashioning. Wigman’s new name was a badge of her Nietzschean commitments.

On the tour, Wigman’s program included *Ecstatic Dances* and sections from *Dance Poems*, in addition to solos she had created the previous year. Wigman included two premieres, *Dances of the Night* and *Vienna Waltzes* – the latter an homage to the Wiesenthal Sisters, known for their expressive interpretations of Viennese waltzes that had deeply impressed Wigman in her youth. New as well was *Four Hungarian Dances*, a dance set to Brahms’ iconic work of the

⁶⁴ Susan A. Manning, “Mary Wigman,” *International Encyclopedia of Dance* (Oxford, 2012), 2-3.

⁶⁵ Manning, “Mary Wigman,” 3.

same name, which became a staple of her solo repertoire and a source of images announcing her to the public. Portrait images, for example, of Wigman performing *Four Hungarian Dances* were published as souvenir postcards of the 1919 tour.⁶⁶ The images show the thirty-three year old Wigman in a full-skirted dress frozen in poses demonstrating physical strength and skill, combined with lyricism and softness. In one image, which was staged on an oriental rug in a studio, Wigman faces the left side of the frame in a deep lunge, one knee bent almost to the floor while her upper body arches diagonally upward. Eyes closed, mouth slightly open, Wigman fills the frame with her dynamic pose. Her bare feet, visibly dirty from dancing are flexed, a testament to the concentration and muscular effort required to maintain the pose.⁶⁷

Wigman quit Switzerland that fall for Germany, where, aided by Trümpy, she gave a series of solo concerts in Hannover, Bremen, and Hamburg. Her programs were similar to those earlier in the year, yet her German audiences greeted her work with less enthusiasm than the Swiss. Müller attributes the lukewarm German reception to their established frames of critical reference, and argues that reviewers understood Wigman's dances within an historical frame of reference that did not accommodate Wigman's aesthetic. This frame included: the "artistic dance" of expressionist Alexander Sacharoff, whose performances in the first decades of the century were rooted in forms of parody, pantomime, and "plastic dance" of other fin-de-siècle artists like Duncan; the "Egyptian Miniatures," of Sent M'Ahesa, whose orientalist aesthetic recalled the work of Ruth St. Denis and the *tableau vivant*; and solos by Clothilde von Derp, Sacharoff's partner known for her highly musical "expressive-dance studies"

⁶⁶ "Vier Ungarische Tänze" [Souvenir Postcards of Mary Wigman]. AK MWS 1.1.1 "Werkfotos Solotanz," S 265, Nrs. 83/73/1062; 83/73/1139; and 83/73/778.

⁶⁷ Anni Hesss, "Ungarische Tänze" (1919). München, Süddeutsche Konzertbüro. "Postkartenfoto Tanzposen" [Postcard Image of Mary Wigman in *Four Hungarian Dances*]. AK MWS 1.1.1 "Werkphotos Solotanz," S 265, Nr 83 /73/1139.

[*ausdruckstänzerischen Studien*].⁶⁸ In contrast, Wigman's dances favored gesture over pantomime, an exotic atmosphere over an imitation or reproduction of ritual forms, and a mixture of musical romanticism combined with silence and percussion. Müller alternately argues that more "popular" forms of early Weimar dance – such as cabaret and nude dances by Anita Berber and Olga Desmond, and the grotesque performances of Valeska Gert – formed a second frame of critical reference for Wigman's reviewers. Wigman's work once again departed from these styles.⁶⁹

Scholars differ on the import of Wigman's early critical reception. Some argue that criticism about her work became a discursive space that enabled her to refine the stylistic and thematic aspects of her dances. Others, including Manning, argue that a "philosophical overdetermination" guided early critics, who were more concerned with establishing dance journalism as a critical genre than with observing her performances onstage.⁷⁰ Wigman's tour occurred at a transitional moment between periods of critical writing in Germany about dance, as well as a more general shift in cultural criticism. "The press was for many years [before 1920] uncertain how to classify its discourse on dance," writes dance historian Karl Toepfer, and dispersed its reviews among daily periodicals, and journals on culture, fashion, sports, and the arts.⁷¹ As a result, critics "treat[ed] dance not as a clearly defined specialization, but as an ambiguous phenomenon that roamed across disciplines and could claim the interest of people

⁶⁸ Hedwig Müller, *Mary Wigman: Leben und Werke der große Tänzerin* (Berlin, 1997), 72.

⁶⁹ For histories of cabaret and nude dancing during the Weimar period, see Teri Gordon, "The Aesthetics of the Demi-Nu: Modernist Representations of the Dancer in Paris and Berlin from the Fin de Siècle to the Nazi Period" (Ph.D. Diss., Columbia University, 2001); Peter Jelavich, *Berlin Cabaret* (Cambridge, 1996); Karl Toepfer, *Empire of Ecstasy* (1997). On Berber, see Lothar Fischer, *Anita Berber: Tanz Zwischen Rausch und Tod, 1918-1928 in Berlin* (Berlin, 1996).

⁷⁰ Jiyung Song, "Mary Wigman and German Modern Dance: A Modernist Witch?" *Forum for Modern Language Studies* 43, no. 4 (2007): 433. For examples of the former, see Susan A. Manning, "Mary Wigman," *International Encyclopedia of Dance*, 3.

⁷¹ Toepfer, *Empire of Ecstasy*, 336-337.

with other modernist agendas. In this respect, the journalistic discourse represented dance as a power that integrated the aesthetically expressive body into a culture that already seemed overspecialized.” After 1920, forums for cultural criticism in Weimar gained readership and became increasingly specialized, with dance likewise a specialized topic for review. Toepfer concludes that after 1920, dance journalism served as much as a spring-board for writers to refine their own critical languages about dance as it was a pursuit requiring more standard journalistic techniques of observation, description, or analysis. Wigman’s embodied conservatism was thus a platform for politics as well as for critique of popular and mass culture.

The archival record of Wigman’s first German tour is relatively thin, possibly the result of the post-WWII reception of her work and efforts in to rehabilitate her professional career from its Nazi involvement.⁷² Yet existing archival documents show that Wigman’s critics saw her work as something new. In contrast to Berber, Desmond, Gert, and images of the new Weimar woman. In contrast to Duncan, Wigman turned away from the biological (i.e. female) body and looked to psychological self as a guide into the social – as a source for the dancer’s social knowledge and power. Wigman “was not interested in [the] corporeal elements of the body as sensuality. In fact, she even seemed to deny those sentiments completely as appropriate material for a genuinely independent artistic vision.”⁷³ Unlike Duncan, Wigman was not interested in gender per se as a source of social freedom or authority, yet similar to Duncan’s dancer of the

⁷² One considerable factor is the material devastation suffered by Germany and German archives during and after the Second World War, during which many Weimar-era periodicals (including specialized dance journals) were destroyed. This, combined with a process by Wigman students of legacy-building in the postwar, when negative reviews of her work were excluded from archival collections, has made reconstructions of the period around 1919 challenging for historians. (The Wigman Archives in Leipzig, Berlin, and Cologne, for example, contain substantial collections of newspaper clippings and reviews of her work, though virtually all after 1920 and are virtually all positive.) However, given that in 1919 Wigman had yet to establish a name for herself in Germany, the volume of critics who chose to cover her performances may simply have been limited. Wigman’s tour also coincided with wartime recovery, social unrest, and cultural instability, and so reportage on a little-known solo dancer from Switzerland was likely not a priority for journalists.

⁷³ Song, “Mary Wigman and German Modern Dance: A Modernist Witch?” 431.

future, Wigman believed that one's status as a woman affected one's relationship to nature and to others, as her writing on Diana, or her characters in *Ecstatic Dances* showed.

For as much as Wigman's critics and audiences were unsure of how to see or describe her work, her early dances deliberately built upon an existing tradition of female solo performances in Germany, Europe, and the United States. Like the dances of Sent M'Ahessa, Ruth St. Denis, and Loïe Fuller, Wigman embodied themes of the ritualistic, the spiritual, the sensual, the exotic. Like von Derp, Wigman's work embodied expressive states and their transformations, rather than describe linear narratives. In *Ecstatic Dances*, *Four Hungarian Dances* (1919), *Seven Dances of Life* (1921), *Scenes From a Dance Drama* (1924), and *Hexentanz* (1926), Wigman embodied the "character study" associated with Sacharoff, a dancer known for his feminine attributes. Finally, Wigman's musicality that was at once free and felt made her heir to the practice of "new" or plastic dancing that the Wiesenthals and Duncan had popularized. Like Karl Federn did with Duncan, Brandenburg identified Wigman as a female pioneer within a German national tradition of art and culture.

Wigman's experiments with form and content remained true to her search for stable order and became more pronounced in the years after her solo tour. This vision highlighted the centrality of the individual in the search for a transcendent whole. Although Wigman veered away from autobiography as source of creative content, her dances continued to entertain the possibility that the origins of the social contract – what made people agree to be governed – were potentially unknowable. "Increasingly [into the 1920s], Wigman turned in the direction of *Ecstatic Dances*, where, rather than imitating religious dances of other cultures, as Ruth St. Denis often did, Wigman objectified spiritual experience without explicit reference to exotic traditions. Infused with Laban's ideas on the mystical connection between the dancer and the

cosmos, Wigman continued to create dances in which ‘the personal life experience of the choreographer yields to the dance visualization of the incomprehensible and the eternal.’”⁷⁴ As we will see in what follows, Wigman combined her commitment to stable order with Pippin’s characterization of “paradox” of self-overcoming – “to ‘let go’ of [individual] commitments and pursue other ideals when the originals (somehow) cease to serve self-overcoming and self-transcendence, when they lead to complacency and contentment.” This led Wigman to discover a place for individual freedom and self-legislation within sites of order and regulation.

Following what Wigman described as a “catastrophic” performance in Berlin in the fall of 1919, she returned to Dresden, a place she knew well.⁷⁵ Dresden and Hellerau had been altered by the war. Hellerau shut its gates, Jaques-Dalcroze returned to Switzerland, and the Jaques-Dalcroze Institute closed. Still, Dresden must have come as a welcome sight after the disappointment of her earlier shows, and even in November, a month of waning light and grey days. Wigman presented a different program than her earlier concerts, which were often marred by logistical difficulties (frequently involving hired accompanists) that on occasion had led her to improvise her dances altogether.⁷⁶ Though a skill improviser thanks to her Jaques-Dalcroze training at Hellerau, Wigman here confronted the practical, professional, consequences of instability, chaos, and disorder. The Dresden program, in contrast, was designed to show off her craft, skill, musical breadth, and compositional style. It consisted of (in program order): *Dance Poems*, which was followed by a short pause; a solo entitled *Shadows*, performed to an “Indian

⁷⁴ Manning, “Mary Wigman,” *International Encyclopedia of Dance*, 3. Wigman’s citation here is taken from *The Mary Wigman Book* (1975) a collection of Wigman’s reminiscences and writing translated and edited by Walter Sorrell. Sorrell’s publication and scholarship on Wigman formed the basis of Wigman scholarship in English in the mid to late 1960s. Notably, Sorrell’s work is silent on Wigman’s participation with National Socialism, as well as her activity in Germany in the 1930s and 1940s, and its tendency towards legacy construction for Wigman has led to considerable scholarly misunderstandings, particularly in America.

⁷⁵ Wigman, “Gespräch mit Mary Wigman, Gret Palucca, Gerhard Schumann,” 51.

⁷⁶ Wigman, *Ibid.*, 51.

Melody”; two dances, *Temple Dance* and *Idol Worship*, both excerpted from *Ecstatic Dances*, with the former performed without sound accompaniment and the latter with gong and drums; a solo, *Dance in A-Major*; and, to conclude the evening, her lyrical and virtuosic *Four Hungarian Dances*.⁷⁷

Dresden audiences received Wigman so positively that she described their reactions as “something unimaginable” and “marvelous.”⁷⁸ Her critics had little trouble finding a critical frame through which to view her, and they honed in on the immediate significance of her work. For example, a reviewer for the Social Democratic newspaper (SPD), the *Dresdener Volkszeitung*, argued that Wigman’s performance advanced a new, model vision for humanity: “Mary Wigman, a previously unknown dancer here [...] yesterday attracted a great audience. Only a small part of it knew about her work. And that is: the terror of the sublime, the transformation of grotesque into kindness [*Liebenswürdigen*] and the dream to let new ideals for humanity [*Menschheitsidealen*] quietly build up.”⁷⁹ In her 1913 essay on “The Body as the Instrument of the Dancer,” Wigman defined “grotesque,” which potentially referenced the historical dance form, *grotteschi*, as the opposite of “harmonic”; this dynamic opposition of disorder versus order, she argued, shaped the character of the dance’s melody of force, [*Kraftmelodie*] and was itself a display of logic and order, for it “comes out of the transformation in the gradation of force and ultimately has a discernable scale [through these] the two branches

⁷⁷ Müller, *Mary Wigman*, 67.

⁷⁸ Wigman, “Gespräch mit Mary Wigman, Gret Palucca, Gerhard Schumann,” 56.

⁷⁹ P.B. Untitled Review of Mary Wigman, Nov 10, 1919, *Dresdener Volkszeitung*, page number not available. Cited in Hedwig Müller, *Die Begründung des Ausdruckstanzes durch Mary Wigman*, 103.

[...].”⁸⁰ Following years of violence and war, and currently in the throes of domestic political revolution, Dresden’s politically centrist readers must have found comfort in such images of cohesion and peace contained by the promise of a “quiet build up” of shared “ideals for humanity.”

Shortly after her Dresden performances, German audiences received Wigman with enthusiasm. In January 1920, Brandenburg covered his former collaborator’s tour for *Die Tat*, the “monthly journal for the Future of German Culture” and intellectual home to Weimar’s cultural conservatives and, by the late 1920s, its proto-fascist right.⁸¹ Brandenburg also reviewed dance, literature, and drama for the *Deutsche Allegemeine Zeitung* and *Die Fahne*, both periodicals with conservative political affiliations. Brandenburg was also the author of numerous books, including *Der Moderne Tanz* [*The Modern Dance*] a history of dance in Germany first published in 1913 with revised editions in 1917 and 1921. One of the first histories in German devoted exclusively to modern dance, Brandenburg’s monograph appealed to an elite audience of dance and theater specialists and “established the commercial value of the wave of dance books to follow and served as a model for representing modern dance as a historical force.”⁸² As we will see in Chapter 6, despite the book’s depiction of dance as elite specialization, it also showed the wide appeal of modern dance in Weimar.

⁸⁰ Mary Wigman, “Der Körper ist das Instrument des Tänzers,” (undated, c. November 12, 1913 – December 13, 1913), 66.

⁸¹ By the 1929 under Hans Zehrer’s editorial directorship, *die Tat* became the proto-Nazi home to the “Tatkreis” (the “Tat Circle”), a group of Right-wing intellectuals including Jünger and Otto Strasser, politician and leader of the Black Front, a splinter faction of the early Nazi party, who in 1930 attempted to oust Hitler from Nazi party leadership. For more on *Die Tat*, see also Marino Puilliero, *Une modernité explosive: la revue Die Tat dans les renouveaux religieux, culturels et politiques de l’Allemagne d’avant 1914-1918* (Geneva, 2008); Gary D. Stark, *Entrepreneurs of Ideology*.

⁸² Toepfer, *Empire of Ecstasy*, 338.

Brandenburg's reviews of Wigman capture the spirit of her increasing professional success and provide a critical record of how others observed, understood and interpreted her visions of freedom, authority, and the self. Similar to the reception of Duncan, the reception of Wigman shows how her embodied conservatism was nationalized, and given strong roots in what her critics perceived as a German tradition of culture, philosophy, and art. Brandenburg, like Wigman, was a devoted reader of Nietzsche; like Federn with Duncan, Brandenburg used Nietzsche to highlight Wigman's connection to Germany, as well as a particular set of anti-liberal political views. In *Modern Dance*, for example, Brandenburg noted how Nietzsche's work, particularly *The Birth of Tragedy* [1872], to analyze modern dance.⁸³ In his *Die Tat* reviews, Brandenburg implicitly referenced his Nietzschean affiliations, yet he explicitly noted how Wigman as a model for Nietzschean values of self-overcoming. Her dancing, he argued, demonstrated the same reconciliation between freedom and authority in the search for stable social order that she herself noted. Like Wigman, Brandenburg was an embodied conservative.

Brandenburg cast Wigman's German tour as her "return to her Fatherland," and evidence of history at work.⁸⁴ Casting aside conventions of critical journalism, he described her solos not as discrete events in specific places at specific times but rather as a general process of romantic discovery, revelation, and individual cultivation. Asserting her German return not only added to the nation's tradition of great artists – and recognizing how her dancing belonged firmly within a "German" artistic tradition – he noted that her new aesthetic style promised to rejuvenate a

⁸³ In particular, Brandenburg observed that modern dance was the product of a the convergence of the two competing life-forces described by Nietzsche: the Apollonian – a form of bounded, self-conscious control associated with the Greek god Apollo – and the Dionysian – an unhinged, generative creative force associated with the orgiastic celebrations in honor of the god Dionysus. In the case of modern dance, a "life-feeling" in Europe that was marked by Apollonian features had provided the conditions from which dance "springs forth" as a Dionysian element. For Brandenburg, as for Nietzsche, the encounter of these two opposing forces formed an inherently creative, productive relationship that gave rise to the creation of new cultural forms. See Hans Brandenburg, *Der Moderne Tanz*. 2nd ed. (Munich, 1917 [1913]), 5.

⁸⁴ Hans Brandenburg, "Mary Wigman." January 1920. *Die Tat*, Jg.11, H2: 792.

defeated people. Wigman's representation of a general "type" [*Typus*] rather than a discrete "personality" of the dancer demonstrated this.

The school that she represents, and hers of all the schools of independent, singular styles, belongs to the few honest, creative personalities that tower above the flat, dilettantish swarm of today's dancers, forming standards and indicating direction. Her skill and her dimensionality are equally impressive. Precisely because her body is a heavier type than one usually sees in dance, her command of the material, all the more triumphant as it is quickened and unlocked through an unparalleled discipline and aplomb, no longer surrenders to the embarrassment of accident but in each blink of eye is embodied and fully controlled.⁸⁵

In contrast to the dilettantism of contemporary Weimar culture, Wigman's dancing revealed an authentic, "honest," German expression. Rooted in the command of her body and the technical skill evident in *Four Hungarian Dances*, Wigman's dances "triumphed over" her physical self. Through her independence and authenticity, her discipline and bodily control, she rose above the "swarm of today's dancers." Combining Nietzschean philosophy with nationalist rhetoric and flair, Brandenburg cast her as the model of Nietzsche's *Übermensch* ["Overman"], an individual who, through an acute embodied knowledge, intellect, and sense of the irrationality, succeeds in a process of self-overcoming – on German soil.

Brandenburg noted Wigman's technical skills, particularly in *Four Hungarian Dances* and *Vienna Waltzes*, enabled her to perform the gamut of historical movement forms and musical styles. "From a celebratory Grandezza March she lifts herself up over the scampering and craned flight of a scherzo to a limbless Strauss Waltz, sunk in shadows and dream, unleashed in sacred dances whose music silences, or as ecstatic noise, prays, [...and] cracks through the sharply hot-

⁸⁵ Brandenburg, "Mary Wigman," 792.

blooded and rears aloft a stepping wildness of a Hungarian dance.”⁸⁶ Each of these styles connected to specific, historical, musical dynamics, tempos and rhythms that in turn evoked feelings and images transporting the viewer on a romantic journey through time and space, from ballrooms and temples to folk celebrations. Notably absent on this journey were the sounds, images, and features of contemporary life – the grind and whirr of machinery, the murmur and roar of the masses. Brandenburg looked backward to Wigman’s dance predecessors to frame his characterization: in addition to the Strauss waltzes of the nineteenth century, Wigman’s movements, including her “Baroque linear-graphical Arm movements and hand flexions,” mirrored those by Sacharoff, whose “intellectual and optical style,” he noted, was evident in Wigman’s “calculated symmetry.”⁸⁷ Her evocation of the past in the present proved her skills as an astute observer of German culture. Not unlike Duncan’s presentation of the recapitulation of dance’s history as a form within the movement of the individual dancer, Wigman’s embodied performance demonstrated to her viewers a history of dance’s development.

Wigman’s critical observation of other artistic styles indicated her self-sufficiency. Her dancing was complete, whole, and it looked within rather than beyond itself for inspiration. Her use of the physical space onstage demonstrated this. “Her dance, like no other, which shows the overwhelming phenomenon of movement, [is] something like a phenomenology of movement par excellence,” he declared. “She builds into the space a second space, in which her dance hovers like a planetary body [*Weltkörper*] in its invisible angles and which must have split apart a glassy firmament, if she stepped over its vaults.”⁸⁸ Through this “phenomenology of movement” and her construction of a “planetary body,” Wigman demonstrated to her audience

⁸⁶ Brandenburg, *Ibid.*, 792.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 792.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

how dance combined smaller units and “built” them into a cosmic whole. Brandenburg compared her dance to Wagner’s “absolute music,” a form that united disparate elements to create a complete (i.e. “absolute”) aesthetic experience yet relied on no external tools or conventions (e.g. content, theme, structure, melody) to create a transformative experience of individual and collective self-revelation. As in the case of Wagner’s music, Wigman’s dance was a complete source of creative content that drew others in.

At the beginning and at the end of her dances the music suddenly breaks off, a moment that steals your breath away as if the floor under her feet and ours gave way, but one recognizes nevertheless with astonishment that her movement carries itself, and had one seen the next dance, which is in complete silence, [the accompaniment would have appeared] like a prop and a crutch that she didn't need. It is a similar experience to having an ear, which only knew a single song, but on the first try could, entirely on its own, pick up 'absolute' Music.⁸⁹

Slipping from “her feet” to “ours” Wigman’s dance was self-sufficient and intensely social. Brandenburg described this effect – and the order it effected – through musical metaphor and analogy, not unlike Wigman’s analysis of dance via music. Like “having an ear that only knew a single song” but conjured an entire opera, Wigman’s connection of movement to music, rooted in herself as a source of expressive material, transmitted to the viewer knowledge about the body, about the logic of the dance (e.g. the connection of section or solo to the next), and about the relationship of discrete movements to the dance’s greater whole. The dancer transmitted expressive information *and* the skills for processing that information to a viewer. Wigman’s dances were *Rythmique*-style movement riddles that could be decoded through one’s feet – which, as Wigman’s performance showed, were also the audiences’ feet. Each of these elements, in other words, were thinly veiled metaphors for social relations and the negotiation of power between people.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

Wigman scholar Susan Manning has argued that Wigman's notion of "absolute dance," which Manning redefines using the German term, "Gestalt im Raum" ["the configuration of energy in space"], belonged to her larger "project to make dance an autonomous language."⁹⁰ Developed through an approach to spectatorship and staged representations of gender, Wigman evoked images not linked to a specific persona or her own identity. Through movement, gesture, the use of stage space, musicality, performance quality, and emotive states, Wigman splintered the content of her dances from her status as their creator, and thus, Manning argues, elaborated dance as form of artistic modernism, which advanced a vision for a unified collective, in contrast to the "factionalized" affiliations endemic to the political landscape of Weimar. Manning concludes that Wigman's dances thus became a neutral space into which audiences from left and right read their own political agendas.⁹¹

However, Wigman's "absolute dance," like Jaques-Dalcroze's "absolute audition," was the practical maintenance of stable social order. As Brandenburg's reading of Wigman suggests, her absolute dance was less a gender-based social representation onstage than a practical method to demonstrate how individual expression negotiated social authority. Wigman's absolute dance extended from her vision of the sovereign self; it united free individuals, shaped by drives of rational thought and irrational desire, into contact with others. Brandenburg made this an explicitly national project, though both he and Wigman saw dance as the embodied maintenance of effort and order: dance conserved and protected social harmony. Wigman showed others how to participate in this, and her artistry, physical prowess, and intelligence proved that she was fit to lead others. "Mary Wigman is in her singular element in dances in silence," he observed, "and it belongs, perhaps, to her tactic vis-à-vis the audience, which, in the meantime, she initially

⁹⁰ Manning, *Ecstasy and the Demon*, 2.

⁹¹ Manning, *Ibid.*, 89.

exposes only carefully and sporadically. She indeed proves that she is musical and that she likewise has command over the to-date familiar kind of dance, whereby her rise, from its special domain, will become even greater.” Wigman’s dances convinced Brandenburg that she could lead German audiences. Unlocking a world of complex forms and meanings, her dancing, like Wagner’s operas or Nietzsche’s parables, taught audiences to transform themselves. It taught them to recognize these transformations as a kind of freedom. As the floor vanished from beneath her feet and one’s eyes turned into ears, each member of the audience became a member of the social body. Dance made them understand what united them: a commitment, via the body, to a way of moving that guaranteed each individual’s freedom. This dance was new – not for its engagement with aesthetic convention, but for how it made indeterminacy about the grounds of the social contract irrelevant. Regardless of the motives that led individuals to be governed – whether it was out of nature or human, creative genesis, out of a sense of duty or consent – a peaceful, orderly social existence was possible. Led by Wigman, who was a model for the values needed to achieve this, the audience could enter into this collective and learn to be free.

*

Brandenburg’s reviews underscored how Wigman’s dances defied stylistic classification, and instead formed an “ambiguous phenomenon that roamed across disciplines.” Wigman’s dance, Brandenburg showed, indicated her ability of self-overcoming that broadened her scope for feeling, thought, and expression. For example, Wigman communicated to unspecialized viewers the basic principles of control, self-command, and authenticity by showing how inner desire existed in balance with submission to bodily control. The model for the *Übermensch*,

Wigman taught others how to become *Übermenschen*. She made her dances accessible to others by uniting them into a community of viewers, regardless of differences in knowledge, skill, and experience; she made Nietzschean ideals accessible, achievable. Through her translation of Nietzschean philosophy onstage, Wigman's dances knit together a community joined by a common set of values, framed as general modes of behavior rather than specific examples. If Wigman's dances evoked a sense of loss and sadness, for instance, she made no concrete reference to war or violence, poverty, or gender inequality. If her dances made the viewer feel joy and happiness, it was not through their portrayal of peace treaties, political resolutions, or acts of social justice. Wigman's work instead dealt in metaphor, myth, and suggestion.

Members of the political left and right bolstered their theories of culture, society, and politics with Nietzschean philosophy. Brandenburg's reading of Wigman reveals the Weimar conservative politics of her dances. Brandenburg's cultural pessimism found expression in her work. He noted that Nietzsche's disdain for mid- to late nineteenth democratic liberalism inspired his analysis of dance.⁹² Brandenburg's cast Wigman's dances as lessons in Nietzschean morality that enabled the reinvention of oneself and the social order according to a set of right politics. "The Weimar right-wing intellectuals presented war, militarism, and nationalism as the breeding ground for a new, postdecadent, anti-bourgeois man. Nietzsche had provided these thinkers with an anti-bourgeois language as well as the pathos of a heroic struggle against convention. They transformed his message of the late nineteenth century into an effective element of the politics of youth in Weimar."⁹³ The Wigman dancer as a moral and social leader attested to Brandenburg's concern for the "youth in Weimar" and its future. As we will see in Part III, Wigman's emphasis on education stemmed from this concern.

⁹² Brandenburg, *Der Moderne Tanz*, 1-5.

⁹³ Herf, *Reactionary Modernism*, 30.

In addition to Brandenburg, other critics lavished praise on Wigman. Though they were affiliated with different (i.e. less politically conservative) periodicals, they often echoed his observations about her. After a performance on November 5, 1921 at the *Curiohaus*, Hamburg, an anonymous critic for the *Neue Hamburger Zeitung* noted the historical import of Wigman's work. Reviewing her solos *Tanzrhythmen*, *Four Dances after Oriental Themes*, and *Tanzsuite*, which were all set to piano accompaniment, the critic explained that Wigman's ability to harness the expressive force of her physical body demonstrated its departure from historical, academic forms (i.e. ballet). "In any of Wigman's dances, one feels a feverish stream [*Straffung*] of the entire body; it is as if a tremendous weight stems aloft [...] There is no question that many viewers, now and will in hindsight, rank Wigman's entire project as first-rate. She immediately recognizes that all final accomplishment lies at the end of a chain of events, and she captures a notion of what it means for a single force to compel a brilliant nature [*Natur*, also translatable as "quality"] of this entire, vast path."⁹⁴ Like Brandenburg, the reviewer observed Wigman's reconciliation between individual freedom ("as if a tremendous weight stems aloft") and higher authority ("this entire, vast path"). Elsewhere, Alfred Günther of the *Neue Schaubühne*, a monthly journal for "Theater, Drama, and Film," described a process of embodied synesthesia, similar to Brandenburg's description of Wigman's absolute dance. "She dances with the body, with the arms, with the hands, with the Da-Sein [sic]," he noted. "The body is not only a body. The body is the heart."⁹⁵

Wigman was not content to let her critics be the sole interpreters of her danced theories of sovereignty and the self. In December 1921 at the Frankfurt Opera House, she premiered a new

⁹⁴ H.W.F, "Gipfelleistung: Zweiter Tanzabend Mary Wigman," Nov 5, 1921, *Neue Hamburger Zeitung*, vol. 5, no. 496, page number not available.

⁹⁵ Alfred Günther, "Der Tanz der Mary Wigman," *Neue Schaubühne* 107 H. 5/6, Jg. 3 (September 1921), 107.

work, *The Seven Dances of Life*, her first for a dance ensemble and which dealt explicitly with themes of social power. In 1920, Wigman had opened a school in Dresden, and in January 1921 she founded the “Wigman Chamber Dance Group,” whose members included Gret Palucca, Berthe Trümpy, and Lena Hanke – and many of whom, including dancer Yvonne Georgi, were students and instructors at the Wigman school.⁹⁶ A departure from her solos, *The Seven Dances of Life* featured a cast of eight and combined spoken text with movement and sound to underscore her interest in dance as a collective experience constituted by the reconciliation of freedom and authority. The story of Salomé inspired Wigman’s libretto, published later that year as a monograph by Diederichs, publisher of Duncan’s *Tanz der Zukunft* as well as *Die Tat*. Diederichs himself was a self-proclaimed Nietzschean, drawn to Wigman’s work for clear reasons.⁹⁷ Performed in silence with intermittent percussion, gong, and flute accompaniment, the dance lacked a continuous instrumental score. Like *Ecstatic Dances*, its dramatis personae featured an orderly series of character types: the Speaker (performed by a man), the Dancer (performed by a woman), four Young Girls, and two Drummers. Divided into several parts, the dance traced a loose narrative chronicling a power struggle and its eventual resolution by the characters. In the work, the central figure, the Dancer, follows and disobeys a king’s authority. Sentenced to death for her disobedience, she performs a “Dance of the Demons” and a “Dance of Death,” both of which she survives. The performance concludes as the Dancer, transformed by her near-death experience, unites with the group of Young Girls for a final “Dance of Life.”

The structure and content of the dance revolved around the depiction of the Dancer’s process of self-recognition, through which she realizes that her own feelings of desire – for

⁹⁶ Müller, *Die Begründung des Ausdruckstanzes durch Mary Wigman*, 111.

⁹⁷ On Diederichs’ Nietzscheanism, both before and after WWI, see Stark, *Entrepreneurs of Ideology*.

movement, for life, for expression – are incompatible with the king’s authority. She then harnesses her self-expression into an act of social disobedience, which leads to her death-sentence. In the dance, Wigman illustrates the precise moment in which the Dancer recognizes this tension; significantly, this moment is one in which the Dancer questions the nature of knowledge about the self versus knowledge about the social order. Wrapped in a mood of uncertainty, the Dancer speaks to the audience. “Who am I? I don’t know. I feel only the blood burning in my veins, and I hear nothing other than the beating of my wild blood. Who is God? I don’t know, I only feel the strange force [*Kraft*] penetrating me. I don’t want to feel, I don’t want to know, I only want to dance.”⁹⁸ Questioning the divide between knowledge of her inner desire and her knowledge of the social and natural orders restricting her freedom, and despite her inability to determine the precise source of this desire, she clearly understands her course of action. The Dancer has a “mission”: not “to feel,” not “to know,” but “to dance.” Ironically, through her qualities of self-sacrifice, the Dancer liberates herself from the binary of mind and body, and unites the two in movement. She recovers control of her actions, which enables her return to a community (i.e. the Young Girls), that accommodates, rather than subjugates, her newly recognized freedom and power. The dance concludes on a dreamlike note, as the dancers remain suspended in their newly formed, stable, collective.

A model of the sovereign self, the Dancer in *Seven Dances of Life* rehabilitates physical force as dance, a method of peace and reconciliation rather than violence and brutality. Dance reconciles the competing tensions of self legislation relative to authority, and the tension between rational thought and irrational desire. Uniting psychological and physical force, the sovereign dancer embraces indeterminacy into deliberate action. One again, she is the *Übermensch*.

⁹⁸ Mary Wigman, *Sieben Tänze des Lebens* (Jena, 1921), 9.

Audiences who saw *The Seven Dances of Life* were reeling from war, revolution, worker's strikes, and political uncertainty. The Kapp Putsch occurred the previous year in Munich, which Wigman recalled as significant only for its interruption to her touring schedule.⁹⁹ Wigman's work presented a clear allegory for social harmony in the context of division and fracture that were legible to her contemporary audiences. Manning notes that the dance articulated a vision of an utopian *Gemeinschaft* and "[presaged] the emergence of Wigman's all-female dance group" in the late 1920s.¹⁰⁰ The dance, however, did much more than that. It showed how Wigman's embodied conservatism, including her translation of Nietzschean values as a set of accessible actions for the post-WWI "postdecadent, anti-bourgeois" individual, aided the "heroic struggle against convention" initiated by the Weimar political right. Wigman's embodied conservatism allowed her to advocate for

Gemeinschaft as something inherently good and unified in contrast to a divided and fragmented *Gesellschaft*. Further, the idea of *Gemeinschaft*, and later that of the *Volksgemeinschaft*, had pronounced authoritarian implications. It both proclaimed the existence of social harmony without addressing actual social conflicts and established a moral and ethical basis for individual sacrifice and surrender to existing political powers. Hence the conservative revolutionary notion of the *Volksgemeinschaft* was an attack on both the liberal idea of individual rights and social assertions that class divisions and inequalities stood in the path of genuine community.¹⁰¹

Eschewing the specificities of contemporary politics, including issues of leadership, legal representation, and class division, Wigman showed that the engagement with social or political reality paled in comparison to an allegorical or metaphorical experience via movement of stability and order. Her vision for a utopian community and sense that politics was best left to

⁹⁹ Wigman, "Gespräch mit Mary Wigman, Gret Palucca, Gerhard Schumann."

¹⁰⁰ Manning, *Ecstasy and the Demon*, 96-107.

¹⁰¹ Herf, *Reactionary Modernism*, 36.

those who did it as a vocation would figure as key to her accommodation with National Socialism, for she, like Laban, “conflated and confused [her] ideal of the *Tanzgemeinschaft* (“dance community”) with the fascist ideal of *Volksgemeinschaft* (“people’s community,” after 1933 an “Aryan” community).”¹⁰²

Reviews of *The Seven Dances of Life* were positive. Reviews of Wigman’s own performance as the Dancer were even more laudatory; one critic in Berlin, in fact, noted that her performance showed her as the “philosopher of the dance” capable of inspiring “wonder and respect” – even among those audiences drawn to more popular forms, and who shirked from “danced theories.”¹⁰³ Using Wigman’s artistic accomplishments as a critical angle to review the dance, the reviewer echoed Brandenburg’s characterization of Wigman’s power to expose the spirit of a community through physical rigor and training. “Mary Wigman, the dancer, [is able], with her shaped, limber body, with her strong volitions, with unrelenting energy and, above all, with imperturbable belief in her mission, to find and to spread [*Verbreiten*] [...] the most far-reaching goals of today’s new spirit of the dance [*Tanzgeistes*].”¹⁰⁴ Brandenburg was not the only one to identify Wigman’s leadership qualities. Curiously, the reviewer referred to Wigman’s performance as “dance pantomime” [*Tanzpantomime*], referencing an older tradition of gesture, a project Wigman’s work pointedly opposed. Still, he noted that Wigman herself was the only “possible interpreter” of these pantomimed gestures, which was a marked contrast to the historical function of dance pantomime, developed to make narrative content and action legible to audiences.

¹⁰² Susan Manning, “Modern Dance in the Third Reich, Redux,” 8.

¹⁰³ Anonymous, “Von den Bühnen,” 1922, *Berliner Illustrierte Zeitung*, Nr. 2, 23.

¹⁰⁴ Anonymous, “Von den Bühnen,” 23.

Wigman's work centered around a free, dancing individual, who through movement experienced a deeply personal, intuited connection to strong leadership. This was integral to the creation, maintenance, and preservation of the collective. Wigman expanded her ideas about pedagogy over the next several years and herself emerged as a leader of German modern dance.

*

III. Metabolic Movement at the Wigman School, 1920 - 1927

Wigman's success onstage fueled her theorization of dance instruction, which centered around her school in Dresden. Wigman's decision to establish her school there was due to several factors. In addition to the positive audience reception of her 1919-1920 performances there, which included an "overwhelmingly successful" performance in May 1920 with the Dresden Philharmonic, the Dresden Opera invited Wigman to be its ballet-director, though the position was given later that summer to an artist of more "classical" inclination.¹⁰⁵ Before the offer was canceled, Wigman decided to stage as her first production Gluck's *Orpheus and Eurydice* – the same work that she had performed in at Hellerau in the celebrated 1912 staging by Appia and Jaques-Dalcroze. Wigman's motives for her move to Dresden are unclear, and secondary literature offers little explanation. Whether as a statement of affiliation or desire to stage on her own terms a piece she knew well, her choice of Dresden was likely informed by personal and professional connections cultivated at Hellerau in 1910s, including her ties to Nolde and the van der Rohes.

¹⁰⁵ Müller, *Die Begründung des Ausdruckstanzes durch Mary Wigman*, 106.

Wigman supported her school through revenue from her performances and income from student tuition, yet work by her company, which by the mid-1920s was made up of an all-female group of fourteen dancers that disbanded in 1928, was unpaid.¹⁰⁶ Wigman's touring by the early 1920s expanded beyond German borders to include concert dates in Austria (Graz and Vienna) and Hungary (Budapest). Wigman's decision not to pay her dancers potentially stemmed from economic necessity: beginning in 1921, Germany was mired in hyperinflation, witnessed the extreme devaluation of the mark, and faced a domestic economic crisis that peaked in 1923. Archival documents, such as images, programs, and descriptions of performances by Wigman, illustrate that the Wigman school was not immune to these economic difficulties. For example, a souvenir program for a Wigman performance in March 1923 cost 150 Marks, while by September of that year, its price rose to one million.¹⁰⁷ The effects of this instability "struck [her] very existentially. Contract agreements and honoraria quickly lost their value, daily receipts [from performances], which were stipulated by her contract, were the morning after the performance worth only a partial sum of their value; the train ticket in hand was safer than the concert agency's agreement to cover travel expenses."¹⁰⁸

Despite these obstacles, the Wigman School grew throughout the first half of the 1920s. By 1926 the Wigman School became a "large scale business venture" with over a dozen employees and 300 students.¹⁰⁹ The school was located on the first floor of a large, rococo-style residential building on Schillerstraße, where Wigman also lived. Classes, primarily of middle class girls, were held in a large, gold-painted living room, known as the "Gold Room," which

¹⁰⁶ Manning, *Ecstasy and the Demon*, 90.

¹⁰⁷ Müller, *Die Begründung des Ausdruckstanzes durch Mary Wigman*, 107.

¹⁰⁸ Müller, *Ibid.*, 116.

¹⁰⁹ Manning, *Ecstasy and the Demon*, 90.

and was adjacent to Wigman's bedroom and living quarters and served as the school's main studio.¹¹⁰ Much like Laban's school in Zurich, housed in a living-space-turned studio connected to his living space, Wigman's school was an urban variation of the work-meets-life ethic of Hellerau and Ascona. Boasting an "hygienic dressing room" next to the main studio, the school emphasized nature as a part of its educational plan and facilities. The backdoor of the building opened out into a pleasant courtyard with flowers and vines. Classes were often held in the garden, while the Wigman school "Summer Intensives" were conducted outdoors in nearby parks and wooded areas."¹¹¹ Images taken of students during classes and demonstrations at the Wigman School from 1920 to 1924 show happy, robust young students dressed in solid-color practice clothes, from long, flowing skirts topped by blouses with long sleeves, to short tunics, tank-tops, bra-like shirts cropped at the midriff, and short pantaloons hemmed at the upper-thigh, which more closely resembled undergarments than practice-clothes.¹¹² In addition to variations in dress, the Wigman school also gave its students the freedom to express individual style through a range of coiffure, and did not require students to tie their hair back in neat buns or ponytails. From short, "natural" looks (favored by Wigman) to longer styles pinned back, the students embraced hairstyle as a form of individual, self-expression, and recalled the images of the young students in Jaques-Dalcroze's 1906 *Méthode*.

¹¹⁰ Manning, *Ibid.*, 91; Müller, *Die Begründung des Ausdruckstanzes durch Mary Wigman*, 107.

¹¹¹ Advertisement for the Wigman School [located on Performance Program of the Wigman School, Dresden]. Dresden, April 21 [1920s]. AK MWS 2.4. "Mary Wigman Schule." S 180, back-side; and The Wigman School Dresden, "Lesson and Rehearsal Photos." Dresden, 1920-1924. AK MWS 2.4.2. "Fotos, Schule, Lehrtätigkeit." S 397; The Wigman School Dresden, "Summer Course and Training Classes" [Photographic Images]. Dresden, summer 1924. AK MWS 2.4.2 "Fotos, Schule, Lehrtätigkeit," S 396.

¹¹² The Wigman School Dresden, "Building, Lessons." [Photographic Images of the Wigman School]. Dresden, 1920-1924. AK MWS 2.4.2. "Fotos, Schule, Lehrtätigkeit." S 394, Nrs. 19-23, and 26.

Classes were offered in professional as well as recreational training, known as “*Laientanz*,” or amateur dancing. The school fostered a culture and ethic of community marked by “informality”¹¹³ due to the building’s physical layout, the proximity of classes to Wigman’s living space, and its communal socializing and changing areas. These features were an integral part of school’s educational philosophy and distinguished the Wigman from other dance schools. Wigman also fostered a strong sense of community between the teachers. Holiday parties were held for faculty and staff, for which all dressed up in elaborate costumes often with exotic and oriental themes; their participation in these lighthearted celebrations demonstrated their shared sense of commitment to the school’s mission and social cosmos.¹¹⁴ Photographs of the holiday celebrations, for example, show Wigman smiling, hugged and surrounded by her teachers, physically embracing her as their leader. Wigman students developed rites of passage and social rituals in conjunction with required exams for professional training. These included humorous poems composed about their experiences at the Wigman school. In the words of one student, who declared that the Wigman school was a model for social harmony, “dance [at the Wigman school] is our life [...] if you want to see / something truly fine and beautiful / then get you quickly to Dresden / to the Wigman School!!”¹¹⁵ School photographs show the *sympatico* between students, who grin broadly, hug, and hold hands. Teacher portraits from 1927 show similar bodily language demonstrating the camaraderie between the instructors.¹¹⁶ Such displays of affection were a part of the language of embodied conservatism.

¹¹³ Manning, *Ecstasy and the Demon*, 89.

¹¹⁴ Bruno Wiehr, “Kostümfest in der Wigman-Schule Dresden.” Photograph. Dresden, January 1923. AK MWS 2.4.2 “Fotos Schule, Lehrtätigkeit,” S 677.

¹¹⁵ Anonymous, Untitled Poem by Student of Wigman School. 1926. AK MWS. 2.4. Mary Wigman Schule, S 998, reverse side.

The school's reputation spread, attracting students from Europe and, by the late 1920s, the United States and Japan.¹¹⁷ By the 1930s, Wigman established satellite schools in the U.S, while former Wigman students exported her methods to Japan.¹¹⁸ As with the Duncan and Jaques-Dalcroze Institutes, the Wigman school held regular lecture-demonstrations for the public that showcased class exercises, student compositions, and Wigman's dances for student ensembles. These attracted a range of audiences, including prospective students. In addition to Wigman's active performance schedule, the school became the focus of considerable attention of dancers and artists across the globe. In 1926, Rabindrath Tagore, Bengali writer, 1913 Nobel prize recipient, artist, musician, and intellectual whose works were translated into German by the Diederichs Verlag, visited the Wigman school, where he met with students and attended studio demonstrations.¹¹⁹ In 1927, La Argentina (Antonia Mercé), the era's most famous Spanish dancer, visited the Wigman school, while in 1932 Wigman students and teachers received

¹¹⁶ The Wigman School Dresden, "Building, Lessons." [Photographic Images of the Wigman School]. Dresden, 1927. AK MWS 2.4.2. "Fotos, Schule, Lehrtätigkeit." S 394, Nr. 26.

¹¹⁷ Bonnie Sue Stein notes that Japanese dancer Takaya Eguchi, later to become teacher to Ohno Kazuo, one of the founders of Butoh, had studied at the Wigman school in Germany in 1922. Japanese scholar Akiko Nikaïdo, however, notes that Eguchi, along with his wife (also a dancer), studied in Germany in 1931, and makes no mention of his 1922 visit. See Bonnie Sue Stein, "Twenty Years Ago We Were Crazy, Dirty, and Mad," *The Drama Review: TDR* 30, no. 2 (Summer 1986), 107 – 126; and Akiko Nikaïdo, *T. Eguchi's Creative Methodology and Ideas through the Influence of Mary Wigman* (Taipei, 2010).

¹¹⁸ Eguchi taught Wigman's methods from 1936 to 1947. In 1931, a Wigman School was founded in New York City, supported by American impresario Sol Hurok, who was also responsible for helping Wigman with a series of tours of her company across the United States in the early 1930s. The main educator at the New York School was Hanya Holm, who had danced in Wigman's company for years and taught at the Dresden Wigman School from 1928 to 1931. Holm, who was Jewish, quit Germany due to rising anti-Semitism, and remained in the United States from that point on, where she went on to lead a highly successful career as educator and dance-maker of her own work. In 1936, the school, under pressure from its financial backers, eager to distance the school from its connection to Germany, was renamed the Hanya Holm School. On Holm's career, as well as her relationship with Wigman, see: Nancy Mason Hauser, "Hanya Holm," *The International Encyclopedia of Dance*, ed. Selma Jeanne Cohen (Oxford, 1998), online edition; Claudia Gitelman, ed. *Liebe Hanya: Mary Wigman's Letters to Hanya Holm* (Madison, 2003); and Tresa Randall, "Hanya Holm and American Tanzgemeinschaft," in *New German Dance Studies* (2012), 79 – 98. See also Stein, "Twenty Years Ago,"; and Nikaïdo, *T. Eguchi's Creative Methodology and Ideas through the Influence of Mary Wigman*.

¹¹⁹ Ursula Richter, Untitled Photos of Rabindrath Tagore at the Wigman School. 3 October, 1926. AK MWS 2.4.2. "Fotos, Schule, Lehrtätigkeit," S 424.

Bengali dancer, dance-maker, and educator Uday Shankar, who observed a student performance along with his entourage.¹²⁰

Classes at the Wigman School fell into two categories: those addressing technical and physical skill, and those developing creative artistry. In both cases, principles of improvisation framed course content. The former group was designed to increase control, stamina, muscle memory, physical multitasking, and breathing, and was further subdivided into two categories of either “passive” or “active” movements, or movement “scales” [*Skala*].¹²¹ Exercises, which were repeated several times, employed rhythmical and physical progressions. For example, an exercise teaching students how to step (i.e. to control the distribution of weight on different parts of the foot), had students walk or move across the studio first on their “entire foot” and then again on the “ball of the foot.”¹²² Exercises were done standing as well as traveling, with different tempi and spatial orientations (i.e. to the front of the room, to the teacher, to the back wall of the studio). In addition to variations in rhythm and space, the number of repetitions per movement gesture (if non-locomotive), and the number of accompanying steps required (if traveling), also varied. An exercise in turning with alternate sets of “eight steps [and] four pauses” and “six steps and two pauses” required students to first perform the exercise facing the front of the studio, and then repeat the exercise with a new spatial orientation.¹²³ Exercises for the development of improvisational skills were done individually and in groups, emphasizing individual attention to

¹²⁰ Ursula Richter, Photograph of Mary Wigman, La Argentina and Camensita Perez. AK MWS 2.4.2. “Fotos, Schule, Lehrtätigkeit,” S 423; and Anonymous, Group Photograph of Uday Shankar with Students at the Wigman School. AK MWS 2.4.2. “Fotos, Schule, Lehrtätigkeit,” S424. Interestingly, both Wigman and La Argentina were sources of inspiration for different generations of Butoh dancers. Butoh artist Kazuo Ohno’s memories of seeing as a young child La Argentina perform, for example, inspired his 1977 work, *Admiring La Argentina*. See Sondra Fraleigh and Tamah Makamura, *Hijikata Tatsumi and Ohno Kazuo* (New York, 2006), 90-94.

¹²¹ Mary Wigman, Untitled Manuscript. Undated, c.1920 [1924?], Dresden. AK MWS 2.4. “Mary Wigman Schule: Manuskripten, Notizen, und Ausarbeitungen zum Schulkonzept,” S 1383, 2.

¹²² Mary Wigman, Untitled Manuscript. Undated, c.1920 [1924?], 2.

¹²³ Mary Wigman, *Ibid.*, 2.

his own actions combined with an outward attention to others. In addition to the strength training and muscular control students gained through such repetition, these exercises trained students to cultivate individual skill within the context of a group educational setting.

Courses intended to develop creative artistry also included classes in dance and musical composition. The school offered private and group classes. Musical training was an important part of the Wigman School; it was so important, in fact, that a 1931 series of portraits of the school by New Objectivity photographer Albert Renger-Partzsch included no images of dancers. Instead, Renger-Partzsch captured Wigman's large collection of free-standing drums, hand-held percussion, gongs, mallets, bells, and piano. The well framed images depict the instruments as if they were students, patiently waiting for class to begin¹²⁴; these images perfectly capture the ethic of order, harmony, and stability championed by embodied conservatism. Wigman's accomplishments as a musician and a composer, and her close relationship to her musical director Will Goetze (who accompanied her work onstage and in her courses beginning around 1924), emphasized her musical eclecticism and the centrality of music at the school. Her interest ranged from non-western musical systems (e.g. classical Indian music, gongs, and bells), to the canon of western romanticism (e.g. Liszt, Chopin, and Brahms), to an avant-garde approach to silence as a legitimate form of "musical" accompaniment.

There were many similarities between Wigman and Laban's understanding of movement, something Wigman scholars, students, and even Wigman herself, have noted. Wigman's classroom instruction relied on many of Laban's central principles, such as his concept oppositional force – what he labeled "*Gegenbewegung*" – as well as movement "scales" [*Skala*]

¹²⁴ Albert Renger-Partzsch, "Geräuschinstrumente" [Images of the Wigman School]. 1931. AK MWS 2.4. "Mary Wigman Schule," S 405. Renger-Partzsch belonged to the school of *neue Sachlichkeit* [New Objectivity], and thus his choice to photograph the instruments of the Wigman School, rather than its students, was perhaps as much an aesthetic decision as a statement on the centrality of music. However, in other portraits of Wigman and her work, Renger-Partzsch photographed actual dancers.

to classify movement forms and as the basis for exercise progressions.¹²⁵ In contrast to Laban, who, in the words of one student, “explained too much,”¹²⁶ Wigman’s approach to classroom instruction emphasized improvisation, individual experimentation, and a process of trial and error, which encouraged her students to discover movement principles on their own. Like Jaques-Dalcroze at Hellerau, or Duncan in Grunewald, Wigman relied on embodied demonstration as much as verbal articulation as a pedagogical device. From class dress, in which small differences celebrated individual identity, to progressively developing technical exercises in multitasking and improvisation, to an overall emphasis on empiricism and self-discovery, Wigman’s classes in many respects aligned more closely with the sentimental values of Jaques-Dalcroze than with those of Laban and her contemporaries.

Critics of the time, particularly Hans Brandenburg, articulated the differences between Laban and Wigman’s respective movement styles, pedagogical and compositional approaches, and theoretical orientations. Interestingly, many of these explanations fell along gendered lines. In a review of Wigman’s 1924 *Scenes from a Dance Drama*, Brandenburg summed up the main difference between the two.

[Wigman’s] scenes are the form of pure dance, yet they have, in contrast to Laban, a content that is, to some degree, also representational, similar to how the outpouring of the female soul [*weibliches Seelenbekenntnis*] apprehends. Here, then, is for all intents and purposes the creation of a woman – and while in

¹²⁵ For a detailed analysis of Wigman’s courses, as well as the connections between Wigman’s movement pedagogy and Laban’s, see Manning, *Ecstasy and the Demon*, 90-93; Lucia Ruprecht, “Gesture, Interruption, Vibration: Rethinking Early Twentieth-Century Gestural Theory and Practice in Walter Benjamin, Rudolf von Laban, and Mary Wigman,” *Dance Research Journal* 47, no. 2 (August, 2015): 23 - 41; Müller, *Die Begründung des Ausdruckstanzes durch Mary Wigman* and Müller, *Mary Wigman*; Mary Anne Santos Newhall, *Mary Wigman* (Oxford, 2009). Reminiscences of former Wigman students also provide detailed descriptions of Wigman’s pedagogical methods. See, for example, “The Reminiscences of Tina Flade” (August 8, 1980), and “The Reminiscences of Bernice Van Gelder Peterson” (September 9, 1979), both housed at the Oral History Collection, Columbia University, New York.

¹²⁶ Diane Hunt, “The Wigman Years – Part One of the Thimey Transcripts,” *Washington Dance View* 2, no. 3 (February – March 1981), 25. Cited in Manning, *Ecstasy and the Demon*, 93.

Laban's case, the masculine element is dominant among the performers, Wigman has only female performers.¹²⁷

Shifting away from his earlier descriptions of Wigman's body as masculine and "heavy," Brandenburg was clearly struck by the visual effect of an all-female company onstage. Wigman's stage work at this point was performed exclusively by women, though her students included a number of men, first admitted to her school in 1921 and who danced in her student ensembles around 1922.¹²⁸ Brandenburg identified how, in contrast to Laban's "masculine element," Wigman's dances revealed the inner, metaphysical forces of a female subject – the "outpouring of the female soul" ("*weibliches Seelenbekenntnis*") – yet they did this not as solos but as group dances. In this sense, individual identity was best understood only in the context of the collective, and only after it had first absorbed the values of rigor, self-cultivation, and skill that enabled it to enter in the first place.

Scenes from a Dance Drama reflected Wigman's core pedagogical theories. Wigman began working on the dance in April 1923, and it premiered the same month in Berlin with the original title of "Sketches from a Dance Drama."¹²⁹ It featured nineteen dancers in a non-narrative depiction of a group, moving in concert with and opposition to a leader, who was performed by Wigman. Divided into ten sections with titles with mystical or spiritual connotations (e.g. "Invocation," "Wandering," "Chaos," "Vision," "Encounter"), the action highlighted the dancers' movements relative to Wigman, who alternated between leading the others and assuming a position within its ranks as an equal member. Wigman and Goetz developed the musical accompaniment together through a process of collaborative

¹²⁷ Hans Brandenburg, *Das Neue Theater: Erlebnisse, Forschungen, Forderungen* (Leipzig, 1926), 433.

¹²⁸ Müller, *Die Begründung des Ausdruckstanzes durch Mary Wigman*, 115.

¹²⁹ Müller, *Die Begründung des Ausdruckstanzes durch Mary Wigman*, 116.

improvisation,¹³⁰ and the score incorporated sounds from bells, gongs and castanets. The dance's final section, however, was set to Liszt. In several sections, movement involved spinning floor patterns derived from exercises in her technique classes.¹³¹

The dance presented the audience with a series of impressions rather than a concrete narrative or linear progression of action. These images were easily apparent as social metaphors. *Scenes from a Dance Drama* made clear that an individual's expressive power emerged from her/his movement relative to the directives, demands, and cues of others. Wigman's leader reunited with the group without struggle, underscoring that reconciliation between individual freedom and authority was possible, as well as the existence of a stable social order. As Brandenburg noted in his description of the dance's final sections,

Nevertheless, the strangest life is not a curse, but the highest blessing; the Leader [played by Wigman] experiences contact [*Berührung*, also translatable as "touch"] as a large 'Encounter' with her students, with her creations: one can never forget the grand, fatigued, poignant gestures, with which she sinks back under her followers and children, at once blessed, and held and imprisoned, by the consecrated. The end of the dance celebrates the 'Greeting' of the community [*Gemeinschaft*]: a greeting for the leader, a greeting for us all.¹³²

In this instance, the leader's willingness to reunite with her legions suggested a different model from dances such as *The Seven Dances of Life*, in the relationship between subject and authority changed from the bottom-up rather than the top-down. The dance's depictions of leadership, power, and the relationship of the self to the social order was the inverse of *The Seven Dances of Life*: the desire for social harmony motivated leadership in the former, while in the latter, social harmony emerged from an individual subject coming to terms with her personal experience.

¹³⁰ Manning, *Ecstasy and the Demon*, 108.

¹³¹ For a more complete description, as well as a range of possible conceptual interpretations, see Manning, *Ibid.*, 107- 113.

¹³² Brandenburg, *Das Neue Theater*, 434.

However, both dances depicted an indeterminate basis for human action and, in spite of this, modeled an idealized balance of power between subjects and leaders. Both dances, “speaking the language” of allegory, modeled social orders that underwent total transformation whereby leaders and subjects were reborn. Both dances were divided into smaller sections, featuring instances of tension, conflict, and resolution; they illustrated how consensus was possible through a systematic investigation of component parts. Although the dances lacked a final message, they modeled a final vision of harmony that was achievable through discrete, embodied action.

For all the ambiguity that Wigman presented in her dances, she was explicit about certain aspects of her conceptual approach to her dances. The conceptual content of her dances, she argued, linked to the dancer’s inner state. The dance exposed chaos, changeability, and mutability. Wigman made this clear in the notes for *Scenes from A Dance Drama*.

We don’t dance ‘feelings!’ They are already much too solidly defined, too precise. The change and transformation of the conditions of the soul is what we dance, how it is fulfilled in each individual in his own way, and how it becomes, through the language of the dance, the mirror of mankind, the most unmediated symbol of all beings [...] Provided that they are believing and willing, it all depends on the sacrifice that each, small individual ego [*Ich*] brings to the large mystery of creative form [*schöpferischen Gestalten*].”¹³³

The dance that “is fulfilled in each individual in his own way” that “becomes the mirror of mankind” was not unlike Duncan’s “human translation” of nature and Haeckel’s biogenetic law. For Wigman, the individual “fulfillment” of the “conditions of the soul” as the “mirror of mankind” also meant that individuals were independent, self-legislating units that comprised the greater whole – “the large mystery of creative form.” Wigman’s language activated a

¹³³ Mary Wigman, “Tänzerische Weg und Ziele,” *Die neue Rundschau*, November 1923. Printed in “Mary Wigman Heft,” *Der Keil* 1, Nr. 1 (April 24, 1924), 14.

vocabulary that she used in other instances to describe the meaning of gesture and movement, in which feeling and intimacy mixed with images of the cosmos, the natural world, and the environment. In a 1924 essay published in a special issue of *Der Keil* devoted to her work, Wigman described footwork as love and physical intimacy between the individual and the natural world. “Dancers’ feet love the earth,” she noted. “Each step is a caress, a small tenderness.”¹³⁴ Her descriptions of spinning, in which individual movement formed the axis of the planetary universe, evoked Brandenburg’s language from his 1919 reviews. “For an instant, was not [the dancer] the center of the world, the middle point of the larger movement that is happening, a part of the entire swinging body of the world [Weltkörper], a symbol?”¹³⁵ Finally, Wigman theorized the dancer’s relationship to a general physical environment: “she drops her arms, stands still, looks at the empty room, the *Reich* of the dancer [das Reich des Tänzers].”¹³⁶

Equipped with principles of self-control, physical strength, and a knowledge of herself and others, Wigman’s sovereign self was set free in in the dancer’s *Reich*. Wigman made clear that staged representation and classroom instruction were linked, for as she increasingly articulated her theories to the public, she used the principle elements of class instruction as her main examples. Blurring the lines between the audience and the classroom, Wigman’s theoretical language rested upon images of wholeness and totality: as a “Weltkörper,” the dancer was the center of the universe, while the studio spilled into the streets and mountains as a complete “realm” (“*Reich*”). Wigman thus taught her students and audiences to become *Übermenschen* and she created new, visionary worlds for them to live in. In these worlds, audiences became

¹³⁴ Mary Wigman, “Tanz,” “Das Drehen,” “Der Raum,” in “Mary Wigman Heft,” *Der Keil* 1, Nr. 1 (April 24, 1924), 4-5.

¹³⁵ Wigman, “Tanz,” “Das Drehen,” “Der Raum,” 4-5.

¹³⁶ Wigman, *Ibid.*, 4-5.

students, students became leaders, and all were subject to the same processes of cultivation, transformation, and stability.

In another essay, Wigman articulated the precise role of the individual ego, or “I,” in dance composition. In an essay published in a special edition of the *Dramaturgische Blätter* of the Oldenburg State Theater and in conjunction with a performance of Paul Hindemith’s 1922 dance-pantomime, *The Demon*, she explained that dance composition and creative potential hinged upon the dancer’s recognition of himself relative to a wider whole.

The particular, ceaseless transformation and regeneration [in the dancer] is the source of his creations. In which form, then, from which the expressive current bursts, depends on many factors that are difficult to describe, but [they depend] above all from the relationship of the creator to his ego [*Ich*] and to the environment [*Umwelt*].¹³⁷

Combining images of natural creation (the environment) with images of human genesis (the creator, the ego), Wigman returned to her earlier use of musical metaphor. The dancer’s exercise of his own voice – not “as if replayed out of a score” but instead as an “instrumental orchestra” – was key to creative composition.¹³⁸ The logic of dance expression was therefore free and improvised yet also communal. Dance composition, she further argued, was achieved through the dancer’s “transfer of inner visions [...] to a polyphony, [a] composed expressive body [*Polyphon zusammengesetzten Ausdruckskörper*].”¹³⁹ By translating “inner visions” into a “polyphony” of outward expression, the dancer discovered a “lively manifoldness” in his relationship to other people. Dance composition, she concluded, was an individual process impossible without other bodies or voices; it thus showed the fundamentally social nature of

¹³⁷ Mary Wigman, “Vom tänzerischen Komponieren,” *Dramaturgische Blätter des Oldenburger Landestheaters* 10 (1924/25), 5.

¹³⁸ Wigman, “Vom tänzerischen Komponieren,” 4-5.

¹³⁹ Wigman, *Ibid.*, 4-5.

dance. As such, it remained “the essence of dance composition for groups,” namely, the essence of invention of the social.¹⁴⁰

Although Wigman employed terminology from contemporary psychology and psychoanalysis (the “ego”), she rejected dance as the expression of “feeling” in human behavior illustrated her hesitation towards these fields as interpretive methods. Wigman’s interest in Nietzschean philosophy suggests that she shared his contempt for established modes of self-interpretation, and instead favored self-made models based on the contingencies of life and what William Sewell notes as the “the temporality of social experience” belonging to the historian: an understanding of time as “fateful, contingent, complex, eventful, and heterogeneous.”¹⁴¹ Each of these, Sewell notes, has “methodological corollaries – a concern with chronology, sequence, and contextualization.” Conceiving of Wigman as Sewell’s “historian” highlights the shared concerns for logic, order, and stability between dance as embodied conservatism and the history as an academic discipline.

Wigman’s theorization of sovereignty through dance translated Nietzsche’s basic ideas about embodiment, moral realism, and personal action in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, *The Genealogy of Morals*, *Beyond Good and Evil*, and *The Gay Science*. In contrast to schools of psychoanalysis and psychology (e.g. Freud and Jung), which sought to uncover inner drives as explanation for irrational feeling and behavior (and in doing so, “cure” them), Wigman’s dance accepted the unknown as the endpoint of critical analysis. Her movement metabolized uncertainty, contingency, and indeterminacy and transformed it into order and logic. Delving into the hidden corners of herself, the dancer gained knowledge about human behavior and

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., 5.

¹⁴¹ William Sewell, “Theory, History, and Social Science,” in *The Logics of History: Social Theory and Social Transformation* (Chicago, 2005), 6.

society. This granted her resiliency and helped her to become the embodied manifestation of what Nietzsche famously articulated as “will itself, the will to power – the unexhausted begetting will of life.”¹⁴² Rejecting disembodied, rational thought as a frame to understand the self, Wigman’s dancer mixed intuition, critical reflection and control, and non-rational desire. Here, Wigman’s dancer not only enacted her sovereignty; she unleashed political power. Engaging in a conservative revision of the nineteenth century romanticism and *Lebensphilosophie*, Wigman, like “Weimar’s right-wing intellectuals [,] claimed to be in touch with ‘life’ or ‘experience’ and was thereby endowed with a political position beyond any rational justification.”¹⁴³ This enabled her dancer to become the “[representative] of all that was vital, cosmic, elementary, passionate, willful and organic, of the intuitive and living rather than of the rational and dead.”¹⁴⁴

Wigman’s classroom modeled this social order based upon personal life experience as the source for the authority of knowledge. In a 1925 lecture on the “theoretical and practical exercises for aspiring teachers,” Wigman likened the dance school to a “workshop” [*Werkstatt*], in which teachers and students “together develop” the studio as a “working community” [*Arbeitsgemeinschaft*] that “in its last and deepest sense is the guardian of creation” [*Hüter des Werkes*].¹⁴⁵ Freedom was mutually assured through Wigman’s dance classes, which taught its students to maintain and guard order. Students and teachers contribute to and receive from their participation in equal measure, and “for the duration of her/his work inside of the school, each becomes a member of this community [*Gemeinschaft*] and as such is protected by it.”¹⁴⁶ Participation in the community enabled individual freedom and guaranteed her protection.

¹⁴² Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, 88.

¹⁴³ Jeffrey Herf, *Reactionary Modernism*, 26.

¹⁴⁴ Herf, *Reactionary Modernism*, 27.

¹⁴⁵ Mary Wigman, “Lektion I,“ “Theoretisch – praktischer Übungskurs für werdende Lehrer” (Sep 1925), 2-3.

Wigman noted to her prospective teachers that the “labor” required of them in the classroom was no different than the labor required of the student, who was herself constituted by a mixture of desire and rational thought. As a result, teachers needed to be sensitive to the student’s sense of self, which was shaped by the interplay between psychological and physical (and physiological) forces constituting their “working community.” Wigman explained the nature of this relationship using psychological language. “The student must create independently,” she noted. “The teacher must be so elastic, that he can commit to the ego [*Ich*] of the student and so from there discover the method that helps the student to realize his/her own essence in the dance.”¹⁴⁷ The teacher’s personal knowledge of inner desire and outward expression facilitated a relationship in which both teacher and student could freely express themselves, though neither was subject to claims by the other. Meanwhile, Wigman later noted that in order to develop a student’s natural talents and skills, teachers needed to approach each, individual student as an “independent world”; they should not, she emphasized to them, “want to force her/his own ego on the student. Never take oneself as a measure [for others]. The result would be a poor and dead copy.”¹⁴⁸ Dance instruction, like composition, thus resonated with the values of the neoconservative right. An act of freedom, dance was thus a form of creative invention, in which students realized themselves through the self-legitimizing experience of life and vitality rather than the reproduction of “dead” or pre-existing models.

As a result, Wigman took seriously the prospect of creative invention. Adopting a tone that spoke to both the gravity and possibility inherent in their work, Wigman declared,

¹⁴⁶ Mary Wigman, “Lektion I,” 3.

¹⁴⁷ Mary Wigman, “Lektion I”: “Theoretisch- praktischer Übungskurs für werdende Lehrer” (Sep 1925), 7. AK MWS, 2.4 Mary Wigman Schule, S 1381. Wigman’s original text reads: “Der Schüler muss selber schaffen. Der Lehrer aber so elastisch sein, dass er in das Ich des Schülers eingehen kann und von dort aus die Mittel findet, die dem Schüler zur Offenbarung seines eigenen tänzerischen Wesens verhelfen.“

¹⁴⁸ Mary Wigman, “Lektion I,” 7.

Yet first in the dancing body, in its complete instrument, the language of the dance comes to life. Meaning lives there. There where the dancer [der Tanzende] arises through its [own] I, becoming a vessel, a mediator, an enunciator. And you, who want to be teachers, should become protectors of this thing, should guard over this way of being [Wesen] and lustration [Waschen] so full of secrets [...] What tasks! What responsibilities! But also what positive work, such leadership, when it succeeds!¹⁴⁹

Dance stimulated its followers, and its leaders, to recognize the forces – the goals, actions, relationships, and responsibilities – structuring their lives and granting them meaning. It compelled them to become heroes, and worshippers of harmony. Yet dance was not just a way to understand or celebrate meaning. It was a practical method to educate, transform, and reconcile individuals. It was a way to create a new person, and a new people.

*

Conclusion

Wigman's performances, her teaching, and writing breathed invigorated Weimar dance after the WWI. It also proposed a new vision of postwar political conservatism. Driven by the desire to understand the inner nature of the self and the nature of social harmony, Wigman refused to sacrifice individual freedom in the name of order and authority. As a result, her ideas and her dances – and the community of critics and observers who witnessed them – generated a distinctive account of how an harmonious reconciliation of the two was possible. Drawing upon Nietzschean philosophy and a consensus, value-based vision of the social order, Wigman and others cast herself as the new model of the *Übermensch*, the individual capable of authentic self-expression and extraordinary self-control. Conveying a set of Nietzschean values to her audiences and students, Wigman's work modeled possibilities for social order, which, couched

¹⁴⁹ Mary Wigman, "Lektion II," "Theoretisch – praktischer Übungskurs für werdende Lehrer," (Sep 1925), 2-3.

in metaphor and the language of myth and allegory, shared its affiliations with the conservative and increasingly political right.

Wigman, as Zarathustra, modeled a balance of power that was attractive to Weimar audiences. It was also deceptive. Robert Pippin notes that the process of self-overcoming, shown by Zarathustra and Wigman, reconfigured the social order to preserve a balance of freedom and authority – though this balance was far more precarious than either dancing hero would admit. “Zarathustra,” he notes, “is completely uninterested in gaining power *over others*, subjecting as much or as many possible to his control or command [...] Even when he appears to discuss serving or mastering others, he treats it as in the service of self-mastery and so again possible self-overcoming”¹⁵⁰ [ital. his]. Interested in the maintenance of his own freedom, Zarathustra sees no gains by subjecting others. Wigman’s dancing embodied a similar ethic. The social collective preserved order and individual freedom by carving a sovereign space for each dancer to move freely. What happened if an individual, whether through nature or choice, refused to participate? Like Nietzsche, Wigman offered no clear answer to this question. As a result, only one method promised to yield results. And that was to follow Wigman’s lead.

¹⁵⁰ Pippin, Introduction, xxvii.

Chapter 5

Making Dance Modern: Rudolf Laban and the Science of Dance, 1919 - 1927

“Don’t I feel in my soul that I am a part of this harmonious whole? Don’t I feel that I form one link, one step, between the lower and higher beings, in this vast harmonious multitude of beings in whom the Deity – the Supreme Power, if you prefer the term – is manifest?”

Leo Tolstoy, *War and Peace* (1868)

In previous chapters, we have seen how modern dancers, from Jaques-Dalcroze to Wigman, understood physical movement as the basis for social order. Chapter 1 has demonstrated how Jaques-Dalcroze conceived of systematic knowledge of the body as knowledge of society. Chapter 2, focusing on the correspondence of Isadora Duncan and Ernst Haeckel, described how Duncan and Haeckel saw movement as a method to show how individuals, as subjects of fixed and determined natural law, could be free and unique. Chapter 3 took us to the Jaques-Dalcroze Institute at Hellerau, the life-reform colony outside of Dresden, and illustrated how questions about the grounds for social order – was it nature? Or man? – gave rise to irreconcilable political tensions that dance, as an educational tool and performance event, smoothed over. Mary Wigman, a star pupil at the Jaques-Dalcroze Institute and focus of Chapter 4, showed how the unknowable features of the self rendered questions about the grounds of the social contract irrelevant. Instead, Wigman argued that dance carved a space for freedom in the face of authority because of the ambiguities of the self and society. Such freedom manifested itself as a “sovereign self,” a free and self-legislating dancer who respected authority at all times. Such was the core feature of Wigman’s “embodied conservatism” – what this dissertation labels as an ideological commitment through dance to the maintenance of a stable social order – and her valorization of consensus over dissent, tradition over change, and Nietzschean self-cultivation over modern culture or institution.

This chapter builds upon these themes to consider another way in which the individual self was viewed as an agent for social change. Wigman and others proved through dance that the basis for collective life relied on assent to a social order rooted in physical and musical definitions of harmony. This model left many important questions unanswered. Within this natural order, did man have powers of creative genesis? Or was he simply subject to a determined natural order, as Duncan and Haeckel argued? Moreover, Duncan and Haeckel proved how dance's socially progressive role – the “dance of the future” that would save civilization – tied to biological sex and the reproductive capacities of women. What, then, was left for men?

This chapter answers these questions by examining the work of German modern dancer Rudolf von Laban (née Rudolf Jean Baptiste Attila Laban de Varalja), and his attempts to define dance as a science, which were part of his larger effort to understand the dancer – and man – as a creative producer. Laban's system of recorded textual documentation for dance, known as “Labanotation” or “Laban Movement Analysis,” has come to be recognized by scholars, performers, and audiences as a technique enabling a full appreciation of dance through the examination of its logic, structure, and form, as well as the preservation of particular dance works. Through his system, Laban's legacy has shaped dance in Europe and America in the postwar period. London's Trinity Laban Conservatory of Music and Dance, for example, remains one of Europe's most prestigious dance conservatories, while other Laban institutes and publications appear widely across the United States and Canada. In addition, since the 1940s, Laban's system has spilled over from dance into research in the social, anthropological, biological, behavioral, cognitive, and physical sciences.¹ Though he was not the first to develop

¹ This includes a range of diverse studies, beginning as early as the 1950s, ranging from ethnomusicologist Alan Lomax's Choreometrics Project, to movement simulation projects by NASA in the 1970s, to current studies in

dance notation – earliest examples date from the second half of the fifteenth century – it was only after Laban that scholars have referred to a “universal scientific approach” to dance, to dance as a science, or to dance as a method of systematic “research.”²

As we will see in what follows, Laban’s attempts to define dance as a science began as part of his wider investigation into the nature of German society immediately after the First World War. Laban was not the first to turn to dance as a response to the contemporary “problem” of politics; beginning in the late nineteenth century, many artists and scientists understood movement expression as a knowledge-system with powerful social, political, and scientific bearing. Among these are many figures we have encountered in the dissertation thus far, as well as a diverse group of scientists and artists whom Robert M. Brain has dubbed the “physiological aesthetes,” including Haeckel, Étienne-Jules Marey, physiologist Charles Henry, and painter Georges Seurat.³ Together, these individuals conceived of movement as a tool to theorize phenomena shaping the human condition, from evolutionary development and hereditary diversity (Haeckel), to the body’s role as a graphical recording device (Marey), to concepts of

cognitive and behavioral therapy. For the only study on the connection of Laban’s work to research in anthropology and the hard sciences, see Whitney Laemmler, “The Choreography of Everyday Life: Rudolf Laban and the Making of Modern Movement,” (Ph.D. Diss., University of Pennsylvania, 2016). Examples of current scientific studies inspired by Laban include Junya Morita et al, “Relations Between Body Motion and Emotion: Analysis based on Laban Movement Analysis,” paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Cognitive Science Society (COGSCI), 2013, accessible online: <https://mindmodeling.org/cogsci2013/papers/0202/paper0202.pdf>

² See, for example, Ann Hutchinson Guest, “Dance Notation,” *International Encyclopedia of Dance*, ed., Selma Jeanne Coen (Oxford, 2005). Modern dance practitioners in the United States and in Europe have since the late 1970s referred to their work as “research”: Movement Research, an internationally renowned school, performance organization and publisher founded in 1978, is one example. Since the emergence of the field of “Dance Studies” in the 1990s, scholars frequently refer to practice of dance as a form of systematic research.

³ Robert M. Brain, “The Pulse of Modernism: Experimental Physiology and Aesthetic Avant-Gardes circa 1900,” *Studies in the History and Philosophy of Science* 39 (2008): 393-417.

causality and historical progress (Duncan), to the structure of social organization (Jaques-Dalcroze and Wigman).⁴

Just as Thomas Hobbes showed through scientific experiment how knowledge of physical bodies formed a model to understand law, order, and social organization, Laban demonstrated how knowledge gleaned from dance confirmed the necessary structures for governing collective life. “Show men what knowledge is and you will show them the grounds of assent and social order.”⁵ After WWI, Laban, like his contemporaries, found powerful explanations for his social, economic and political circumstances within the expressive movement systems he had developed in the prewar moment. Viewing society as an entity characterized by properties of movement and motion, he saw the potential for expressive bodies to maintain a hierarchy of natural forms and to correct the misaligned, destructive movement of the social body. This formed the basis of his embodied conservatism, which from 1919 to the mid-1920s accrued a set of politics belonging to the Weimar conservative right.⁶

This chapter responds to the lack of scholarly investigation into the origins of Laban’s politics and his notion of dance as a science, two elements this chapter shows are connected. In particular, this chapter answers the call that some dance scholars, such as Marion Kant, have made for historians to probe the contours of Laban’s political ideology during Weimar.⁷ Kant

⁴ For a discussion of Haeckel and Marey, see Brain, “The Pulse of Modernism”; and Anson Rabinbach, “Time and Motion: Etienne Jules Marey and the Mechanics of the Body,” chapter 4 in *The Human Motor: Energy, Fatigue and the Origins of Modernity* (Berkeley, 1990), 84 – 120.

⁵ Steven Shapin and Simon Schaffer, *Leviathan and the Air Pump: Hobbes, Boyle, and the Experimental Life* (Princeton, 1985), 100.

⁶ In contrast to Laban’s body of work on movement analysis, none of his Weimar-era writings on politics and culture have been translated into English.

⁷ See Marion Kant, “German Dance and the Concept of Criticism,” manuscript version and English translation by the author, in *Être ensemble. Figures de la communauté en danse depuis le XX siècle* (Centre National de la Danse, 2004), 143-164; and Carole Kew, “From Weimar Movement Choir to Nazi Community Dance: The Rise and Fall of Rudolf Laban’s *Festkultur*,” *Dance Research* 17, no. 2 (Winter 1999); 73-96. Writing in response to Martin Green’s study of Laban at the mountain artists’ colony of Ascona, Kew notes that “Laban’s similarities to *völkisch* thought

articulates the basic features of Laban's and Wigman's political conservatism in their professional disagreements, which came to a head in the late 1920s at the Second Dancer's Congress at Essen. Each artist evinced an inherently anti-democratic, elitist ethic in their pedagogies, performances, and critical writing, which ultimately took the form of a bureaucratic tug-of-war.

[Wigman's and Laban's] rivalry concerned the content of their concepts: though both were essentially conservative, they differed in grades of their conservatism. Their debate did not include civil rights of any kind. If at all interested in the social position of dancers, they both tried to establish some kind of material security that allowed greater freedom of their work with financially slightly less dependent pupils [...] Neither ever had unions or professional alliances in mind that would make their dancers independent of their master. Instead, their struggle for power inevitably led them to battle over the influence of the many dance organizations; this was above all an ideological war with aspects concerned with economic or financial safety.⁸

As we have seen in Chapter 4, Wigman's "high conservatism"⁹ crystallized around her pedagogical programs and was enacted through her embodied conservatism, which after 1919 became a vehicle for Weimar politics. This chapter now shows how Laban's dance science, which was evidence of his own embodied conservative commitments, became saturated with a range of conservative politics after 1919, and which were distinct from a pre-WWI iteration of Wilhelmine cultural or political conservatism.¹⁰ Jürgen Habermas describes this post 1919

became a lens through which to view his continuity and censure [before and during National Socialism]" as well as "Laban's 'unpolitical' position' [that] could be explored in greater depth" (1). Kew rightly disagrees with Green's position that Laban's neoconservatism was proto-Nazi only insofar as it emphasized "the culture of body movement, [a] racial categorization of dance and an enthusiasm for Wagner" (Kew, 91, FN 2).

⁸ Kant, "German Dance and the Concept of Criticism," 5.

⁹ Kant, *Ibid.*, 4.

¹⁰ Contemporary scholars tend to vary in their usage of the terms "conservatism" versus "neoconservatism" to refer to the German political Right following WWI, using them interchangeably. Contemporary scholars tend to avoid the use of the term "neoconservatism" to avoid confusion with contemporary strains of the post-WWII Neoconservative (and Neoliberal) movements in the United States and Europe. See Jeffrey Herf, *Reactionary Modernism: Technology, Culture, and Politics in Weimar and the Third Reich* (Cambridge, 1984); George Mosse, *The Crisis of*

conservative agenda as “neoconservative” and advocated by a generation of “the repressed right wing intellectuals of the Weimar period,” typified by figures such as Ernst Jünger, Joachim Ritter, Ernst Forsthoff, and Arnold Gehlen, who “[rejected] mere progress in civilization, thus anticapitalism, anti-Americanism, the development and glorification of the elite...The heroic deed was to overcome what was common and base, action in itself was to serve liberation [...and to show] loyalty to what was one’s own, safeguarding of roots, accommodation to the flow of history, to the depths of one’s people...All of pedagogy was permeated with the propagation of secondary virtues: obedience, duty, service, readiness for sacrifice – faith.”¹¹ With Habermas’ characterization of these Young Conservatives in mind, we will now see how Laban’s ideas merged with the politics of the Weimar right and its values of order, civic virtue, leadership, and reform. Through this, dance’s status as a method of theorizing without theory comes into view. To theorize is to display logic, order, and purpose; to offer theory is to explain, and represent, the world. Embodied conservatives had no use for explanation, since for them, harmony as a category and synonym for order sufficed. In fact, theory threatened to disrupt the stable harmonic order guiding society by introducing difference of opinion, fact, and explanation. Theorization, as a social practice, maintained consensus by instilling among people qualities of order, logic, and respect for established structure. Here, embodied conservatism’s theorization without theory redefined a relationship of practice to representation, in which practice rendered representation a threat to social stability. In this, we can see Laban and Wigman’s roles as social theorists, and

German Ideology: Intellectual Origins of the Third Reich (New York, 1964); Detlev Peukert, *The Weimar Republic: The Crisis of Classical Modernity* (New York, 1988), 147 - 163; Kevin Repp, *Reformers, Critics, and the Paths of German Modernity: Anti-Politics and the Search for Alternatives, 1890-1914* (Cambridge, 2004); Fritz Stern, *The Politics of Cultural Despair: A Study in the Rise of Germanic Ideology* (Berkeley, 1961). On conservatism and Weimar technology, see Adelheid Voskuhl, “Ambivalenz in Versprechen: Fortschritt und Untergang in der Technikphilosophie der Weimarer Republik,” in *Technology Fiction: Technische Visionen und Utopien in der Hochmoderne*, eds. Uwe Fraunholz and Anke Woschech (Bielefeld, 2012), 26 – 40.

¹¹ Jürgen Habermas, “Neoconservative Cultural Criticism in the United States and West Germany,” in *The New Conservatism*, ed., Richard Wollin (Cambridge, 1989), 31-32. Habermas here cites journalist Hans Heigert, who formed this description of the features of German post-WWI neoconservatism in a 1982 Goethe acceptance speech.

dance's powerful position with respect to social and political imaginaries, with bearing on modes of historical political thought.

Finally, by illustrating dance's status as a method of social theory, this chapter identifies the allegiances that enabled Laban and other German modern dancers to see Hitler's order in 1933 as the realization of social and political goals they had long sought. Unlike the politics of some of their Right contemporaries, who developed clear proto-Nazi sympathies during the mid-to late Weimar moment, Laban and Wigman's embodied conservatism made the contours of their political affiliations more ambiguous – and more easily masked. However, their social commitments were inflected with the same political and cultural values of the Weimar right: a sense of duty, hierarchized leadership, anti-materialism, anti-institutionalism, consensus, spiritual holism, and a mistrust of modern technology. These commitments provided the basis for their accommodation of National Socialism beginning in 1933. While the fact of German modern dance's alliance with Nazism is well documented, the precise contours of dance's politics during this time have not been adequately discussed. The reasons for this are many – and addressed at length in this dissertation's epilogue – though they are largely due to the post-WWII treatment of Laban's collaboration with National Socialism, which many students, scholars, and audiences would prefer to forget.¹²

This chapter is divided into three parts. Part I begins with an examination of Laban's earliest critical writing about dance, which appeared within wider cultural debates about German

¹² The body of secondary literature on Laban is substantial relative to the volume of work overall on the history of German dance, yet this work provides little explanation of the origins of Laban's Nazi sympathies. See, for example, Karen K. Bradley, *Rudolf Laban* (Routledge, 2008); Evelyn Dörr, *The Dancer of the Crystal* (Scarecrow, 2003); Dörr, *Rudolf Laban – die Schrift des Tänzers: ein Portrait* (Taschenbuch, 2005); Valerie Preston Dunlop, *Rudolf Laban: An Extraordinary Life* (London, 1998); Preston-Dunlop, *Rudolf Laban: Man of Theater* (London, 2003). Notable exceptions to this include Marion Kant and Lillian Karina's *Tanz Unterm Hakenkreuz* (Henschel, 1999) [in English, *Hitler's Dancers* (Berghahn, 2003)], which addresses both Laban's and German modern dance's involvement with National Socialism. Tellingly *Hitler's Dancers* was met upon its publication with considerable resistance by dance scholars in Germany, the United Kingdom, and the United States.

politics, identity, and culture around 1919. Like Jaques-Dalcroze, Duncan, Haeckel, and Wigman, dance knowledge is the knowledge of the social. Laban was not alone in his endeavor to define dance as a science. He was surrounded by a circle of dance intellectuals, including Wigman, who influenced him in a number of crucial ways. His first writing about dance as a science appeared in the journal *Die Tat*, later known as the intellectual home to the proto-Nazi *Tatkreis* [“Tat-Circle”]. Moreover, Laban mixed into his vision of science a set of politicized views influenced by an equally politicized set of fin-de-siècle debates about scientific universalism, monism, materialism, and holism. Laban incorporated into his philosophy a number of these, including two sets of scientific affiliations straddling the divide between the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. On the one hand, Laban was optimistic about forms of scientific knowledge obtained through *Naturphilosophie*, Romantic science, and technological innovation. On the other hand, he was skeptical of information not rooted in forms of rational or positivist experimentation – the very values championed by modern science. Laban mistrusted materialism, empiricism, specialization, and institutionalization of (scientific) practice, yet his work rested on principles of rational observation, deductive reasoning, and systematic analysis supported by trial-and-error and methodical explanation. To reconcile these conflicting positions required considerable critical work, a task he set about from 1919 to 1926 in his two major monographs, *Die Welt des Tänzers* [*The Dancer’s World*] (1920) and *Choreographie, erstes Heft* [*Choreography, vol. I*] (1926).

Laban ultimately settled on a vision of the universe that informed efforts to create dance as a science. Laban understood natural order partly according to the model Haeckel and Duncan described from 1903 - 1910. Building upon Haeckel’s monism, Laban believed that inorganic matter belonged to the hierarchy of natural forms which formed the model for a hierarchy of

social forms among humans. Here, a problem arose. What made man unique? Duncan solved this question through biological sex and the reproductive power of women, who were able to creatively express themselves through having children. But what about men? Duncan's solution was no comfort to Laban, who thus turned to questions about the nature of freedom that Wigman, his contemporary and collaborator, had raised. Part II traces Laban's ideas as they developed during the 1920s and highlights the split between his and Wigman's projects. Here, it shows the emergence of what this dissertation labels as "second nature." Like Wigman, Laban's dancer needed to be free in order to express his natural abilities. Laban, like Wigman, found a source of freedom in a vision of the sovereign self. Laban's vision of freedom took the question of creation a step further, and presented man as a source of creative genesis – rather than mere imitation or "art" – which extended from his features of innate intuition and physical capabilities.

By the mid-1920s, Laban's approach to movement separated concepts of human nature and intuition from other physical and biological orders. This concept of human nature was based in a mode of active, practical engagement with the world. Though not a term used by Laban himself, "second nature" referred to a human capacity through the practice of dance that hinged upon a "dancerly insight" helping performer and audience member, participant and observer, to connect with a harmonic totality lost in the modern moment. Through the concept of second nature, Laban established the grounds for a social order combining assent to stable order with the radical conception of nature as improvable, instrumental, and available to humans as a source for spontaneous, authentic creation. In other words, Laban gave man a power that other modern dancers had not. This dissertation argues that this concept was championed by many, challenged by some, and in spite of its compromise with National Socialism, has proven extremely durable.

Part III shows that although Laban's writing took a "scientific turn" around 1926 and sought to articulate dance through the language of scientific universalism, it did not signal his abandonment of politics. Laban's ideas emerged in dialogue with many of his students and collaborators, and we will see in the next chapter how dance critics and historians such as Hans Brandenburg and Fritz Böhme politicized dance throughout 1920s, emphasizing Laban's vision at the forefront of an explicitly national, German, modern dance community. Through his creation of a *lingua franca* for dance, combined with his stage productions and movement choirs casting dance as a form of Nietzschean tragic culture, Laban's work in the late 1920s translated his political worldview into an increasingly codified and allegedly "apolitical" cultural form. Nietzsche once again appeared for Laban and his critics the crucial link enabling the acceptance of indeterminacy and the establishment of firm grounds for the social order. Invoking Nietzsche was also, as we will see in the case of dance writer Hans Brandenburg, a method to nationalize and further politicize the work of embodied conservatives.

From 1919 to 1927, Laban articulated dance as the resolution of conflicting tensions. It was something accessible yet technical, universal yet individual, abstract yet intuitive and "natural." This endowed dance with a power to end politics. Dance erased social difference, eliminate conflict of opinion, instilled order, and restored harmonic unity in the age of Weberian disenchantment.

*

I. Rudolf Laban's Science of Dance

Born in Bratislava in 1879 into an Hungarian military family, Laban began his artistic career at the fin-de-siècle with a series of failures. Laban found himself first in Paris, where he studied ballet at the Paris Opéra and then architecture at École des Beaux Arts before dropping out.¹³ From there, Laban moved to Munich, where he made unsuccessful attempts as a career in painting within the artistic circles of the *Blaue Reiter* and the literary world of the Stefan George Circle. After a series of early performance experiments around 1912, Laban abandoned hope for a future in buildings or oil paints, and he focused instead on movement as an expressive medium. The following year, Laban relocated to Switzerland, yet his early exposure in Munich to Kandinsky's spiritually oriented color theories and the mystical belief-practices in Paris of Freemasonry and Rosicrucianism, an esoteric order that understood life as a spiritual quest, formed the durable core of his ideas about dance.¹⁴ Laban was deeply influenced by theories of Heidelberg crystallographer Victor Goldschmidt, whose writing shaped Laban's faith in

¹³ Albrecht Knust, Laban's associate in the late 1920s – 1930s, noted in a biographical sketch of Laban that Laban had studied classical ballet during his student years in Paris. Although no more specifics are known, Preston Dunlop concedes that this is plausible, given that Laban's analysis of *danse d'école* in *Choreographie, erstes Heft* [1926] is sophisticated enough to suggest some degree of ballet training. See Preston-Dunlop, *Rudolf Laban: Man of Theater*, 11.

¹⁴ Preston-Dunlop notes that "although there is no direct evidence that Laban and Kandinsky met" in Munich, she observes that they were living in the same area – on the same street, in fact – and overlap can be seen in many of their artistic principles, notably, "Kandinsky's *innere Notwendigkeit* (inner necessity) and Laban's concept of inner effort." Drawing further connections between Laban's concept of harmony and work by Arnold Schoenberg, she also notes a likeness "between Schoenberg's emerging *Harmonielehre* (theory of harmony) for atonality and Laban's *Harmonielehre* for the dancer's space." However, given the radically different ends to which each of their systemic approach to harmony was in service – for Schoenberg, this entailed the fracturing of canonical harmonic patterns and the destabilization of "natural" harmony, while for Laban, this entailed the reiteration of established patterns of harmonic form, particularly those perceived to be "natural" and "eternal" – the comparison seems tenuous. See Preston-Dunlop, "Rudolf Laban," in *The International Encyclopedia of Dance*, ed. Selma Jeanne Cohen (Oxford, 2005), 2.

Laban was a member of both Masonic and Rosicrucian orders. Laban was first exposed to Rosicrucianism in Paris around 1900, while still a student at the École des Beaux Arts. According to Laban biographer Valerie Preston Dunlop, the order connected to the École boasted an illustrious membership of artists and musicians, among them Henri Matisse, Claude Debussy, Gustave Moreau, and Erik Satie. See Valerie Preston Dunlop, *Rudolf Laban: Man of Theater*, 8-9.

movement as the expression of a physical, mathematically justifiable, harmonic order. According to Goldschmidt, all forms of organic and inorganic matter were composed of the same basic geometric structures and displayed in variations of symmetrical patterns in visual, musical, and biological forms.¹⁵ Laban returned to Goldschmidt's work, particularly his 1901 text *Über Harmonie und Complication*, throughout his career proof for the recurrence of harmonic unity. From Goldschmidt, Laban affirmed the notion that human physiology mirrored crystalline forms, while embodied movement, from creative gesture to simple actions such as walking or running, demonstrated the "forms, tensions, and proportions of a [body that is] determined by the same harmonic laws as the generation of shapes of the crystal."¹⁶

All things, for Laban, were thus linked in a unity and hierarchy of physical form, from the most simple to the most complex. Man sat at the top of this hierarchy, endowed with the ability to empirically observe – and inductively reason about – this harmony. As he noted in his first monograph, *The Dancer's World* (1920), "The dancer is to me that new human [*neue Mensch*], whose awareness [*Bewusstsein*] does not come from the exclusive brutality of thoughts, which creates feelings [*Gefühlen*] or desires. It is that human, whose clarity of apprehension [*Verstand*], deep perception [*Empfinden*], and strong will make him consciously strive to interweave a harmonic, balanced and, in the interdependence of its parts, a still moving whole [*Ganz*]. If you can find a better term than the word 'dancer' for this human, such designation will not be a problem."¹⁷

¹⁵ Victor Goldschmidt, *Über Harmonie und Complication* (Berlin, Julius Springer, 1901).

¹⁶ Rudolf Laban, *Welt des Tänzers* (Walter Siefert, 1920), 36. All translations mine unless otherwise noted. Laban's language is notoriously opaque, and I have included Laban's original language in instances where I have taken some liberties with translation. Interestingly, in the first edition of the book, Laban misspells Goldschmidt's name as "Goldschmied."

¹⁷ Laban, *Welt des Tänzers*, 9.

From 1913 to 1915, Laban honed his sense of the connection between spiritual life, dance education, and social organization. In the summer of 1913, Laban divided his time between Munich, where he had opened his first school for dance, and the life-reform artists' colony of Ascona, located in the mountains of southern Switzerland. Assisted at Ascona by Jaques-Dalcroze Institute graduates and star pupils Mary Wigman (then "Wiegemann") and Suzanne Perrottet, Laban created masonic-ritual performance pieces and taught expressive movement courses, which he titled "*Tonkunst*" (sound-art), "*Wortkunst*" (word-art), "*Bewegungskunst*" (movement-art) and "*Plastikkunst*" (sculptural-art) – categories that in 1919 he condensed into a motto for his vision of embodied harmonic order: "Dance, Sound, Word" ("Tanz, Ton, Wort").¹⁸ Laban's professional reputation grew thanks to his courses at Ascona. The next summer, following the outbreak of World War, Laban, Wigman, and Perrottet moved to Zurich, where they remained for the duration of the war at Laban's school, which he had reopened. It was during this time that Laban began to record his ideas about dance as an analytical system.¹⁹ Zurich attracted Laban because of its different artistic values from Germany, and around 1914, Laban noted in a letter to Hans Brandenburg, dramaturge and theater critic whom Laban had met in Munich before the war, that Switzerland was marked by open atmosphere, in contrast to Germany, where Laban had "the impression that in the coming months I would have only limited prospect towards the development of my goals."²⁰ Laban elaborated. "On all sides [in Germany]

¹⁸ The original reads: "Wir können also sagen: Einfache Formen sind regelmäßige Gedanken, die sich zu symmetrischen Paaren, proportionalem Aufbau und eurythmischer Bewegung fortschreitend entwickeln und in dieser letzten Höhe in den Nuancen Tanz-Ton-Wort zum menschlichen Ausdruck werden." Rudolf Laban, "Symbole des Tanzes und Tanz als Symbol," *Die Tat*, 11 Jg., H.9 (Dezember 1919), 674.

¹⁹ Preston Dunlop, "Rudolf Laban" (2005), 2.

²⁰ Rudolf Laban, Letter to Hans Brandenburg (undated, c. 1914), 1. John Hodgson Archives / Rudolf Laban Collection [Hereafter referred to as "JHA RLC"]. Brotherton Library, Leeds University. BC/MS 20c Theatre/Hodgson/1/1/359 - 361 (Letters from Rudolf Laban to Hans Brandenburg, 1914 – 1934) [Original series ID: "Box 30, Folder 40, Items 2-4"]. In a later letter, Laban refers to their original meeting in 1914. See: Rudolf Laban,

I see an aversion to “aesthetic” interests, almost an animosity, particularly against dance, which is so distant from what is going on. Here in Switzerland, a powerful aesthetic wave is building – it’s apparent who [goes in for spiritual comfort], since bodily comfort isn’t working.”²¹ Laban had yet to see Germany as a home for his work; in fact, at this point he saw it as antithetical to his goal of establishing harmonic order.

The war spread across Europe and the opposing powers dug deeper into their trenches, yet Laban continued to promote his vision for dance. Given that he was an Hungarian citizen with training as an artillery cadet, Laban expected to be called up for service in the Hungarian Army, yet his awareness of the war did not prevent him from actively pursuing opportunities to establish new forms of dance education.²² However, he struggled to gain support. In 1915, Laban sought to recreate the life-reformist community of Ascona elsewhere in the Swiss countryside and opened his own “life-arts school,” a “Labangarten” (“Laban Garden”), whose motto, “each does all” [“Jeder macht alles”], captured the ethic of spiritual, social, and cultural cultivation of the individual through practices in communal living, handwork, healthy living, and mystical practices.²³ Whether because of the war or a lack of interest among the local population, the school failed to garner enrollment and never opened.²⁴

Elsewhere, in the social artistic circles of the Zurich-based Cabaret Voltaire, Laban’s work was an outlier. His hopes that Switzerland would provide him artistic refuge were soon

Letter to Hans Brandenburg (Cademario, 7 August, 1919), 2. JHA RLC. BC/MS 20c Theatre/Hodgson/1/1/361, no.13 (Letters from Rudolf Laban to Hans Brandenburg, 1914 – 1934).

²¹ Laban, Letter to Hans Brandenburg (undated, c. 1914), 4.

²² Rudolf Laban, Letter to Hans Brandenburg (undated, around 1914), 2. JHA RLC. BC/MS 20c Theatre/Hodgson/1/1/361, no.7 (Letters from Rudolf Laban to Hans Brandenburg, 1914 – 1934).

²³ Evelyn Dörr, *Die Schrift des Tänzers: Rudolf Laban, ein Portrait* (Norderstedt, 2005), 95-96.

²⁴ Dörr, *Die Schrift des Tänzers*, 95-96.

dashed. Laban expressed in his private correspondence acceptance mixed with contempt for the modernist experiments around him. In August, 1916 he wrote to Brandenburg, “Cubism, Simultanianism [*Simultanismus*], Futurism flower here with strength – we [Laban and his dancers] have let these currents vegetate as seemingly unproductive. Many interesting things will be made, yet [their] main feature is weariness [*Mattigkeit*] and perversity.”²⁵ Laban’s attitude was unsurprising, given how his work differed from the Zurich Dada, whose credo Tristan Tzara articulated in 1918 as “a protest with the fists of its whole being engaged in destructive action: Dada [...] the abolition of memory: Dada; abolition of archaeology: Dada; the abolition of prophets: Dada.”²⁶ Laban’s work, inspired by Rosicrucianism, Freemasonry, and nineteenth-century life reformism, unsurprisingly appeared out of place.

Switzerland proved a temporary home. In 1919, after being denied a Swiss visa and finally threatened with military conscription, Laban returned to Germany, where he founded a performance troupe in Stuttgart and briefly served as a guest artist at the National Theater in Mannheim.²⁷ Laban’s return to Germany also marked the beginning of his career as a social critic. Upon his arrival, he contributed to Jena-based periodical *Die Tat*, founded in 1909 by the Nietzsche-inspired philosopher and freemason Ernst Horneffer. In 1912, Eugen Diederichs took over the journal as editor. As one of the most influential German publishers of the Weimar period, Diederichs quickly transformed *Die Tat*’s romantic holist orientation that sought “to further establish in our culture the unity of content and form, from inner character to outer appearance” to a postwar cultural pessimism championing social and political

²⁵ Rudolf Laban, Letter to Hans Brandenburg (Zurich, 28 August, 1916), 4. JHA RLC. BC/MS 20c Theatre/Hodgson/1/1/361, no.8 (Letters from Rudolf Laban to Hans Brandenburg, 1914 – 1934).

²⁶ Tristan Tzara, “Dada Manifesto” [1918], trans. Robert Motherwell. In *The Dada Painters and Poets: An Anthology*, ed. Robert Motherwell, 2nd ed (Cambridge, 1981), 81.

²⁷ Preston Dunlop, “Rudolf Laban” (2005), 3.

neoconservatism.²⁸ After 1919, the journal's new politics and worldview were hard to miss. Diederichs, for example, dedicated the first special issue of *Die Tat* under his supervision to Paul Lagarde, who decades earlier had bemoaned the “moral decline” of Wilhelmine Germany due to the “loss of religious faith and moral stamina; violation of traditional German values; laziness caused by excessive material comfort; widespread mediocrity, philistinism, pedantry, and lack of creativity in the educational system; the disappearance of heroic German individualism [...] and worst of all, a fundamental lack of unity among Germans.”²⁹ (The Jews, Lagarde claimed, were largely to blame.) By 1919, the journal indexed the writers in the arts, and political and social sciences advocating *völkisch* unity, anti-materialism, romantic anti-capitalism, and nineteenth-century German idealism.³⁰ Even its austere aesthetic, printed in *Fraktur* typeface without visual images, announced the journal's affiliations in contrast to the bold photomontages and sans-serif of its politically Left and even more moderate progressive Weimar contemporaries.³¹

²⁸ Horneffer's credo reads, “die Einheit von Inhalt und Form, von inneren Charakter und äußerer Erscheinung in unserer Kultur wiederherzustellen.” Immediately facing Horneffer's text is an image of a bust of Nietzsche by Max Klinger. Ernst Horneffer, “Unsere Ziele,” *Die Tat*, 1Jg., H.1 (April 1909), 2. While the impact of the war on Germany undoubtedly influenced the journal's shift in orientation, Stephen Aschheim notes that Diederichs' direction merely foregrounded core values of the journal Horneffer founded. Connecting *Die Tat* and its Nietzschean roots to a wider anti-Marxian, anti-materialist postwar sentiment, he notes, “Eugen Diederichs' neo-Romantic group centered around *die Tat*, for example, had from its beginnings based its ideal of German cultural renaissance upon the Nietzschean influence. The war simply heightened their expectations. Its commentators insisted that through the crucible of war the breakthrough to a new national Nietzschean authenticity was indeed possible.” See Aschheim, *The Nietzsche Legacy in Germany 1890 – 1990* (Berkeley, 1992), 144.

²⁹ See Gary D. Stark, *Entrepreneurs of Ideology: Neoconservative Publishers in Germany, 1890 – 1933* (Durham, 1981), 60. Fritz Stern in *The Politics of Cultural Despair* devotes the first third of the book to Lagarde (also known as “de Lagarde”), whom Stern dubs “the prophet of doom and regeneration.”

³⁰ Though not as openly anti-Semitic as Lagarde, Diederichs was a staunch anti-materialist and rejected a positivist, empirical view of reality that discounted a spiritual dimension. Diederichs was “convinced that modern rational science had analyzed, dissected, and sundered the world of knowledge; the increasing specialization of learning had fragmented the whole into isolated, independent units” (Stark, *Entrepreneurs of Ideology*, 63). For an early history of Diederichs and *Die Tat*, particularly its engagement with mysticism, religion, and the critique of Wilhelmine culture, see also Marino Puillierio, *Une modernité explosive: la revue Die Tat dans les nouveaux religieux, culturels et politiques de l'Allemagne d'avant 1914-1918* (Geneva, 2008).

³¹ By the late 1920s, and with Hans Zehrer's assumption of editor in 1929, *die Tat* became the proto-Nazi home to the “Tatkreis” (the “Tat Circle”), a group of Right-wing intellectuals that included writer Ernst Jünger and Otto

Laban's writing for *Die Tat* belonged to this index. His first article, "The Symbol of Dance and Dance as a Symbol" (January 1919), reiterated dance's connection to harmonic order evident through individual behavior and education. Emphasizing the unitary nature of movement, Laban noted that incongruity, tension, and asymmetry were natural phenomena that appeared in abstract systems (e.g. painting, music, written and spoken language), yet proportion and symmetry always resolved tension into harmonic logic and cohesion.³² Laying the arguments he would elaborate at exhaustive length in *The Dancer's World* (1920), Laban connected the knowledge of harmonic form via dance to knowledge of the social and political. Dance, he argued, restored a natural hierarchy among forms and thus formed the basis for a hierarchy within society. Laban explained this in a roundabout way, arguing for social order as the mirror of harmonic order on two accounts. First, a written system for dance would serve as the *lingua franca* between all beings, allowing all creatures already connected because of natural harmony to finally, fully, communicate; and second, a shift among individuals in their behavior, would allow them to finally feel and express themselves their natural, harmonic abilities. Dance heightened an awareness of the connection between feeling and rational thought, and through such dance-knowledge, individuals recognized harmonic form as the basis of all social relations.³³ Through this cycle of recognition and experience, Laban demonstrated that knowledge of dance necessarily assented to harmonic order. Importantly, this change in perception entailed the rejection of a rational or instrumental worldview grounded in individual

Strasser, politician and leader of the Black Front, a splinter faction of the early Nazi party, who in 1930 attempted to oust Hitler from Nazi party leadership.

³² Rudolf Laban, "Symbole des Tanzes und Tanz als Symbol," *Die Tat*, 11 Jg., H.9 (Dezember 1919), 669 – 675. This prefigures his later theory of *Gegenbewegung* ["countermovement"], established in *Choreographie, erstes Heft* (1926).

³³ In the case of the former, *die Tat* readers would have to wait almost a decade, for Laban would not fully articulate his own system of "Tanzschrift" ["dance writing"] until 1927-1928.

choice. This, Laban warned in June of 1920, resulted in an excess of modern-day materialism and militarism. “The attempt to organize the world as a shopping mall or a barracks,” he declared, “led to world war.”³⁴

Laban presented a pressing case for knowledge about dance and its bearing on social relationships. His system of dance notation, fundamental to social reform, would require nearly a decade of work before it was formally unveiled as “Tanzschrift” (“dance writing,” also known as “Labanotation”) in 1927-1928, though he began working on preliminary drafts while in Switzerland during the war. As early as 1918, Laban declared privately that he had finalized a system that would stabilize social relations between people in accordance with a set of natural and civic virtues. Without stating what those virtues were – and highlighting instead the form of his emergent theory rather than the specific content of the theory itself – he referred to an early version of a manuscript, eventually published in 1926 as *Choreography, vol. I*, Laban noted,

My *Choreography* is completed, as soon as I have a few weeks in quiet to complete the ordering and transcribing of the manuscript. A lot has changed in it; a person cannot create a form of written notation, he can only show the natural laws on which notation as a convention can be built from. [...] In this, I mean that *Choreography* will be published, in its outline at least, along with the research I have undertaken since my earliest youth into written symbols, hieroglyphs as well as formal mysticism; I believe that our time is ripe for these things, and needs them.³⁵

Laban’s “natural law” departed from Haeckel and Duncan’s vision of natural law, as it incorporated inorganic, as well as organic, matter into this great chain of being. Haeckel, as we remember from Chapter 2, rejected inorganic matter because it lacked the capacity for

³⁴ Rudolf Laban, “Kultische Bildung im Fest,” *die Tat*. 12Jg., H.3 (June 1920), 164.

³⁵ Rudolf Laban, Letter to Hans Brandenburg (Zurich, 15 May, 1918), 1-2. JHA RLC. BC/MS 20c Theatre/Hodgson/1/1/361, no.10, Letters from Rudolf Laban to Hans Brandenburg, 1914 – 1927.

spontaneous movement, and therefore could not serve as a model for harmonic unity.³⁶ Shown in his private notebooks, Laban's early forays into dance notation illustrate an inventive experimentation with visual form. Drafts for his system include symbols with allusions to runic inscription and Celtic iconography, figures in Western musical notation (such as an upside-down G-clef), and lines and characters from East and South Asian calligraphy.³⁷ Such experiments indicate his search to create a language for dance that built upon a plurality of historical, mythical, and contemporary cultural forms. Although Laban eventually abandoned the visual organicism and ornament of these sketches for a final version of *Tanzschrift* based on the austere geometric designs of his Bauhaus collaborator, Oscar Schlemmer, his early effort to unite different visual languages via dance reiterated his holistic impulse and commitments.

Laban began to see Germany as a national home for his work. He also, gradually, discovered a way in which his embodied conservatism could merge with the conservative politics of the Weimar Right to advance his career. Laban's vision for German society was not as bleak as his anti-capitalist, anti-militarist prognosis for Europe suggested. Activating heroic, *völkisch* language of historical triumph, he noted that "Pure dance can first bloom, when the moment is right [...] The first step of the awakening has happened, this renaissance is the transformation of the fate of our race, which has stretched its limbs for millennia. Art – the dance

³⁶ Ernst Haeckel, *The Riddle of the Universe at the Close of the Nineteenth Century*. trans Joseph McCabe (London, 1900). "All living organisms without exception have the faculty of *spontaneous movement*, in contradistinction to the rigidity and inertia of unorganic substances (e.g. crystals) [...] these active vital movements are partly discovered by direct observation and partly only known indirectly, by inference from their effects" (111).

³⁷ See, for example Laban's artists notebooks held at the Tanzarchiv Leipzig, including: "Skizzen zu verschiedenen Ansichten der Spirale"; "Piroettenspirale des Ikosaeders"; "Spiralenstrahlen mit Bezeichnung der C-Dur Tonleiter"; and "Untitled." Undated notes, c. 1919 -1920s. Tanzarchiv Leipzig, Rudolf Laban Collection [hereafter referred to as "TL RLS"] Rep.028.2a.Nr.3.15 – Nr.3.19. See also: Rudolf Laban, "Entwürfe zu Tanzschriftversuchen (Schwalbenschwanzschrift)." Undated notes, c. 1919 -1920s. TL RLS., Rep.028.III.2b.Nr.5.4, Nr.5.5, and Nr.5.10; See also, "Skizzen zur Tanzschrift: Farbige Darstellung des Kreislagengesetzes bei Drehungen und Wendungen (Kinetographie Laban)." Undated, c. 1919 -1920s. TL RLS., Rep.028.III-2c.Nr.5.11, Nr.5.12, Nr.5.13, Nr.5.15, and Nr.5.19.

– has its part in it [...] We dancers are the pioneers of this new dawn of art.”³⁸ The failures of established institution in Germany to unite people made crystal clear dance’s role as a tool for social progress. Laban argued that abstraction, a basic element of human expression, was partially to blame for institutional, social, cultural, and political failure. Abstract artistic and creative practices, such as poetry, established association and equivalence deepening one’s sense of the world, yet some abstract systems, like modern science, discounted those connections through an exclusively rational concern for material reality, direct correlation, and empirical evidence. Science thus obscured, rather than unveiled, truth, giving man a false sense of power and expression. “For every idea, the method of poetry subtends an equivalent image with an illustrative symbol. Science goes even further; it attempts to crumble metaphor into logic, and calls the outcome truth [“und schilt das Ergebnis Wahrheit”].”³⁹ Laban did not elaborate how scientific systems did this. Instead, his generalizations narrowly defined abstraction as the direct substitution of one discrete symbol or phenomenon for another. Despite his conceptual ambiguities, he clearly stated that institutionalized knowledge- and scientific practices incubated a narrow, brittle, worldview. By 1919, Laban’s understanding of “science” was a catchall term denoting institutions, practices, and beliefs that favored rational thought over an even balance of feeling and thinking.

Dance, in contrast, was a stable balance of intellect and intuition that also relied on abstraction. The best illustration of this, Laban argued, lay in dance’s deep history. Historical attempts from the Renaissance and the Middle Ages to translate dance into other mediums, such as music, text, or visual representation, had fallen short – not because history was not a good

³⁸ Laban, “Symbole des Tanzes und Tanz als Symbol,” 675.

³⁹ Laban, *Ibid.*, 675.

guide for dance to do so, but because dancers had yet to recognize that deeper history should serve as a point of reference. Laban noted,

From the trove of memory of primitive times [*Urzeit*], a new wave of power that belongs to man rises up to us; dance, in which the power of thought is corporeally realized through the mass of feeling of [vibration] and is refined in the intellect of the act. We need no words, we need no sound to unite and deeply experience will, feeling and knowledge – and to let flare the accrual of united dynamic engagement.⁴⁰

Whereas Duncan and Haeckel saw man as special but ultimately no different from other life forms, Laban saw man as privileged, powerful. Man's power of thought and feeling, which was "corporeally realized," distinguished him as different, special and did not just recapitulate species development in the individual, as Duncan had shown. An intellectual exercise rooted in man's "memory of primitive times," dance was the "refinement" of an active, dynamic process connecting man to his civilizational origins. Like science, dance dealt in abstraction, though of an altogether different order: it was the abstraction of history (rooted in time) and memory (which lay beyond time) into physical movement. Joining the temporally bound with the timeless, dance stabilized two aspects of an ideal, universal order. Wordless and soundless, "corporeally realized" movement belonged to history but also showed how man was different. Through its unique status, man's embodied movement connected the dancer to the basic elements undergirding human behavior and interaction: "will, feeling, and knowledge." Man's movement, in other words, was different than the movement of other living beings.

Knowledge of dance was thus knowledge of men, or knowledge of the social. By extension, to dance meant enter into a social world based in a particular set of relationships and power dynamics, all of which affirmed harmonic unity *and* man's unique power as an organism. Dance's features as timeless, universal, soundless, and wordless rendered its translation into

⁴⁰ Ibid., 675.

other expressive systems unnecessary. Importantly, this feature granted dance its formal autonomy; man, embodying dance, likewise became autonomous. Laban explained this by invoking Jaques-Dalcroze's theory of rhythm grounded in expressive movement. Like Jaques-Dalcroze, Duncan, Haeckel, and Wigman, Laban argued that through the outward physical manifestation of internal sense, visualization, and intuition, dance was "the well of life, movement, [that] is no longer symbolized but lives eurythmically and displays itself."⁴¹ The autonomous position of dance and (now) the dancer, combined with the collective memory of dance's deep history and granted it supreme authority in the present. Dance could thus mediate conflicting opinions between social groups, philosophical or artistic schools, and political camps. Laban gave the example of the debate between idealism and materialism, a frequently discussed topic among many of *Die Tat*'s Platonist and Neoplatonist contributors. "The Artist, particularly those of the coming days, is not tasked with choosing religious philosophy [or] science on either side in the fight between idealism and materialism, but rather he is a mediator, a joiner of both viewpoints, bringing them together in artistic truth."⁴² For Laban the concept of abstraction – its purpose and definition, and its relationship to rational thought and embodied feeling – was at stake, and he had much to gain through a détente of these opposing philosophical schools. On the one hand, as an ideal feature of creative expression and harmonic order, abstraction was crucial to his vision of dance. On the other hand, as a practical guide for embodied movement and systematic instruction, abstraction was essential to his system. Laban saw this conflict as an opportunity. German dancers, the "pioneers of this new dawn of art," formed consensus about truth and by doing so, ensured a stable social contract.

⁴¹ Ibid., 675.

⁴² Ibid., 669 – 670.

Laban argued throughout the 1920s that the individual dancer's capacity to experience concrete entities as abstract feeling formed the grounds of social consensus among people. Dance relied on the outward physical manifestation of movement (i.e. its material conditions), but it also relied on internal sense, inner visualization, and felt intuition (i.e. its ideal manifestation). In both cases, dance indicated what made individuals unique and powerful: the ability to navigate the world in a dual capacity, in which all concrete or material phenomena were simultaneously experienced as feeling and sensation. Laban noted in *The Dancer's World*,

The dancer has [a] sense for abstractions: yes, he recognizes [*anerkennen*] no difference between concrete and abstract representations [*Vorstellungen*]; thus he always experiences that abstract divided tension of the so-called concrete things as immanent being-forming [*wesenbildende*] force, and that, on the other side, this abstract tension as something very concrete, namely active, and hence as true currents [*Strömungen*].⁴³

By perceiving the world simultaneously as “concrete and abstract representations,” and “experiencing” this “abstract divided tension” as an unmediated, no-translation-necessary “being-forming force,” the dancer achieved Laban's time-bound/timeless trinity of “willing, feeling, and knowing.” Like the natural “forces” (“Strömen”) championed by Hellerau's inhabitants described in Chapter 3, a dancer's connection to nature and natural order let loose a surge of material action. At the same time, through abstraction, the dancer unified languages of expression, action, and force into a man-made, creative product. Finally, Laban's proposition did away with a fundamental position of post-Enlightenment modernity: the Kantian division of experience as constituted by a combination of graspable phenomena and unknowable noumena. For Laban's willing, feeling, and knowing dancer, all was within reach.

⁴³ Laban, *Die Welt des Tänzers*, 53.

Led by this troika of feeling, knowledge, and will to action, the dancer collapsed representation with reality and harnessed its power into material force, or “currents.” The dancer, through his natural capacity for movement, generated, maintained, and protected the dance. It was, in other words, the same “metabolic movement” that Duncan, Haeckel, and Wigman described. “The experience of the dance is for the dancer the sense of the world,” he noted. “What the researcher searches for, what the dreamer desires, what the willing covets [...] the dancer experiences in dance. The dance is the limitless possibility of comprehension [*Erfassen*] and self-communication [*Sichmitteilen*].”⁴⁴ The dancer was an active social participant, connected at all times to her/himself, the world, and others; he constantly transformed the world around him to meet the demands of harmonic order. The social implications of this were hard to miss. As “active” rather than “passive” engagement, dance threw into relief characteristics of apathy, laziness, and an unwillingness to assume responsibility or duty towards others. Dance worked as its corrective. The social defined the dancer, whose self was further defined by a critical consciousness of the representation of his body and brain vis-à-vis others: “all human beings regard both their bodies and their minds as discrete, self-subservient entities. It is the individuated mental stuff, as well as the individual’s own representation of it, that go under the name of self.”⁴⁵

Laban noted that the intrusion of politics into man’s “natural” life had stunted communal growth and the common good. “The entire ethic of our culture is lazy. The attempts of art, the church, and the State [...] have failed.”⁴⁶ For Laban, a society lacking movement was a society in peril. Rejecting existing social models around him that were too reified or rational – and

⁴⁴ Laban, *Die Welt des Tänzers*, 48.

⁴⁵ Jan Goldstein, *The Post-Revolutionary Self: Politics and Psyche in France, 1750 – 1850* (Cambridge, 2005), 2.

⁴⁶ Rudolf Laban, “Kultische Bildung im Feste,” *die Tat*, 12 Jg., H.3 (June 1920), 162.

anticipating criticism of his theories as too “subjective” – Laban dismissed the concept of objectivity *tout court*, stating that “so-called objectivity” was disguised subjective reasoning and “indeed always a downright fierce subjective sympathy for some kind of conception of form or base-theory recognition [*Erkenntnisgrundtheorie*].⁴⁷ Laban here potentially referenced “Erkenntnistheorie,” a theory of knowledge that German theologian and philosopher Eduard Zeller announced in 1862 as the “future of philosophy”: a study of knowledge which justified the status of philosophy as an academic discipline in light of what many of Zeller’s contemporaries saw as a superior treatment of human reason through modern science.⁴⁸ Yet despite his disdain for a rational worldview, or Zeller’s support for the academization of the study of knowledge, Laban invoked math and logic, most frequently the Fibonacci sequence, as incontrovertible evidence for his claims.⁴⁹

In many ways, Laban’s model for social order was not unlike Wigman’s. As we have seen in Chapter 4, by 1913 Wigman had already noted a “recognition” by which the dancer actively joined interiority and exteriority, outwardly expressing – or “rousing,” in her words – expressive force.⁵⁰ While their language and terminology differed – Wigman’s dancer “knows” [*Kennen*] while Laban’s dancer “recognizes” [*Anerkennen*] – their vision was the same. Dance was active social engagement. Both the Laban and the Wigman dancer connected to others and

⁴⁷ Laban, *Die Welt des Tänzers*, 16.

⁴⁸ John Michael Krois, “Kulturphilosophie in Weimar Modernism,” in *Weimar Thought: A Contested Legacy*, eds., Peter E. Gordon and John P. McCormick (Princeton, 2013), 101-102. For Zeller’s speech, see Zeller, “Über Bedeutung und Aufgabe der Erkenntnistheorie,” in *Vorträge und Aufsätze: Zweite Sammlung* (Leipzig, 1887), 489 – 95.

⁴⁹ See, for example, Laban’s discussion of symmetry and asymmetry, *die Welt des Tänzers*, 37. Fibonacci’s “Golden Ratio” was an example Victor Goldschmidt frequently used in *Über Harmonie und Complication*.

⁵⁰ In the words of Wigman, “The dancer must know [*kennen*] his body, if he wants to control it. He must learn the different muscular functions in order to discover, to regulate – he must learn his body in order to rouse movement.” Mary Wigman, “Der Körper ist das Instrument des Tänzers,” (undated, c. November 12, 1913 – December 13, 1913), 58. “Tagebuch 1913,” Akademie der Künste, Mary Wigman Sammlung [AK MWS], 2.3 Tagebücher, S 439. This passage is discussed at length in Chapter four.

to natural order; they were critically self-aware of how dual forms of representation (ideal and material) that were expressed in movement impacted those around them. While Wigman's system accommodated irrational feeling as a part of the dancer's experience of the world and others, Laban, save a few passing references in *The Dancer's World* to Jungian psychoanalysis, showed limited interest in the human psyche or in the possibility that "feeling" encompassed the speculative and the empirical. Both, however, understood dance as the convergence of knowledge, feeling, and will. As a result, dance provided a "limitless possibility of comprehension," a freedom that was generated, maintained, and protected by their movement systems. Finally, both saw dance as form of work that meaningfully contributed to the greater social good. For Wigman, the dance school formed a "working community" [*Arbeitsgemeinschaft*]; Laban advocated for "dance as work [...] dancerly creation is not only desire and art, but honest cultural work [*Kulturarbeit*]. Social co-creation, [in the striving of its time], sprouts self-evidently and unintentionally from its effects."⁵¹ Elsewhere, Laban pushed to restore social value to the professional occupation of the dancer.⁵² Thus, Laban and Wigman, in their schools, dance companies, and in their writing, championed the dancer and dance-maker as a meaningful, socially necessary vocation.

Laban and Wigman's respective projects were united in their conception of dance to maintain social order, in spite of conflicting political forces. Their theorization of dance was an holistic endeavor, in which their literary skills joined seemingly opposed ideas, images, and phenomena – as we have just seen in the case of Laban's resolution of the idealist/materialist divide. Laban and Wigman thus captured, in the words of Ann Harrington, the anti-Weberian

⁵¹ Laban, *Die Welt des Tänzers*, 147.

⁵² Rudolf Laban, Letter to Hans Brandenburg (Stuttgart, 29 April, 1920), 2. JHA RLC. BC/MS 20c Theatre/Hodgson/1/1/361, no.20, Letters from Rudolf Laban to Hans Brandenburg, 1914 – 1927.

promise that “what the old science of the Machine had wrought, a new science of Wholeness would heal.”⁵³ Like other scientific holists, Wigman and Laban, “in [a] time of perceived intellectual and social crisis” employed “metaphor and other connotative properties of language [that] allowed [him] to leapfrog in a range of ways across the epistemological divisions of the time that an earlier generation of science had declared must necessarily separate the secular from the sacred, the natural from the political, the mythical from the necessary.”⁵⁴

Laban’s disdain for early twentieth-century scientific rationalism, which “crumbles metaphor into logic and calls the outcome truth,” stood as testament to this. And as the 1920s progressed, he would find new and increasingly inventive ways to bridge social and political divides in the name of dance, order, and stability. Within this, Laban would find a place for man as a unique creator.

*

II. Dance as Second Nature

By the early 1920s, differences between Laban and Wigman became increasingly apparent. Wigman’s use of nineteenth-century canonical music in her performances and musical metaphor in her writing diverged from Laban’s insistence on dance as an expression predating cultural institution, tradition, and convention. Laban labeled the features of this expression “Tanz, Ton, Wort,” the motto of his early course in Ascona that referred to a “secret society of being” [*Geheimbundwesen*, also translatable as “network of being”] or communicative form with

⁵³ Ann Harrington, *Reenchanted Science: Holism in German Culture from Wilhelm II to Hitler* (Princeton, 1996), xvi.

⁵⁴ Harrington, *Reenchanted Science*, xix.

prehistoric roots. Laban argued that this trinity of social action formed the basis of primitive societies, and gave meaning to basic ritual and cultural production; in turn, such actions grounded individual members' recognitions of their roles and representations within the family, village, or tribe. He noted that a modern "mass psyche" [*Massenpsyche*] and the "particular interests of a party – be it of a philosophical, religious, economic, or political nature" had caused the "degeneration" of this secret society, atomizing and dividing its members through specialization, rationalization, and overly administered life.⁵⁵

Laban did not oppose the use of musical convention in dance. We will see in Part III of this chapter how he often used works from the canon of nineteenth-century Western music for his stage performances. However, Laban distinguished between sound and music, unlike Wigman. He characterized sound according to "scientific" or structural features, such as its effects on a listener's emotions. "Sound is spatial tension between atoms and has a psychological effect of sadness or such, depending on whether its configuration is heavily or lightly applied, just as with body positions."⁵⁶ Laban, like Wigman, Duncan, and Jaques-Dalcroze, understood sound as the basis for a definition of harmony, which the listener's emotional state reflected. Wigman saw dance dynamically related to musical convention, for it expanded musical moods and effects during performance, similar to Duncan's approach at the turn of the century. For Wigman, dance without musical accompaniment was, at its core, "musical."

Another important difference between Laban and Wigman was in their respective approaches to dance as a singular, time-bound event. Wigman saw dance as the public transformation of a stage space, during which time the performer's expression unleashed dance's

⁵⁵ Laban, *Die Welt des Tänzers*, 111-112.

⁵⁶ Rudolf Laban, Letter to Hans Brandenburg (Stuttgart, 29 April, 1920), 4. JHA RLC. BC/MS 20c Theatre/Hodgson/1/1/361, no.20, Letters from Rudolf Laban to Hans Brandenburg, 1914 – 1927.

force to enable freedom and order. Laban, in contrast, saw dance as a “natural religion [of] knowledge” [*Naturreligion [des] Wissens*], whose roots in pre-historic society made its power self-evident and eternally recurring. This, Marion Kant notes, formed for Laban a kind of dance “Weltanschauung.”⁵⁷ Like Haeckel’s monist worldview, dance as a worldview was a powerful force no longer bound by the borders of the stage, or the borders between individual bodies. Wigman’s particular focus on performance emphasized her understanding that a dancer’s power relied on her participation in a discrete dance event – with others. For Laban, dance’s power lay in natural order and emerged all of the time, everywhere. Dance in performance was one particularly good illustration of that order, but that order existed independently of it.

In 1919, Wigman left Laban to begin a performance and teaching career of her own, and Laban intensified his reforms to dance as a science. By then it was clear to him that “evidence” pointed to dance’s “immanent cultural power [*Kulturkraft*]” and the necessity for a written (i.e. ordered, systematic) yet holistic (i.e. spiritual, intuitive) theory of dance to restore this “natural religion of knowledge” within society. Laban carefully noted that his systematization of dance knowledge did not standardize it. His stated goal for *The Dancer’s World*, described by dance historian Karl Toepfer as “more a meandering collection of notes rather than a cogently argued theory of bodily expressivity,” was thus “not to advance norms and dogmas, but rather to arouse dancerly insight [*tänzerische Einsicht*].”⁵⁸ Emphasizing the role of dance education, training, and practical engagement, Laban noted the active qualities necessary for dancers to train their bodies and to stimulate their “sense of the world,” despite the fact that such knowledge came, paradoxically, from objective or universally proven theories of truth. Dance, a material, body-

⁵⁷ Marion Kant, “Laban’s Secret Religion,” in *Discourses in Dance 1, no. 2*, eds., Ramsay Burt and Susan Leigh Foster (2002): 46.

⁵⁸ Karl Toepfer, *Empire of Ecstasy* (Berkeley, 1997), 101; and Laban, *Die Welt des Tänzers*, 9.

based knowledge, yielded ideal results. Laban, apparently, was not bothered by this contradiction.

Revealing the unique characteristics naturally stimulated through by the dancer's action and intuition, Laban's science of movement presented dance and "dancerly insight" as what this dissertation labels "second nature": human nature or intuition separate from a natural (i.e. cosmic or biological) order or the natural world. Laban articulated this concept in his writing via what he called "A Round-Dance of Ideas" [*Gedankenreigen*], a mode of theorization rather than a specific theory of dance based on personal knowledge gleaned through his own observation, experiment, and performance. Laban argued that this "Round Dance of Ideas," which (though not explicitly stated by Laban) was nothing more than Haeckel's combination of philosophical speculation and empirical research. This unveiled the source of dance's authority. As the fruits of his empirical study, it was the practical application of his own second nature.

The Form [of the book] is the Round-Dance of Ideas, which I have arrayed into obtained insights out of thousands of dances, conversations with dancers, writings about dance and movement, and from dance lessons and studies. Dance accounts for itself only in dance.⁵⁹

Citing an eclectic history of "knowledge from dance" from Plato and Sufi mystic Dschelladdin-Rumînu to Confucius and Nietzsche, Laban opposed his conceptual project to values of mainstream Weimar culture. He conjured images of pagan rituals and folk traditions, in contrast to the mechanized kicklines of stage revues and the linearity of motion – in transportation, in art, and popular music – that dominated modern, technologized life. Laban did not oppose technology, and unlike *Die Tat's* imageless pages, his monograph contained photographic images, most featuring Laban and his dancer (and lover) Dussia Bereska. Yet these images "were

⁵⁹ Laban, *Die Welt des Tänzers*, 15.

merely decorative illustrations with no direct relation to anything in the text. [The images] depicted the two dancers in uncontextualized studio poses, with Bereska constantly wearing bizarre, rather mythical costumes. The photos created the impression that dance inhabited its own strange world, an immense, bewildering system of phenomenal relations detached even from the language that tried to explain it.”⁶⁰ Laban’s approach to dance’s visual representation emphasized how dance differed from modern culture and technology, and, when experienced through the unique capacities of the dancer, underscored harmonic order. Without the individual dancer’s expressive skills to maintain it, this harmony threatened to dissolve into chaos, and disorder. Thus, a unified nature relied on a second, or additional, nature to maintain and protect it.

Like his understanding of science and abstraction, Laban’s concept of dance as second nature unified a range of contradictory ideas. Notably, Laban’s concept of second nature differed from that of his Hungarian contemporary, Marxist theorist Georg Lukács, whose specific use of the term “second nature,” outlined in his 1914-1915 *Theory of the Novel*, denoted processes of reification and alienation of labor in a capitalist society.⁶¹ Lukács and Laban shared the belief in a totality of culture, which they believed had been fragmented by the social, economic, and political effects of modern industrial capitalism. For them, this fragmentation threw into relief a new kind of human behavior that formed in response to the loss of this cultural whole. Laban and

⁶⁰ Toepfer, *Empire of Ecstasy*, 102.

⁶¹ Georg Lukács, *Theory of the Novel: An Historico-Philosophical Essay on the Forms of Great Epic Literature*. Trans. Anna Bostock (MIT, 1971 [1914-1915]). Lukács locates the origins of this second nature in “the world of convention, a world form whose all-embracing power only the innermost recesses of the soul are exempt, a world which is present everywhere in a multiplicity of forms too complex for understanding. Its strict laws, both in becoming and being, are necessarily evident to the cognizant subject, but despite its regularity, it is a world that does not offer itself either as meaning to the aimless subject, or as matter, in sensuous intimacy, to the active subject. It is a second nature, and, like nature (first nature), it is determinable only as the embodiment of recognized but senseless necessities and therefore it is incomprehensible, unknowable in its real substance” (62).

Lukács differed in second nature's practical implications, whether it was a symptom of, or a solution to, the degenerate effects of modern life. For Lukács, second nature proved man's inability to extricate himself from a larger superstructure engulfing him; his second nature resulted from a harmful process of "ahistorical naturalization" of modern life and society.⁶² For Laban, second nature meant something entirely different. It was rooted in deep history. It was the way to recover human agency in an age of depersonalization, reification, and rationalization.

Neither Laban nor Lukács was the first to understand second nature as a method to heal social and cultural fracture. In the mid-eighteenth century, Rousseau proposed in *The Social Contract* and *Emile* the concept of second nature as part of his vision of a communally binding, political totality. Intellectual historian Martin Jay notes that "[u]nlike Vico, whose cultural wholes were unconsciously created by poets, Rousseau stressed the deliberate, conscious decision involved in their origins [...] The implication of all of this was that the solution to [social and political] fragmentation lay less in a return to nature than in the creation of a new 'second nature,' which would transcend the limitations of the first."⁶³ Laban's understanding of nature was similar to Rousseau's in the sense that man's "natural" or "primitive" state was not a reliable basis for modern social order; it was only through education and deliberate socialization that a self-conscious engagement with the world could occur. In other words, only after a Laban student trained according to such educational reforms could she arouse her "dancerly insight" in service to "willing, feeling, and knowing" and the social collective into which she assumed a role and projected her representation of self. A stable basis for the social contract was assured, as it enabled individuals to be free and to realize themselves as self-conscious subjects of a particular

⁶² Martin Jay, *Marxism and Totality: The Adventures of a Concept* (Berkeley, 1984), 43.

⁶³ Jay, *Marxism and Totality*, 43.

order. By proposing this, Laban reformed more than a Rousseauian model for the social contract. “German Idealism came to draw heavily on the notion that such a second nature might be refashioned to realize the wholeness which Rousseau had only posited as a unreachable dream. The personal education he had described in *Émile* was broadened to become a kind of collective cultural *Bildung* of mankind in which totality in its normative sense might be realized.”⁶⁴ Laban’s understanding of dance, advanced through its members’ intuitions and actions thus shared with his German idealist predecessors a practical concern for how second nature restored and maintained social unity.

For Laban, the whole was democratic. His understanding of democracy, however, departed from a tradition of political thought stretching back to ancient Athens, in which the *Agora* formed a vital, public space to voice opposing views. For thinkers such as Aristotle, the conflict of opinion formed the basis of a politics whose principles of debate and deliberation took the form of public dialogue, or performance. Citizens and lawmakers celebrated virtuosic displays of speechmaking, oratory, and rhetoric, and championed as civic and social virtue a clarity of logic and argumentation. Laban saw things otherwise. Democracy was not enacted through public debate but through an unspoken likeness of mind and body between individuals. In an unpublished essay on democracy, likely written around 1916 and part of a series of unpublished writings from 1916 to around 1920 on themes such as “[A] Community for Social Reform,” “The Social,” and “Study on Sociability and Sociality,”⁶⁵ Laban declared that

⁶⁴ Jay, *Ibid.*

⁶⁵ These essays can be found in the Rudolf Laban Collection as part of the John Hodgson Archives, housed at the Brotherton Library, University of Leeds. While the essays themselves are undated, the stationary two of the essays cited in this chapter - “Die Demokratie ist auf der Seelenähnlichkeit, Körperähnlichkeit und Geistesähnlichkeit der Menschen basiert“ and „Politiker ist kein Beruf!“ – are written on provide indications to the time and place in which Laban composed them. The former is written on the back of a program for a performance by the “dancing poet” S.A. Norden, which occurred on May 30, 1916; the latter is written on stationary belonging to the *Sanatorium am Königspark*, in Dresden, where it is possible Laban stayed. Valerie Preston Dunlop has noted Laban’s mental

“[d]emocracy is based on the similarity of soul, body, and spirit among individuals. It will help each individual, to a certain degree, complete the development of his [human] qualities, and will provide a brotherly division of abilities [and] the achievement of life possibilities [*Lebensmöglichkeiten*].”⁶⁶ Active qualities of personal achievement and social uplift, and connections between people defined democracy. Democracy was no longer political engagement, but a force to erase differences between members of a community, a form of assent to order. Importantly, this accommodation hinged on the collective commitment to the cultivation of each individual. Laban argued that natural law and harmony formed the basis for political and civic education. He explained:

Clearly, between men there is at work an evident difference of nature and heredity. Outer, inner, and middle qualities must therefore be nurtured [...] Furthermore, social protection should not be measured according to monumental inferiority, but to the sparks of educated spirit [*erziehenden Seelenfunken*], which in principle is the same among all men. [...] After all, such cultivation and development [comes] only through the complete understanding and a weighed examination of the thousand-fold nuances of body, soul, and spirit.⁶⁷

Hierarchy between people was inevitable, because of differences in natural ability. The recognition of difference was therefore crucial to reform education, needed to cultivate the “sparks of educated spirit” among its individuals. This, in turn, provided social uplift for those disadvantaged by biological “nature and heredity.”

instability and his “bipolar state of mind” from 1916 – 1916, partly caused by his ongoing financial difficulties and his “complex family life” (Preston-Dunlop, *Laban: Man of Theater*, 19-20).

⁶⁶ Rudolf Laban, “Untitled” [“Die Demokratie ist auf der Seelenähnlichkeit, Körperähnlichkeit und Geistesähnlichkeit der Menschen basiert.”] (undated, ca. May 1916), 1. JHA RLC. BC/MS 20c Theatre/Hodgson/1/1/2 File B (Series of Articles by Laban) [Alt reference: “B18, B2, F2”], item no. 18/01/03/9.

⁶⁷ Rudolf Laban, “Untitled” [“Die Demokratie ist auf der Seelenähnlichkeit, Körperähnlichkeit und Geistesähnlichkeit der Menschen basiert.”], 1.

Laban argued that strong leadership maintained this social hierarchy based in nature. “To wake [*wecken*] and rule [*regeln*] this understanding, mature and wise leaders are at the present time necessary,” he observed. “[T]hey will, with the [wish] for a general democracy towards social, economic, and political higher development, education, and therefore tolerance and parity [sameness] [*Gleichheit*], bind ability to this ideal mass and educate [*erziehen* – also translatable here as “nurture”] the whole.”⁶⁸ Much like the dancer’s insight, “awakened” through dance practices in the classroom, onstage, and in everyday life, the collective “understanding” of the similarity among individuals – and notwithstanding their “thousand-fold nuances of body, soul, and spirit” – was both “awakened and ruled” through the actions of an elite leadership. According to Laban, such rule remained “democratic,” provided the intentions or “wish” of this elite remained committed to the establishment of equality through ideal models for social, fiscal, and political action.

Lest his contemporaries think of him as a political theorist in the traditional sense, Laban clarified his unconventional stance towards politics. “A politician is not an occupation! To be a politician is an approach [*Einstellung*] to the soul.”⁶⁹ Instead, political action, leadership, and communal organization were questions of the spiritual connection among disparate parts of an otherwise complete totality. So what, precisely, did the “whole” mean to Laban? Laban’s interest in a unified order or hierarchy was perhaps best illustrated by his concern for crystallography and its crystal-life analogies proving the shared properties of matter, motion, and structure across all organic and inorganic matter. Laban’s holistic approach to the natural world aligned with an older, nineteenth-century tradition of scientific, religious, and philosophical monism, which,

⁶⁸ Laban, *Ibid.*

⁶⁹ Rudolf Laban, “Untitled” [“Politiker ist kein Beruf! Politiker sein ist eine Einstellung der Seele”] (undated, ca. 1916-1920), 1. JHA RLC. BC/MS 20c Theatre/Hodgson/1/1/2 File B (Series of Articles by Laban) [Alt reference: “B18, B2, F2”], item no. 18/01/03/6.

loosely defined, connotes a body of scholarly and scientific practices that “represent[ed] a common challenge to the Cartesian conception of the mind and body as essentially separate domains. Against dualistic understandings of human reality, [monists] seek to analyze nature and culture from a single vantage point.”⁷⁰ Typified by the work of Haeckel, as well as Hans Driesch, monists responded to materialist theories of evolution, embryology, and species development, and proposed holistic, and often vitalist, conceptions of human nature and the natural world. Haeckel articulated the goals of monism as part of a larger cultural project in his 1899 *The Riddle of the Universe*; as Chapter 2 has shown, monism was not a discrete philosophical or scientific program but a worldview in which nature, humanity, and the universe figured as a complete, unified totality.⁷¹ As the “inheritor of German Romanticism and *Naturphilosophie*” of Goethe, Schelling, and Lorenz Oken,⁷² Haeckel embedded the concept of a natural totality in his theory of cellular protoplasmic movement (“*Wellenzeugung*”), in which a motion-based model explained evolutionary differences within a single species yet showed “the unbroken continuity [that] connected all persons, all living organisms with the great pattern that could be traced back to the beginning of life, a wave pattern that the organism recapitulated in individual development.”⁷³ As we have seen in Chapter 2 and the case of Duncan, this rhythmic aesthetic model for unified nature was powerful inspiration for her “dance of the future.”

Haeckel’s influence in Germany was wide ranging. As a *DAZ* author wrote in an obituary for him on 9 August, 1919, “so few have had such a decisive influence on the entire

⁷⁰ Todd H. Weir, “The Riddles of Monism: An Introductory Essay,” in *Monism: Science, Philosophy, Religion, and the History of a Worldview*, ed., Todd H Weir (Palgrave, 2012), 1.

⁷¹ Weir, “The Riddles of Monism,” 4.

⁷² Knox Peden, “Alkaline Recapitulation: Haeckel’s Hypothesis and the Afterlife of a Concept,” *Republics of Letters: A Journal for the Study of Knowledge, Politics, and the Arts* 4, no.1 (October, 2014), 9.

⁷³ Brain, “The Pulse of Modernism,” 403.

life-spirit [*Geistesleben*] of the future as he has.”⁷⁴ Like Laban, Haeckel advocated new models of education and research. *The Riddle of the Universe*, for example, championed the arts, including drawing, painting, and physical movement as important methods to teach “our monist ethics” and the unity among all natural beings in the forward march of civilization.⁷⁵ For both Haeckel and Laban, education staved the damage of modern technology in society, and, particularly for Haeckel, the dangers of a dawning twentieth century. Haeckel underscored his belief in creative education with his unconventional (and, according to his critics, “unscientific”) use of charts, diagrams, and illustrations, which made him, in the words of Lorraine Daston and Peter Galison, “an artist in scientists’ clothing.”⁷⁶ The concern shaped both Laban and Haeckel’s view of nature, which for Laban is best summarized by Haeckel’s monist mission: “In the school of the future, nature will be the chief object of study; a man shall learn a correct view of the world he lives in; he will not be made to stand outside and opposed to nature, but will be represented as its highest and noblest product.”⁷⁷

Laban took this one step further. For Laban, man was not just a “noble product.” He was also a noble producer. By the 1920s, Laban grounded his quest to reform society in the restoration of this vision, a cosmic unity featuring man, whose second nature confirmed him as a creative producer. Jaques-Dalcroze, Duncan, and Wigman had shown that the dance studio was a vital space to theorize human nature and behavior; in particular, the dance classroom was a laboratory to interrogate the shared interests that bound people together in the social contract.

⁷⁴ Anonymous, “Ernst Haeckel” [Obituary], *Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung* (9 August 1919), pp NA.

⁷⁵ Ernst Haeckel, *The Riddle of the Universe*. trans Joseph McCabe (London, 1929 [1899]), 283.

⁷⁶ Lorraine Daston and Peter Galison, *Objectivity* (New York, 2007), 247.

⁷⁷ Ernst Haeckel, *The Riddle of the Universe*, 296.

Stepping into the studio to find a laboratory, Laban is Haeckel's mirror image: a scientist in artist's clothing.

The comparison between these two figures explains how Laban's understanding of holistic nature linked to his concept of scientific objectivity. Haeckel and Laban's respective pursuit of scientific truth stemmed from their insistence that embodied knowledge exposed an order and hierarchy that modern society needed but had yet to recognize. For Haeckel, scientific inquiry bared a natural, objective order based upon "'ideas' in images," or "what he believed to be the true idea hidden beneath potentially false or confusing circumstances."⁷⁸ Laban, who believed in "so-called objectivity," understood that the proper knowledge of nature was rooted in man's creative power and helped parse misleading information from the unified (i.e. true) natural order connecting all things. In this sense, Laban's understanding of harmonic nature and man's second nature in service to it was a state of collective being, an ethics or worldview seeking stability through constant theorization. This was all guided by the spiritual artistic consensus – the assent to social order – elaborated in his early Weimar writings.

The implications of this were far-reaching. As we will see in Part III, Laban believed that nature was plastic, deceptive, and creatively instrumental. Laban articulated this in his concept of *Gegenbewegung*, a movement system and social metaphor that illustrated how material expressions were not representative of their deeper constitutive forces. As such, the natural expressions of dancers, as well as ordinary citizens, were not reliable indications of true nature or natural order.

Laban's early writings demonstrate how dance, in theory and practice, opposed modern life. Dance's status in deep granted it authority as a source of knowledge not subject to the designs, pace, or regulation of modern life. Laban's understanding of a second nature, or

⁷⁸ Daston and Gallison, *Objectivity*, 247.

“dancerly insight,” restored unity to an otherwise fragmented society; knowledge of dance was knowledge of social order that dancers, as leaders endowed with special ability and powers of creative genesis, maintained. Dance, as a science and universal language erased social tensions and legitimized it as meaningful work. In turn, this reconciled conceptual, philosophical, and ideological oppositions. Laban’s dance science ensured social stability based in a collective sense of duty toward unity over individual rational choice, material life, engagement with political reality, or radical change as a means to heal social fracture. Coming to light at a moment when modernity displayed itself in full force, dance as an anti-modern worldview was born.

*

III. *Gegenbewegung*, Movement Choirs, and the Rebirth of Tragedy

Laban’s activities in the 1920s were not limited to his critical writings or his notational system. Following his return to Germany in 1921, Laban founded a dance company in Stuttgart, the *Tanzbühne Laban*. During this time Laban was also working as a guest artist at the National Theater in Mannheim.⁷⁹ The company, from which he formed a smaller performance group, the *Kammertanzbühne Laban*, maintained an active performance schedule from 1922 to 1928. With twenty dancers from Mannheim (including Kurt Jooss and Albert Knust), the company showcased Laban’s many dances, particularly in Hamburg, where he had secured financial sponsorship.⁸⁰ Laban’s interest in myth, German history, romanticism, and heroism inspired the company’s repertoire, with titles such as *The Swinging Temple (Der Schwingende Temple)* (1922), *Faust’s Salvation (Fausts Erlösung)* (1922), *Prometheus* (1923), *Terpsichore* (1925), and

⁷⁹ Preston-Dunlop, “Rudolf Laban,” 3.

⁸⁰ Preston-Dunlop, *Ibid.*

Don Juan (1926). Despite Laban's preference for dance without music, several featured accompaniment from the Western classical canon. *Terpsichore*, for example, was set to music by Handel, *Don Juan* to Glück, and *Ballet of the Knights* (*Ritterballet*, 1926 [?]) to Beethoven.

Similar to Wigman's company, Laban's troupe broke with the dance company hierarchies associated with European ballet and opera organizations of the mid- to late nineteenth-century. Laban biographer Valerie Preston Dunlop notes that dancers in Laban's companies performed stage roles interchangeably, while "the same dance might be performed in different costumes or with different sound or by a different sex and number of dancers."⁸¹ Laban's flexible approach to casting recalled earlier models of company performance, in which men's and women's parts were performed *en travesti* by members of the opposite sex, and destabilized established modes of stage performance.⁸² Surprising his dancers and audiences with nightly variability and gender-bending, Laban injected into his work a playfulness that reoriented the idea of a dance as a fixed work of art to an unpredictable, live experience. This was evident in his use of improvisational techniques – also employed by Wigman, Jaques-Dalcroze, and Duncan – which underscored his position on the relationship of movement to music. Based on his early studies in architecture, Laban's theatrical work "championed improvisation as a new way of discovering new movement, new rhythms [...] The idea of dance as living architecture brought in the crucial ingredient of space. Dalcroze's [sic] definition had been 'Dancing is the art of expressing

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 3.

⁸² On the significance of travesty dancing prior to the twentieth century – and in particular, its role in the destabilization of social and gender representation – see: Inge Baxmann, "A Balance Lost: Staging the Body and Controlling Social Mobility During the French Revolution," in *Dance Discourses: Keywords in Dance Research*, eds., Susanne Franco and Marina Nordera (Routledge, 2007), 153 -168; Susan Leigh Foster, "Dido's Otherness: Choreographing Race and Gender in the *Ballet d'Action*," in *Dance Discourses*, eds., Franco and Nordera, 121-130; Lynn Garafola, "The Travesty Dancer in Nineteenth Century Ballet," *Dance Research Journal* 17/18, no.2 - 1 (Autumn 1985 – Spring 1986): 35-40; Peter Stoneley, "Nuns and Fairies" and "Swans," chapters two and three in *A Queer History of the Ballet* (London, 2007), 22 – 66.

emotion by means of rhythmic body movement' but for Laban dance was simply the dynamic body in space."⁸³ Laban championed spontaneity and creativity as an unpredictable, impulsive and forceful act. Onstage and in the studio, Laban "was likened by his circle to a volcano. An outpouring of ever emerging creative ideas seemed to tumble out of him. His choreographies were one strand of his creativity. He never intended they should lose their immediacy and become fixed for he was already turning his mind to the next as he completed the one in rehearsal, in fact on many occasions leaving an assistant to complete the process."⁸⁴

His creative work, with its principles of improvisation and unpredictability, maintained a peculiar relationship to his published work on dance, whose volume fixed an archive of his ideas. Toepfer suggests the tension between Laban's conceptual project and his performance practice was less a question of practical method than of his overall vision: "Laban's idea of dance was too complex to achieve its strongest or most lucid expression through dances. He saw dance as a mode that transcended the borders of institutions and conventional distinctions between nature and civilization."⁸⁵ In other words, given that theatrical performance and education were practical forms of institution tied to the realities of production logistics, budgetary concerns, and everyday life, as such, Laban's method would necessarily fall short of achieving his vision, which sought to do away with those constraints. The tension between his stage works and his written oeuvre was not the only example. Laban's goal to craft a notational system as a method for dance documentation and authoritative reference for scholars, students, and rehearsal

⁸³ Preston-Dunlop, *Rudolf Laban: Man of Theater*, 13.

⁸⁴ Preston-Dunlop, *Ibid.*, 23.

⁸⁵ Toepfer, *Empire of Ecstasy*, 100.

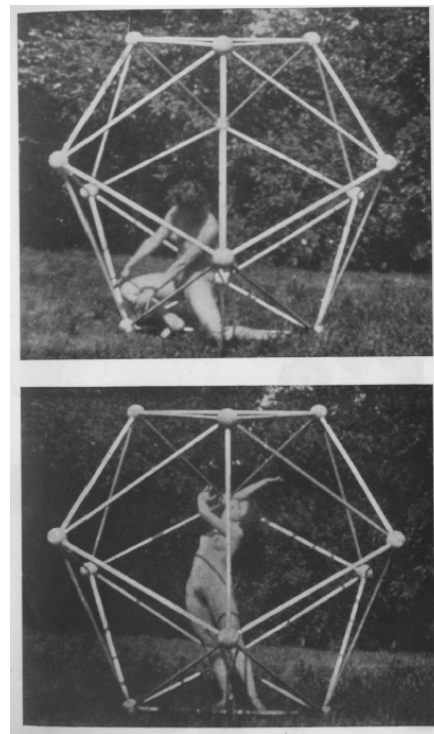
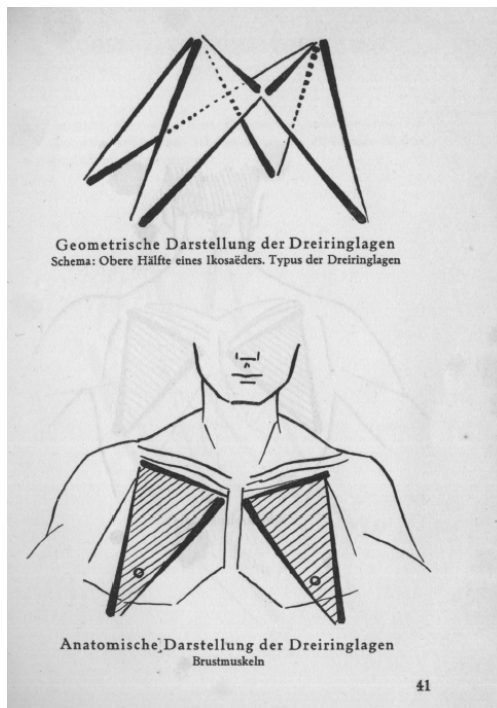
directors conflicted with his vision of dance as an intuition, in which soul and spirit united with an harmonic totality, rather than a set of codified steps or expressive gestures.

Laban's first step toward unveiling his notational system came with the publication of his second monograph, *Choreography, vol. I* (1926). Although *Choreography* was not the final form of his notational system, it was his first explanation of his technical approach. Dramatically different in style, length, and content than *The Dancer's World* or *Gymnastics and Dance* [*Gymnastik und Tanz*], Laban's second monograph published in 1926, *Choreography* was a technical manual concerned with "formal" rules for the study of dance. Laban specified in the opening of the book that dance should be viewed "as a wave of living, shifting states of transformation" rather than as a discrete phenomenon.⁸⁶ His science of dance here resisted fragmentation, fixity, and "itemization" he had warned of in his early *Die Tat* articles. More importantly, by emphasizing movement as a "shifting wave" Laban effectively suggested that movement was theorization without theory: displays of order and information without fixed endpoints or conclusions. *Choreography*, thus concerned exclusively with the theorization of movement, made no explicit references to society or politics. Laban's turn to theorization over theory accompanied an important shift in his work: his pointed silence surrounding politics.⁸⁷ Yet *Choreography* broke neither with politics nor with his early political vision. Its project was to creatively reinvent education and the individual. The concept of harmonic order remained its exclusive concern. Methodologically, the text relied on categorization, taxonomy, and

⁸⁶ Laban, *Choreographie, erstes Heft*, 1-2.

⁸⁷ Although Laban was an active collaborator with the Nazi Party from 1933 to 1935, even during National Socialism – and certainly afterwards – Laban remained "silent" on political issues. For a discussion of Laban's activities in connection to the Nazi regime, see Terri J. Gordon, "Fascism and the Female Form: Performance Art in the Third Reich," *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 11, no. 1.2 Special issue: German Fascism (Jan- Apr. 2002): 164-200; Lilian Karina and Marion Kant, *Tanz unterem Hakenkreuz* (Henschel, 1996) [in English, *Hitler's Dancers: German Modern Dancers and the Third Reich*. trans. Jonathan Steinberg (Oxford, 2003)]; Kew, "From Weimar Movement Choir to Nazi Community Dance"; and Patricia Stöckemann and Hedwig Müller ...*jeder Mensch ist ein Tänzer: Ausdruckstanz in Deutschland zwischen 1900 und 1945* (Gießen, 1993).

classification – all features of *The Dancer's World* – while “harmonic” geometric forms (particularly the twenty-sided icosahedron) grounded its vision for the highly individual, active study of dance.



Images from *Choreographie, erstes Heft* (1926), 41 and 26. From left to right: “Geometric Diagram of Three-Membered Arrangement” (top) and “Anatomical Diagram of Three-Membered Arrangement” (bottom); “A and B Scales. *Primary Swing*.”

Significantly, *Choreography* introduced a systematic account of Laban’s concept of *Gegenbewegung* (“oppositional movement”), which undergirded all movements. *Gegenbewegung*, however, could not be explained by prefigured steps or positions, as in the *danse d’ecole*, or historical forms of ballet and social dance. These forms, Laban argued, sought to reduce tension in favor of grace and ease of motion – or, as was often the case in ballet, the illusion of grace and ease of motion. *Gegenbewegung* was rather a set of dynamic oppositions that emerged in the flow or freely progressing passage of the body’s movement. From simple

weight shifts of the feet or lifts of the arms, to complex movements involving multiple limbs and spatial directions (e.g. swings, jumps, spirals), an invisible calculus of tension emerged.

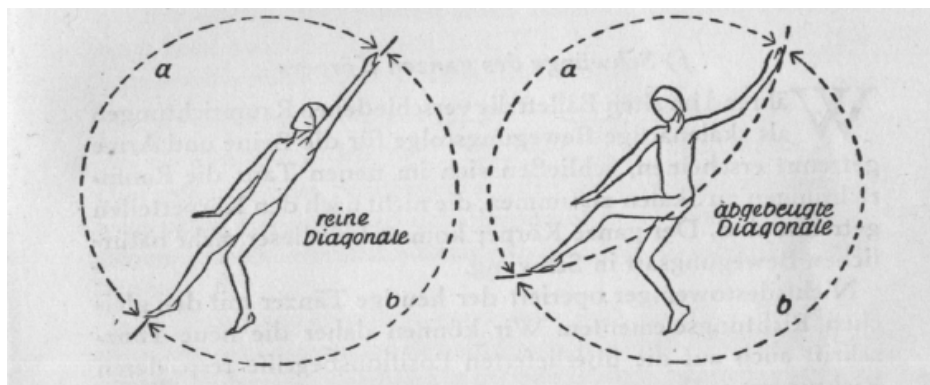


Fig 2: Illustration of *Gegenbewegung* [“Oppositional Movement.” *Choreographie, erstes Heft* (1926), 11.

This concept directly responded to the *danse d'école*. In ballet, discrete spatial positions, such as the five *port-de-bras*, were “valid as points of orientation for the spectrum of pathways,” yet Laban argued that the ideal ballet body presented no “oppositional directions for the foot positions” because it formally divided the lower body (legs, feet, hips) from its upper half (torso, arms, neck, head). (Here, Laban evidently misunderstood a central approach to body position in ballet, whereby *épaulement*, or a diagonally facing pose, creates oppositional tension in space.) Laban noted that as a result, “the arm directions lose ground to the slope [*Neigung*] of the foot positions” and thus limit movement’s expressive potential.⁸⁸ Laban Using Fig. 2 (above) as an illustration, Laban noted that through *Gegenbewegung*, “Harmony therein exists in the two *uneven* sections that the danced-circumference [*Tanzumkreis*] through this downward bending diagonal. The limbs, which create the oppositional swing, are therefore always closer to one another on one side of the body as opposed to the other” [ital. his].⁸⁹ The significance of Laban’s

⁸⁸ Laban, *Choreographie, erstes Heft*, 11.

⁸⁹ Laban, *Ibid.*, 11.

observation lay in the fact that despite the outward appearance of ease – emphasized, perhaps, by the svelte form of the dancers in Fig. 2 – movement was constituted by an unseen process of tension and resolution. The visual appearance of asymmetrical movement (as in the right-hand figure), therefore did not mean that the movement lacked harmony. Laban here thinly veiled an argument for two different social orders. The first, ballet, attempted to create an ease of motion through the rational division of the body, which in turn restricted freedom and mobility. The second, modern dance, accepted dynamic opposition of all movement as a constant flow and which optimized freedom and mobility. Further, this constant flow stayed the tide of chaos and disorder.

The “uneven” appearance of movement was thus material evidence of harmonic order. Laban noted that movement expression was highly unpredictable – a potentially irreconcilable tension in his lifelong effort to systematically articulate its features. Invoking crystallography’s claim of symmetry as the shared structural basis for all physical matter, Laban presented a series of charts, divided into even categories of right hand/side motion versus left hand/side motion. These, he argued, encompassed all possible directional pathways for the body and concluded that “Dance is movement, its tendency is labile. The harmonization of movement is, however, bound up with a certain stabilization [...], symmetry, balance.”⁹⁰ Laban’s system of *Gegenbewegung* articulated a precise critique of classical dance that his modern contemporaries struggled to achieve. Unlike Jaques-Dalcroze, Laban saw the appearance of bodily or visual tension not as forces to be eliminated but as a sources of creative potential. In addition, ease of motion was not an indication of social ease or harmony; these entities, like *Gegenbewegung*, existed above and beyond visual appearance and instead relied on embodied movement to uncover them. Laban’s

⁹⁰ Laban, *Ibid.*, 15.

notion of *Gegenbewegung*, like his notational system, thus “revealed that the overwhelming majority of dances confined themselves to a tiny range of the total movement possibilities of the human body, that choreographic imagination was incredibly blind to a huge, unexploited expressive potential; and [...] showed that the dancing body produced such complex disturbances of perception that empirical analysis was much more difficult than anyone realized.”⁹¹ All of these possibilities belonged to the stable, harmonic order. This was a powerful metaphor for freedom within society, as *Gegenbewegung* stabilized collective order and expanded individual motion.

Though he was arguably less interested in Nietzsche than Wigman or Brandenburg, both of whom made frequent and enthusiastic references to him in their work, Laban’s concept of *Gegenbewegung* reveals Nietzschean elements. Laban had previously made occasional references to Nietzsche: in *The Dancer’s World* he linked his vision to Nietzsche’s 1882 *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, noting that “Nietzsche’s Zarathustra characterize[d] the dancer as a singular person [*Eigenmenschen*],” while in *Gymnastics and Dance* he used the image of Zarathustra to explain the moral dimension of his dance pedagogy.

It is simply the case, that [a] dancery, worthy performance [*Leistung*] can only come into being through a embodied-soulful-spiritually balanced, thoroughly educated person. That which the ancients called a dancer and what in our time is perhaps mostly revived in Nietzsche’s portrayal of the dancer in his “Zarathustra” is a complete picture of human culture – and not a Tomfool or Acrobat, and at the very least a Marzipan-puppet [*Marzipanpuppe*] that, over the ramps of our faded court-stages we must wonder at.⁹²

Laban was explicit that Zarathustra, the dancer, was the model for a “complete picture of human culture,” as demonstrated through his virtuosic displays of embodied morality, creative

⁹¹ Toepfer, *Empire of Ecstasy*, 106.

⁹² Rudolph Laban, *Gymnastik und Tanz* (Oldenburg, 1926), 156.

expression, irony, intelligence, disguise, and instruction. Like Wigman, Nietzsche helped show the fundamental connection between physical movement and social engagement. Zarathustra's dancing antics, after all, required an audience.

Laban's Nietzschean strains are perhaps more evident through his connections to Wigman and Brandenburg. Laban's relationship to both figures undoubtedly shaped his own thinking about his dances, and dance more generally. As we have seen in Chapter 4, Wigman translated Nietzschean philosophy into her system for dance and self-sovereignty. Wigman and Laban were close collaborators, and their respective interests formed the context within which their ideas developed. Laban's observation of her performances, his collaboration with her in the studio, and his instruction of her in the classroom absorbed her influence and interests, as much as his own ideas and efforts stimulated her. Laban's work was also shaped dance critics, including Brandenburg, a devoted Nietzschean, and their extensive correspondence, chronicled in Chapter 6, throughout the 1910s and 1920s.

Laban's correspondence with Brandenburg illustrates the significance of Nietzschean philosophy in Laban's work. Laban's familiarity with the multiple editions of Brandenburg's monograph, *Der Moderne Tanz [The Modern Dance]* (1913, 1917, 1921), which included a discussion of Laban's work as the modern revival of tragic culture as outlined in *Birth of Tragedy* [1872]. Laban not only read Brandenburg's book; he supplied Brandenburg with photographs for the 1921 edition. Upon receiving a final copy in October 1921, Laban wrote enthusiastically, "I've read your book with great joy, i.e. read through it [as there are] some familiar sections."⁹³ Laban referred to an overlap between the 1917 and 1921 editions,

⁹³ Laban, Letter to Hans Brandenburg (Stuttgart, 14 July, 1920), 1. JHA RLC. BC/MS 20c Theatre/Hodgson/1/1/361, no.22, Letters from Rudolf Laban to Hans Brandenburg, 1914 – 1927; and Laban, Letter to Hans Brandenburg (Stuttgart, 18 October, 1921), 4. JHA RLC. BC/MS 20c Theatre/Hodgson/1/1/361, no.24, Letters from Rudolf Laban to Hans Brandenburg, 1914 – 1927.

significant for the text's near-identical narrative of the origins, beginning with Duncan, of modern dance in Germany. *Birth of Tragedy* heavily influenced Brandenburg's thinking about modern dance. In it, Nietzsche articulated a vision for the revitalization of Germany through a return to tragic art and culture, which, according to Nietzsche, reconciled two opposing, creative forces governing Ancient Athens: a rational, tempered worldview symbolized by the god Apollo and a wild, physical abandon symbolized by the god Dionysius. Tragic culture reached its apogee during the sixth and fifth centuries BC through plays by Sophocles and Aeschylus, yet it vanished with the emergence of modern philosophy, whose approach to society, culture, and knowledge valued rational thought over nature, or brain over body, instead of a balance of the two. Brandenburg subscribed to Nietzsche's formulation, summarized by scholar Cathy Gere: "[t]he great tragic age was in turn brought to a premature close by the advent of Socrates and his spirit of rationalist inquiry, a symptom – in Nietzsche's provocative reversal of received wisdom – of cultural degeneration, the lamentable excesses of which were still everywhere visible [...]."94

Brandenburg took this position as the basis to theorize the history of modern dance. "Having listened to Nietzsche's language [*Nietzsches Sprache*]," Brandenburg noted, referencing Nietzsche's writing as well as the embodied movement of his philosophical protagonists, "we understand the degree to which dance and tragedy inseparably belong to one another, how tragic figures and dancers are one and the same."⁹⁵ Brandenburg argued that Nietzschean tragic culture was reborn in Laban's movement, which healed divisions between the Apollonian and the Dionysian through its cultivation of heroic, complete individuals.

⁹⁴ Cathy Gere, *Knossos and the Prophets of Modernism* (Chicago, 2009), 31.

⁹⁵ Hans Brandenburg, *Der Moderne Tanz*. 2nd ed (Munich, 1917 [1913]), 23.

From [Laban's] art of movement will be a complex of movement-arts [...] the division between body and forms of intellect [*Intellektswesen*] will be overcome, but herewith not something of the virtue of the long, Apollonian duration, the virtue of a specialization of power and ability, but rather from its decline, in which the capacity of the Apollonian spirit will eventually be reunited with the original Dionysian goal of Mankind, which reveals itself exclusively as that of the future: the complete human [*der ganze Mensch*].⁹⁶

Laban's "complete human" was the model for the future. Endowed with powers of creative genesis through his second nature, he emerged as the male counterpart to Duncan's woman: the dancer of the future, and the mother of future generations. Nietzsche, in other words, demonstrated that dance was not beholden to biological sex. Dance's freedom and creative potential were grounded in history, rather than biology.

Brandenburg made slight changes between the multiple editions of *Modern Dance*. The 1921 edition included a complete chapter on Laban, while the first two editions included only a section on Laban's work, which was nested in a larger discussion of key figures in the development of German modern dance (e.g. Jutta von Collande, Gertrud Falke, Laura Österreich, Jaques-Dalcroze, Isadora and Elizabeth Duncan, and Bess Mensendieck). Brandenburg limited his 1917 analysis of Laban to the activities of the Laban school, whose significance, he then argued, lay in the merits of its graduate "Mary Wiegmann," "Laban's best, master student."⁹⁷ By 1921, Brandenburg saw things differently.

From 1917 to 1921, Brandenburg held onto his belief in Laban's work as the modern balance between Apollonian and Dionysian forces. His early reading of Laban provided an important lens through which Laban read and, in turn, developed his own ideas – similar to his

⁹⁶ Brandenburg, *Ibid.*, 41.

⁹⁷ Brandenburg, *Ibid.*, 41.

relationship to Wigman. Though not necessarily searching through passages of *Birth of Tragedy* as a guide for his company performances or his analytical writing, Laban absorbed and reflected Brandenburg's Nietzschean approach in his work. Laban's image of opposing dynamic forces in *Gegenbewegung* as a generative source of movement mirrored the tension between Apollonian and Dionysian forces, whose struggle and resolution led to new forms of creative expression. Nietzsche was also a way to connect Laban's artistic production to Germany. Like Karl Federn's 1903 translation of Duncan's *Tanz der Zukunft* that emphasized Duncan's connection to Nietzschean philosophy over natural science in order to situate her in a German national context (described in Chapter 2), Nietzsche threw into relief the links between Laban's work and its "German" qualities.

Laban's movement choirs, developed around this time, can also be understood as an interpretation of Nietzschean tragedy. Laban, like Wigman, experimented through the 1910s and 1920s with dances for a large group of performers. These mass choirs highlighted movement unison, pattern, repetition, and an effect of visual scope and display rather than gestural detail or physical complexity.⁹⁸ Like the Jaques-Dalcroze performances for Swiss national festivals at the turn of the century, Laban's movement choirs involved large casts of students and amateurs. As early as 1917 Laban began experimenting with movement choirs; *Sun Festival*, a twelve-hour outdoor performance in Ascona was inspired by the rituals of the *Ordo Templi Orientis*, a masonic order to which he belonged and which featured Wigman as one of its many

⁹⁸ On movement choirs in the 1920s and 1930s in Germany, see Teri Gordon, "Fascism and the Female Form: Performance Art and the Third Reich," *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 11, no.1/2, Special Issue on Sexuality and German Fascism (January – April, 2002): 164 -200; Kew, "From Weimar Movement Choir to Nazi Community Dance," cited below; and sections on mass dance in Hedwig Müller and Patricia Stöckemann, *...jeder Mensch ist ein Tänzer: Ausdruckstanz in Deutschland zwischen 1900 und 1945* (Anabas, 1993); Mary Anne Santos Newhall, "Uniform Bodies: Mass Movement and Modern Totalitarianism," *Dance Research Journal* 34, no.1 (Summer 2004): 27 – 50; Karl Toepfer, *Empire of Ecstasy*; . For mass dancing in Wigman's work, see Manning, *Ecstasy and the Demon: Nationalism and Feminism in the Dances of Mary Wigman* (Minnesota, 2006).

performers.⁹⁹ In his movement choirs, Laban blended a Dionysian orgiastic and chaotic potential with Apollonian order and self-control. In so doing, he presented a modern expression of what the ancient Greeks, according to Nietzsche, attained in tragic drama, namely, the pleasure and necessity of art as social participation, which “[dissolves] our identity and individuality” and reveals “a return to our original state, a state which is metaphysically speaking what we always *really* were. Getting back to that fundamentally natural state, after the brief sojourn in the illusory world of ‘individuality,’ is experienced as pleasurable.”¹⁰⁰

Where was the line between audience member and stage performer? Laban was not clear, and was largely silent on the issue of spectatorship, though in his writing he seemed to suggest that all members of society were dancers. This was a problem for those, like Brandenburg who firmly identified as dance viewers or critics. Nietzsche, once again, offered a solution. Brandenburg he connected the dots between the Laban dancer and the Laban audience by showing how for the spectator the “pleasure” enacted by the Laban movement choirs was its own version of the “arousal” of “dancerly insight” of second nature. The spectator thus intuited through observation the “dissolution” of the self embodied onstage. Laban’s work affirmed the power of man within an harmonic order, maintained by both performer and spectator. Together, they formed unity. Laban’s choirs showed that the individual was not reduced to a faceless automaton in a crowd but, through its power of creative genesis, multiplied the site within society for freedom, sovereign power, and stable order.

⁹⁹ Mary Anne Santos Newhall, “Uniform Bodies: Mass Movement and Modern Totalitarianism,” 29.

¹⁰⁰ Raymond Geuss, Introduction to *Birth of Tragedy*, xviii.

Laban's interest in medieval carnival celebrations and pagan ritual shaped his concept of *Festkultur*, or "festive culture."¹⁰¹ Throughout the 1920s, he elaborated ideas about *Festkultur* in articles for *Die Schönheit*, *Die Fahne*, and *Die Tat*, and in *The Dancer's World* and in *Gymnastics and Dance* he often explained concepts of harmonic unity using the example of the movement choir. The format of the movement choir was different – less intimate, perhaps – from work for his main company and its chamber offshoot, yet the overall ethic of the work was the same. Laban's movement choirs were made of large numbers of dancers with diverse backgrounds, had few rehearsals, and so encouraged participants to learn from one other through trial and error; this was not unlike Jaques-Dalcroze's commissioned works for Swiss national festivals, whose enormous casts required limited or no rehearsals, combined professionals and amateurs, and encouraged learning by example among the performers. In 1929, at the city stadium in Mannheim, Laban premiered a dance with 500 young performers,¹⁰² a size that made regular rehearsal meetings impossible and demanded an alternatives to conventional modes of theatrical rehearsal and production. Laban's *Festkultur* responded to a contemporary culture that separated the Apollonian from the Dionysian and challenged institutions restricting the festive energies of its citizens through static self-control of rational individuality.

Theater historian Erika Fischer-Lichte and others have remarked on how the mass choir, through its ethic of communal identity, bridging the aesthetic agendas of interwar Germany to the Nazi and Soviet regimes of the 1930s.¹⁰³ It is important to note, however, that from the mid

¹⁰¹ Kew, "From Weimar Movement Choir to Nazi Community Dance," 77.

¹⁰² Kew, FN 42 in "From Weimar Movement Choir to Nazi Community Dance," 93.

¹⁰³ Erika Fischer-Lichte, "Mass Spectacles Between the Wars – in Search of a Collective Identity," Part II of *Theater, Sacrifice, Ritual: Exploring Forms of Political Theater* (London, 2008): 87 – 197. A key distinction, however, between mass choirs of the Nazi and Stalinist eras and those of the early 1920s must be made insofar as the movement choir emerged in the Soviet Union as early as 1917, predating Laban's use of them. See, for example,

1910s to the 1930s in Germany, the United States, and in the Soviet Union mass pageantry and movement choirs also advanced an anti-fascist, Left politics.¹⁰⁴ Historian Carole Kew, for example, describes continuities in Laban’s movement choirs of the 1920s, rooted in celebrations of *völkisch* culture, and his Nazi era works from 1933 to 1935. While a strong case can be made for the ideological connection between Laban’s Weimar movement choirs and his Nazi era dances, Kew’s argument illustrates a problem endemic to most secondary literature on Laban, which separates his cultural production from his political engagement. Laban himself, as we have seen, saw no division between the two. With respect to his movement choirs, Laban himself remarked in a 1930 lecture on the “Cultural and Pedagogical Meaning of Amateur Dance” at the Third German Dancer’s Congress in Munich, that the mass choir formed a “new folk dance movement of the white race,” distinct from “fashionable social dances which show an invasion of foreign racial movements.”¹⁰⁵ By connecting the culture of the movement choir to the socio-political mission of dance, which he described a decade earlier in *Die Tat* as the “transformation of the fate of our race,” Laban clearly advocated for the collapse, through mass dance, of politics and culture – particularly one that served to advance a particular “race” of people. Kew, in contrast, sees this passage as evidence of Laban’s split between the culture and politics of the movement choir, a site “where the individual merged with the supra-personal, the content not

James von Geldern, *Bolshevik Festivals, 1917 – 1920* (Berkeley, 1993); Gordon (2002); Kew (1999); Manning (2006); and Santos Newhall (2004).

¹⁰⁴ Two notable example in the United States are the *Pageant of the Patterson Strike* (1913) and *The Star of Ethiopia* (1911), which featured a text written by W.E.B du Bois. On movement choirs and left politics in the United States, see Lynn Garafola, ed., *Of, By, and For the People: Dancing on the Left in the 1930s, Studies in Dance History 5*, no.1 (1994); and Ellen Graff, *Stepping Left: Dance and Politics in New York City, 1928 – 1942* (Durham, 1997). See also von Geldern, *Bolshevik Festivals, 1917 – 1920*.

¹⁰⁵ Rudolf Laban, “Der Laientanz in Kultureller und Pädagogischer Bedeutung,” (Munich, 1930), cited in Müller and Stöckemann, *...jeder Mensch ist ein Tänzer*, 96-99. [Translation from Kew, “From Weimar Movement Choir to Nazi Community Dance,” 78.]

annexed to any specific ideology.”¹⁰⁶ “By locating choric dance within a *völkisch* movement heritage, yet simultaneously distancing it from a political or ideological agenda,” she notes, “Laban left the way open for the continuity of this dance form within the Nazi racial state.” Laban’s defense of natural law was a defense of social hierarchy of ability and value. Knowledge about dance was knowledge that harmonic order reigned supreme and formed the grounds for assent to a particular mode of how power relations between people would be determined in everyday life. Moreover, to subscribe, as Kew does, to a division between culture and politics in Weimar accepts the historical opposition between concepts of *Kultur* and *Zivilisation* established by German thinkers from Hegel to Burkhardt. Since the early nineteenth century, debates about the relationship of culture to politics – and, in many cases, efforts to separate the two – were laden with political meaning. John Michael Krois notes that from 1919 to the mid 1930s, “[t]he divorce of *Zivilisation* and *Kultur*, which seems apolitical, was actually part of a highly political ideology” that fueled many politicians’ mistrust in the early years of the Republic toward French and British (i.e. “foreign”) governments and, through its critique of parliamentary democracy, advocated a return to a *Kaiserreich*.¹⁰⁷ Laban, with his curious view of democracy as unified, silent consensus, folded the movement choir into the same set of values – including individual cultivation, creative education, *völkisch* heroism, leadership, and his critique of modern institution – which, through this “highly political ideology,” evidenced concern for culture over the specifics of political or social reality. Laban’s embodied conservatism formed his *Kulturkritik*.

Laban’s movement choirs thus maintained for the Weimar political right the “tragic culture” that Brandenburg, like Nietzsche, identified as a remedy to modern social disorder.

¹⁰⁶ Kew, “From Weimar Movement Choir to Nazi Community Dance,” 78.

¹⁰⁷ John Michael Krois, “*Kulturphilosophie* in Weimar Modernism,” 110.

Laban's vision of the social body, stabilized through the absence of deliberation and dissent, created a space beyond politics. This, Stephen Ascheim argues, defined much of late Weimar conservative political ideology.¹⁰⁸ This "apolitical" space made it possible for Laban to redefine dance not as "art" or "culture" as politics itself: an act of creative power that affirmed one's status and authority over others.

The range of contexts for Laban's dances, insofar as we can think of them as "performance texts,"¹⁰⁹ challenge what intellectual historian Dominick LaCapra has called a "documentary approach" to history that "distorts our understanding of both historiography and the historical process."¹¹⁰ The specificities of political life in Weimar were absent from Laban's work, yet his embodied conservatism, his practice of theorization without theory, and his understanding of the culture of dance as the creation of relationships of hierarchies and authority firmly situated him on the Weimar political right.¹¹¹

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Conclusion: Laban's Leviathan

For Laban, dance was knowledge of order and stability. Dance was also knowledge of the grounds for society, politics, history, and national identity. Laban's perspective here provides the key to understand his dance as "modern." At the turn of the century, Émile Jaques-Dalcroze

¹⁰⁸ See Ascheim, *The Nietzsche Legacy in Germany*. See also Mosse (1964); Repp (2004); and Stern (1961).

¹⁰⁹ See, for example: Susan Leigh Foster, *Reading Dance: Bodies and Subjects in Contemporary American Dance* (Berkeley, 1986); and Mark Franko, *Dance as Text: Ideologies of the Baroque Body* (Cambridge, 1993).

¹¹⁰ Dominick LaCapra, "Rethinking Intellectual History and Reading Texts," *History and Theory* 19, no.3 (October 1980), 272.

¹¹¹ Fischer-Lichte notes that the mass pageant did not necessarily erase the identity of the individual in favor of an collective one. Rather, collective identification enabled a sharper vision for the individual participant's own sense of self. See Fischer-Lichte, *Theater, Sacrifice, Ritual*, 120-121.

conceived of natural ability as improvable through rigorous training and the reduction of effort, and as the outward expression of inward states; he also understood nature to be something fundamentally unalterable. Around the same time, Duncan, taking cues from Haeckel, viewed nature through the lens of sexual selection and spiritual monism: nature was biologically intrinsic, historical, and revealed itself through dance as a universal outlook shared across all life forms. Wigman, like Duncan, understood nature as something to be conjured, expressed, and reproduced through dance; it was once again the outward expression of inward states. Performance thus charted and revealed nature's hidden features, and man's deepest desires. This was a task for which the dancer was uniquely suited. Here, both Wigman and Duncan envisioned the dancer acting not from rational or conscious choice, but from an inner impulse or calling: the "call of nature." In this sense, both subscribed to a classical notion of art as "artifice," the reproduction of nature. Neither sought to alter nature, to examine the meaning of this call, or to challenge nature's ultimate authority. Though their educational experiments worked to transform an imperfect society, Wigman and Duncan cast nature as an ideal concept that lay beyond the reach of expressive effort.

Laban's understanding of nature and its relationship to dance was different. *Gegenbewegung* showed that dance's material expression did not represent its deeper constitutive forces. As such, a dancer's "natural" expressions were not reliable evidence of the "nature" of dance. Laban's notion of systematic dance education mirrored Jaques-Dalcroze's belief in nature as improvable. "Race," for Laban, was a cultural category distinguishing the positive features of German life from the ills of modern society, as shown in his description of movement choirs and their social necessity. However, Laban shared with his predecessors a

sense of the human being as shaped by its relationship to nature – “that people need to be in harmony with nature and the cosmos to be wholly human.”¹¹²

Curiously, for Laban, knowledge of nature was tied to intuition rather than to the embodied human, its biology and physiology. Laban identified a gap between dance and nature: in 1928, in lecture at the Berlin University, he noted that “dance is not natural, but abstract.”¹¹³ Laban separated his search for knowledge about dance from knowledge about nature, even though, as we have seen, knowledge about dance was the basis from which to understand social order as the mirror of natural, harmonic, order. As something “abstract,” dance was a deliberate act of creation. It was also an act of control over nature. Laban stated this succinctly in *Choreography, vol. I*: “Thus our goal is the mastery of movement through explanation [Erklärung]” [ital. original].¹¹⁴ As we have seen, “abstraction” for Laban was a process of knowledge-acquisition that collapsed ideal and material representations into concrete force. His formulation suggests that dance was something beyond nature, an act of being-creation stimulated by thought, collective expression, and the coordination of natural and social orders. Dance was Laban’s Leviathan.

Building upon a theatrical tradition that sought the maintenance of the social and the political through embodied practice, Laban’s science of dance advanced a distinctly anti-modern, anti-liberal politics. In its approach to nature, however, it was thoroughly modern. Building upon an older vision of fixed, determined nature, Laban recast nature as a terrain to be creatively, consciously explored. Nature was a stage to demonstrate man’s social power. Like Haeckel’s

¹¹² Preston Dunlop, “Rudolf Laban” (2005), 2.

¹¹³ Rudolf Laban, Lecture. Berlin University (April 16, 1928). Cited in Toepfer, *Empire of Ecstasy*, 105.

¹¹⁴ Laban, *Choreographie, erstes Heft*, 2. “Denn das Ziel ist für uns die Beherrschung der Bewegung durch die Erklärung.”

monism, nature revealed how expressive movement generated social authority, and how it provided the materials needed to reform leadership and communal organization in light of past and present failed attempts. Dance was a mechanism to ensure civilizational order and progress. By casting dance as second nature that improved upon an existing natural order, Laban established a modern basis for dance's total authority separate from its classical origins. This worked, in the words of Hans Blumenberg, "to fashion something out of *human origin*, to render the authentically new in the realm of the unrealized by using what has not yet actually been realized, advancing beyond the dependence on imitation of nature to a place untouched by nature" [ital. original].¹¹⁵ Ironically, the most radical aspect of Laban's project was not his rejection of dance as a form of authority tethered to a human maker but his knowing embrace of dance as its very source.

Laban's science of dance redefined dance as a kind of knowledge. To know and practice dance was to exert social authority, cultural prowess, and creative freedom. More than that, his science of dance confirmed it as modern. No longer the outward expression of inward states, dance – like nature – had a history of its own that surged forward into the future. Dance, as embodied conservatism, announced the triumph of consensus and the end of politics. It cleared the path for a future it had invented for itself: an open, ordered, and unchallenged space for creation.

¹¹⁵ Hans Blumenberg, "'Imitation of Nature': Towards a Prehistory of the Idea of the Creative Being" [1957], trans. Anna Werth, *Qui Parle* 12, no. 1, *The End of Nature* (Spring/Summer, 2012), 39.

Chapter 6

The Social Theory of Hans Brandenburg and Valeska Gert

“I have never believed that man’s freedom consists in doing what he wants, but rather in never doing what he does not want to do, and this is the freedom I have always sought after and often achieved, the freedom by virtue of which I have most scandalized my contemporaries [...] They were wrong then, not in expelling me as a useless member of society, but in ostracizing me as dangerous, for I confess I have done very little good, but never in my life have I harbored evil intentions, and I doubt if there is any man living who has done less actual evil than I.”

Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Reveries of a Solitary Walker* (1782)¹

Can the history of dance explain the features of modern society? Some dancers and historians believed that it could. Others disagreed, arguing that dance’s power to explain the structures of modern life lay not in an analysis of the past but in an understanding of the present. This chapter turns to representatives of both sides of this debate, Hans Brandenburg and Valeska Gert, who defended their respective positions based upon their observations of how the dancer experienced and expressed time within society. Although they held largely opposite views and politics, they were united in their belief that dance offered a unique perspective to understand the unfolding of human experience as the experience of time. This was something momentary or durational, as a sequence of events, or as a spontaneous and contingent experience. Based upon their observations and research, they crafted respective theories about the nature of social life and transformation.

In this chapter, we will see how the social theories of Hans Brandenburg and Valeska Gert built upon many of the ideas established by Jaques-Dalcroze, Duncan, Wigman, and Laban and examined throughout this dissertation. Part I examines the historical writing of Hans Brandenburg. As we will see, Brandenburg turned to history, which provided him a platform to demonstrate how culture formed the basis of society. For him, dance showed that a range of

¹ Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Reveries of a Solitary Walker*. Trans Peter France (New York, 1979 [1782]), 102.

diverse features constituted time and shaped as fundamentally social. William Sewell's characterization of the historian, attuned to "social temporality," or "the unfolding of human action through time" provides a useful frame to understand Brandenburg's project.² Sewell describes how the historians' attention to social temporality indicates her understanding of time as constituted by several key features: time as fateful (i.e. irreversible and something lodged in memory); time as sequential, contingent, and situated within a chain of action; time as complex (composed of different temporalities, such as gradual versus sudden movement); and time as heterogeneous, a mixture of continuity, rupture, and flux.³ Part I examines how all of these concepts were operative in Brandenburg's work, which enabled him to theorize social change, and propose solutions to contemporary social problems in Germany. Brandenburg did this primarily in his monograph, *The Modern Dance* [*Der Moderne Tanz*, 1913, 1917, 1921] and revisions to its multiple editions, as well as in his dance reviews for the journal *Die Tat*.

Valeska Gert, in contrast, took a more sociological approach. Part II of the chapter shows how Gert's approach to questions of dance and human experience modeled Sewell's social scientist. Like Brandenburg, Gert accepted the historian's basic premise of culture as the basis of society. However, she rejected the notion that dance, viewed over long periods of time, could explain the circumstances of contemporary life. As a stage performer, she rejected many of Brandenburg's key assumptions about time and instead argued that the experience of contingency, spontaneity, and dislocated rupture defined human experience. In contrast to embodied conservative thinking, Gert argued that dance's unique relationship to time upended social representation, such as class, gender, and nationality. With her "strong penchant for

² William Sewell, "Theory, History, and Social Science," in *The Logics of History: Social Theory and Social Transformation* (Chicago, 2005), 6.

³ Sewell, "Theory, History, and Social Science," 6-11.

structural thinking,” Gert was a social scientist: “By contrast with historians, who tend to opt for multiple causality and detailed circumstantial narrative, social scientists tend to look for explanations in terms of a relatively limited set of enduring, entrenched, and causally powerful features of the social world – such features as class relations, dominant ideologies, enduring occupational or demographic patterns, powerful economic interests, stubborn cultural beliefs, or built-in characteristics of organizations.”⁴ But if Gert took a sociological perspective to questions of dance and human experience, she approached time as an historian, complicating Sewell’s model. The comparison of Brandenburg and Gert throws into relief how individuals conceived of dance as social theory. At the same time, their respective approaches reveal how dance enabled a body of shared knowledge about time and social temporality. Dance supports and challenges supports Sewell’s characterization.

Brandenburg and Gert together illustrate how embodied conservatism was put to further use for politics on the Weimar right and challenges to it that emerged on the political left. For Brandenburg, embodied conservatism served as a platform for politics with the potential to heal Germany’s social divisions. Chapters 4 and 5 have chronicled how embodied conservatism became a project of the Weimar political right; this chapter examines by articulating dance as social theory, Brandenburg further infused embodied conservatism with politics of German nationalism and anti-Semitism. These views emerged not only in his printed writing about dance, but in his personal correspondence with Laban, whose career Brandenburg saw as integral to social transformation in Germany.

Gert, in contrast to Brandenburg, flatly rejected embodied conservatism. Dance, she argued, was as a force for social instability. Based upon the performer’s experience of time as contingency, rupture, and tension between radical oppositions, such as the very slow or the very

⁴ Sewell, *Ibid.*, 14.

fast, Gert demonstrated dance's power as an explanatory force for society lay in its synchronic, rather than diachronic features. Disregarding time as shaped by the past or the slow experience of fateful action over time, Gert cast dance as the opposite of metabolic movement. Features of memory, order, and structure, she showed, were playful and dynamic; through this, dance destabilized society, created chaos, and stirred confusion. Dance upended entrenched belief. Dance destroyed the appearance of harmonious relationships between people and exposed their social, economic, and political inequalities. Order was not synonymous with social unity, but with restriction, regulation, and conformity.

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I. Hans Brandenburg

Like other journalists during the Weimar Era, Hans Brandenburg was more than a culture critic. He was a social observer who wrote about dance in order to theorize social structures and their changes over time. Questions about the relationship of dance to society and history to society preoccupied Brandenburg, whom we have encountered at several points throughout this dissertation. Brandenburg showed in his critical reviews for *Die Tat*, the *DAZ* and the three editions of his monograph, *The Modern Dance*, that culture formed the basis of society. In all three editions of *The Modern Dance*, for example, he argued for dance as the epitome of culture – a German national culture. As we have seen in Chapters 4 and 5, Brandenburg invoked Nietzsche in his writing on Wigman and Laban to frame his analyses of dance and its social import. Nietzsche enabled Brandenburg to position culture as the basis of society and to show how dance, as a kind of tragic culture, could transform collective life .

Further inspired by Nietzschean philosophy, Brandenburg conceived of *Modern Dance* as explanation for his contemporary moment, characterized (in his view) by cultural decay, social fracture, and the abandonment tradition and values. In his preface to the 1917 edition, he described dance as a cultural form shaped by a group of talented individuals forced into exile due to the political circumstances of the First World War. Shaped by their collective social dislocation and political migration, they foregrounded in their artistic work dance's most essential feature: its "tragic" character. To explain this, Brandenburg assembled the first printed history in German of what he called "modern dance," linking together the work and life histories of a series of individual, influential figures. These original, wartime exiles included Jaques-Dalcroze, forced to "abandon" Germany in 1913; Laban, forced from Munich to a temporary home in Zürich; and "tragic" dancer Gertrude Leistikow, whose departure from Germany during the war led to her "disappearance" from modern dance scene.⁵ Leistikow's fate was particularly tragic for Brandenburg, as her pre-WWI performances had inspired him to write *Modern Dance*, a history of a topic that, as a dramaturge by training and prior to seeing Leistikow, he allegedly knew little about.⁶ He argued that dance works and teaching by these artists, shaped by their experience of exile, showed the values that captured the essence of tragedy in dance: "a readiness for sacrifice, a delight in death, transcendence, strength in suffering and a world-conquering triumphant will, this art, which in [these times] the nation of a great culture would have ennobled [as] the ignition and romanticization of army and homeland [*Heimat*] and with a

⁵ Hans Brandenburg, *Der Moderne Tanz*. 3rd ed. (Munich, 1921 [1913]). Citations throughout this chapter are from the third edition unless otherwise noted.

⁶ Jacobien de Boer, "'Sie Lieber Hans Brandenburg,': Gertrud Leistikow and Hans Brandenburg," *Dance Research* 34, no. 1 (Summer, 2016), 33. Importantly, de Boer attempts to bring attention to Leistikow, a performer about whom little is known, through her relationship to Brandenburg. Politics, however, is entirely absent from his discussion.

sacerdotal meaning.”⁷ Their wartime mobility and national dislocation enabled them to display physical heroism, spiritual transcendence, respect for tradition, and devotion to one’s *Heimat* – which, as was the case with Laban and Jaques-Dalcroze, was one’s adopted *Heimat*. As we have seen in Chapter 4, 1919 Brandenburg believed that Wigman’s 1919 solo tour captured this latter feature, and he added her to the founding group in the 1921 revised edition.

Brandenburg defined dance’s tragic essence and explained its historical development according to Nietzsche’s ideas outlined in *Birth of Tragedy*. Similar to his early *Die Tat* reviews of Laban outlined in Chapter 5, Brandenburg observed in monograph that modern dance was the product of two competing life-forces that converged in society: the Apollonian (a bounded, self-conscious control associated with the Greek god Apollo) and the Dionysian (an unhinged, generative creative force associated with god Dionysus). Brandenburg argued that an Apollonian “life-feeling” in Europe at the fin-de-siècle provided the historical context for modern dance’s sudden emergence, “springing forth” as a Dionysian element in Germany in the work of Isadora Duncan.⁸ Brandenburg’s description captured both the essence of Nietzsche’s ideas, as well as the principles of spontaneity and improvised nature at the center of Duncan’s system. For Brandenburg, as for Nietzsche, the encounter of these forces was creative, producing new cultural forms with the potential to transform existing social mores, institutions, and relationships. For Nietzsche, Attic drama was the first example of tragic culture and for Brandenburg, modern dance was its full realization. For both, tragedy played a social role, shaping strong social values, attitudes, and structures while staving off (or in some cases, actively destroying) those antithetical to them. Nietzsche and Brandenburg both believed in

⁷ Brandenburg, *Der Moderne Tanz*, 5.

⁸ Brandenburg, *Der Moderne Tanz* (1917), 5.

tragic culture as a bulwark in Germany against Western European liberalism and democratic values – what Nietzsche labeled in 1872 as the “ills of ‘modern society.’”⁹

Brandenburg like Nietzsche, was a cultural pessimist. Mixing personal observation with “objective” or “scientific” prose, Brandenburg fashioned his persona as the author of *Modern Dance* after Nietzsche. In his introduction to the 1917 edition, Brandenburg echoed almost verbatim “An Attempt at a Self Criticism,” Nietzsche’s preface to his revised edition of *Birth of Tragedy*, which appeared several years after its initial 1872 publication. Nietzsche turned the preface into an occasion for critical reflection upon his earlier project; with the preface to *Modern Dance*, Brandenburg did the same. For Nietzsche, holed up in his “Alpine nook” away from the Franco-Prussian war and the “thunder of the Battle of Wörth rolling over Europe,” the incongruity of his predicament relative to Europe’s political climate brought his attention to the role of Greek culture in the development of European society.¹⁰ Brandenburg noted that his political circumstances following WWI led him to examine the role of dance in the development of German society and reevaluate his earlier ideas. This exposed for him dance as a form of modern tragic culture. “For all intents and purposes,” he noted, “the war will stimulate and first fully help the development of dance: as its art, dance, springing forth from a tragic life-feeling, ascends with other arts to the height of a tragic culture [*Kultur*].”¹¹ Brandenburg here contrasted dance as a product of instantaneous, creative genesis (“springing forth”) with dance as the effect of slow change and progress (“development”). Finally, the questions stimulating Nietzsche’s investigation of tragic form in the nineteenth-century were those guiding Brandenburg in the

⁹ For Nietzsche, tragic culture centered around the work of Richard Wagner, which was a position he later, famously, reneged. See Raymond Geuss, Introduction to Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy and Other Writing*. ed., Raymond Geuss, trans. Ronald Speirs (Cambridge, 1999 [1872]), x.

¹⁰ Friedrich Nietzsche, “An Attempt at a Self-Criticism,” in *The Birth of Tragedy and the Case of Wagner*, trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York, 1967) [1872], 17.

¹¹ Brandenburg, *Der Moderne Tanz* (1917), 5.

twentieth. “Is pessimism *necessarily* a sign of decline, decay, degeneration, weary and weak instincts?” Nietzsche asked. “Is there a pessimism of *strength*? An intellectual predilection for the hard, gruesome, evil, problematic aspect of existence, prompted by well-being, by overflowing health, by the *fullness* of existence?” [ital. original]¹²

Brandenburg believed in such pessimism of strength, and he criticized contemporary society accordingly. He punctuated his writing with the idea that dance – and the dance writer – had the potential to expose instances in which society thwarted human potential. For him, modern society had little redeeming virtue. Hollow ritual, convention, and institution defined it. People were slavish, unthinking and unfeeling. Society valued lowbrow, or cheap entertainment, and valorized stage personalities rather than great artists. Brandenburg’s early journalistic reviews reiterated these views. From 1919 to 1920, Brandenburg reviewed a series of performances by the Munich Dance Group for *Die Tat*, which demonstrated the effects of social decay on dance. He noted that the skill of Group’s performers declined in recent years, evidence of the negative prevailing forces of contemporary mass culture over the “fullness of existence.” Their dancing, he argued, combined with a set of administrative and directorial problems (which, as other journals reported elsewhere, implicated Brandenburg himself), and left the Group “in danger of being destroyed by dilettantism and insecurity.”¹³ Trapped in a downward spiral of artistic and administrative disorder, their performances no longer had cultural worth as art, but were instead staged representations of social disorder and chaos. “Dilettantism, which wants to operate at all costs, has in dance decayed into sheer fun, cloddish clowning, which one then calls “grotesque”; its lumpen pantomime can in the best case become only acrobatics, and as such it

¹² Nietzsche, “Attempt at a Self Criticism,” 17.

¹³ Hans Brandenburg, “Münchener Tanzkunst,” *Die Tat* Jg.11, H1 (July 1920), 310.

belongs exclusively in the circus and in variety theater.”¹⁴ Rather than examples of “the essence of tragic culture,” dance by the Munich Dance Group performed the condition of social disintegration.

For Brandenburg the culture critic, an analysis of dance was an analysis of society. For Brandenburg the historian, questions about dance history were questions about the transformation to social structures and values. Both instances led to a discussion of dance’s formal autonomy, a subject hotly debated by dancers, writers, and pedagogues in Germany during the 1920s. In his analysis of the Munich Dance Group, Brandenburg likened dilettantism to a social disease, in which a lack of specialization, weak leadership, and poor organization caused individuals to act like circus performers – “cloddish clowning” – rather dance artists. Under conditions of weak social values and structures, people regressed in their behavior, like children, clowns, or trained animals. In the absence of great art, audiences and artists depended on mass culture as a source and model for social values and behaviors, and a guide for future expressive representations.

Weimar journalists and their readers were familiar with the appeal of mass performance for non-specialist audiences. “Lumpen pantomime” and “fun” were all the rage: columns of advertisements in daily periodicals, such as the *DAZ*, announced to the new republic nightly and twice daily dance hall revues, cabaret, circus acts, and performance curiosities. Crowds rushed to cabarets and variety theaters to see acts such as the *Haus der Wonderwelt's* [sic] “indo-african Fakir and Yoga Culture Character Fantasy and historical Dances,” whose logo featured a silhouette of a skull with a snake wrapped around it, sinister and turban-like.¹⁵ With considerable

¹⁴ Brandenburg, “Münchener Tanzkunst,” 310.

¹⁵ Advertisement. *Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung*, March 1919, page number not available.

ink spilled in support of popular sensationalism, Brandenburg saw that the politically centrist *DAZ* valued its demand for revenue through advertising over its aspirations to highbrow culture, or the dissemination of conservative social values, which was demonstrated through his own reportage for the paper on historical figures such as Heinrich von Kleist, Achim von Arnim, and the virtues of provincial living in prototypical “German” towns, such as Bad Lauschtädt.¹⁶ Brandenburg thus reserved for more politically conservative periodicals, such as *Die Tat*, his pointed social commentary. In them, Brandenburg readily pointed out cultural “decay” within the contemporary dance and theater communities.

Brandenburg found a silver lining in the cloud of modern German society. The new dance of Laban, Wigman, and others offered a path to freedom from – and for – society. As Nietzschean tragic culture, modern dance showed possibilities to develop a strong character and social values that rejected staid convention and meaningless engagement with others. As we have seen in Chapter 4, Brandenburg described how Wigman, the Zarathustrian Overman, formed a model for audiences: through dance, Germans became strong and heroic, independent and self-legislating, and deferent to hierarchy, order, and tradition. They became embodied conservatives, who transformed clowning into art and social chaos into order.

Brandenburg’s descriptions of Wigman demonstrated that this transformation elapsed over time in two ways. First, dance as social transformation happened as discrete performances: short, bounded time-events. Second, dance changed society slowly over time, in the course of a dancer’s career (a sequence of these short time-events), teaching, and influence. Wigman’s solo tours from 1919 – 1920 displayed the cumulative power of dance performance to spread values of freedom, intuition, and social harmony over large swaths of the country. On the other hand,

¹⁶ Hans Brandenburg, “Bad Lauchstädt: ein Kulturbild aus Deutschlands Vergangenheit,” *Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung*. 7 July, 1919, 1.

her dances displayed the power of dance in performance within a single evening in a single room. During her live performances, Wigman proved that time in dance performance was heterogeneous; this was shown through her musical skill and physical combinations of different tempos (i.e. speeds) along with bursts of energy and slow suspensions. The effect was one of altered time: “She builds into the space a second space, in which her dance hovers like a planetary body [*Weltkörper*] in its invisible angles and which must have split apart a glassy firmament, if she stepped over its vaults.”¹⁷ Through this temporal heterogeneity, Wigman made clear that features of causality, contingency, and sequential variability shaped the experience of the social collective. Additionally, Wigman’s variation of Wagner’s “absolute music” further demonstrated how memory was also a temporal experience within society. Through dance, Wigman exposed the inner workings of social temporality.

Brandenburg then turned to history and the issue of dance’s formal autonomy, arguing that, as tragic culture, dance contained the possibility to effect new kinds of freedom in society. Beginning in the fifteenth century, European dance emerged as an expressive tradition through operatic and pantomimic spectacle, as well as within aristocratic culture and courtly life. “Freeing” dance from its historical dependency on other cultural forms would free dance, as practice and representation, to enact social change. It would also free dancers, such as Wigman or Laban, to serve as agents for social transformation, and the reorientation of its values around qualities of strength, heroism, and national identity. This was further evident in the case of the Munich Dance Group, whose use of music by eighteenth century French composer Andre Grétry called attention to the issue of dance’s autonomy. Grétry composed works for comic opera at the same moment when writers about dance (i.e. eighteenth century dancing-master Jean-Georges Noverre) called for dance's formal autonomy; in light of the Group’s precarious situation, its use

¹⁷ Hans Brandenburg, “Mary Wigman.” *Die Tat*, January 1920. Jg11, H2, 792.

of Grétry called attention to the causes of social decay and dependency. Grétry signaled the potential for dance to regenerate culture and society through the unique forms of freedom it expressed. Brandenburg noted that the music “was full of movement possibilities, though modern dance must have new music written for it and it alone; here lies the heretofore neglected task, through which the recognition of dance and music on equal levels will be achieved.”¹⁸ The Group’s use of Grétry underscored the unrealized potential of the dancer as a free, autonomous social agent.

Brandenburg framed this issue differently in *The Modern Dance*. Brandenburg noted that, in addition to dance’s formal relationship to music, the written theorization of dance asserted its formal autonomy and signaled potential as an agent for social change. He explained this through the relationship of written text to visual imagery. Though it included some photographs, *The Modern Dance* was largely text-based. Brandenburg wrote for cultural and educated elites, rather than popular audiences, and his prose was dense, difficult to understand, requiring slow, attentive reading. He relegated most of the text’s visuals to an appendix, which emphasized his descriptions about dance – of his literary evocations of movement based upon imaginative representation – over concrete, visual depictions or descriptions of dance as a linear sequence of completed action. He noted that the book’s visuals were intended only to enhance the text and explained that the written theorization of dance, like stage performance, was based upon a sensitivity to temporal experience.

Dance has equally little to do with journalism as with photography [...] at best [photography] can only hint at the taste, style, humanity and general level of dancers, but not at dance, whose sole being exists in movement and is therefore inseparable from temporality (as well as three-dimensional spatiality). This work therefore must not be taken as a picture-book, but rather its

¹⁸ Brandenburg, “Münchener Tanzkunst,” 311.

wording [*Wortlaut*] must, from beginning to end, be worked through.¹⁹

Writing about dance hinged upon time. A form “inseparable from temporality,” dance demonstrated its bearing as an observational mode to analyze historical change. Text unfolded, like Wigman’s dances, from “beginning to end” (“At the beginning and at the end of her dances the music suddenly breaks off, a moment that steals your breath away as if the floor under her feet and ours gave way...”²⁰), while dance theorization demanded readers follow “slow” discursive features, such as logic, order, or narrative. As a form of tragic culture, dance demonstrated its bearing as social theorization; the history of this cultural form thus uncovered the discrete events, moments, sources, and influences that cumulatively accounted for contemporary social conditions, behaviors, values, and institution.

Brandenburg believed that historical change was a mixture of the material, rooted in the embodied performances of individual dancers, and the metaphysical, a teleological process that culminated towards some kind of providential fulfillment. In both instances, social temporality defined dance and its history. Dancer’s bodies exposed time as a complex, heterogeneous process shaped by material and metaphysical forces. Performances were discrete, singular events that occurred through dancers’ physical bodies; the careers and performance histories of dancers were comprised of memories of performances, ideas, and states of being, as well as chains of events that were repeated, collected, and referenced over long periods of time.

Dance history thus offered a synchronic and a diachronic view of social experience. Wigman’s performances showed that dance could be short, spontaneous, and sudden – *and* slow and meditative; one could contrast these qualities her artistic contemporaries to better understand

¹⁹ Brandenburg, *Der Moderne Tanz*, 5. *Wortlaut* is also translatable as “text.”

²⁰ Brandenburg, “Mary Wigman,” 792.

modern dance as a form, or its current historical condition (such as its formal status as autonomous). The longer view of her career, enabled one to understand Wigman's dance as the slow progression of qualities, values, and aspects that shaped its current form. Dual aspects of time marked dance history: "springing forth" as tragic culture" it was spontaneous, while also developing through individual lives, careers, and memories. It was singular, quick, isolated; it was progressive, slow, expansive. Brandenburg likened dance in this respect to a Nietzschean image: "a centaur," which embodied the Dionysian and Apollonian in a single body. Brandenburg noted how, "on one half it carries the impulse of solid spiritual form, on the other, it is stuck deep in pure elements – in improvisation, in tight connection to personality, in flowing, fleeting smoke."²¹ Dance was material, causal and "stuck deep in pure elements," even though, paradoxically, its displayed itself as ephemerality, improvisation, and "flowing, feeling, smoke." On the other hand, dance was a metaphysical ideal, driven by "the impulse of solid spiritual form." In the latter instance, dance was perfect, ideal, aspirational.

Brandenburg offered a number of historical examples in dance to elucidate the complexities of time as a social phenomenon. He pointed, for instance, to the origins of modern dance in Germany, which he located in works by Isadora Duncan and the Austrian Wiesenthal Sisters. Performances by the Wiesenthals at the turn of the century to *Wiener Walzer* transformed the "joy of dancing" [*Tanzfreude*] from the "banal enjoyment of the turning masses" to "an element"; liberating dance as an autonomous form, the sisters affirmed dance's potential to restore cultural prestige to other artistic forms, such as musical masterworks by Straus.²² Solo performances by Ruth St. Denis, Sent M'Ahesa, and Rita Aurel captured "the dance of the

²¹ Brandenburg, *Der Moderne Tanz*, 18.

²² Brandenburg, *Ibid.*, 51.

orient,” which illustrated the mysticism and spirituality – the ideal and aspirational – of the “dance instinct” crucial to dance as tragic culture.²³ To show time through dance as slow and diachronic, Brandenburg offered examples of the Duncan School, the Jaques-Dalcroze Institute, Rudolf Bode and Bess Mensendieck’s schools of *Gymnastik*, which demonstrated the development of dance education, from expressive schools of pantomime, gymnastics, and *Rythmique* to modern dance.²⁴

Brandenburg’s history culminated with Laban’s dance-writing, *Schrifttanz*, which he saw as necessary for the creation, maintenance, and protection – the metabolic movement – of dance as modern tragic culture. For Brandenburg, Labanotation was the dance of the future. “Modern dance tightens itself up from the basis of a general bodily education and its ever-new developments and [moves] towards the possibility of movement-writing [*Bewegungsschrift*],” he declared. “And in between – and based on the principle of a new Dionysian-tragic life-feeling – lies the impulse of a new theater-art and a host of soulful-spiritual [*seelisch-geistig*] expression, which, finally, will once again be inseparable from the body.”²⁵

Brandenburg made no mention of ballet in *The Modern Dance*. He included a short discussion of the “Russian Ballet,” a catchall term for romantic solos by Anna Pavlova, though he declared that “the ballet is dead.”²⁶ Wigman and Laban had received some classical training, a

²³ Ibid., 52.

²⁴ In contrast to Wigman, who emphasized in her career the departure of her work from her teacher, Brandenburg saw the Swiss pedagogue and German modern dancer linked in a history of modern dance. Wigman noted in the 1970s that she had gained very little from her studies Jaques-Dalcroze: “there was nothing notable about it. [Everything] that had to do with musicality and with the musical-rhythmic education under Jaques-Dalcroze and his method interested me only a little! To be honest. What was interesting to me about it was what could be said through the fact of it: say it this time with your body. That was wonderful.” Mary Wigman, “Gespräch mit Mary Wigman, Gret Palucca, Gerhard Schumann” [Interview by Gerhard Schumann with Mary Wigman and Gret Palucca], recorded Nov. 28, 1972. TL MWS K3 Nr.7, 21.

²⁵ Brandenburg, *Der Moderne Tanz*, 19.

²⁶ Brandenburg, *Der Moderne Tanz*, 67.

point Brandenburg carefully avoided. Save passing reference to work by Fokine, Brandenburg did not mention of Diaghilev's Ballets Russes, who were popular in Europe at the time. Principally composed of dancers from Poland, Russia, and Eastern Europe, the troupe captured the spirit of interwar liberal cosmopolitanism; their trans-national mélange of modernisms – futurism, neo-primitivism, and neo-romanticism – clearly challenged Brandenburg's cultural and political conservatism.²⁷ Work by the Ballets Russes, such as dances by Nijinsky or Fokine, differed considerably from Laban's and Wigman's, particularly their emphasis on staging, visual design, and performance as proscenium spectacle. Arguably, Brandenburg's elision had some empirical grounds: the reach of the Ballets Russes, as well as French schools of Delsartean movement and pantomime (also absent from *The Modern Dance*) extended westward on the continent and potentially had little influence over dancers in Germany. Yet his silence was striking. Certainly by the late 1920s, debates about modern dance, even within Laban and Wigman circles, necessarily included discussions of ballet and the influence of the Ballets Russes. By 1930, Brandenburg's elisions were thrown into relief as discussions on ballet and the Ballets Russes were commonplace in *Schrifttanz*, the Vienna-based publication dedicated to Laban's ideas.²⁸

Brandenburg's elisions made clear his German nationalism. *The Modern Dance* told the story of *German* modern dance: modern dance rooted and developed in German soil, sealed off

²⁷ On the various schools of modernist experimentation within the Ballet Russes, see Lynn Garafola, "The Making of Ballet Modernism," chapter 3 in *Diaghilev's Ballets Russes* 2nd ed (Da Capo, 1998 [1989]), 76 – 97.

²⁸ See for example, Josef Lewitan, "Pas de Basque," *Schrifttanz* Jg.2, H2 (May 1929): 19 – 20, which included a Labanotated analysis of the origins of a *Pas de Basque* from a *Mazurka*; Lewitan, "Das Diaghileff Ballett," *Schrifttanz* Jg.2 H3 (August 1929): 58 – 59; Bronislava Nijinska, "Von der Bewegung und der Schule der Bewegung," *Schrifttanz* Jg.3, H1 (April 1930): 3-6; Irmgard Thomas, "Ballett als Erzieher," *Schrifttanz* Jg.3, H1 (April 1930): 7 – 8; Derra de Moroda, "Enrico Checchetti," *Schrifttanz*, Jg. 3 H. 2 (June 1930): 32-33; Egon Wellesz, "Das 'Balletto A Cavallo,'" *Schrifttanz*, Jg. 3 H. 2 (June 1930): 34-36.

from the influences of a wider Europe and its social decay. Brandenburg's descriptions of figures such as Laban, Wigman, Edith von Schrenk, Jutta von Collande, Clothilde von Derp, Gertrud Leistikow, and Laura Österreich made clear that modern dance was synonymous with Germany, German culture, and "German" values. Through them, modern dance became a German national identity, the embodiment of tragic cultural values, such as strength, heroism, leadership, rigor. Modern dancers also protected Germany against the "ills" of non-German influences, which he argued through the example of Von Derp and Sacharoff, a duo known as "the most enduringly popular dance pair in European history."²⁹ Before teaming up with von Derp, Sacharoff was known for his androgynous style among Munich expressionists painters (including Kandinsky and Franz Marx); he posed as an artists' and later employed high fashion designers, such as Paul Poiret, Hubert de Givenchy, and the Ballet Russes' Natalia Goncharova to create costumes for his solos. His performances were a mix of styles and national influences, in which he "projected the image of an ancient Greek vase painting figure, donning a kind of tunic-skirt while dancing to music (harps and string quartet) by Renaissance Italian composers (Palestrina, Monteverdi, Di Lasso) or a waltz by Joann Strauss."³⁰ In 1913, he began performing with Von Derp, and, like the other founders of modern dance forced into exile, had relocated to Switzerland (like Laban) during the war. Brandenburg argued that their collaboration was significant in the history of modern dance for its demonstration of Von Derp's feminine expressive qualities, which ultimately undermined by her partnership with the effeminate, and Russian-Jewish, Sacharoff. "Von Derp has renounced her blood," Brandenburg sharply

²⁹ Karl Toepfer, *Empire of Ecstasy: Nudity and Movement in German Body Culture, 1910-1935* (Berkeley, 1997), 219.

³⁰ Toepfer, *Empire of Ecstasy*, 222 and 219.

observed, “and like a false costume taken to be a refined, elaborate one, so too was the potential to dance with Sacharoff a false potential.”³¹

Brandenburg mixed his nationalism and thinly-veiled anti-Semitism with a curious approach to feminism. For him, an orderly balance of masculine and feminine qualities defined modern dance. This balance distinguished woman through her reproductive capacity as a fertile mother, and granted her a social agency – a freedom to explore her femininity on her own terms, apart from social restrictions or convention. In an explicitly nationalist elaboration of Duncan’s sexual selection, in which female intuition and fitness for reproduction marked her as creatively powerful and socially and physically mobile, Brandenburg noted that “modern dance is principally the achievement of women [...] dance is her true emancipation, one that is far bolder, more radical, and more capable of conquering the future [*zukunfterobernd*] as her entrance into politics – the discovery, liberation, and making visible through her body her indissoluble soul.”³² The social and political emancipation of women came not through party politics, social activism, or constitutional legislation, but through dance. Material and mythic elements comprised a woman’s femininity; the practice and representation of her gender in its socially reproductive function in turn maintained social order. As a kind of “soulful” feature, the dancer’s engagement with her gender was “far bolder, more radical” – and contained more possibilities for “conquering the future” – than an engagement with social reality.

Through removed from the realities of social and political experience, dance was a force for political and social change nonetheless. It was also a force for historical change. Like many of his Weimar contemporaries, such as Oswald Spengler, Ernst Troeltsch, Hans Rickert, and Martin Heidegger, Brandenburg rejected universal concepts in his analysis of changes to society

³¹ Brandenburg, *Der Moderne Tanz*, 155.

³² Brandenburg, *Ibid.*, 19.

over time. Instead, questions of historicity framed the understanding of social and cultural forms. In the traditions of nineteenth century historians Dilthey and von Ranke, Brandenburg and other Weimar historicists rejected idealism and “believed that the human being could only be grasped in terms of its historicity, not in universal concepts. And like them [they] understood that the highest value of a culture did not derive from their value from their participation in timeless Platonic forms, but rather were relative to the cultures that produced them.”³³ For Spengler, for example, whose 1918 *The Decline of the West* [*Der Untergang des Abendlandes*] captivated postwar audiences, this took the form of a “world culture,” based in modern man’s understanding of historical time that would rehabilitate society. “This, then, is our task. We men of the Western Culture are, with our historical sense, an exception and not a rule. World-history is *our* world picture and not all mankind’s. Indian and Classical man formed no image of a world in progress, and perhaps when in due course the civilization of the West is extinguished, there will never again be a Culture and a human type in which “world-history” is so potent a form of the waking consciousness.”³⁴ Like Spengler’s “modern man,” dancers attended to the subtleties of time and formed the ideal social models for this ‘waking consciousness.’ In performance, for example, dance required a knowledge of various musical, rhythmic, and embodied tempos and temporalities, often within the same performance. Wigman’s solo tours, or the solos of Jutta von Collande, were just some examples. Forms of dance improvisation by Duncan, Jaques-Dalcroze, Wigman, and Laban, showed how dancers recognized contingent circumstances *and* longer chains of time as progress or slow development. Through their commitment to stable social order (i.e. their embodied conservatism) they further showed how spontaneous movement – the

³³ Charles Bambach, “Weimar Philosophy and the Crisis of Historical Thinking,” in *Weimar Thought* (2013), 137 – 138.

³⁴ Spengler, *Decline of the West*, 15.

experience of temporality as a sudden rupture – was not chaotic or random, but belonged within a logical structure and stable system.

Brandenburg's writing demonstrated that other social practices related to dance, such as historical writing, theorizing, or teaching, contained unique power through the unfolding of time. Qualities of perpetual physical and temporal movement defined dance – “dance's sole being exists in movement and is therefore inseparable from temporality” – and its discursive power lay precisely in this mobility. Dance slipped seamlessly between the material and metaphysical registers, synchronic and diachronic planes, social categories, practices, and representations. It broke apart dualities (e.g. dance as verbal *and* non-verbal) and maintained them (dance was feminine *or* masculine). Brandenburg showed how the combination of these practices within a given community set it apart from its wider social context. Modern dance carved an autonomy for itself as a sovereign territory, establishing its own laws and maintaining its own order.

Brandenburg was not the only dance writer in Germany to describe the history of dance through the life-histories, memories, and accounts of individual performances by particular dancers. Other writers used biographies to address larger theoretical questions about the relationship of dance to history and society. These included Paul Nikolaus (*Dancers (Tänzerinnen)* [1919]), Werner Suhr (*Artistic Dance (Der Künstlerische Tanz)* [1922]), and Fritz Giese (*Body Soul (Körperseele)* [1924]), all of whom analyzed the histories of particular dancers to understand the features of a given style or system for dancing. Critic Frank Thiess, in his 1919/1923 *Dance as Artwork (Tanz als Kunstwerk)*, explored the various categories of modern dance through an analysis of Clothilde von Derp, Sent M'Ahesa, Niddy Impekoeven, and Valeska Gert; their embodied performances, he argued, serves as the basis for an analysis of

performance style.³⁵ (Mary Wigman was notably absent from Thiess' text). In the early 1920s, Hans Fischer argued that biographies of dancers helped theorize society, though it was unclear what, exactly, his social theory was. In *The Dance Book (Das Tanzbuch)* [1924], for example, Fischer showed that “abstract categories of dance possessed their own meanings, but he could not identify them persuasively. His literary inclinations perhaps dominated his perception: he saw the referent, not the sign; he saw what [Valeska] Gert signified, not how she signified; he saw what the dance evoked in his imagination, not the dance.”³⁶

For Brandenburg, performances by individual dancers demonstrated with precision the wider social benefits of dance when liberated as an autonomous cultural form. Brandenburg described the dancing of von Collande, who was a member of the Munich Dance Group, who “inhabit[ed]” the music, “not archaically, but rather in a rich renewal.” In contrast to the Group’s performance works, her “renewal” displayed her physical and social freedom: in her dancing, for example, “the social and the obligatory live on, the curial [courtly] and the embellishment” yet her movement showed a “gravitational counterpoint.” Using language similar to his descriptions of Wigman in 1919, Brandenburg argued that Collande’s body highlighted the difference between movement forms of the eighteenth century, in which the upper half of the dancing body was beholden to particular steps and movements of the legs, and those of the present, in which the body was “more fully involved” – more capable of full, and free expression – in

³⁵ Frank Thiess, *Der Tanz als Kunstwerk* (München: 1923 [1919]).

³⁶ Toepfer, *Empire of Ecstasy*, 340. Toepfer muses that this orientation gave rise to Fischer’s Nazi ideology. “Probably this affection for the imaginary urged him toward the mythic image of the body advanced by National Socialism” and in his later writings he “explored the ‘secret of beauty’ in the human body, examining genetic, ‘natural’ values of the ‘well-created body,’ which transcends all cultural difference. What made bodies beautiful, he concluded, was neither nature nor culture, but will, the conscious act of disciplining the body to fulfill the image of an ideal, of an imaginary identity” (340-341).

performance.³⁷ Her dance made clear the connection between dance history and social change. Brandenburg make this link explicit in his writing. Performances by Collande, Wigman, and Laban demonstrated how

the question forces itself [upon us]: whether or not the rise of modern dance before the War, a rise of such strong tension in strong personalities [...] was also its downfall. Indeed, a few large talents have succeeded in it, but even more than that has been an overflow of small ones. And that dance above all, although it is based on a Dionysian feeling of community, was initially towards personalities and was perhaps only the outcome of a dying, social-individualistic culture.³⁸

Brandenburg defined modern dance as the social. As tragic culture, it began from “a Dionysian feeling of community” that gave it life, protected it, and sustained it. Dance defined changes to bodies over time as a social experience; dance’s cultural value and its position within society defined its future. Which was grim. Germany’s “dying social-individualistic culture” alienated individuals from one another, splintered community, offered false values, and destabilized collective identity. The valorization of the individual “personality” encouraged “clownish clodding” over rigor and specialization. Collective cultural identity and artistic freedom had little meaning.

In contrast, the Dionysian “feeling of community” offered life and hope to Germany. Animated by the mission of the German *Volk*, the dancer’s social mission was clear.

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For Brandenburg, history demonstrated that Wigman and Laban were destined to be Germany’s social leaders. Through their dances and writings, they liberated dance as tragic

³⁷ Ibid., 311.

³⁸ Ibid., 312.

culture and proved they were not individual personalities, or a “Charakterkopf,” but were models for the values that united community, such as heroism, strength, skill, confidence, adaptability to circumstance, and, above all, strong national identity. In particular, Laban was an “artist, pedagogue, gymnast, dance-maker, choreographer, musician, painter, writer, researcher, discoverer, inventor, ethnographer, thinker and visionary, or nothing of all of these, but rather – to speak in his own language – simply a dancer.”³⁹

This section will now trace Brandenburg and Laban correspondence throughout the 1910s and 1920s, to show how Brandenburg’s influence as a critic extended beyond the page. In particular, it helped secure Laban’s power as a figure central to the dance community in Germany. As the two men exchanged views about dance, society, and politics, they each sharpened their ideas about dance and refined their sense of German modern dance as the theorization of the social order.

Following the end of the war, dance critics in Germany championed a range of artists, including those, like Laban, who were devising methods for dance notation. In October 1919, for example, the dance specialist newsletter *Die Libelle* ran a feature on the “importance and worth of a written fixed system for modern dance” in Germany, in which Laban’s then-developing system of dance notation was listed as one option among many. “Hans Brandenburg announces Laban’s advances, Grit Hesega suggests in her programs dance writing by composer Jap Kool, and in this edition of our journal we’ll speak in hindsight of a May 1919 lecture held in Berlin on Olga Desmond’s monograph and dance notational manual *Rhythmographik*.”⁴⁰ Fritz Böhme, a culture critic for the newsletter, as well as the *Berliner Börsen-Courier* and a colleague of

³⁹ Hans Brandenburg, “Über Rudolf von Laban,” *Die Tat*, Jg.12, H2 (Dezember 1920), 678.

⁴⁰ Anonymous, “Gedanken zur kommenden Tanznotenschrift,” *Die Libelle* Jg.2, Nr.16 (2 Oktober, 1919), 157. All translations mine unless otherwise noted.

Brandenburg's at the *DAZ*, lectured on Desmond's system. Böhme would later go on to become one of Laban's fiercest champions in the late 1920s, yet at this earlier moment, he affiliated with a different system. Böhme championed her Desmond's work as the "*Bewegungsschrift*" of choice and served as her informal promoter, having written the forward to her monograph, *Rhythmographik: Dance Notation as the Basis for the Independent Study of Dance* [*Rhythmographik: Tanznotenschrift als Grundlage zum Selbststudium des Tanzes*].⁴¹

Desmond's system piqued Laban's interest. Her method resembled an earlier form of dance notation developed in 1887 for classical ballet by Friedrich Albert Zorn. Though she was not advocating movement of the *danse d'ecole* per se, Desmond borrowed from Zorn's earlier model through her use of stick figures as illustration of bodily movement, and western musical notation as a framework for designating tempo, timing, and rhythm.⁴² Laban heard of Desmond's system and wrote to Brandenburg in in 1919 expressing interest in *Rhythmographik*. Without having read it, Laban criticized its limitations. Referring to Desmond as "Desmow," he noted, "It is really impossible to write a dance with these 'mice'" – an allusion to the visual appearance of the stick figures used in *Rhythmographik*, whose extended legs and arms Laban thought resembled tiny tails.⁴³ He noted that a more useful model was the Baroque system of Raoul-Auger Feuillet, whose eighteenth century form designated spatial pathways and floor patterns

⁴¹ Olga Desmond, *Rhythmographik*. Forward by Fritz Böhme (Leipzig, 1919). At the time, Böhme had allegedly recommended her as a dance teacher to Hertha Feist, the sister of Böhme's first wife, who prior to her studies with Desmond trained at Hellerau with Jaques-Dalcroze, and later with teachers at the Bode and Mensendieck *Gymnastik* schools. Feist would eventually join Laban's troupe in Stuttgart around 1920, only to leave his group a few years later to create her own work, including solo performances (notably, a "Dionysian Dance") during the mid 1920s for the Social Democratic Party. Despite Heist's political affiliations with the SPD in the 1920s, she became a Nazi sympathizer after 1933. For more on Heist, see Toepfer, *Empire of Ecstasy*, 250-254.

⁴² Friedrich Albert Zorn, *Grammatik der Tanzkunst: theoretischer und praktischer Unterricht in der Tanzkunst und Tanzschreibekunst, oder Choreographie* (Leipzig, 1887).

⁴³ Rudolf Laban, Letter to Hans Brandenburg (Nuremberg, Nov 11, 1919), 2. JHA RLC. BC/MS 20c Theatre/Hodgson/1/1/359 - 361 (Letters from Rudolf Laban to Hans Brandenburg, 1914 – 1934).

with line strokes rather than stick figures and used musical notation to record dance compositions. Feuillet's system, Laban argued, was useful because it was concerned with harmonic form (i.e. logic and stable order). Laban failed to mention European (and specifically French) social elites primarily used Feuillet's system, which did little to disseminate knowledge about dance as a universal expression beyond the borders of the court.⁴⁴ He instead cast Feuillet's work as an investigation in stable order, thus situating his own vision in a longer historical tradition. "The oldest, original [systems] (Feuillet) also had a recognition of harmony," he explained to Brandenburg.⁴⁵ With such an historical precedents, Laban's work gained legitimacy and authority in the present.

During the early 1920s, Laban tirelessly popularized his approach to dance. Many of his reviewers supplied him with critical and administrative support, notably Brandenburg, whose influence as writer extended beyond the page. Brandenburg and Böhme, as well as critics Josef Lewitan, and Artur Mitchell, were central influences in the German dance community from 1919 to 1933. "In the Weimar Republic, a period in which parliamentary democracy was being set up, critics became peculiarly public speakers. As agents, they proposed dance concepts which turned out to be highly political even if the writers themselves thought of themselves as non-political or even anti-political. Critics were as much actors in their time as the artists they described."⁴⁶ Brandenburg's journalism and critical writing on dance not only helped fashion Laban and Wigman at the helm of German modern dance, but also united a readership on German culture

⁴⁴ On Feuillet, see Ann Hutchinson Guest, entries on "Dance Notation" and "Feuillet Notation" in *The International Encyclopedia of Dance*, ed., Selma Jeanne Cohen (Oxford, 2005).

⁴⁵ Laban, Letter to Hans Brandenburg (Nuremburg, 11 November, 1919), 3.

⁴⁶ Marion Kant, "German Dance and the Concept of Criticism," 1, in *Être ensemble. Figures de la communauté en danse depuis le XX siècle* (Centre National de la Danse, 2004), 143-164. Manuscript version and English translation by the author.

that divided into two groups, the center mainstream of the daily *DAZ* and the cultural elites of the monthly *Die Tat*.

As colleagues, artistic collaborators, and confidantes, Brandenburg and Laban had a unique relationship. They disagreed about many issues, including the relationship of dance to culture, and dance to history. At times, Brandenburg's weighty writing threw into relief Laban's conceptual inconsistencies. In Laban's journalistic pieces and published monographs, for example, Laban cast dance as the extension of cultural behaviors stemming from deep history and memory – what he called around 1920 as “the trove of memory of primitive times.”⁴⁷ At other times, he described dance in terms of universal law and concepts. While Brandenburg, the historicist, believed that history had proven dance's tragic character and endowed dancers with power as expressive subjects and social leaders, Laban insisted on the neoplatonic “timelessness” of dance's features and core values, a position shared by many of Laban and Brandenburg's colleagues at *Die Tat*.

Brandenburg and Laban's respective writing benefitted from their intellectual exchange and personal relationship. Brandenburg's writing, for example, granted a conceptual coherence to Laban's ideas, which as the previous chapter has shown was marked by its tendency towards theorization without theory; Brandenburg, in contrast, presented Laban as an artistic visionary, whose practices perfectly aligned with the body of his ideas. Laban's popularity, in turn, provided Brandenburg with a readership and audience interested in learning more about Laban. However, the gestural and incomplete qualities of Laban's ideas and his theorization without theory pointed to inherent tensions in Brandenburg's work. Brandenburg sought to establish theoretical coherence in his social theory of modern dance and his arguments about dance as modern, tragic culture; by championing Laban's ideas about dance's universalism and

⁴⁷ Rudolf Laban, “Symbole des Tanzes und Tanz als Symbol,” *Die Tat*, 11 Jg., H.9 (Dezember 1919), 675.

timelessness, however, he evidently ignored many of Laban's basic challenges to his own work and principle assumptions.

Neither Brandenburg nor Laban seemed bothered by these differences. They were united in their commitment to embodied conservatism and the conservative politics of Weimar. This included their mutual faith in Germany as the place for modern dance to flourish in the postwar. Their letters between 1914 and 1927 demonstrate how their German nationalism connected to dance. Publicly, Laban advocated for universalism through dance, and in his books and articles, he described a transnational regeneration through dance via a "race" of performers and practitioners.⁴⁸ In his private correspondence however, Laban confessed his admiration for a German nationalism, noting to Brandenburg in 1914 that, "Your and your wife's enthusiastic descriptions [of Germany on the eve of WWI] interest me deeply, and I understand and share your awe for your fatherland, for [its] shimmering [*glänzende*] organization and spiritual [*seelische*] strength."⁴⁹

Laban's lavish praise for Germany's "shimmering organization" was practical. He had experienced difficulties obtaining a Swiss visa and, determined to avoid military service in Hungary, saw potential in Germany for political refuge, as well as logistical and financial support for his artistic works. He recognized, however, that to enter the country he would need official bureaucratic or administrative support.⁵⁰ Laban's frustration with the lack of performance opportunities in Switzerland combined with his financial problems (which plagued him

⁴⁸ It should be noted here that "race" was a term used by many early cultural critics in Germany and did not have the same xenophobic or anti-Semitic connotations of the later 1920s and 1930s.

⁴⁹ Rudolf Laban, Letter to Hans Brandenburg (undated, around 1914), 3. JHA RLC. BC/MS 20c Theatre/Hodgson/1/1/361, no. 7, Letters from Rudolf Laban to Hans Brandenburg, 1914 – 1927.

⁵⁰ Rudolf Laban, Letter to Hans Brandenburg (Zurich, 15 May, 1918), 1. JHA RLC. BC/MS 20c Theatre/Hodgson/1/1/361, no.10, Letters from Rudolf Laban to Hans Brandenburg, 1914 – 1927.

throughout his professional career) to make Germany an appealing national alternative. Given his history of limited professional success in Munich before 1910, his calculation was risky.

Laban's friendship with Brandenburg demonstrates his belief that his professional success was based as much on business savvy as on the strength of his artistic vision. At the end of the war, Laban observed privately to Brandenburg that his artistic mission depended on the financial viability of his dances. "Under the current and local conditions, and without a suitable, commercial financial basis, the profitability of [my performances] is naturally unthinkable. In order to create this base, I can no longer be bothered by the things that up to this point I haven't been able to do."⁵¹ Acknowledging his dependency on finances, and determined not to be demoralized by previous setbacks, Laban referred to money as "nervus rerum," a "sinew" of things.⁵² He admitted his shortcomings as a businessman, and acknowledged that his artistic success hinged on his business acumen, which meant his recruitment of *other* to handle his affairs. As he put it in 1920, "let's leave [business to] the businessmen, our job is to find the business-oriented folks."⁵³ Laban's statement attests to his dependency on others, and his vision of the fundamentally social nature of his artistic accomplishment.

Though Laban saw a spiritual alliance between his work and German "organization," he made repeated overtures to Brandenburg about an artistic collaboration, which Laban hoped would take place in Germany and thus present an opportunity for the paperwork and financial backing he needed in order to emigrate. Confident that Brandenburg shared his vision for a "performing society" [*Aufführungsgesellschaft*] and would also provide him a path to German

⁵¹ Laban, Letter to Hans Brandenburg (Zurich, 15 May, 1918), 1.

⁵² Rudolf Laban, Letter to Hans Brandenburg (Cademario, 7 August, 1919), 1. JHA RLC. BC/MS 20c Theatre/Hodgson/1/1/361, no.13, Letters from Rudolf Laban to Hans Brandenburg, 1914 – 1927

⁵³ Rudolf Laban, Letter to Hans Brandenburg (Nuremberg, 1 Feb 1920), 1. JHA RLC. BC/MS 20c Theatre/Hodgson/1/1/361, no.18, Letters from Rudolf Laban to Hans Brandenburg, 1914 – 1927

residence or citizenship, Laban urged him to promote their proposed dance-theater performance.⁵⁴ Meanwhile, in Switzerland, Laban independently pursued channels of patronage to the German and Prussian elite through the social connections of his German students based in Zürich. Brandenburg, who had a better knowledge of cultural patronage in Germany, saw this as futile.⁵⁵ In light his conceptual vision of dance as a universal language that rejected contemporary social values, Laban made little effort to hide the hypocrisies of his professional ambition and tethered himself strongly to institution, money, and national context. His professional opportunism contradicted his belief in stable harmonic order, yet it was an important part of his approach to dance. As we have seen in Chapter 5, he strongly castigated others for precisely these material concerns.

United by their faith in the fatherland, the two men corresponded throughout the 1920s. Like Brandenburg's literary efforts to unite the Weimar cultural conservatives divided between the *DAZ* and *Die Tat*, Laban attempted to organize a divided body of dance elites and cultural intellectuals who had split along the war's dividing lines – and who provided Laban with his strongest base of support. One group was *Die Tat*'s prewar thinkers, who after 1919 maintained Horneffer's prewar romantic holism and whose optimism seemed naïve and out of touch. The other group were the cultural pessimists, like Brandenburg, motivated by a newer vision for Germany and urgent social concerns. Together, these embodied conservatives worked throughout the 1920s and 1930s to secure Laban's institutional centrality in Germany. This first took shape with the first Dancers' Congress in Magdeburg in the summer of 1927, a gathering of dancers from across Germany and Europe that culminated in the publication of *Schrifttanz*, a journal dedicated to Laban's ideas. The institutional centrality of Laban's within the German

⁵⁴ Rudolf Laban, Letter to Hans Brandenburg (Zurich, 15 May, 1918), 1.

⁵⁵ Laban, *Ibid.*

dance community after 1927, including his involvement and direction of subsequent Dancers' Congresses of 1928 and 1930, likewise shows the success of their efforts to organize modern dancers around Laban's leadership.⁵⁶

Laban was both aware, and humorous, about his professional ambition. He made light of Brandenburg's characterization of him as a leader for the dance community. At one point, referencing an encyclopedia entry on dance history by Brandenburg which Laban helped write, he joked, "if you'd like to mention me [in the credits leave out] my abilities as astrologer, mixer-of-poisons, engineer and consumer of alcohol, and keep only director, dance discoverer [*Tanzerfinder*], and pedagogue."⁵⁷ Laban's self parody of attests to more than his sense of humor and intimacy with Brandenburg. It also demonstrated that modern dance hinged upon the social – upon the organization, interactions, and relationships between people.

The correspondence of Laban and Brandenburg demonstrate how embodied conservatism was a discursive practice as much as a physical or social one. Furthermore, Brandenburg and Laban show how the "modernity" of German modern dance lay in its practical and theoretical approach to the social organization of the dance community, from its social networks, to its various institutions, leadership, hierarchies, administration, and financial operations. All of these elements formed the "sinew" of the community. To gain control or power over them required an awareness of their contingent and durational aspects, experienced by all but only recognized by some. Modern dance meant the social, but only certain people made dance modern.

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⁵⁶ On Laban's role in Germany after 1927 and particularly during the three dancers' congresses, see Hedwig Müller and Patricia Stöckemann, *...jeder Mensch ist ein Tänzer: Ausdruckstanz in Deutschland zwischen 1900 und 1945* (Anabas, 1993).

⁵⁷ Rudolf Laban, Letter to Hans Brandenburg (Stuttgart, 18 October, 1921), 2. JHA RLC. BC/MS 20c Theatre/Hodgson/1/1/361, no.24, Letters from Rudolf Laban to Hans Brandenburg, 1914 – 1927.

II. Valeska Gert

If Hans Brandenburg was the historian of modern dance in Germany, Valeska Gert (née Gertrud Valeska Samosch) was its social scientist. Like Brandenburg, dance offered an occasion to theorize the features of social life and experience, and offered possible suggestions for causes to their ruptures and transformations throughout periods of time. Like Brandenburg, Gert argued that dance as a method for social theory lay principally in its unique relationship to time and temporality. However, Gert believed that modern dance was the opposite of embodied conservatism: it was a material practice and worldview that rejected social harmony. Modern dance upended social order and created chaos; like society, its logic was impenetrable, unclear, and deceptive. Modern dance exposed the fallacy of stable representation, onstage and in society. Modern dance announced the hypocrisies of performance, onstage, and as social and political leadership. It showed the impossibility for artistic, spiritual, social transcendence.

The *enfant terrible* of the Weimar dance scene in 1920s, Gert only performed alone. Unlike the other figures in this dissertation, she had no students and founded no school. In solos such as *Japanische Grotteske* [*Japanese Grottesque*] [1917], *Kanaille* [*Scoundrel*] [1919], *die Kupplerin* [*Procuress*] [1921], *Nervosität* [*Nervousness* (also “*Excitement*”)] [1927], *Boxen* [*Boxing*] and *Clown* [both undated, c.1930] dance destabilized meanings about the social self. These solos depicted marginalized, oppressed, and criminalized social types – prostitutes, pimps, drug-addicts, freaks, and foreigners. In her solos, she eliminated sustained movement sequences, and instead favored gesture, facial features, costumes and make-up to evoke the banal, the unexceptional, the depraved, and the destitute.

Gert's performances were social situations in miniature, which highlight forms of inequality and imbalances in power. This unfolded in Gert's performances through a social encounter between herself, the performer, and her audiences, which was characterized by alienation, awkwardness, and unease. Gert's performances in these solos often escalated into scenes of raucous abandon between herself, lost in a state of frenzy, and her audiences. In contrast to the mystical, meditative atmosphere Wigman cultivated in solos such as *Ecstatic Dances* [1917], Gert "became ecstatic when the audiences screamed and howled at her dancing. Her art was one of merciless attack; it had nothing of the softness and meditative approach of interpretive dance."⁵⁸ Interestingly, though both women conveyed "ecstasy" onstage, Wigman's ecstasy established social unity, while Gert's ecstasy heightened the artificial nature of performance and the divide between herself and her audience. This, for Gert, exposed the power inherent in staged representation, Audiences, forced to sit and watch Gert onstage, became increasingly confused and excited as they attempted to follow the logic of her embodied movements.

Like Brandenburg, Gert believed social transformation could happen through dance. Gert embraced Marxist politics, rejected forms of national identity, and believed in class-struggle as the basis for social change. She further rejected the proscenium stage as the space to broadcast her views and instead performed in unconventional environments such as basements or bars, particularly throughout the 1930s. Over the course of her career, she opened numerous cafés in Germany and in the United States, often located in abandoned spaces or improvised shanties, where she hosted solo performances and musical acts oriented towards contemporary social

⁵⁸ Hedwig Müller, "Gert, Valeska," *The International Encyclopedia of Dance*.

critique.⁵⁹ From 1924 to 1929, her approach to performance took on an added charge of economic protest as Weimar's mainstream entertainment industry, and the proliferation "super-revues," gathered momentum. Like Duncan had done at the turn of the century, Gert rejected the values advanced in stage spectacles of identically dressed female kicklines in "monumental proportions, both in terms of outlays of capital and the elaborate nature of the productions."⁶⁰ These included acts such as the Tiller Girls and the Jackson Girls, famously cast by Siegfried Kracauer in his 1927 essay, "The Mass Ornament" as the critical example of rationalization and cultural reification under capitalism. In Kracauer's characterization, "the mass ornament is the aesthetic reflex of the rationality to which the prevailing economic system aspires" whose "hands in the factory correspond to the legs of the Tiller Girls."⁶¹

Gert's approach to gender was complex and both rejected and embraced social stereotypes. Her gender-bending performance in *Boxing*, for example, parodied muscular

⁵⁹ Gert opened her first venue in 1932, the *Kabarett Kohlhopf*, in Berlin. In 1933, Gert left Germany for London, and six years later, moved to New York City, where she opened her second venue, a cafe called *the Beggar Bar* (where she employed a then-struggling Tennessee Williams as a cook. In 1941, Gert moved to Provincetown, Massachusetts, where she opened her third establishment, *Valeska's*. Gert returned to Europe in 1947, leaving a trail of bars and cafes in her wake: in Zürich, *Café Valeska und ihr Küchenpersonal* (1947); in Berlin, *Bei Valeska* (1958), located first in the basement of an opera house on Kant Straße, which then relocated and was renamed to *die Hexenküche* (1950); and finally, in Kampen, Sylt, *die Ziegenstall* (1955). See Susan Manning, "Review of *Valeska Gert: Tänzerin, Schauspielerin, Kabarettistin*", by Frank-Manuel Peter; *Anita Berber: Tanz Zwischen Rausch und Tod, 1918-1928 in Berlin* by Lothar Fischer; *Auf der Großen Straße: Jean Weidts Erinnerungen* by Jean Weidt," *Dance Research Journal* 18, no.2, special issue: "Russian Folklore Abroad" (Winter: 1986-1987): 70-73; Sydney Jane Norton, "Modernity in Motion: The Performance Art of Mary Wigman and Valeska Gert in the Weimar Republic" (Ph.D. Diss., University of Minnesota, 1998); and Frank-Manuel Peter, *Valeska Gert: Tänzerin, Schauspielerin, Kabarettistin* (Frohlich & Kaufmann, 1985).

⁶⁰ Teri Gordon, "The Aesthetics of the Demi-Nu: Modernist Representations of the Dancer in Paris and Berlin from the Fin de Siècle to the Nazi Period" (Ph.D. Diss., Columbia University, 2001), 201.

⁶¹ Siegfried Kracauer, "The Mass Ornament" [1927], in *The Mass Ornament: Weimar Essays*. Ed. and trans., Thomas Y. Levin (Cambridge, 1995), 79. Importantly, the critical equation of dancing bodies with the stranglehold of structure has arguably led to dance's marginal treatment by generations of scholars of Weimar culture, including members of the Frankfurt School. Employing Walter Benjamin's notion of the auratic work of art, however, Elswit upends a critical readings of dance that confuse metaphors about it for the thing itself. Dancing bodies, she points out, "were not actually mechanically reproducible, and yet they were seen to possess a disconcerting interchangeability," which necessarily belie "a fixation with the primal scene of reproduction on the factory floor." Although dancing women "were seen to reveal the 'truth' of their times", what constituted such "truth" was never entirely clear (Elswit, *Watching Weimar Dance*, 80 and 93). See also Ana Isabel Keilson, "A Review of 'Kate Elswit. *Watching Weimar Dance*,'" *The Germanic Review: Literature, Culture, Theory* 90, no.4 (2015): 369-372.

masculinity and mass sport. Her sexually androgynous roles in *Japanese Grotesque*, *Japanische Pantomime* [*Japanese Pantomime*] [undated], and *Nervousness* challenged conventional depictions of the sexualized female – and male – body. Meanwhile, Gert’s other solos, such as *Procuress*, as well as studio portraiture of her by artists including Man Ray, presented the highly sexualized femininity of her stage characters and her own professional persona.⁶²

Gert was not bothered by the rationalization of culture and its homogenization of time, which Brandenburg saw as a threat to dance’s social power. In fact, she embraced forms of mass-culture as the basis from which to show how time in performance was heterogeneous and complex, and as such served as the basis for social theory. Dance critics observed how Gert’s performances exposed dance’s transformation of social representation and social imaginaries. Kurt Tucholsky, writing under the pseudonym Peter Panter for *Die Weltbühne*, a popular theater journal, noted in 1921 that Gert’s performances blurred one’s perception of fixed social identities. “Does Valeska Gert dance? That she can dance stands without a doubt. That she can do more also stands. She uses technique [*Technik*] [...] as the real basis of fantasy. No, she doesn’t just dance. She pours a cornucopia of people from the parquet: Japanese and tightrope dancers and jugglers and circus-riders and ringleaders and bawdy women and Spanish ladies and who knows what else [...] This woman dances with the face.”⁶³ Gert’s carnivalesque display was the opposite of “cloddish clowning.” Instead, it was the destabilization of sexuality, national identity, and vocation. Gert evoked of pairs of social identities only to collapse them into a jumble of representation: she was at once “Japanese” and “Spanish,” a “circus-rider” and a “ringleader,” a “bawdy woman” and a “lady.” No longer the expression of the ideal, the beautiful, or

⁶² Archival Photographs of Gert in performance. Reprinted in Peter, *Valeska Gert: Tänzerin, Schauspielerin, Kabarettistin*, 33 -41.

⁶³ Peter Panter [Kurt Tucholsky], Untitled Review. *Die Weltbühne* (17 Feb, 1921, no. 7), 204. Reprinted in Wolfgang Müller, *Valeska Gert: Ästhetik der Präsenzen* (Berlin, 2010), 123.

the sublime – as aestheticians from Aristotle to Schiller had claimed as art’s purpose – dance was social time, social representation, and social reflection. This was made possible through the marriage of physical technique and imaginative faculty, or “fantasy.” Gert’s performances here showed a curious variation of Wigman’s sovereign self, as the performer could freely legislate her social representation within the context and rules for performance, however wild or raucous it may have been, as was the case with Gert.

Gert’s work intersected with that of Wigman, Laban, and Duncan in surprising ways. Like them, she approached dance as an autonomous form that was independent of musical accompaniment. In her dancers, she used grunts, self-made sounds (such as claps or slaps), and odd vocal noises as her “musical” scores; though different from Wigman’s use of gongs or other “sounds,” championed the same faith in dance’s formal autonomy and self-sufficiency. Like them, Gert improvised and relied on spontaneous movement as the basis for her performances. She was also a savvy self-promoter. Her dances were more than just forms of social critique: dance historian Kate Elswit notes how Gert’s solos had added appeal “within an educated middle class, a group often disillusioned by both the social and artistic status quo,” and thus, “during the Weimar Era, Gert needs to be seen as an insider who deployed a sense of marginality as an aesthetic strategy.”⁶⁴ In other words, Gert’s engagement with culture and politics was shaped as much by her professional-artistic concerns as her efforts to establish dance as social critique.

Gert’s depictions of marginalized social types placed her at the center of critical controversy about the nature of dance as a form. Given her unconventional – and for some, off-putting – performances, other critics besides Tucholsky argued whether or not what she doing should be classified as “dance.” Weimar dance critic Werner Suhr hailed Gert as the embodiment of the “Grotesque,” a dance genre that defined in *Der Künstlerische Tanz* [1922] as a legitimate

⁶⁴ Kate Elswit, *Watching Weimar Dance*, 85.

branch of “artistic dance” (as opposed to light or “lowbrow” entertainment) that was marked by soulful comic expression akin to tragicomedy. Theorizing the features of the grotesque as a modern dance form, Suhr noted, “[Gert] is truly [Genial]! She even has talent to appear talentless. She has absolutely each talent that one needs for Grotesque dance. And what one doesn’t need for it, she also has in abundance. [...] This great dancer possesses instinct and, with deep femininity, intellect. She has the instinct for the laughableness of the honest, for the honesty of the laughable and for the weaknesses of the strong. And she has the intellect in all of that – the tragicomic – to recognize, with necessary wisdom, the necessary distance.”⁶⁵

In addition, Suhr’s observation illustrates an important parallel between Gert’s work and Laban’s concept of second nature. Gert was the skillful inventor of her own nature: with the “talent to appear talentless” and the “intellect” and “wisdom” to achieve “necessary distance” onstage, Gert shifted the source of her embodied expression from her “natural” ability to a secondary, cultivated control. In this sense, she resembled Laban’s dancer, endowed with a “dancerly intuition” that modified a first, or original, nature. In Laban’s as in Gert’s vision, dance was not the imitation of nature but a force for creative genesis used “to fashion something out of *human origins*.”⁶⁶ Perhaps ironically, the two united in their approach to dance as an act of human genesis, even (as in the case of Gert) when its purpose was the self-conscious imitation of another individual, social type, or existing form.

Gert’s performances showed her synchronic approach to dance and her tendency to theorize the features of large-scale social structure based in her own, synchronic experience. The author of four autobiographies, Gert was known throughout her career for making strong, public

⁶⁵ Werner Suhr, *Der Künstlerische Tanz* (Leipzig, 1922), 41-42.

⁶⁶ Hans Blumenberg, “‘Imitation of Nature’: Towards a Prehistory of the Idea of the Creative Being” [1957], trans. Anna Werth. In *Qui Parle* 12, no. 1, *The End of Nature* (Spring/Summer, 2012), 39. Italics original.

statements about the significance of her work.⁶⁷ Gert did not doubt that her work should be classified as “modern dance,” nor did she doubt its political mission. Gert summarized her position in a radio speech on “the working class and theater,” which followed a performance at the Leipzig Worker’s Institute and was reprinted in *Kulturwille*, the “Monthly Paper for Culture of the Working Class.”

Modern dance is the crossover from old to new theater. The modern acting, dancing person needed to split himself from the old theater and become independent, now that the stage no longer had anything to offer him. He did not care about what was customary, he was without the ballet of the old theater conventions. Completely naïve, from feeling alone he created the *representational*.⁶⁸ [ital. original]

In Gert’s view, time was not experienced as slow progress or incremental change. Rather, it was a sudden rupture or leap based in social inequality. Dance was something that “crossed over” from one form to another, while individuals “split themselves” through dance from older artistic and social practices and convention. Dance was dissociative, free from the burden of causality or teleology. The dancer was “independent” and “naïve,” able to reset within each moment onstage the possibility for action and representation.

This approach to representation onstage liberated the individual in society. Once again, it was also a surprising variation on Laban’s second nature and Wigman’s sovereign self. Gert elaborated that dance’s power as social temporality arose onstage and in the moment through the performer’s use of the mask.

Our time presses toward the monolithic [monumental], the typical, the transpersonal, thus toward the mask. But this mask must not be worn artistically, but rather, the expression of feeling must, in an

⁶⁷ Gert’s autobiographies include *Mein Weg* (1931), *Die Bettlerbar von New York* (1950), *Ich bin eine Hexe – Kaleidoskop meines Lebens* (1968), and *Katze von Kampen* (1973).

⁶⁸ Valeska Gert, “Über Tanz,” *Kulturwille, Monatsblätter für Kultur der Arbeiterschaft, Ausgabe: Arbeiterschaft und Theater* H.2 (Leipzig, Februar 1931), 27-28.

elementary way, be heightened to the extreme so that face and body themselves become [the] ultimate, [the] typical: it must be heightened to become a mask. The theater-dance, of which today so many speak, is not, as is often thought, a modernized addition to theater in lieu of ballet, but it is rather a *substitution* of theater, a dramatically moved embodiment of the modern person.⁶⁹

Gert's "mask" was conceptual and material construct, and an implicit critique of Wigman, whose use of the mask in *Hexentanz* [1916/1926] and *The Seven Dances of Life* [1921], depicted forms of social harmony, the mythical, the timeless, and the metaphorical. Gert, in contrast, understood the mask according to its relevance to modern social representation, shown through its "monolithic" "typical," and "transpersonal" qualities and effects. In contrast to Brandenburg, the historian, Gert, the social scientist, understood social structures as a given. "Social conduct, the specific features of institutions, or particular beliefs and opinions may vary widely, but these variations are seen [by the social scientist] as effectively shaped or regulated by underlying structure. In the rhetoric of social-scientific discourse, the buck tends to stop at structure."⁷⁰ Musical and physical harmony did not model the social order; the unstable nature of relationships between people did. Donning the mask and, in effect, becoming the mask, the dancer was no longer a unique "race" or social class endowed with elevated skill or values. She was not the dancer of the future, but the dancer of the moment, faced with an audience. She was not a guardian of the polis, but a member of its masses.

Modern dance was thus the expression of a collective subjectivity or social consciousness. For Gert, the question was whether it was something inherently stable or unstable. Like Brandenburg, Gert noted modern dance's social nature, but she observed it through its synchronic rather than diachronic features. "I am no solo dancer. I need a partner, and

⁶⁹ Gert, "Über Tanz," 27-28.

⁷⁰ Sewell, "Theory, History, and Social Science," 14.

this partner is my audience. It is only the audience that tears off the mask from dance. Only then it shows its true face for the first time.”⁷¹ As the “dramatically moved embodiment of the modern person,” social consciousness was not an experience of long duration or progressive history but a single event defined by rupture, contingency, and unpredictability. This included features in performance of changing dynamics, sounds, and speed in physical gesture. Gert here presented a version of Sewell’s “eventful temporality”: through dance, she rejected time as defined by causal laws, or by the interdependence of sequences of occurrences upon other sequences of occurrence.⁷² Through such “eventful temporality,” Gert’s dancer wore the mask “not artistically” and reminded the audience – her dance partner – of its material, social context. Gert thus provided a critical method to distinguish through embodied temporality forms of social representation: as imitation (the mask as “artifice”) or as creation (the “heightening to the extreme” of “expression of feeling”). Faced with these two options, the dancer was able to self-consciously fashion representation onstage: to engage knowingly in acts of imitation *and* representation simultaneously. Thinkers like Kracauer and Weber had observed that a rationalized society limited, if not altogether foreclosed, possibilities for authentic expression and representation through contemporary culture. Gert’s dance suggested otherwise.

Gert extracted theories of social representation from her own experiences onstage. Brandenburg spilled ink over over hundreds of pages narrating the life-histories of dancers to show dance as tragic culture and social theory. Gert, meanwhile, theorized social change with a different set of evidence. She focused on connecting dance to its wider social context, rather than reimagining the social within the unfolding of dance history. Remarking on her contemporaries, she viewed every effort to buffer dance from social and political reality with suspicion.

⁷¹ Gert, *Ibid.*

⁷² Sewell, 101.

*“I do not like abstract dance, I have nothing to do with it. Anyone can conceive from it whatever he wants, and what is not really in those dances [...] Abstract dance stems from Ancient Greek movement, which Duncan had recovered and which was then modernized through Dalcroze, Laban and Wigman. But these movements say nothing to me. What do they have to do with our times? I could only caricature them. They don’t correspond to my way of being. For that reason, I take my material largely from life today, from the metropolis in which I live, which I know and which I love.”*⁷³ [ital. hers]

Though in performance she practiced the opposite of embodied conservatism, her role as social scientist sought the same logic and order that Jaques-Dalcroze, Duncan, Wigman, and Laban discovered in harmony. For Brandenburg, this was a boon. For Gert, this was an anathema.

“I believe that every artist is able to develop only *from his time*, for he is rooted in it,” Gert declared. “They will carry a message for our imitators, the same message that each generation receives from its precursors and passes on to its successors, the message that we are all people, subject to the same laws, becoming, fighting, and passing away.”⁷⁴ Contrary to the embodied conservatives, Gert showed through the body that social experience was one of altered time, struggle, and difficulty. Within society, no one emerged as fit or able to rule. Nature was indiscriminate. Power was imbalanced. All became, fought, and passed away.

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Conclusion

Gert left Germany in 1933 and spent the next sixteen years in exile. Gert was one of the first Jewish members of the modern dance community to return to Germany after 1945. She spent the remainder of her long career much as she spent her career during Weimar: performing

⁷³ Valeska Gert, “Über Tanz,” 27-28.

⁷⁴ Gert, *Ibid.*

roles that pushed the limits of social representation and challenged the basic structures shaping relationships between people. Her performances in the postwar and decades following included cameos, often as androgynous or spiritually possessed figures, in experimental films by German directors Rainer Werner Fassbinder [*Acht Stunden sind kein Tag* (1972-73)], Volker Schlöndorff [*der Fangschuss* (1976); *Nur zum Spaß, nur zum Spiel*, (1977)], and Tabea Blumenschein and Ulrike Ottinger [*die Betörung der blauen Matrosen*, (1975)], as well as Italian director Federico Fellini [*Julia and the Spirits* (1965)].

Gert's influence extended beyond Germany's film community. Gert's performances in these films and the memories and imagery associated with her Weimar-era performances inspired many German artists, dancers, and musicians to question the foundations of the social order. This took the form of deliberate challenges to it. In the 1970s and 1980s, for example, Gert attained notoriety as inspiration for many German cultural figures, as well as a then-emerging punk scene in West Berlin. In 1977, for example, Fassbinder muse Hanna Schygulla corresponded with Gert, looking to establish a friendship and a possible artistic collaboration.⁷⁵ Wolfgang Müller, performance artist and bandleader of *Die Tödliche Doris*, a post-punk band from the early eighties, recalled Gert's impact on a generation of West German performers: watching Gert in a 1975 late-night television appearance, Müller recalled the power of an eighty-three year old Gert – “with a chalk-white, powdered face, black hair, blue eye shadow, and large back eyelashes” – who modeled for his generation the spirit of social, political, and cultural freedom.⁷⁶ For Müller and others, Gert was “a sheer dose of *vis vitalis*. And she mediated the idea of what it mean to be independent and free – with complete consciousness of all

⁷⁵ Hanna Schygulla, Correspondence with Valeska Gert, July 11, 1977. Akademie der Künste Berlin, Valeska Gert Sammlung [“AK VGS”], 3.1 (Korrespondenz mit Privat Personen), Nr.139.

⁷⁶ Müller, *Valeska Gert*, 10.

addictions.”⁷⁷ In addition to her influence over experimental and avant-garde musicians and filmmakers, Gert influenced a subsequent generation of European modern dance choreographers, including *Rosas* founder Anne Teresea de Keersmaeker.⁷⁸

Brandenburg, meanwhile, extended a different influence after Weimar. Through Laban’s influence, by 1934 Brandenburg was folded into the inner circle of dance performers, scholars, and administrators responsible for shaping modern dance policy under National Socialism. His correspondence with Laban after 1933 attests to their continued mutual exchange, and political influence. In a series of exchanges in preparation for the 1934 “German Festival for Dance,” a week-long event of state-sponsored performances, Laban invited Brandenburg to shape the festival’s conceptual vision, which was a presentation of dance as a national, German form.⁷⁹ He invited Brandenburg to contribute written essays to a publication slated to be released following the festival, and offered to introduce him to Otto Laubinger, first President and Director of the Reich Theater Chamber, a division of the Ministry of Propaganda.⁸⁰

This chapter has shown that underneath the political differences between Gert and Brandenburg were another set of differences about the role of dance in society. These differences were connected to politics, and served as the basis for Gert and Brandenburg to form their political affiliations. Both saw dance as a socially temporal experience, which granted it its social and cultural power. Brandenburg, adopting an historian’s approach to time and causality understood dance principally as the progressive unfolding of action and idea over time. Gert,

⁷⁷ Müller, *Ibid.*, 11.

⁷⁸ Anne Teresea de Keersmaeker, “Valeska Gert,” *TDR: The Drama Review* 25, No.3 (October 1981): 55-66.

⁷⁹ Rudolf Laban to Hans Brandenburg (Munich, October 5, 1934), 1. JHA / RLC BC/MS 20c Theatre/Hodgson/1/1/359 - 361 (Letters from Rudolf Laban to Hans Brandenburg, 1914 – 1934), Box 35, Nr. 33.

⁸⁰ Rudolf Laban to Hans Brandenburg (Munich, October 11, 1934), 1. JHA / RLC BC/MS 20c Theatre/Hodgson/1/1/359 - 361 (Letters from Rudolf Laban to Hans Brandenburg, 1914 – 1934), Box 35, Nr. 34.

meanwhile, was the social scientist, relegating the evidence for her social theories of dance to her own lived experience. And whereas Brandenburg situated the social function of the dance into a complex network of slow change leading up to the present, Gert saw the links between dance and society from the vantage point of large-structure, in the present. “Where historians tend to be satisfied with multi-stranded but ultimately causally diffuse accounts, social scientists tend to single out what they take to be the most causally important features of the world and to elaborate their dynamics systematically.”⁸¹

More importantly, perhaps, Gert was suspicious of the idea of dance as Nietzschean tragic culture. Viewing personal motives of individual figures within the dance world as unstable as the forms of social representation she depicted onstage, Gert opposed efforts to centralize the dance community according to a particular vision or style of dancing. In further contrast to her modern dance contemporaries, Gert saw a radical potential in the forces of modern society whose forms of technology, culture, and entertainment offered new modes to liberate social time and representation. Divided by politics, Brandenburg and Gert were united in their efforts to shape dance as a method for theorizing social order and change.

⁸¹ William Sewell, “Theory, History, and Social Science,” 14.

Conclusion

From Harmony to Happiness: German Modern Dance, 1928 - 1936

The German Dancers' Congresses

In 1928, the editors of *Schrifttanz*, a journal dedicated to the dissemination of Laban's ideas, declared in their inaugural issue that the extraordinary popularity of dance in Germany was no proof of a flourishing art form. Instead, it was clear evidence of dance's decline. "Artistic dance had such a boom in our time that it has finally earned recognition in wider circles as a full-fledged, independent form comparable to music and the other arts," they declared. "Dance has even become fashionable and, if one closely follows its development, it is already in danger of losing its depth."¹ The editors were writing on behalf of the German *Schrifttanz* Society [*Deutsche Gesellschaft Für Schrifttanz*], a term difficult to translate into English ["writing-as-dance," "dance script," or "dance-writing"], but which largely referred to Laban's notational system, "Kinetography," which was finalized and released to the public the previous summer in conjunction with a congress on dance held in Magdeburg.

Both the editors and the *Schrifttanz* Society were writing in response to what they considered to be an increasing lack of specialization among dancers. This was reflected by the emergence of a growing body of trained experts and everyday performers [*Fach- und Laienkreise*]. The editors were particularly concerned about this new demographic. Though it clearly signaled the popularity of modern dance across Germany, its rapid rate of expansion threatened to outpace the efforts of dance community leaders, such as Laban, to educate students in the rules and regulations of harmonic law. If modern dancers were to avoid the mistakes of the

¹ Anonymous, Editor's Introduction, *Schrifttanz* Jg.1, H1 (Juni 1928), 1.

previous decades – particularly in the wake of the First World War and the proliferation of dilettantism in the early years of the Republic – they needed strong, centralized administration for the community. More importantly, individual dancers needed to learn how to filter amateurism from artistry, which protected and maintained dance’s basic principles for all.

Not every dancer is creative! And the emotional improvisation of the inventive, untalented dancer is no artwork! [...] There are dancers who produce, and dancers who reproduce. But the work and worth of a dance are sapped by the death of its performers, if they are not held down by writing. All historical attempts to develop dance-writing have been imperfect [...] Not until our time, with its physical and biological research, could the perfect system of *Tanzschrift* be produced.²

Laban’s system had arrived just in time. As their names implied, “*Tanzschrift*” and “*Schrifttanz*” were two aspects of the same practice. Though the editors refrained from explicit definitions, it was the new face of embodied conservatism. “A stage in the development of mankind is achieved, identical to art of the word through alphabetic script – the art of sound developed through harmonic laws and notational systems.” Though the authors of the editorial were unlisted, Brandenburg and Laban’s voices were unmistakable among them.

During the course of the late 1920s and early 1930s, embodied conservatism undergirded the institutional centralization of dance in Germany. Shaped by Laban and Brandenburg’s conservative vision for social order, harmony, and historical development, *Schrifttanz* was published quarterly from 1928 to 1931. Based in Vienna, it was run by Alfred Schlee, a pianist by training who had studied with Jaques-Dalcroze, trained in Dresden with Wigman, and who collaborated in the 1920s and 1930s on performance-works with Laban and Bauhaus member

² Anonymous, Editor's Introduction, *Schrifttanz* Jg.1, H1, 1.

Oskar Schlemmer.³ A fierce advocate of Laban's for many years, Schlee allegedly began searching for a publisher for a journal dedicated to Laban's ideas as early as 1922, eventually finding a home six years later with Universal Edition, a music publisher known for promoting contemporary composers such as Béla Bartok, Franz Schreker, Alexander Zemlinsky, and Egon Wellesz, many of whom had collaborated with dancers.⁴

Embodied conservatives were also the organizers of the three “Dancer’s Congresses” held in 1927, 1928 and 1930 in Magdeburg, Essen, and Munich, respectively. The publication of *Schrifttanz* – as well as *Der Tanz*, another dance specialist publication run by Josef Lewitan – came on the heels of the inaugural Congress in Magdeburg, a three-day event co-directed by Laban and Schlemmer, who had created the final design for Laban’s script.⁵ Laban and Schlemmer organized the 1927 Congress in conjunction with a months-long exhibition on German theater held in Magdeburg. The Dance Congress, which took place over the course of three days in June, featured lectures, performances, workshops, and smaller working-groups [“*Sektionssitzungen*”] oriented around specific dance-related issues. Lectures were given by dance critics and theorists including Brandenburg, Böhme, Laban, as well as dance historian Oscar Bie (author of the 1905 *Der Tanz als Kunstwerk*), and writers Andrei Levinson and Hans W. Fischer. Bauhaus member Adolf Loos also delivered a lecture on “The physiology of modern dance.”⁶ The Congress featured three separate evenings of performances by Laban’s company,

³ Gunhild Oberzaucher-Schüller, “Annotation zur Geschichte einer Tanzzeitschrift,” in *Schrifttanz: eine Vierteljahresschrift*. Hrsg. Alfred Schlee. Jg1.1928-Jg4.1931 (Hildesheim,1991), 2.

⁴ Oberzaucher-Schüller, “Annotation zur Geschichte einer Tanzzeitschrift.”

⁵ “Dokumente: 1927 Magdeburg.” [Archival Documents from the 1927 Congress at Magdeburg] Reprinted in Hedwig Müller and Patricia Stöckemann ...*jeder Mensch ist ein Tänzer: Ausdruckstanz in Deutschland zwischen 1900 und 1945* (Gießen, 1993), 59.

⁶ “Dokumente: 1927 Magdeburg.” 59 – 61.

the “Tanztheater Laban.” In fact, the company’s “all-Beethoven program” – dances set entirely to works by the iconic German composer – was featured as the opening-night celebration for the Congress. Notably absent from the Congress’ directorial board, speakers, and performances was Wigman, who had been the focus of earlier controversy during the planning-stage between congress organizers, including Laban, Böhme, and Paul Alfred Mehrbach, one of the directors of the German Theater Exhibition.⁷

The 1927 Congress was particularly notable for the practical steps it took to address issues of the dance community’s organization, administration, and leadership. No longer content to merely theorize the communal structures possible through dance, German modern dancers, together with dancers from other styles and aesthetic schools, set to work to create them in practice. In addition to performances and lectures, working groups at the Congress met to address issues central to the dance community and facilitate dialogue between different dance schools, including modern and ballet. All of this was done under Laban’s direction, aimed at consolidating these multiple approaches into a single, coordinated, artistic community. Working groups addressing “artistic questions” convened over specific issues of “Ballet and new dance,” [*Ballett und neuer Tanz*], “laws for dance” [*Gesetze der Tanzkunst*] “productive and reproductive dance,” “masculine and feminine dance,” “dance psychology,” and “applied and independent art” [*angewandte oder eigene Kunst*]. Groups addressing “organizational questions” handled issues of “professional representation, statistics, questions related to pay and earnings [*Gehaltsfragen*] [...] protection for artistic production, agents and impresario[s].” Finally, groups concerned with questions of pedagogy tackled issues of “dance students, field specialization and general education [...] children, dance school accreditation, private-initiatives and state

⁷ Valerie Preston-Dunlop, *Rudolf Laban: An Extraordinary Life* (London, 1998), 130-136.

regulation.”⁸ Participants and organizers deemed the 1927 Congress so successful that it served as the model for subsequent congresses of 1928 and 1930.

Through the German Dance Congresses, metabolic movement expanded outwards to form a network of sovereign subjects who moved freely under harmonic law. Through them, embodied conservatism took shape not just as an approach to the studio or to society, but as a set of practical actions for the realization of the harmonic ideal in everyday life – in education and health, social representation and organization, business administration, economics, and finance.

*

Modern Dance and the Nazi Idea

Five years after Magdeburg, the “*Reich* of the Dancer” that Wigman discovered at the heart of German modern dance fell under the purview of another, larger *Reich*: National Socialism. Embodied conservatives saw Nazism as an extension of harmonic order and, in the transition from Weimar to the Third Reich aided the government in recasting modern dance as the extension of a Nazi vision for society. The sovereign dancer served the Nazi state, yet the leaders of German modern dance saw no contradiction in terms. By 1934, the government subsidized the Wigman and Laban schools, while individuals including Laban and Böhme helped shape government policy on dance until 1935.⁹ Laban directed a series of German Dance Festivals in 1934 and 1935, modeled after the Dance Congresses at Magdeburg, Essen, and

⁸ “Dokumente: 1927 Magdeburg,” 59.

⁹ Lillian Karina and Marion Kant, *Hitler's Dancers*. trans Jonathan Steinberg (Berghahn, 2003), 85 – 146.

Munich.¹⁰ In 1936, Wigman, together with company dancers Gret Palucca, Harald Kreutzberg, and Dorothee Günther, created a performance spectacle for the opening ceremony of that year's Summer Olympics, the "Hitler Games," featuring ten thousand performers and attended by over one hundred thousand spectators.¹¹

The massive spectacle of modern dancers moving as a coordinated body erased any lingering doubts among Germans of dance's power to establish social order. Yet for those sitting in the audience who had followed modern dance before 1936, they knew that dance's social authority extended beyond such material displays of practice and representation. Modern dance joined brain and body, materialism and metaphysics; it translated the embodied "motion of limbs" crucial to the coordination of social order into a metaphysical ideal crucial to the fascist state. Beginning with its inception as the effortless alignment of physical and social forces, embodied conservatism by 1933 crystallized into a form of social thinking that aligned with another vision for social harmony, which also required the coordination of natural, social, and political orders: "the Nazi Idea" of art and society.¹² Based on Eric Michaud's definition of "the National Socialist myth" – "namely, the assimilation of work into artistic activity, the two being confused in the concept of 'creative work,' from which Nazism expected the very best of 'performances' [*Leistungen*]" – the "Nazi Idea" echoed many core ideas of embodied conservatism. Characterized by principles of cohesion, alignment and coordination, the Nazi Idea required the stable movement of one member as a model for the stable movement of all. Forms of emotional or psychological contentment crucial to the Nazi Idea had analogs in the embodied

¹⁰ Karina and Kant, *Hitler's Dancers*, 109 – 123.

¹¹ Susan A. Manning, *Ecstasy and the Demon: Feminism and Nationalism in the Dances of Mary Wigman* (Berkeley, 1993), 194.

¹² Eric Michaud, *The Cult of Art in Nazi Germany*, trans. Janet Lloyd (Stanford, 2004), xiii.

conservative experience of harmony in physical – and for some, psychological – sensations of contentment, satisfaction, and happiness. Aspects of Platonic virtue undergirded German modern dance; Christian theology undergirded the Nazi Idea. The Nazi Idea enabled man to be a creative producer; Laban’s work exposed the generative power of the dancer’s “second nature.” Based upon a “process that was able to lead from *idea* to *form*,” embodied conservatism merged with the Nazi Idea, which “was incorporated into that realization as a dream or vision of happiness – and that is why the process of its realization constituted a guarantee of future happiness. Creative work, as the process of the production or realization of the Idea, was to constitute the joyful onward march of the “community of work” bent on finding itself.”¹³ Before 1933, embodied conservatism championed harmony. By 1936 it promoted happiness.

The political power of this happy, harmonic alignment was described best by Wigman, who articulated how each member of the “dancing community” spoke the harmonic “language of the dance.” Though Wigman described this in 1925, her writing captured modern dance’s social function ten years later in service to the Nazi state. As “a vessel, a mediator, an enunciator” for law and order, the dancer “should become protectors of this thing, should guard over this way of being and lustration so full of secrets [...] What tasks! What responsibilities! But also what positive work, such leadership, when it succeeds!”¹⁴

The story of German modern dance shows that by 1936, ways of thinking about modern dance were inseparable from ways of thinking about social order. Under Nazism, modern dancers’ efforts to ensure and optimize a freedom of movement glaringly exposed a willingness to sacrifice political freedoms – theirs, and others’ – in the process. This dissertation has shown

¹³ Michaud, *The Cult of Art in Nazi Germany*, xiii.

¹⁴ Mary Wigman, “Lektion II,” “Theoretisch – praktischer Übungskurs für werdende Lehrer,” (Sep 1925), AK MWS, 2.4 Mary Wigman Schule, S 1381., 2-3.

that such willingness was not unique to the Nazi period but was inherent to the project of embodied conservatism from the beginning. It was inherent to the idea of modern dance.

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