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Body Language: Seeking a Living Vocabulary for the Dancing Body

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Body Language: Seeking a Living Vocabulary for the Dancing Body

by

Colleen Theresa Culley

A thesis submitted to the Department of Dance of The College at Brockport, State
University of New York, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Fine Arts

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by

Colleen Theresa Culley

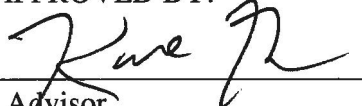
2015

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Abstract

Language is an important part of the dance tradition, used by dance teachers to convey images and understandings of the body for technical skill and expressive development. Furthermore, language does not exist in isolation; it shapes understanding and reveals the conceptual undertones of understanding. Recognizing language as a possible site to integrate theory and practice, I began to ask, “How does the cuing commonly used in dance education influence understandings of the dancing body?”

In order to investigate this question I analyzed language commonly used in dance classrooms based on the contemporary metaphor theories developed by cognitive theorists George Lakoff and Mark Johnson. Through this lens, I noticed an important distinction between language that references the dancing body through non-living metaphors as very different than language where the body is spoken of in terms of a living system. This research identifies several common metaphors used in dance in which the body is understood in terms of non-living systems like instruments, machines, computers, commodities, and wars.

Next, this research looks at movement practices where the body is understood as a living, generative and changing system. The focus of this section is on somatic practices, especially Continuum and the work of Liz Koch, where the possibility of change towards what is possible is the preference. Finally, based on this research, I suggest that dance and movement educators develop a practice of attending to the

language of training the dancing body; after all it is a powerful tool for affecting potential.

Forward

The Dancing Field

Currently, I am both a student and teacher of dance. The dance classroom is a site of lively exchange between past traditions and possibilities for the future, between vulnerability and power, between human experience and rigorous subject matter. In my teaching, the richness of my experience as a student of dance reminds me that carrying it forward matters and inspires my conviction to share its power. However, I know from experience, being a student of dance is also vulnerable. Reflecting on my process, I often ruminate on how much is at stake for students, and how a desire to learn and trust the learning process can be difficult when the earlier wounds of education stymie curiosity. Being a teacher of dance is vulnerable, too. As a dance educator, I hope my material is enough, and that I can honor dance pedagogical traditions while teaching material current enough in a way that resonates with a changing field.

As the primary site of the transference of knowledge in dance education, the body is particularly powerful and vulnerable. Through my reflections on learning and my process of growing into a teacher, questions about the nature of the field and the transference of information have become important. These questions include how bodies are trained, and how the language around training and understanding the body is part of the transference of knowledge, tradition and the future of the field.

Introduction

In 2015, a yoga teacher at a popular studio in Rochester, New York instructed students to move into *flat back*. But, backs are not flat. The body is not flat in any way; it is three-dimensional, having volume and curves. *Flat back* is followed by a command to *straighten elbows*; again, elbows are not straight at all, either in how they manifest when the meeting place of the humerus and radial-ulnar is extended in the body, or in the form the actions can take to the observing eye. Straightness is simply not what happens. And I wonder, what happens when we hear these words and try to live them out, even though we cannot? Is there dissonance when language such as this is internalized by bodies that are fundamentally in conflict with it? Is the body's potential limited with language like this, affecting how we see our bodies and what seems possible?

Having to live in a body is a mysterious circumstance of the human experience. Human bodies are both universal and individual: lived, experienced, researched, labeled, moved and in all these cases written and spoken about.

Having to speak and write about bodies also presents a mysterious circumstance of human experience. Language and felt experience can feel very far from and even at odds with one another. Yet the process of putting words to a felt experience gives shape to the experience and creates a version of the experience that may be different from the experience itself.

My interest in languaging bodies began through my training as a dancer and has been maturing as a movement educator. As a student of dance, I studied a broad

range of dance and movement techniques with particular emphasis on American modern dance traditions and Laban/Bartenieff Movement Analysis. In most dance classes, teachers convey a great deal of their material through speaking. Through language, teachers of dance and other forms of movement influence how their students come to conceive of their bodies, and the role of the body in their livelihood. The power of these words to influence is subtle; their impact not necessarily tangibly witnessed, however, the influence of these words lasts. Their power has been handed down through the various lineages of yoga teachers, echoed in generation after generation of dance educators, written as fitness wisdom on the backs of t-shirts, and the power of these words has slipped into colloquial conversation as cultural artifacts of disciplined bodies.

As a young student of dance I delighted in playing with how my thoughts and images shaped movement, and found that understanding movement in many different ways and translating multiple images brought great possibility to clearly articulated movement. Later, as I have grown to focus more on teaching, this interest has translated into the use of images and metaphors meant to support student learning. Observing others has led me to increasingly consider how these images and metaphors operate on the human system and how they shape conceptions of the body that may or may not be coherent with felt, embodied experiences. Furthermore, I have had many dance classes in which the teacher offers images and metaphors, asking me to conceive of my body in ways I do not want to feel, or are very far from my own understandings.

In this paper I will explore how the language of dance teaching affects the dancer's learning experience. Parts of this writing offer an already familiar critique of Cartesian and mechanical paradigms. These ways of being in the world and training the body are already receding, as new methods emerge. As you read this critique please be aware that my intention is not to dismantle these ways of working all together, instead consider this writing a chance to pause and reflect on how we are trained as dancers and the role language takes on when shaping the body during training. The latter parts of this writing propose and discuss paradigms already in process; that is, ways of working that are emerging in dance training with increasing strength and frequency. As this project calls attention to their presence, my intention is that it also gives agency to their power to unravel past paradigms.

Last year, as a student in Liz Koch's *Core Awareness: Advanced Application Course* I spoke of wanting to develop a language for speaking about bodies that honors their living entity, and I felt, somehow, this would support conceiving of the body as a creative and generative system. At the time I had no idea the kind of study this would become. Liz recommended I study Emilie Conrad's idea of *exaptability*,¹ the human system responds to what is possible, e.g., experiencing, witnessing, merging with and living into new options. Different than adaptability, in the Darwinian tradition, being adaptable means adaptation, changing in response to the need to survive. Trying to survive versus living out one's potentiality are very different paradigms of existence

¹ Emilie Conrad, *Life on Land: The Story of Continuum* (Berkeley: North Atlantic Books, 2007), 21.

Chapter One

Key Concepts in the Field of Bodies

As a candidate for a Masters in Fine Arts in dance, the three main focuses of my time have been scholarship, embodied practice and pedagogy, areas of study, which can feel as though they exist as disparate entities. However, although the parts can seem unrelated to each other, over the past three years certain threads have been tying these themes together. Motivated by the desire to integrate my scholarly research with embodied experience and teaching, my curiosity has landed on questions about the connections between social climate and language and the influence of language on training the dancing body.

Body-centered scholarship offers many voices around what the body is, including existential questions like how the body participates in self-hood and engages with society. Other voices have dealt with questions concerning the body as a material site representing something else. Finally, others have examined how the body is disciplined and controlled, and how it is trained. As these voices weigh in, I am drawn to familiar names of the academy like Michel Foucault, Mary Douglas and Marcel Mauss, whose work, often cited, has suggested the ‘what is happening.’ Ultimately, these voices make me to look at theories of conceptual framing based on language, in order to consider how language influences dance training and understandings of the body.

A primary theme of body scholarship is the Cartesian tradition of ‘I think, therefore I am,’ which promotes corporeal control and assumes the superiority of

intellectual functions. For many scholars, critiquing and challenging the Cartesian tradition is a foundation of their work. As my research followed their lead, the Cartesian tradition became a central organizing concept for analyzing dance training, and its ties with societal values. The gestalt of Cartesian philosophy and experience are in tension with somatic values and associated theories of embodiment in which preference is given to integrated wholeness. As I delved into their distinctions theoretically, these two paradigms revealed themselves in language. Studying language brought my research in relationship with the pedagogical and experiential elements of dance, allowing me to highlight the past, call attention to emerging trends, and use language as a key to the integration of theory and practice.

The following outline of body-scholarship reflects the tension of shifting paradigms and practices. Revolutionary movements emerge from prominent currents; if the Cartesian paradigm were not so dominant, it would not be so important to challenge its constructs. However, my challenging the Cartesian paradigm comes with the caution of creating polarities, where perhaps polarities are not so clear. The following section articulates Cartesian paradigms and somatic paradigms as distinctly counter to each other; however, in the practice of training the dancing body the distinctions between paradigms is murky. At a time when dance training increasingly preferences whole-person values, the act of polarizing the two camps neglects the muddled complexity of language, training, and the nature of a changing field.

The Labeled Body

Throughout this writing I categorize bodies by labeling them based on the gestalt of their patterns. I adopt the practice of identifying and labeling bodies in order to participate in this tradition of describing bodies, as well as to call it into question. When did labeling the different types of bodies begin? What purpose does labeling bodies serve? How does labeling influence the bodies it sets out to describe? Do these distinctions limit the body's potential? Does labeling enact control over these bodies and limit their complexity? In their labeled categories, I speculate on the experience of the body and offer interpretations of how the cultural environment and vocabulary choices land on the body. In doing this, I draw associations between the body-site and cultural feeling-tone. And, in doing this, I am over-simplifying bodies and removing the attributed individual identity from them. Bodies are not neutral. Neither is writing about them, nor labeling them.

I identify and discuss ten body prototypes relevant to dance scholarship and practice, which are important to latter discussions about language and training the body. These bodies are not mutually exclusive or collectively exhaustive; they exist simultaneously and overlap each other, affecting and influencing each other.

The Lived Body

The body is representative of human life, it is literally lived-in ,i.e., it is 'through which' human life is experienced. Phenomenology, a major theoretical approach arguing for the body's role in experience, calls the experiential body that is

one's own, the lived body.² Giving credence to this body, phenomenologists examine how the body is experienced and how its experience shapes ways of knowing. In her book, *Bodies Moving and Moved*, Jaana Parviainen describes how the core-concepts of phenomenology have unfolded from its founder, Edmund Husserl, through its lineage, especially Maurice Merleau-Ponty. Husserl was mostly concerned with describing experience as a detached witness. His perspective on phenomenology morphed significantly through different schools and theorists, including the well-known French philosopher, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, whose concept of phenomenology dealt with the body's integral role in cognition and lived experience, which he outlined in his important book *Phenomenology of Perception*.³ Arguing that the body is not merely a passive object, Merleau-Ponty suggests that the perceiver is not only a cognitive mind, but is an embodied person, bound to the world as a bodily being.⁴

Many other significant scholarly voices have chimed in to the conversation about the body's role in human experience. As Chris Shilling states in his seminal work *The Body and Social Theory*, the body comes to experience “[o]ur organism as our vehicle of being in, experiencing, and creating the world in which we live.”⁵ Similarly addressing the fundamental nature of the body to human experience, Andrew Strathern, in his book *Body Thoughts*, which organizes theoretical

2 Jaana Parviainen, *Bodies Moving and Moved: A Phenomenological Analysis of the Dancing Subject and the Cognitive and Ethical Values of Dance Art* (Tampere: Tampere University Press, 1998), 26.

3 Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *The Phenomenology of Perception* (New York: Routledge, 2014).

4 Jaana Parviainen, *Bodies Moving*, 30-33.

5 Chris Shilling, *The Body and Social Theory* (Washington, D.C.: Sage Publications, 2003), 206.

perspectives on the body, articulates the embodied perspectives of more current thinkers when he states, “[o]nce we recognize that there is a mental component in all bodily states and, conversely, a physical component in all mental states the boundary between mental and physical... disappears” and later, “[e]mbodiment reminds us of the concrete, the here and now presence of people to one another and the full complement of senses and feelings through which they communicate with one another.”⁶

The Trained Body

The trained body exists in multiple layers, from the wide-ranging strokes of adaptation and habituation to specific training regimes meant to sculpt or create a certain body. Broadly speaking, training the body happens through the actions the body does, and especially the actions it does repeatedly. If long hours of sitting and writing a memoir are a frequent practice, the body adapts and adjusts to this, and may increase its capacity to focus and articulate increasingly clear and complex thoughts in writing. If walking busy streets with an abundance of sound is done often, the body adapts.

Training the body as a practice is both empowering and limiting. Becoming adept and skilled at something through practice, especially when it is desired, is an important human endeavor. Training the body into greater skill is one of the most satisfying feelings I know of. As the body becomes adept at certain skills, other possibilities are hedged out, or atrophied. Take the case of sitting and writing a

⁶ Andrew Strathern, *Body Thoughts* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1999), 4.

memoir mentioned above; while these skills develop, the skills of standing and speaking may diminish during this time simply because they are not given attention, and other skills, like writing scientific literature, once a skill of the writer may diminish because the emphasis on a creative, sensory-driven memoir conflicts with organizing the clear relationships outlined by the specific scientific research.

Learning to participate in the discourse of higher education is an example of training the body pursued in depth by Maria Julia Carozzi in her article “Talking Minds.” Carozzi argues that the academies’ neglect of the body’s relevance in thought, and scholarly pursuits trains a body to recede from participation. She traces the beginning models of academic institutions to the structures of religious institutions where power and hierarchy were connected to corporeal control and argues that although the faith-based dogma associated with religion was stripped from the academy, the body-based paradigms and control structures remained.⁷ Describing the body of the educated person whose training has highlighted skills like sitting, writing, reading and thinking, while diminishing others, like valuing sensorial information, Carozzi offers chair and desk structures as an example of how “organized academic rituals invest in separating the body and its participation in scholarly discourse.”⁸ Accordingly, chairs, desks, and other elements characteristic of academic livelihood, like sanitized work environments, and discourses emphasizing

7 Maria Julia Carozzi, “Talking Minds: The Scholastic Construction of Incorporeal Discourse,” in *Body and Society* (London: Sage Publications, 2005).

8 Carozzi, “Talking Minds,” 30.

content (intellect) over form (matter), promote and further train the mover to separate the body from other aspects of the self.

My own experiences offer another aspect of training the body. In my early twenties I took a position as a fitness trainer at a major club in New York City. During this time, I 'tried-on' the training programs I was paid to provide clients. Partnering with another trainer at the club, I sculpted my body through a fitness schedule of calculated lifting, resting, eating, and aerobic exercise. Our weight lifting routine was driven by specific recommendations of mass, sets and repetitions, developed to build strength and hypertrophy. This program absolutely changed the physical shape of my body, as well as what it was capable of doing. It also changed how I felt in my body and my narratives of it. While I experienced myself as stronger physically, I also experienced myself 'stronger,' or more accurately, less penetrable emotionally. I also felt less supple in my body; the few dance classes I took during this time were very challenging, as the articulations and qualities of dance once comfortable to my body felt foreign. While I still lift weights, the intent and intensity is significantly less, as is my overwhelming sense of being stuck in the movement patterns associated with it.

The Social Body

The fact that the body is socially constructed and understood is the focus of several prominent theorists. Marcel Mauss in his book, *Techniques of the Body*, believes the physical body is molded by society and culture, and that the body is a primary site for socialization. Socialization, according to Mauss, instills certain

values and beliefs into body-level behavior and places the body as a site of socially encrypted interpretation.⁹ Based on the premise actions and behaviors have varying levels of social appropriateness, he classifies social codes of behavior and outlines how social appropriateness changes with age, gender, and efficiency.

Feminist sociologist Mary Douglas further develops Mauss's perceptions of socialization by articulating the relationship between the social body and society. Douglas's work explores the relationship between the physical and social, stating, "[t]he social body constrains the way the physical body is perceived."¹⁰ In her book *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of Concepts of Pollution and Taboo*, Douglas cites how the body is understood and how boundaries are established based on social practices. The theme of the book, dirt, allows her to examine ideas of cleanliness and contamination in different cultural contexts and analyzes how the body takes on different meanings and symbolisms depending on respective cultures. For example, Douglas believes we focus on those areas of the body most vulnerable in terms of culturally constructed beliefs about purity.¹¹ In essence, cultural practices are inscribed on the body and hence, the body is vulnerable to such inscriptions. Douglas re-analyzes her earlier findings only to discover how kosher rules in Judaism mirror altar and body practices; that is to say, what was allowed to be sacrificed on the altar could also be consumed. Douglas's research maintains the body as the matter upon which cultural symbols, metaphors, and rituals are inscribed.

9 Marcel Mauss, *Techniques, Technology and Civilisation* (New York: Durkheim Press, 2009).

10 Strathern, *Body Thoughts*, 21.

11 Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of Concepts of Pollution and Taboo* (New York, Routledge, 2003) 112-133.

Douglas's research demonstrates how social beliefs and values enact their power on the physical lives of individuals in the culture. The dynamic interplay between bodily understanding and social values is a reminder as to how body facts and interpretations are not to be confused with truths. Even medical understandings are not free of value, as they are often interpreted to be. For example, to speak of the heart as a pump aligns the heart with an image and function other than itself. As Donna Haraway suggests, "no stories we tell about nature can ever be innocent."¹²

The Cartesian Body

When Renes Descartes took an existing religious dichotomy and turned it into a philosophical one he was responding to the social and political climate of his time, which brought credence and coherence between philosophical and religious thought. Cartesian language maintains body, soul, emotion, and reason as individual operatives, meaning it is possible to study and account for each of these elements of the person as entirely distinct and unaffected by the others. The separation of human parts created a hierarchy of parts, placing reason and intellect as superior to other aspects of the human being.

The Cartesian paradigm distances various aspects of self-hood resulting in fragmentation and consequently, a desire for control over these various aspects. Separations in personhood, characteristic of the Cartesian paradigm, foster dissonance between thought and behavior, and increase the need for self-control. Cartesian ideas promote a patriarchal, dualistic, and materialistic culture in which paradigms of

¹² Lynda Birke, *Feminism and the Biological Body* (New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 2000), 137.

mastery and control are enhanced. As the site upon which control is enacted, the body is made both powerful for its potential to resist and vulnerable for its potential to be dominated.

The 'elusive obviousness' of the Cartesian body hides its presence; evidence of the Cartesian paradigm surfaces frequently in daily life, even in environments seemingly working to unravel it. Phrases like "mind over matter," or "it's all in your mind," are common examples. A yoga teacher I studied from once said, "quiet your mind, so you can control your body." This phrase suggests separation between mind and body and the subsequent need for control. While well-intended, phrases like this reveal the prominent undercurrent of Cartesian-based ideas of separation and a magnetism towards control.

The Controlled Body

The most extreme example of corporeal control is the incarcerated body. Michel Foucault's article "The Body Condemned" focuses on this body by analyzing the elements of incarceration, including what this punishment seeks to repress, its effects, techniques of control and the technologies of power. More than the sum of their parts, Foucault's analysis suggests punishment is not only about reducing crime and violence, but also domination over another. Calling the body the 'best property' to punish, Foucault describes the relationship between punishment and power, likened to the condemned man and the king, where power is exercised (not possessed) on the

body of another.¹³ The exaggerated relationships of control in prisons provide information on the subtler techniques of control used on bodies in less regulated climates.

Foucault outlines a historical trajectory of the body and power, describing how the classical age treated the body as an object that became a target on which to exercise power. From here, the body as “object” became what he calls ‘two books,’ one being Descartes' mechanical, medical model of the body and the other being the techno-political model marked by institutions engaged in training and control. In both cases the body is analyzable and manipulated, situating power outside of the material body. As Foucault says, “[a] body is docile that may be subjected, used, transformed, and improved.”¹⁴

Jennifer Gore documents techniques of power in physical education in her article, “Disciplining Bodies: On the Continuity of Power Relations in Pedagogy.” Drawing on Foucault’s concept of disciplinary power that functions at the level of the body, she analyzes the power dynamics of pedagogy outlining the corporeal methods physical education teachers use to discipline students and gain compliance in the classroom. The eight techniques of power she uses (based on Foucault) are surveillance, normalization, exclusion, classification, distribution, individualization, totalization, and regulation. Citing individualization, the practice of giving

13 Michel Foucault, “The Body Condemned,” in *Discipline and Punish in The Foucault Reader* edited by Paul Rabinow (New York: Pantheon Books, 1984).

14 Ibid., 136.

individually unique character to one's self or other, as the most common technique used, she supports the idea of power and discipline as not necessarily negative; techniques of power are often productive for learning. She sees techniques of power as a method supportive of the construction of knowledge, while many others serve social order and relationships, or the construction and maintenance of subjectivities.¹⁵

One of the tactics used to control the body is surveillance. Surveillance is defined as monitoring, supervising and overseeing the body. When I worked as a personal trainer, it was part of my job to set and follow a schedule of weighing and measuring the bodies of my clients in order to monitor their progress. This practice gave me power in two ways. If clients were seeing the results they wanted I would remind them of the value of my service and our work together. If they were not seeing the results they wanted, I could seek out the problem, probably food, and reprimand them for interfering with our efforts. Surveillance is very common in dance training, as dance educators monitor students' performance in class, in auditions.

The Working Body

The economic structures of a society shape how the body meets the needs of its material survival. In capitalism the body is trained to make money. The roots of connecting the body to financial gain are found in the workplace of early industrial factories, complete with assembly lines, time clocks, and cogwheels of the 1840's. In

15 Jennifer Gore "Disciplining Bodies: On the Continuity of Power Relations in Pedagogy" in *Learning, Space and Identity*, edited by Carrie Paechter, Richard Edwards, Roger Harrison and Peter Twining (London: Sage Publications, 2001), 178.

these factories the worker's body took on new meaning, where its materiality morphed into an object-entity whose output was hitched to production. Physical output and fiscal input became directly linked in theory, and the laboring body came to symbolize profit, while the body became a mechanism for production. For much of business today the working body has remained a symbol for production, though the mechanism and actions associated with its labor have changed.

The deliberate training of a working body began with Frederick Taylor, founding father of scientific management or the "science of the management of others' work,"¹⁶ whose influence is significant for several reasons. First, he split the body into the two dimensions important for work, effort and skill, from which grew systematized methods, much like codified techniques in dance, for creating the working body in order to minimize time and maximize productivity. Secondly, Taylor's deliberate manner of training and organizing the body sought a coordination of the community of bodies designed to maximize all efforts.¹⁷ He taught workers how to organize their physical actions based on his physicality, which was translated to theirs. His goal in these analyses and teachings was to "slice to the core of an action, preserving what was necessary and discarding the rest as the sedimentation of tradition, or worse, artifice spawned by laziness."¹⁸ Although many working bodies of Taylor's time may perform different actions and produce different goods from the

16 Harry Braverman, *Labor and Monopoly Capital* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1998), 25th Anniversary Edition, 62.

17 Shoshana Zuboff, *The Age of the Smart Machine: The Future of Work and Power* (New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1998), 42-3.

18 *Ibid.*, 42.

working bodies of today, the tradition Taylor created spawned a lineage of training the body emphasizing control and obedience.

In 1974, Harry Braverman wrote *Labor and Monopoly Capital: The Degradation of Work in the Twentieth Century*, which sparked a debate, still relevant forty-years later, about the working body of the laborer. Braverman writes as a scholar and a practitioner with many years as an industrial laborer, and he argues that managerial and physical structure industrial work has degraded skill and knowledge of the worker. Giving support to this claim he describes the principles of Scientific Management and Taylorism as:

“If the first principle is the gathering and development of knowledge of labor processes and the second is the concentration of knowledge as the exclusive province of management— together with its essential converse, the absence of such knowledge among workers— then the third is the *use of this monopoly over knowledge to control each step of the labor process and its mode of execution.*”¹⁹

The act of training a compliant and limited body endorses the division of those who ‘know’ from those who ‘do.’ This division into knowing and doing in the workplace parallels the Cartesian division of intellect from body, and reflects the economic interests in privileging intellectual province over physical labor. The hierarchical ranking of mind over body is a metaphor of the manager to laborer relationship, where managers literally ‘oversee,’ looking from above onto the working bodies of their labor force, to monitor and discipline for ideal physical activity.

¹⁹ Braverman, *Labor*, 182.

Contemporary economic theorist Donald Lowe looks at the body in relationship to production and consumption practices in late-capitalist societies. In his recent book, *The Body in Late-Capitalist USA*, Lowe examines the layers of production practices in the late-capitalist system; he noticed an increase in work, designed around cybernetic exchange systems, means workers at all levels of industry spend increased amounts of time at computers. Less of their work has body-based relevance. The worker is nearly without a body, or more accurately, the body is irrelevant to labor and output.²⁰ Does the diminishing body of the late-capitalist workforce point to future body trends where the body is freed from producing expectations towards a new agency of experience? Or is the outcome one where the body's removal from production means it suffers further disconnection from experience and cultural value?

The Object(ified) Body

Expectations of obedience and impulses to objectify are intimately linked to impulses of control. Feminist theorist, Luce Irigaray, suggests the fundamental challenge to selfhood is found in objectification, a process emerging out of the dissonance of seeing others and experiencing one's self. Objectification means seeing a body stripped of its humanness, as an innate object, perhaps like a machine. Irigaray's outline of objectification is based on the order of senses, stating that the bodies of others are understood through vision and the capacity to see the bodies of

²⁰ Donald M. Lowe, *The Body in Late-Capitalist USA* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1995).

others, while the sense of the self develops from experience in our own bodies, a disconnect that seems to enhance the forgetting that we are whole embodied selves.²¹

The Gendered Body

Perceptions of gender in relationship to the body run deep in cultural narratives and provide another layer of insight into the training and languaging of bodies (while an in-depth look is worthy of another project). Historically, the female body has been constructed as amorphous and fluid, and associated with being unstable and out of control. This gendered association of the unstable body was put in relationship with the female's fragile mind.²² That a woman's body could not be controlled gave rise to her being 'pathological' and problematic, as well as in need of discipline and control.

Shilling sees economic and cultural underpinnings of scapegoating women's bodies. Unstable economic changes of the early nineteenth century generated fear among men that their lives were no longer in their control, according to Shilling. Fear of the destabilized individual identity, coupled with the naturalistic views of the body, created a gendered division between male and female bodies. The female body became the scapegoat of man's economic unrest. Later, as industrialization marched along, it "provided an increasing stock of metaphors which were used by the dominant in society to understand and explain social and natural life."²³ These metaphors were often applied to support understandings of gender; for example

21 Luce Irigaray, *An Ethics of Sexual Difference* translated by Carolyn Burke and Gillian C. Gill (New York: Cornell University Press: 1993) 167-170.

22 Shilling, *Body*, 40.

23 *Ibid.*, 43.

menstruation was seen as 'production gone awry' and threatening to 'natural social order.'²⁴ In contrast to the controlled and powerful male body, the female body, considered unruly and feeble, represents a scapegoat of disobedience and a threat to social order. When placed in relationship to the paradigms of training the body, where the emphasis is control and obedience, the picture is increasingly complex. Might dance training and performance, celebrating a pinnacle representation of an obedient body, support patriarchal impulses to restrain the body?

The gendered nature of objectifying associations and practices is particularly developed in relationship to Laura Mulvey's theories of the male gaze. The male gaze is a conceptual framework in which patriarchal ideologies and practices culturally dominate body narratives and values for observing and objectifying others, the primary perspective from which movies and other viewing events are organized.²⁵ Having lived in a culture steeped in the male gaze, Mulvey sees the male gaze as an unnoticed phenomenon.

The Dancing Body

The felt experience of dancing, looking at and analyzing dance can feel like two distinctly different versions of dancing bodies. These two versions can feel at odds with one another, especially when the critiques of looking at and the experiences of those doing are communicating different messages about the same dance.

24 Ibid., 43-45.

25 Laura Mulvey, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema" originally published in *Screen* 16.3 (Autumn, 1975) 6-18.

In her article “Dancing Bodies,” Susan Leigh Foster does a style analysis of different dance techniques and speculates on how the physical training extends beyond the body, shaping the identity and lived experience of dancers who train in each technique. In writing this article Foster integrates movement description and interpretation, organizing her perceptions of different movement styles into an argument of the value of the bodies in each grouping.²⁶ Her article demonstrates that training the dancing body means training values through technique. Movement, after all, is not value free, is not simply a flippant gesture, it is loaded with meaning, memory, desire, social and political power, and value.

The final body Foster describes is the contemporary ‘hired body.’ Foster’s argument has a tone of nostalgia; she preferences yesterday’s dancing bodies over those of today. She describes the dancers in this group as out to please, lacking a core identity, willing to bend and meld to be whatever is needed to get the job. According to Foster, this category applies to current practice; her description of today’s dancer does not necessarily align with the experiential world of the contemporary dancer.

The experience of being analyzed by another, in which the analysis is dissonant with real experience, is disorienting for it is in conflict with the world of the lived body. However common this kind of tension is, it does not mean that the dancer is not also empowered by the experience of dancing. Consider the sense of accomplishment gained from figuring out a combination or gaining proficiency in a movement vocabulary. The sense of physical freedom that comes from training in

²⁶ Susan Leigh Foster, “Dancing Bodies” in *Meaning in Motion* edited by Jane C. Desmond, (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003) 235-257.

dance forms, like the sense of ease and capacity found at the completion of a yoga class, is also part of the dancing body. As dancers, the choice to be looked at and the experience of performing can be empowering and even healing.

Of the list of labeled bodies above, the dancing body experiences most, if not all, of these labels at different times in its training and performance. The dancing body is lived, trained, and sometimes controlled. It is also working, and at times objectified. Studying and being a dancing body means continuously navigating these many embodied experiences, and the theoretical discourses associated with them. Like the dancing bodies themselves, in dance, the relationships between theory and practice just keep moving.

The Integrated Body

Whether the body is integral to self-hood and relevant in consciousness has clearly been the subject of much debate in different schools and traditions of philosophical thought. While much attention has been given to distinct body labels that can distort the body itself, as well as the larger picture of the body, the body is ultimately the manifested material of human life. Put together, the above parade of theorists is getting at the body as integral to human experience and multi-faceted in its presence. As a whole, they bring me to a version of the body that says 'yes' to many distinctions above and then experiences a reality where the many labels exist together in one body: all of the parts coming together to form an integrated human experience.

The body is in constant flux, never fixed, living amongst overlapping identities and processes at any given time. The label 'the integrated body' allows

these experiences and identities to exist simultaneously, and maintains that these overlapping labels can inform each other, yielding information on the layered and complex nature of human experience. Each of these many labels brings clarity to an aspect. The relationships and dialogues between the parts create the whole person and his/her individual uniqueness. While being many bodies at once, the body is allowed to be whole through integration.

Chapter Two

A Case for Language and Bodies

In *Life on Land*, Emilie Conrad writes “[l]anguage is probably one of the greatest tissue shapers of all, primarily because it is audible breath.... The feet (terrain) and language (culture) probably have the greatest *external* impact on the sculpting of tissue.”²⁷ Quantitatively analyzing the impact of language on the body is beyond the scope of this writing, but qualitatively questioning and encouraging others to also pursue the practice of considering their language for training the body is exactly my goal. When those who train bodies use words, in both the spoken language and tone, they are conveying much more than simply words, but also associations of imagery, and feeling tone, they reference political values and create culture.

As a dance instructor for fifteen years, I am ever conscious of how my directions for body movement are interpreted and enacted by my students. The words I use to instruct, guide, discipline, and motivate draw on a generalized and normalized repertoire of images, concepts, and feelings that are shared by my students. It is within this discursive realm that I examine the relationship between language and movement, that is, between the metaphors of typical dance instruction and the subsequent bodily responses they inspire.

A challenge with this kind of study is that the nature of language is to change over time, meaning words take on different meanings and associations given culture,

²⁷ Conrad, *Life*, 149.

audience, and context. This became clear to me in a recent student evaluation of my teaching, in which a student wrote how the Scottish word ‘hootenanny’ used in class to describe an improvisational structure of joyous and unstructured play reportedly caused her to feel so uncomfortable. Consequently, she “shut down.” Though my intention was to offer a space for joyous celebration and community, gathering around class concepts, receiving this feedback was a gift. I assumed they knew these words and that they too delighted in their celebratory nature; yet to her it had no meaning except to sound squeamish. Since receiving this feedback, I provide the historical and cultural context to this word’s meaning, which changed the way students engage with improvisational structure. Attention to this detail also made the improvisation much more of a hootenanny.

Dance educators concerned with bodies use language as a technique of training. The linguistic phrases of dance, like the movements, are part of the tradition, handed down from teacher to student, echoed in studio walls, shaping the culture of body training and the bodies that hear them. Many of these phrases have been successful to the degree of creating the dance we know, but what are these phrases teaching? How do they affect the body? Do these words actually get the results they are striving for? And in such a way, how do they develop and limit the capabilities of the dancing body?

Just as bodies are not neutral, neither is the language used to train and describe them. Speaking about the body is not a value-free endeavor, nor is it free of political agendas. Most often the language used for training and speaking about the

body is innocent enough, coming more from tradition than from the desire to discipline or gain power. However, given its political agency, the entailments of body-speak are worthy of consideration, particularly because of what they reveal and because considering them is an opportunity to replace them with a more accurate vocabulary.

Living and participating in a society steeped in Cartesian and mechanistic economic traditions make examining language of training bodies an endeavor complicated by the numbing of repetition. Given my background and training, my own experiences and understandings cannot be neutral, and in many cases I am so used to Cartesian metaphors I hardly notice them around me. What language refers to the body through other systems? What language honors the lived body? How do these different associations in language affect what we can know and experience our bodies?

To help answer these questions, I will turn to the work of linguist George Lakoff, whose theories of cognition and metaphor offer information on the relationship between language and embodied experience. Lakoff, along with philosopher Mark Johnson, describes *metaphorical concepts* as systemic linguistic expressions and cognitive maps, which demonstrate association through the words used to describe the system. Simply put, we use the language of what we know, the familiar (source domain), to understand what we don't know, the unfamiliar (target domain). The known is mapped onto the unknown via image schemas: that is, durable

and deeply embodied image-feelings based on our primary experiences of being in the world.²⁸

As metaphors create associations by applying language usually meant for one system to another system, they are revealed through the details of language. As Lakoff and Johnson say, “[t]he essence of metaphor is understanding and experiencing one kind of thing in terms of another.”²⁹ When the body is mechanized, it is characterized by its parts and their function, and understood through reductionist relationships, as in x leads to y. The mechanized body has a diminished potential for sensory imagination, an oversimplified understanding of causality and a reduced expressive capacity.

As the body becomes machine-like, the metaphor will deepen, with details further filled-in and increasing associated implications. Repeatedly developing a relationship between systems, (i.e., machine and body) the human system fills in details and comes to experience and embody the associations. If dancers continually practice applying machine metaphors to their bodies, understandings of the body as machine-like will develop and felt experience will shape the living body into being experienced as a machine.

Consider, for example, the expression “she is a machine,” that means the person being spoken of operates perhaps without the influence of feeling, like a machine. In translation, the conceptual metaphor indicates her physical capacity and

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George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By* (Chicago: The University of Chicago, 2003).

29 Lakoff Johnson, *Metaphors We Live*, 5.

style to be reminiscent to that of a machine. Other mechanistic-tinged language could include, “she just keeps on ticking” or “her battery never runs out.” In the cases of both statements she is compared to something machine-like, (e.g., a clock that just keeps ticking, or a toy equipped with an ever-ready battery). From these metaphors extensive image schema configurations form and in the case of mechanistic body-ideas are expressed in phrases like “you have to shift gears” or “use your arm as a lever.”

Analysis of metaphors means considering the organization of thought patterns and their impact on lived experience. In *Metaphors We Live By*, Lakoff and Johnson state that conceptual systems are not just linguistic devices; they are conceptual devices that influence experience, and shape how we live. The following discussion addresses the foundational theoretical framework of metaphor theory.³⁰

Primary Metaphors

Primary metaphors are the basis of Lakoff and Johnson’s book *Philosophy in the Flesh*, which shows how that metaphorical linking between the abstract and concrete to form the basis of moral thought. Primary metaphors bridge the gap between abstract and concrete experience. For example, ‘good’ is a qualitative projection that is abstract and subjective, while ‘up,’ a quantitative assessment, is considered concrete and tangibly measured. Primary metaphors bridge the distance between these two perceptions, meaning up and good link conceptually, (i.e., up-ness associates with the quality of good linked in reasoning). Through repetition over time,

³⁰ Ibid.

'up' in the spatial matrix becomes 'good' in the social and moral code. According to Lakoff and Johnson, the process through which these two perceptions link is personal, but driven by culture and language, and ultimately the linkage is nearly universal, holding consistent across language and culture.

When conceptual metaphors link abstract and concrete concepts, they create layers of relationships within their associations. For example 'up' and 'good' are an example of a primary metaphor, where 'good' is the abstract, and 'up' is the concrete. Up-ness is factual, while 'good' is an interpreted value. Another primary metaphor associated with 'up' in space is being in 'control,' as in 'the top man.' In space, following this logic, 'up' is both good and control. Good and control are represented by the same region in space.³¹ It is interesting to speculate about the implications of this: the projected qualitative judges 'good' and 'control' are linked spatially. Does this suggest that, cognitively, 'control' and 'good' are experienced as related, as in being good means being in control or controllable?

Conceptual Metaphors

Conceptual metaphors, the largest sub-heading in the family of Lakoff and Johnson's metaphor terms, refer to the application of one system of conceptual framing to another system. As described above, this is usually done to describe something unknown in terms of something known, or something complex in terms of something simple. Lakoff and Johnson say conceptual metaphors shape thinking, as well as behavior. A frequently cited example of a conceptual metaphor from

31 George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, *Philosophy in the Flesh: The Embodied Mind and its Challenge to Western Thought* (New York: Basic Books, 1997).

Metaphors We Live By is “argument is war.” The usage of this metaphor could take shape in conversation through phrases like “I attacked her points” or “he won the arguments.” In these phrases, the conceptual framework of a war is applied to argument, shaping the image of an argument as having a quality of war. This language also influences how we might engage in an argument. If an argument is war, the goal may be to win. If an argument is a dialogue, then the goal would be to have a rich and lively discussion.³² In both cases, the metaphorical understanding of argument gives a map for how to behave in an argument.

Target and Source Domains

Analysis of investigating metaphors requires getting more specific about the origin and application of the metaphor. The terms *target domain* and *source domain* describe the directionality of the application of conceptual metaphors. In metaphor theory, the source domain is the system that is known and through which the metaphorical conception is drawn, while the target domain is what is unknown and the system we try to understand through the source domain.

Source Domain: the conceptual system from which the metaphor is drawn

*Example: the body is a **machine***

The machine is the system that is known and the model for another system.

Target Domain: the conceptual system sought to be understood

*Example: the **body** is a machine*

The body is the system that is unknown and interpreted through another system.

³² Ibid., 77-85.

When the body is a source domain, the body is mapped onto other systems, such as instruments or machines. The relationship is reversed when the body is the target domain, and other, better-known systems, are mapped onto the body and the body is understood in terms of another. In instances of training bodies, where bodies are better organized when they are understood, the body is usually the target domain, receiving the frameworks of other systems to help structure and educators and students of make sense out of it.

Image Schemas

Deeply held and supported by embodiment, image schemas are defined by Mark Johnson as “a recurrent pattern, shape, and regularity in, or of, these ongoing ordering activities.”³³ Image schemas are emergent image-feelings based on our primary experiences of being in the world that are shaped and reinforced by embodied experiences and the form of the body itself.³⁴ In short, image schemas describe dynamic, multi-modal patterns of embodied experience linking abstract ideas to concrete concepts. For example, the common image schema of a container is often associated with the possibility of being out of the container, as in, ‘I think outside the box,’ ‘I send you out for milk,’ and ‘the moon is out tonight.’ In all cases ‘out’ implies a spatial relationship where there is a container and the possibility of being out of the container.

33 Mark Johnson, *The Body in the Mind: The Bodily Basis of Meaning, Imagination and Reason* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1987), 29.

34 Penny Tompkins and James Lawley, “Embodied Schema: The Basis of Embodied Cognition” last modified 2015, (<http://www.cleanlanguage.co.uk/articles/articles/245/1/Embodied-Schema-The-basis-of-Embodied-Cognition/Page1.html>).

Since image schemas were identified by Lakoff and Johnson, a newer, though less used term 'embodied schema' has emerged to reflect the physical nature of image schemas. While the term 'image' suggests a visual emphasis, image schemas are not limited to imagery, but actually draw on the sensory and perceptive process of the whole organism. Developed by Johnson in 1987, the term 'embodied schema' was described by researchers Penny Thompson and James Lawley to reflect "the multi-sensory experiential patterns acquired pre-verbally as children, which are later revealed in the pre-suppositional nature of our verbal and nonverbal language."³⁵

Entailments

'Entailment' is a term coined by Johnson used to describe what is imparted on the target domain through the source domain and specifically referring to the implications of a metaphor. According to Johnson entailments are, "meaningful structures for us chiefly at the level of our bodily movements through space, our manipulation of objects, and our perceptual interactions."³⁶ Through entailments we get information on the values of the metaphor and the outcomes of the metaphor. Consider the entailments of the common yoga and dance phrase "flat back." Flat back implies two-dimensionality, and a surface that is even and planed-off, like a table-top might be. The entailments of this image reveal the misleading nature of it. A flat back is biologically impossible; the human form is three-dimensional, the spine is characterized by curves, and the torso has volume and rounded, doming ribs.

35 Ibid.

36 Johnson, *The Body in the Mind*, 29.

The practice of mapping entailments provides information on the network of associations developed through specific conceptual metaphors. Through repetition, metaphorical frameworks develop associations into layers of support and an increasingly substantial and connected web of details. For example, in association with the metaphor of the body as machine, the phrase 'get the motor going' is common in fitness and dance classes. As the machine metaphor is expanded on, other associations of the metaphor fill in supporting details. Overtime, the motor metaphor can develop more details, strengthening its understanding. In this case, the same teacher would later say 'now we are going to step on the gas,' as if to suggest the pace of class is going to increase, or later might say, 'hit the brakes, you are speeding. While the details give greater clarity to the conceptual metaphor, they also add greater confusion to the misleading association. There is no motor in the body as there is in a car, and we don't get it going by inserting and turning the key, nor do we slow down the body by stepping on a brake.

Chapter Three

Bodily Involvement in Metaphor Theory

Traditionally, Lakoff and Johnson have argued that metaphor theory is proof of the body's role in shaping cognitive patterns and experiences. What is important about their inquiry is the impact the metaphorical associations have on the lived experience; that is, how do conceptual metaphors and their entailments affect felt bodily experience and the movement potential of dancing bodies?

George Lakoff, in his article "Contemporary Metaphor Theory," states that metaphor is both a linguistic expression and a conceptual mapping. To draw distinction between the two he uses the terms 'metaphorical expression' "to refer to an individual linguistic expression that is sanctioned by a mapping." Like Lakoff and Johnson, I am concerned with the kind of metaphors described by mapping; because mapping one system onto another brings out the relationship between embodied experience and language.

"The metaphor is not just a matter of language, but of thought and reason. The language is secondary. The mapping is primary, in that it sanctions the use of source domain language and inference patterns for target domain concepts. The mapping is conventional, that is, it is a fixed part of our conceptual system, one of our conventional ways of conceptualizing...."³⁷

37 George Lakoff, "Contemporary Theory of Metaphor" in *Metaphor and Thought* edited by Andrew Ortony (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 208.<http://terpconnect.umd.edu/~israel/lakoff-ConTheorMetaphor.pdf>.

With this statement Lakoff challenges the fundamental definition of metaphor as exclusively a linguistic expression, saying metaphors are not only devices of language but are also devices of cognition and embodiment. Mapping entailments repeatedly demonstrate the thoroughness and details of many conceptual metaphors. With time and repetition metaphors develop networks of support and association for the coupling.

Because of the frequent usage of certain conceptual metaphors through the layered and detailed mapping of entailments, Lakoff says that metaphors are influential on thought and behavior. In other words, through repeatedly developing a relationship between systems the human system comes to experience and embody the associations.

Common Conceptual Metaphors with Body as Target Domain

Dance educators who train dancing bodies towards certain physical and aesthetic ideals/goals regularly draw on conceptual metaphors to communicate to the bodies they are responsible for training. That language affects the physical understanding of dancers, including their image schemas of their body, how it works and what it is to look like, as well as the embodied experience. In short, the conceptual metaphors of training are part of the training and color the moving experience.

There are several prominent conceptual metaphors where the body is the target domain used by dance educators, as well as fitness and yoga educators. In each case, by using another system to aid understanding of the body system, some

elements of the body are heightened and others are diminished. By comparing the body to an instrument, a machine, a commodity of exchange, or a war, are dance educators suggesting an embodied sensibility of that system? And what happens to the moving experience and movement potential when the body is primarily experienced through an alien system such as a machine or a commodity of exchange? For most dance educators, I suspect the use of this metaphorical language is unconscious, more the result of training traditions and cultural influences. However, imagery is not neutral, and as educators, bringing attention to language and imagery means our image schemas become a powerful choice.

Body as Instrument

The back of a College at Brockport dance department t-shirt says, “our bodies are our instruments.” Dance Magazine has a particularly abundant legacy of comparing the dancing body to an instrument. In 2010, writer Bonnie Wonzy wrote, “[i]t’s often said that a dancer’s body is her instrument, but dancers and teachers remain divided on just how much anatomy a dancer needs to know.”³⁸ And, in a July 2012 article Dance Magazine writer Kathleen McGuire says, “[a]s the years go by, you pay more attention to your instrument. So many aspects of both body and mind need to be working at optimum level that longevity is a rare accomplishment. More often than not, your body will decide when it’s time to retire.” Later in the article

38 Bonnie Wonzy, “Your Body Under the Skin” in *Dance Magazine* last updated in 2015, <http://www.dancemagazine.com/issues/March-2010/Your-Body-Under-the-Skin#sthash.Tg2ozlwG.dpuf>.

McGuire quotes Harkness specialist Megan Richardson as saying: “[a] career in dance is a lifetime of honing, readjusting, and refining”.³⁹

For a dancer, metaphorically associating the body with an instrument might seem like an obvious connection, since instruments are elemental mediums of artistic expression involving rigorous practice and both represent the physical medium of performance. In certain ways, the body as instrument feels good in my skin. When I ‘try it on’ in my tissues, I feel celebrated and as though I possess some uniquely superior and privileged quality. While this may feel good to my ego, it is followed by, “well why isn’t it good enough as a body?” as though the dancing body needs to be equated with something else or another art to justify its value. It also suggests a distancing, one in which where clarity of movement is increased, almost as though I can witness myself externally, from the outside, to gain greater control and precision over the actions I perform.

Since one’s response to language and imagery is an individual process and each dancer will resonate differently with images, these accounts describe my experience, which could be very different for others. This said, the individual nature of the response does not diminish the value of considering language and the ‘what else is there and is not there?’

There are advantages to considering the body as instrument for the dancer: the body could be cared for as precious, much like a fine musical instrument, or the idea

³⁹ Kathy McGuire, “Listening to Your Body” in *Dance Magazine* last updated in 2015, <http://www.dancemagazine.com/issues/July-2012/Listening-to-your-body#sthash.hNoddm2i.dpuf>.

of tuning up reinforces the practice of warming up and calibrating self and ensemble. The similarities are highlighted by the metaphor. However, other aspects of this metaphorical linkage represent a kind of colluding in which aspects of both systems are concealed in their association. In this example, instruments are not alive, whereas human bodies are. This fundamental difference is hidden by the metaphorical frame of the body as instrument. Another distinction of the human body is an embodiment of a person, while as instrument, though it can feel like it is part of the musician using it, is an extension of the body system. In this, concealing diminishes aspects of each.

Associating the body with an instrument conveys related associations and messages contained in the coupling. The term 'instrument' carries within it certain entailments and image schemas. To treat the body like an instrument means its purpose is to be played, and at some point it may be called to perform its expressive function. Also implied in the instrument metaphor is that its pedigree is linked to value. The instruments created by famous makers, played by celebrated musicians and well cared-for have the highest worth. Similar logic follows dancing bodies, whose primary purpose is to perform and whose value is to some degree linked to the pedigree from which they have been trained.

Comparing the dancing body to an instrument conceals the fact that the dancing body is a whole human being. An instrument has no feelings, emotions or empathic responses whereas the human body does. When the dancing body is an instrument, the dancer may be willing to put up with a lot of abuse and pain in the pursuit of virtuosity, and may disconnect from the humanity of the dance community.

There are historical ties to this linkage. For much of the 1600's-1900's dance was considered a tertiary art form, meaning it was, at best, secondary to the music accompanying it. Dance visionaries including Rudolph Laban sought to elevate dance's status in the world, working to promote dance as a primary art form that offers a unique and valuable expression not dependent on other forms. In doing this, Laban, among others, frequently drew from musical systems and metaphors in order to theorize.⁴⁰ In this process, perhaps he further supported the application of the musical metaphor to dance.

The body as an instrument resonates with potentiality and expression. Yet the inanimate nature of instruments means I am conceiving of my body as an object, something not alive and something without agency. When my body is an instrument it is special and unique, to be treated as a precious object and honored for what it is capable of, in terms of marketplace value: the better it is the more it is worth. While of course this kind of image 'feels good,' it does not honor the whole of a living body or its potential for self-organizing change.

Machine

In early 2015, I let students know we were going to 'shift gears.' As I muttered that phrase, I imagined my students standing on one moving gear and jumping onto another coming towards them, as if they could pull a lever and the gears of their brains would shift to a new track. Here I was speaking to my students as if their learning processes were a series of mechanized levers and tracks which they

⁴⁰ Valerie Preston-Dunlop, "Laban's Life," (presentation during *The Dynamic Body Intensive*, London, United Kingdom, July, 2013,).

could control like a clock or bicycle, as if their bodies were machines. I realized I was uncritically using a common phrase. When I apologized and explained to them the problem with this metaphor, they were hardly concerned; 'shifting gears' is such a commonplace idea, the mechanizing and de-humanizing nature of it was hidden in its familiarity; after all, I was merely building on an already well-established framework.

In 2013 Lexus published a car commercial featuring dancer Tamara Rojo. The commercial alternates between clips of her and the Lexus IS. The focus in the clips of Rojo is her superb physicality, including her strong, lean and chiseled body, placed in elegant lines, and the performance of impressive skills like lay-backs, fouette turns and grande jetes. The dancer's feats are broken by spliced-in clips of the Lexus IS turning lights on, driving and wheels turning.⁴¹ The splicing and sequencing of events creates confusion between the dancer and the car, as though their identities blend and their movements merge with one another. The commercial ends with the slogan "*a stronger body for better control.*"

A second car commercial created in 2008 for Ford and choreographed by Pilobolus further highlights the blurring of bodies and machines. Beginning with mundane interactions and close ups of dancer's faces, dancers lift, roll, and tangle their bodies to form the images of cars. To complete the image they adjust actual tires and grills into place. Then the use of video techniques highlights the shape by

41 "Poise," car commercial created by Lexus, created in 2013, accessed on March 25, 2015, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rIYVhDKCbqY>.

superimposing faint ghost-like car images over the dancers.⁴² This commercial ends with the slogan “*powered by you.*”

These commercials visually represent the blurring identities of bodies and machines. In both cases the dancing body is compared to a driving machine, both celebrated for their beauty, control, and strength. As symbols of power and individual agency, the highly skilled bodies suggest that although viewers may not possess such a desirable body, the purchase of this car is comparable.

Comparing dancing bodies and machines is not only reserved for the advertising world. Dancers, too, draw on images of machines in describing the function, structure and expression of their bodies. In a 2013 somatic class taught in upstate New York, the student-instructor guided students to “experience your psoas as a conveyor belt, as one side moves up the other side moves down,” based on an exercise she had adapted from another reading. And in a 2014 group fitness class in Rochester, NY, the instructor informed her students “your psoas muscle attaches to thoracic vertebrae-12 to your lesser trochanter.”

In these examples the motion of the assembly line is used as an image to invoke an understanding of the psoas muscle, and in the latter example, the concept of muscles being attached to bones is conveyed to students. The purpose of these images is to convey pathways of connection and pull moving throughout the inner-scape of the body. Yet, through language they also convey image schemas suggesting the body as machine-like.

⁴² “Human Car” car commercial created by Ford, choreographed and performed by Pilobolus, accessed March 25, 2015, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9-Qu_A9BZi8.

In traditional texts, the iliopsoas, or more specifically the iliacus, psoas major and psoas minor, are thought of as a muscle complex originating at the thoracic vertebrae-12, lumbar vertebrae, and iliac fossa running through the deep torso near the spine and through the pelvis and inserting in the lesser trochanter of the femur. The iliopsoas' primary action is to participate in hip flexion, though having a mixture of type-I and type-II muscle fibers it is also used in postural support. This is a straight-forward anatomical story. Yet, suggesting 'your muscles attach to your bones' implies the muscles and bones have been connected much like the emergency brake of parts of my Bernina sewing machine or my Ford Fiesta car. This is a misleading image schema; nobody attached my muscles to my bones.

In 2008 National Geographic published a DVD documentary titled *The Incredible Human Machine*. The documentary is filled with stunning images of inside the human body and a nearly overwhelming abundance of facts about its functioning. However, the title and contents of this documentary miss a crucial point, we are not machines and the human experience is not merely a conglomeration of facts.⁴³ Humans have desires, emotions, feelings, preconceived notions, and perceptions. While the point of this documentary was not to explore the human condition, most materials exploring the body overwhelmingly take the position of this documentary, a position whose prevalence understates the complexity of the body and promotes the belief that the machine-like body can be controlled.

43 "Incredible Human Machine," created by National Geographic, (NIGHT Inc., 2007).

In her book *Feminism and the Biological Body*, Lynda Birke writes of how her training as a biological researcher has often felt in conflict with her felt experiential understandings of her body. Birke argues that many medical image/embodied schemas are misleading and their cultural power furthers their agency to influence thought about the body. Challenging representations like National Geographic's *The Incredible Human Machine* leads to fragmentation and in fragmentation misunderstood ideas of control. She says:

“Science can thus carry on arrogating to itself responsibility for ‘naming nature’ ... whatever metaphors we use, the biological body carries on its biological process... The forms of representation used to narrate ‘how the body works’ themselves affect how we live our bodies. We inherit a language of biomedicine that insists on reducing our bodies to constituent parts; how we live in our bodies is intimately affected by the power of that language.... We have learned to compartmentalize our bodies, and thus our experience of living them.”⁴⁴

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Control and the Machine Metaphor

A preference for having control over the body is a subtle symptom of the metaphorical coupling of body as and machine. The stereotypical notion of ballet, and dance in general, is the bodily control needed to make hard things look easy. While I appreciate the tradition and spectacle in these types of dance, it brings with it questions around why bodily control is culturally desirable or attractive. What is the symbolic significance of having control over one's own body? What is the significance of this to personhood? How about to social order? And when corporeal

44 Birke, *Feminism*, 159.

45 *Ibid.*, 146.

control is coupled with the image of ease, as it is in many Western contemporary dance forms, such questions take on more layers of significance.

According to a Google search on April 28th, 2015 'control'⁴⁶ as a noun means:

the power to influence or direct people's behavior or the course of events, as in "the whole operation is under the control of a production manager," with synonyms being jurisdiction, sway, power, authority, command, dominance, government, mastery, leadership, role, sovereign, supremacy, and ascendancy.

According to the same Google searchdictionary.com 'control' as a verb means:

determine the behavior or supervise the running of, as in, "he was appointed to control the company's marketing strategy, with synonyms being to be in charge of, run, manage, direct, administer, hear, preside over, supervise, superintend, and steer.

Many of my beginning dance students write in their reflections that through their experiences in a dance class they are learning to control their bodies. I usually respond by asking them "Really? What do you mean by this? Are you sure you mean 'control'?"

Having control over one's matter is an embodied version of the Cartesian divide. Controlling the body usually means 'mind over matter.' As an athlete, I have vivid memories of 'mind over matter-ing' my way to jock success. I remember playing with the strength of my intention, believing I was setting clear goals in my mind and then demanding my matter produce these goals. All other information, e.g., sensations, perceptions, were in service to the goal I had set. While these games were satisfying for what I could achieve, there were many instances where despite my sincerest efforts to convince my body of its abilities I just could not achieve the

46 "Control" accessed on April, 2015, https://www.google.com/webhp?sourceid=chrome-instant&rlz=1C5CHFA_enUS576US577&ion=1&espv=2&ie=UTF-8#q=control%20definition.

results I intended. My matter just would not cooperate in my desires for increased turns, higher legs, or increased turn-out.

Later in my career as a dancer, when learning from teachers whose paradigms moved away from control to opening possibilities, exploring what is possible, I started to experience these changes happening not from control, but from paradigms of allowing, and sensing. The things I had been working so hard for in one manner actually came when I began working from a completely different inroad.

Yet, the concept of corporeal control is still a favorite. In the Pilates system, a body training program specializing in core strength, one of the fundamental principles is ‘contrology.’ In a dermatologist appointment (2014), the doctor I saw encouraged me to start ‘controlling my aging process’ (as if this is actually possible). In this instance, controlling the body meant keeping it from changing or managing its change.

The body as a machine trickles into many areas of culture and influences the language and experience of the body. Major cultural themes, e.g., compartmentalization and control prevalent in physical training and medical practices, emerge from the body as a machine metaphor. When the dancer’s body is a machine, it means the dancer learns to follow the pulse of the inner motor, pull up the arches, and hold in the stomach. The dancer also learns to disassociate her physicality from the rest of her self-hood, as though her body functions through the mind’s intention to control it. Self-organizing life processes are not part of the conversation, and as a result, I suspect limit what is possible for the dancing body.

Computer

Applying the metaphor of a computer to the body is another version of the machine metaphor. Phrases in dance like ‘hit your reset button,’ ‘plug in,’ or ‘improvise with the tools in you database,’ are references to the computer applied to the body in dance training. The machine and computer metaphors emerge from similar patterns of making sense out of the body by applying a different model to the human system.

The machine and computer metaphors also diverge from each other in several important ways. The machine metaphor invokes images of gears, levers, pulleys and other three-dimensional mechanical relationships. It also invokes causality based on what is visually understood through relationships in the machine. The computer metaphor invokes images more mysterious and hidden and less concrete than the machine metaphor. The function of computers is less obvious to the observer, its inner workings a complex web of messages sent along electrical currents and pathways. When the body is understood through computer metaphors, images like processing information, crunching numbers, networking connections, hitting power buttons, and storing gigabytes of data come to mind.

Economic Commodity

Machines and computers initially functioned in the workplace to increase productivity and efficiency of output. Over time, machines and computers have become mainstream devices meant to ease physical labor in many aspects of life; however, their early roots and primary purposes still influence how they are

understood. When the metaphors of machine and computer are used in body training situations, are their roots of productivity, output and exchange, still resonating in the human system?

The early days of management theory equated human physicality with monetary gain. Take the example of the early Taylorism experiments in which laborers were timed, measured, and ranked for their capacity to stack logs. Physical fatigue was ignored, as were recuperation needs and considerations of laborer health. As Taylorisms methods grew, the most efficient laborers were identified, and their movements analyzed and taught to other workers. Through rigorous disciplinary measures, with the goal of creating a work force of homogenized efficiency, the movement of labor grew uniform and systematized.

The dancing body can embody similar associations, including regimented input/output functions and value assigned to it in relationship to its skill. Dancers earning money as performers are using their bodies in exchange for monetary compensation, and dancing bodies, like laboring bodies, are ranked for skill and efficiency. Metaphors of the dancing body that 'gets used up' or 'worn out' echo machine-like conceptions of its livelihood. Phrases like 'the more you put in, the more you get out' model exchanging physicality for benefit in the form of increased skill, monetary gain, or recognition.

The dancing bodies can also be linked to value, coupling skill with worth. To a certain extent, this makes sense; dancing bodies are performing bodies and their ability to execute the technique and skills of dance is a main goal of dance training.

However, the reality of basing the worth of dancing bodies on their skill is different than highlighting the body's value and teaching bodies to dance through metaphors of value and exchange. I took a ballet class from a New York City-based instructor who in 2012 would say, "who would pay to see that?" letting students know their pirouettes were not up to her expectations. This phrase magnifies the dancing body as a body of worth.

Other idioms place the body as an employee in the workforce. While these are not as directly related to body training, they are often mentioned in student papers and deserve mention here. One phrase I frequently read is that dance helps students 'manage their stress.' The idea of managing one's stress is curious to me; its metaphor is related to workplace structure, and implies that stress is an employee. But, stress is not an employee; it is a biological response and an emotional state, and 'managing it' is misleading to what stress is, why and how it happens. Another example of referring to the body as an employee is the bargaining relationship often developed in weight-loss and fitness paradigms. Examples of this include reasoning with the body in phrases like, "if I get through this exercise class, I will be able to eat _____," or "because I was 'bad' at the Super Bowl, I am punishing myself with oatmeal for breakfast." The term 'bad' implies overeating, or eating food considered not healthy.

An employee/manager relationship is implied, one in which a Cartesian separation of body and mind is taking place; secondly, there is a Taylorist implication that the body is a symbol of obedience and production. Machine, computer, or

employee metaphors in body-training traditions suggest the idea of commodification and exchange as applied to the body. Does the dancing body risk being undermined and deprived of other sensory and perceptive processes and possibilities?

War

When I first began exploring the feasibility and relevance of this inquiry, I was uncertain if, in fact, these conceptual metaphors of the body in body-training were as common as I suspected, and I was suspicious about my budding concern for how they affected felt experience and conceptions of what is possible for the body. Then, still in the early phases of what-it-could-be, I was in a yoga class, again in Rochester, NY. As the teacher opened class by outlining his plan for the next 75 minutes, he announced, “[w]e are going to attack your hip joints in six different ways.” In response, most of the other students heaved a great sigh, which I interpreted as a show of support, a non-verbal signal of ‘what a great idea.’

Wait, WHAT?! I thought. Attacking the hip joints implies that my hip joints are separate from me and I am at war with my hip joints, and that one of us, me or my hip joints, will win and the other will lose. This was problematic on so many levels. First, there was the misleading image that my hip joints are separate from the whole of me. Next, there was the association with war, and effectively declaring war on the body, something I do not exactly want to try on, and does not comply with the message of peace so frequently associated with yoga. Also troubling was the word ‘attack,’ a word that implies violence and the attempt to dominate or control. And

finally, most concerning of all, was how many people agreed that attacking their hip joints was exactly what they wanted to do this evening.

Since that 'ah-ha' in the yoga classroom I have been drawing many examples of metaphors from yoga classes, mostly because right now I am taking more yoga than I am dance. However, I have found that metaphors of war are quite frequent in the dance context, too. In December 2014, a dance colleague said at the beginning of technique class: "my body is against me today." Another one I heard was from the teacher who said, "to win, you have to go to the hardest place and work against it."

Militaristic models of the body are shaped by historical and political influences. While relevant to body training protocols, war metaphors are also common in medical and biological body-think and I suspect speak to the prevalence and ease of this association. In *Feminism and the Biological Body*, a book I have drawn heavily on, Lynda Birke suggests that the metaphor of the nerve as an electrical current originated with technology developed for the military, that later proved useful in measuring the electrical current-nature of the nervous system. She argues, "the heritage of war are etched deep into the narratives of nervous system communication."⁴⁷ After demonstrating the historical relationship between the nervous system and war, she describes the common associations of the immune system as a war. Invoking the common images of the immune system battling off outsider forces, sometimes called impurities, I remember a high school health cartoon video where the immune cells literally carried guns and charged the germ forces out

⁴⁷ Birke, *Feminism*, 104.

of the body. While these examples do not relate specifically to training dancing bodies, they offer information on how culturally they seep into understanding.

When metaphors of war are applied to the human body, several themes emerge: dualism, conflict, and domination. One dance cohort said in a Spring 2015 conversation, “my body is fighting back,” in reference to her feeling physically overworked. This statement contains all three implications of the image schema: dualism, conflict and domination. In the dualistic instance, the phrase reflects how she and her body are separate entities, with different needs, values and possibly even territories. In terms of conflict, her statement references the conflict of interests between what feels like the needs of her body and the needs of some other part of her. And, in terms of domination, her phrase suggests that her body, and the implied other part, are fighting to dominate one another, as if the territory they are fighting over cannot honor both simultaneously.

The presence of war metaphors in body and dance training practices has been surprising. In part, because of how prevalent they are, and in part, because of violence they contain. War metaphors are often in contrast to the images portrayed by the environment they are used in. For example, many yoga teachers use war metaphors, despite promoting images of peacefulness and ‘letting go.’ Metaphors of war reflect a deeper disconnect than simply Cartesian values, but a dissonance where parts of the

self are vying for territory and power. War metaphors reveal layers of cultural ideas, where war is waged with other countries and within one's own self.⁴⁸

Dealing with the Image Schemas

Analysis of the image/embodied schemas associated with each metaphor highlights the related conceptual maps and entailments. In each of the above examples, the image/embodied schema suggests certain qualities. The following outline organizes the primary elements of image/embodied schemas for the metaphors discussed above.

Image schema of instruments: Instruments are objects to be played. As tools used for the expression of sound, they require a musician to play them. They are to be treated with care and respect, and need to be tuned regularly to maintain their function. They themselves are free of empathy, feeling, and agency, though they convey these qualities in performance.

Image schema of machines: Machines are hard, made of metal or plastic with interchangeable parts. Machines imply fixity and stability. As stable objects, change in a machine happens to a part, and does not affect the whole. Their function and repair is controlled by others. They are plugged in and powered by external sources of energy. Used to maximize output while minimizing human effort, the word 'efficiency' comes to mind.

Image schema of computers: Computers are devices programmed to carry out arithmetic or logical operations automatically. The processing element carries out

⁴⁸ As I wrote this section in a café in Rochester, NY, a girl of about 7 or 8 years of age played a war video game at the table behind me.

arithmetic and logic operations, and a sequencing and control unit can change the order of operations in response to stored information. Via computers information is accessed, downloaded, processed, shared, and saved. Two-dimensional screens allow users access to the information. As ‘smart machines,’ computers are powered on and off, fixed and stable, while the non-tangible material running through them is malleable and yet always present.

Image schema of commodities: Commodities are items of exchange, to be bought and sold, consumed and thrown out. Created to generate profit, and consumed for enjoyment, throughout the process of exchange, power is enacted on them by others. Priced on value, a designer good is more rare and special than a good considered mainstream and common.

Image schema of war: Wars are fights or conflicts where health and human life is on the line. Wars have winners and losers, with the implication of strategic moves made in attempt to stifle and conquer one another.

Image schema of living systems: Living systems are complex and layered. Defined by change and fluctuation, where parts affect the whole, living systems are less controllable and finite than stable material objects, often with self-organizing properties.

Living Systems and Industrialized Objects

When conceptual metaphors are used to communicate bodily understandings, certain aspects of the body are highlighted, while other aspects are concealed. In instances when metaphorical concepts associated with systems of machination,

economy, or war are placed on the living body, the living, changing human system, is often among the elements concealed in the metaphor, while other aspects like function and form are highlighted. Applying the computer metaphor to the body highlights the body's ability to take in information, but conceals many other parts of the human body, like its three-dimensionality, its individual agency, and its sensorial possibility. Using the war metaphor on the human body highlights conflict, perhaps between desire and experience, and conceals integrated relationships, including disease, as part of a living system.

Industrialized objects are static, inanimate entities, defined by function and value. Bodies are moving, changing entities, constantly defined and redefined. Placing image schemas of fixed objects and non-living systems on the human body can create tension between suggested and felt experience. I suspect that this dissonance fosters confusion and dis-integration in the development of the human system and reduces embodied capacity.

Many of the metaphorical concepts discussed above, when applied to the body, result in fantastical fallacies, that is, false versions of the body as based in reality, and, as such are not actually possible. For example, the mechanically-oriented directive mentioned earlier, 'move into flat back,' is common in dance techniques like Horton, Graham and Simonson. Anatomically, there is no such thing as a flat back. The spine has five curves, and the back body is shaped by the curvature of this bony structure, as well as other factors including its neuromuscular patterning and internal organs. 'Flat back' implies two-dimensionality, like a piece of paper. The

body is, by nature, three-dimensional, and language and image schemas should reflect this. Another fantastical fallacy is the concept of homeostasis, a biological term that suggests the potential to achieve a state of no change, or balance; these phrases suggest image schemas that are unachievable.

Fantasy images are problematic for several reasons. They do not honor the reality of a living system and promote embodied/image schemas that are not real. These conceptual metaphors confuse the human system as it attempts to achieve a fallacy, searching for something not real and not connected to its sensorial experience. I suspect these discrepancies between conceptual metaphors, image schemas, and felt experience result in a form of disembodiment, in which the body fails to achieve external goals for it, creating a state of dis-integration between intention and action.

Specifically, the language in many dance-training environments come from image schemas that are at odds with the dancing body as a living system and interfere with potentially generative experiences of the embodied self, e.g., potentially limiting the role of sensation and perceptive processes. In dance, bodies are often spoken of as parts, not inclusive of a selfhood: phrases like, “my left leg doesn’t like me right now,” as if the leg is not part of the self. As a discipline often about the development and celebration of corporeal control, treating dancing bodies as objects, not living selves, is quite common and arguably serves the values of control. For dancers, the parts fallacy distorts the potential for wholeness and puts language and felt experience in dissonance with each other.

My argument is not that all metaphors of the body, not representative of living systems, should be abolished in dance training. They have served the dance training tradition thus far, and inspired valuable understandings of the body. Non-living metaphors need to be considered more carefully for their influence on the human system, and when possible should be substituted by a living language.

Studying the language of professionals in body-based fields is a timely practice whose ultimate goal is to promote physical change; changing the language can shift the overarching understandings as well as the practical experience. Instead of muscles 'originating, inserting and attaching' we could think of them 'emerging from, growing into, and in connection with boney structures.'⁴⁹ The use of non-living and bio-mechanical metaphors needs to be considered for what it promotes. If dance educators have language that increases the possibility of the human body, why not use it? There are many ideas of the body where re-writing the narrative towards living models would serve to integrate the system by connecting experience with concept. However, this means resolving language and sensation discrepancies that are so common they are hardly noticed.

⁴⁹ This concept and language has been inspired by other teachers, including Liz Koch and Bonnie Bainbridge-Cohen.

Chapter Four

Practices for the Living Body

Language, and specifically conceptual metaphors, are an example of how mechanistic, capitalistic and generally de-humanizing paradigms have influenced how our bodies are understood and our dance practices have been shaped in accordance. Superficially, the language is a symptom of educators and students who are steeped in these cultural norms. More deeply, examining, unraveling and creating new language for training the body allow new understandings and paradigms of the body to emerge.

When I joined a continuum class in 2014, I found a community of movers actually doing in practice what I had been seeking in theory. In Continuum the body is rigorously spoken of and thought of as alive, organized in spiral-like patterns and responsive to internal and external environments through fluid oscillating movements. Through these classes, and the guidance of Priscilla Aucincloss, I experienced a movement practice and philosophical container that brought theory to life and offered me insight into what becomes possible in the body when it is conceived of as a truly living, self-organizing entity. And, in these classes I came to believe the best evidence of the need to move away from the mechanical towards the living is provided by the experience of doing it.

Continuum is a somatic movement practice developed by Emilie Conrad in which breath, sound, and touch are used to awaken the fluid intelligence in the body and create wave-like undulations in tissue. When described in this way, Continuum

seems like it comes from a different world than most dance training, and in many ways it does. Yet, as my experiences in Continuum opened up new ways of conceiving of movement and changed the skill of my dancing body, I have come to understand the larger values and theories of Continuum as part of the foundation for shifting models of the dancing body towards living systems.

In practicing Continuum, I experience being highly aware of the inner-scape of my body, like a heightened experience of being profoundly embodied. The wave-like uncoiling motion in Continuum is not actively controlled, as in, I do not send it to places in my body, but allow it to unfold on its own. The serendipitous nature of the body's uncoiling and revealing made possible through this practice is surprising and comforting. After a session, called a 'dive,' I usually feel more formed in my material self, more ease in being, calm and centered. Through my practice of Continuum, my dancing has changed significantly. First, I experience much more joy in my dancing, and find my body easier and more supple than it was two years ago. I also feel my body has become more vibrant, with greater access to its sensory and perceptive worlds.

Continuum is one technique in a larger body of work referred to as Somatics. In dance training, Somatics is usually used towards the goals of dance training, or as the sub-title of a recent text *Dance and Somatics* sums it up: '*body-mind principles of teaching and performance*.'⁵⁰ In dance, somatic training involves ways of working with the body that are inclusive of sensory and perceptive processes, where

⁵⁰ Julie A. Brodie, and Eline E. Lobel, *Dance and Somatics: Mind-Body Principles of Teaching and Performing*, (Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland and Company Inc., 2012).

techniques like imagery, touch and experiential anatomy are used to increase the functional and expressive capacities of the dancer. In this way, dance has adopted the somatic concepts and techniques in relationship to what is useful to dancers. However, this means many aspects of the somatics traditions and values are not yet common in dance training.

A theme in somatic traditions is to connect theory with embodied practice. Somatics is a body of practices for working with the body, focused on the capacity for change on a body level to inspire change in the whole human system. The term 'somatics' was first coined by Thomas Hanna, and derived from the Latin word 'soma' for body. According to the International Somatic Movement Education and Therapist Association (ISMETA) website, somatics developed ““through a process of inquiry into how consciousness inhabits the living body.””⁵¹ In my teaching and writing I often define somatics simply as ‘whole person approaches to movement, and movement as an approach to the whole person.’

Among the earliest of somatic educators was Mabel E. Todd, who wrote *The Thinking Body* in 1937. While organized around anatomical information, Todd’s book is a foundational text for how physiological information informs psychological processes. Despite occasional mechanistic images and language, her work was in its time ground-breaking. Todd introduced an interpretation of the body as part of the whole human, and taught how the body is an intelligent entity in its own right.⁵² Todd

51 “International Somatic Movement Educator and Therapist Association,” last updated in March, 2015, <http://www.ismeta.org/#!deals>.

52 Mabel E. Todd, *The Thinking Body* (Princeton: Princeton Book Company, 1937).

believed the body was of nature, for example not steel, not a machine, but of a life-process and involved in the emotional reality of the human.

Later early contributors included Stanley Kelerman who wrote *Emotional Anatomy*. In Kelerman's perspective, he could 'read' bodies for their emotional habits and reactions based on their physical form, including where tissue has built up and diminished, and how weight is carried.⁵³ While I have concerns about Kelerman's work as likened to a pop-psychology movement of the body for his time, his writing and research brought a new layer to the somatic field. Arguing that the body's form is shaped by psychological patterns, Kelerman brought the emotional into dialogue with the physical, and laid the foundation for tracking how form and experience are dynamically intertwined.

The next major contributors to the lineage of somatic work included Irene Dowd and Bonnie Bainbridge-Cohen, whose work aims to bridge physiological information with personal experience. Dowd's book, *Taking Root to Fly*, attempts to bring her experience and her understanding of anatomical information together. For example, in one passage she articulates how through dreams and discipline she shifted her habitual postural pattern of retreating in her sternum to one of advancing forward through this area.⁵⁴ Through the process of physical change, she describes emotional and instinctual changes in her behavior, including that while the physical pain of her earlier holding pattern subsided, her emotional responses to her

53 Stanley Kelerman, *Emotional Anatomy* (Berkeley: Center Press, 1985).

54 Irene Dowd, *Taking Root to Fly: Articles on Functional Anatomy* (New York: Contact Editions, 2003), 45-53.

environment and interactions were also affected by the shift in the carriage of her ribcage. Ultimately, she writes that the new alignment pattern was one she was not emotionally willing to accept, and she returned to earlier postural patterns.

Bonnie Bainbridge-Cohen, the founder of Body-Mind Centering®, brings a similar emphasis on physiological knowledge, integrating experiential and developmental perspectives. Initially, Cohen studied Laban Movement Analysis with Irmgard Bartenieff, but felt understandings of the inner body were underdeveloped, and set out to expand on it. Her subsequent work, *The Body-Mind Centering system*, focuses on the different body systems and the developmental movement patterns. Cohen emphasizes ‘getting in touch with the mind of the body.’ Similar to Kelerman, Cohen suggests that the form of the body is patterned by intellectual and psychological.

“There is something in nature that forms patterns. We, as part of nature, also form patterns. The mind is like the wind and the body is like the sand; if you want to know how the wind is blowing, you can look at the sand.”⁵⁵

In her writings and teachings, including a collection of essays, *Sensing, Feeling and Action: The Experiential Anatomy of Body-Mind Centering*, Cohen presents anatomical information from the perspective of experiencing focused on being-with, listening, and moving in response. Body-Mind Centering preferences the

55 Bonnie Bainbridge-Cohen, “Body Mind Centering,” <http://www.bodymindcentering.com/introduction-body-mind-centeringr>.

knowledge of the experiencer and brings awareness to the vitality and the metaphors of these areas of the body.⁵⁶

Body-Mind Centering also interprets the inner scape of the body through its outer form. For example, Cohen ‘reads’ photographs of the biological body and comments on organ vitality and psychological patterns, e.g., “he has supple and healthy kidneys as evidenced by the bulbous support through his ribcage and back body”; or “look at the healthy vibrant venous flow through the nervous system.” When her work manifests in this form I wonder if it interferes with her experientially-based work that preferences the knowledge of the doer, and if the voice of the expert-looking-in commands more authority than the doer.

As the somatic field has developed, the clarity of the values and details has also developed. Visionary somatic educator Liz Koch, who specializes in core integrity and specifically the iliopsoas, is nudging the field into new directions through her specific interpretation of core. Koch is important because she is an example of weaving the physiological with the metaphorical, the personal with the experiential. In her writing and workshops, the emphasis on the psoas allows her to organize lived-in experiences in a manner where students can delve deep into the layers of the bodily basis of their experience, in a way that theory and some larger systems do not permit. Koch’s work provides a model for future educators and theorists who wish to bring theory and practice into dialogue that is individually constructed and meaningful and can swim in the larger sea of human experience.

⁵⁶ Bonnie Bainbridge-Cohen, *Sensing, Feeling, and Action: The Experiential Anatomy of Body-Mind Centering* (North Hampton, Massachusetts: Contact Editions, 2012).

Koch suggests that the health of the psoas is related to the health of the nervous system, saying that an over-tapped and exhausted nervous system might demonstrate symptoms of fatigue through a constricted and rigid psoas. Koch describes the iliopsoas as more than just the 'primary muscular connector between lower and upper bodies' as is its colloquial rap. Instead she asks the fitness and somatic communities to consider the psoas as the messenger of coherency of the nervous system.⁵⁷ In her workshops, Koch works with the psoas to encourage the nervous system to 'unravel,' a metaphor reflecting its 'wound-up-ness.' Citing embryological and developmental research, as well as information from a biological perspective, she suggests that the psoas passes over and is in dialogue with the neuro-core of the body, including the adrenals and kidneys, organs whose role in sympathetic and para-sympathetic (fight, flight, freeze and rest, digest, reproduce) is increasingly documented and understood.

In Koch's version of the iliopsoas, it is both functional and expressive. In the animal kingdom the iliopsoas is the muscle complex that jumps to flee in cases of fright or danger. In my work with humans, I have witnessed the iliopsoas expressing fear and tension, as well as celebration and ecstasy. As intellectual understandings of the medical model support a mapping of the body including mechanics and function, others like Koch are contributing to expressive and metaphorical understandings.

I am excited about work like Liz Koch's because it offers the opportunity for many versions of the body to exist at one time. While Koch's work emphasizes the

⁵⁷ Liz Koch, *Core Awareness: Enhancing Yoga, Pilates, Exercise and Dance* (Berkeley: North Atlantic Books, 2012) 30-33.

living body, she acknowledges the dynamic relationship between the many different versions of bodies and the lived experience of the body, teaching participants to examine the narratives of their bodies and their felt experience. As a living system, the body in Koch's work is complex, and lively with all of the information and interpretations informing the body.

Through the work of Koch, Bainbridge-Cohen, Conrad, and many others, somatic practices have been laying a theoretical and practical foundation for re-writing narratives of the body, and re-experiencing the body. While dance is increasingly drawing on somatic traditions to develop its training methods, many of these translations miss a foundational concept: that the body is a living, self-organizing entity. As long as the language and associated paradigms of dance maps the body with non-living systems, the dancing body is significantly limited in its potential.

The most substantial proof of the value of re-writing the language of dancing body is found in experience. The somatic traditions are about experience, more than about language, and they demonstrate that the vocabulary provides a concrete inroad to creating experience and understandings. Simply put, the evidence is in the experience.

Let's return to Emilie Conrad's term *exaptability* meaning a system's change in relationship to what is possible, instead of what is necessary to survive. I suspect that when language honors the living system paradigm, 'exaptability' becomes a more

likely option for the dancing body. When object-oriented language preferences control, the body responds to this paradigm with disciplined and directed growth.

As a student in Mariah Maloney's dance technique class in 2013, I had a heightened experience of my opening to what is possible. Inspired by her somatic experiences and knowledge, the culture in Mariah's class created a container for the living body to explore and unfold its own intelligence. The class had been guided towards sensation and breath, and especially the suppleness of the spine. We were moving across the floor in an improvisation of these ideas and all of a sudden, my feet spread to connect to the floor and push against it. This push traveled through me, and my feet felt for the first time like they were able to exchange information between the ground and my body. Weeks before, I had noticed this quality in Mariah and reflected on what it might feel like. Then, without demanding it or controlling it, my body too found it. It was as though my moving system became available enough for this to be possible and part of my system.

When the body is understood as a living bio-intelligent (as opposed to bio-mechanic) organism it is capable of surprising and remarkable change. Increasingly developing a language of process in which the living, creative nature of the body-system is highlighted, will create new possibilities for dancing bodies. The language of somatic disciplines is generally oriented around the living system. They promote change and address the body as a continuously unfolding creative process. I believe movement is an essential part of this process. And actively engaging in movement supports the re-organizing process of the living system, providing patterned

experiences through which the whole organism is encouraged to grow. As Carol Agnesseens said in a podcast, “we are always embryos,”⁵⁸ a sentiment that highlights how change in the body system and tissues is not limited to embryological stages, but that our tissues are always changing. And as long as we allow change, there is potential for growth.

This paradigm is a paradigm of possibility; it creates a generative understanding where development and potential are always available. This paradigm is very different than one of control and objectification, in which the possibility of losing control is an integral part of the deal. In a paradigm of possibility and growth, there is hope for what comes next; the living process is, at its foundation, an ongoing creative practice..

⁵⁸ “Core Awareness,” podcast retrieved on April 7th, 2015, <https://www.freeconferencecallhd.com/playback/?n=DYwj%2Fjhocp>.

Chapter Five

Next Places to Go

When I started this project I wanted to find ways of working with the body that honored it as a creative entity, one capable of guiding its own growth, and not in need of authoritarian intervention. I suspected this would take me to new places in my own body, but did not suspect it would take me to language. When the chair of my thesis committee suggested I was speaking about language I could hardly understand where she was coming from. As I continued to pursue the paradigm of the body as a creative being, language revealed itself as being ‘at the heart of the matter.’ And, more importantly, as a tremendously powerful agent in the changing paradigm. While I have only begun to gather the linguistic information necessary to addressing and shifting the mechanistic paradigms, I recognize its clues are everywhere, and the interest in shifting is also more common than I imagined. Furthermore, I am not the only one doing it. Other educators are also standing on this threshold and many are cleaning the room, getting rid of the language no longer needed.

In conclusion, through this process I came to understand that the non-living conceptual metaphors in dance training are only part of the problem. They concretely reveal the mechanical and economic undertones of much of our cultural understandings. However, they do not give us enough information about what is happening in the larger fabric of dance training. Through my embodied investigations of language I have found that some conceptual metaphors coming from mechanical worlds can bring great value (while still they may undermine potential, they to some

extent 'work'), language that attempts to restrain change processes inflicts a deep objectification of the body and instills control paradigms over potential paradigms. In the following section I outline some common phrases in dance training, considering their implications and offering suggestions to re-language them.

In many cases, as I re-looked at language, I came to realize parts of my understanding were questioning the command style of training common in dance. And while I delight in dancing in this way, I have found the dancing and performance process got much richer as I shifted to movement training environments where the command style teaching was only part of the classroom experience; the experiential score was honored as a living context from which I could explore my embodied being in a sensory and perceptive playground.

Closing Thoughts

Deep in the push of this creative process, after a disorienting afternoon of sifting, organizing, deciding, weeding and clarifying I drove to the gym with my husband in the car. Over the two-mile drive, I nearly caused three accidents and ran hard into a curb. Frustrated, I stammered an exploding “I am losing my mind.” He agreed.

Not wanting to make myself exercise in this state, I decided to wallow in the hot tub, and enjoy the water as a chance to remember myself, my senses, and mostly my embodied being.⁵⁹ As I stroked my skin, closed my eyes, followed my impulses, I realized, in fact I had not *lost my mind*. I had dis-integrated my senses, perceptions and embodied being. My mind was more of a metaphor for my embodied integration, than a mind itself.

Through this project I have come to understand the colloquial term ‘mind’ as a reference to the awareness of conscious and being alive, describing a relationship of self, life and world. I have also come to be very interested in the practice of languaging embodied experiences, that is, all experience.

Abstracting and coupling sensorial experience and perceptual interpretation is a process that is both creative and distancing. To speak about experience, put word, label and name to something felt, creates distance between the embodied experience and the spoken description. I understand this as a process of abstraction that grows increasingly theoretical as the felt experience moves to name, and then to

⁵⁹ The term re-member here is a reference to the feeling to being dis-membered, as though the members of my body had disconnected from each other.

interpretation. For example, say I notice I feel cold. By the time I notice this, the sensorial experience of being cold may have been present in me for a while before I identify the sensation. Once I notice I am cold, I may state getting cold is interfering with my dancing and finally “it’s too cold to dance.”⁶⁰ This process of abstraction is creative; it creates meaning. It is also distances the lived, felt experience.

In closing I want to quote from Emily Conrad, whose words resonate deep in my tissues as the culminating tones of this project, “Movement is what we are, not something we do.”⁶¹

60 Bonnie Ginitis, *Engaging the Movement of Life: Exploring Health and Embodiment through Osteopathy and Continuum* (Berkeley: North Atlantic Books, 2007), 68.

61 Conrad, *Life on Land*, 49.

Appendix One: Metaphors and Phrases Database

The following database is the beginning of an ongoing process of collecting and analyzing language in dance training, and is thus incomplete, with obvious wholes and inconsistencies.

Metaphors/Phrases	Entailments	Problems	Suggestions
flat back	the body is 2-dimensional, the back could be flat	misrepresents the structure of the body, back is not straight, ever	lengthen or reach through head/tail/midline
open your heart	Press the chest forward, compress the back body	the heart is 3-dimensional, pushing chest forward closes the back of the heart; main artery to body is in back of heart, perhaps not ideal to compress it	consider if this alignment is actually a goal, if so bulge forward with chest, explore width between ribs and then invite heart to slide forward
my left leg is not happy with me	body part is not part of personhood and has its own agenda,	implications that it cannot be controlled, objectifies left leg	
work against the body or	the body must be disciplined away from its instinctual responses	why work against the body? Why does this even seem like a good idea?	
attack (insert body part)	at war with that part of the body,	separation of self and body, implies being at war with self, will be a winner and loser	
muscle X attaches to bone Y	machine-like, this part	no one attached your muscles	grows out of X, emerges in to Y

	connects to this part	to bones	
spinal column	architectural support beam to hold up structure, implies a rigid structure	the spine is not a column, or single structure, it more like a snake than a structural idea	it is a spine where bones float on top of each other and a nervous system emerges through (actually the spinal bones develop after the notochord)
manage stress	stress works for you and is linked to function and output	stress is an ongoing fluctuation in the body...	
stress relief			
stack vertebrae			
straighten your legs/arms			
force the air out			
suck in the stomach			
hold x away			
“contrology”			
shift gears			
hold it, hold it.			
reset button			
ignition			
send messages to the muscles			
turn the volume up/down			

Appendix Two: The Body-Based Creativity Model

About ten years ago I developed a model for creativity based on the moving body, which at the time I termed the Body-Based Creativity Model (BBCM). Through this model I outlined the bodily basis for sensorial and perceptive processes, associated these processes with the experience of movement and contributed patterns in these processes to the bodies' participation in creative practice. When I developed the Body-Based Creativity Model, I was naively content with the assumption that movement was valued as an experience generative to the human spirit, and that this was more or less an accepted truth. In retrospect, I have come to understand that for a culture steeped in the values of productivity and reductionist relationships, investing in sensorial experience and the creative capacities of the human body was incongruent to the dominate tug of society.

The aspects of the whole person the BBCM ignored were the emotional and spiritual elements, in part because I do not study them per se and so I struggled to qualify them in a manner that fit the structure I designed as the model. As I reflect on this project, its values and struggles, what seems most important to me was honoring the bodily creative process of becoming so essential to creativity; to demand the body be considered a vibrant and integral part of the human experience is profound. In retrospect, what I was after with BBCM was to find a way to bring the body into the human experience, including blending the inner/outer divide, often challenging the

scholarship of the body, allowing me to develop a working understanding of change and creative capacitance⁶².

Not much later in my career I would come to understand how these inklings, developed by the BBCM, would interrupt challenge the Cartesian tradition. As I worked into a career based on fitness, there was discomfort between what I understood through my work with the BBCM and what I was being taught by the fitness field. Treating bodies like imperfect and fixable objects that simply needed to be made part of the system of fitness training in order for their imperfections to be resolved was fundamentally at odds with the values I was developing in the rest of my work.

Currently, what feels most alive to me about the BBCM is two-fold: the body and the concept of creativity. To me, creativity is process-oriented, and means the active unfolding of potential. Charles Johnson's Creative Systems Theory is a living-systems example of modeling the creative process as articulated through the primary stages. According to Johnson, any creative process begins with somatically-felt inklings, like seeds sparking one's potential, which form into playful and child-like meanderings of known possibility. In Creative Systems Theory, playful exploration becomes the hard work of differentiation and weeding out what is not needed. Clarifying details in which parts are brought into relationship with each other to form a new wholeness follows. Next as the creative process is released from the identity of

⁶² Creative capacitance is a term used by Charles Johnson in his Creative Systems Theory to describe the health or well-being of a system and as recognized through its health the capacity and volume of what it can take on.

the maker it is shared with others. Creativity in this way is ongoing and multilayered with multiple processes in different stages going on at once.

The BBCM allowed me to dive into this project and provided a foundation for asking questions about the nature of training bodies. The existence of the BBCM as a part of the larger project of honoring aliveness and creativity in the many forms it takes means remembering the body as essential in the process.

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