UNITY OF BODY AND SOUL THROUGH DANCE

“Unity of Body/Mind, Body /Soul dualities in perception of Dance”

A Term Paper
by
Gonca Gümüşayak

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A. Adnan Akçay

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In my paper, I would like to focus on the subject of “Dance” in reconstruction of the body as a unity of Body/ Mind, Body/ Soul dualities.

I claim: “in dance, the body cannot be thought without the togetherness of the body, mind and soul”, you cannot exclude your soul from the body while you are being in the sensation of the art of dance. Or you cannot exclude your mind while moving your body parts consciously and technically. Feeling of self-realization of the subject in the act of dance, as united body and soul. If we want to consider dance, as an art form, a way of expression of feelings, we cannot ignore its uniqueness of bodysoul. I will try to include my experiences as well as a review of the literature.

In the paper, various body perceptions will be covered from Ancient Era to Modern Era, from Aristotle to Lacan, from Descartes’ dualisms to Meraleau-Ponty’s “Phenomenology of Perception”. Non- Cartesian understanding will be supported. Different approaches of dance forms in perceiving the body will be examined.

One of the dance technique- contact improvisation dance- will be demonstrated as an example of where we could observe our body as becoming into being, as a soul, as a mind and the body itself together.

As Aristo said: “the soul is nothing more than the living character of the body”.

Subjects to mention:

• Ancient understanding of the body&mind
• Cartesian –dualistic thinking, non-dualistic thinking
• Existential phenomenology
• Body and Phenomenology: Merleau-Ponty
• Dance and phenomenology
• Contact Improvisation
Ancient understanding of the body&mind

“The phrase ‘the body and embodiment’ like ‘the living body and life’ sounds almost like a play on words and thus acquires for us an almost mysterious presence. It vividly presents the absolute inseparability of the living body and life itself. We should perhaps even ask ourselves whether questions concerning the existence of the soul, indeed any talk of the soul at all, could ever arise if we did not experience the body both as something living an as something subject to decay. Perhaps, even for us today, Aristotle was right when he said that “the soul is nothing more than the living character of the body, the form of fulfilled self-realization which he called entelechia.”

“In Greek experiences, famous passage from Plato’s Phaedrus, a certain famous Greek physician had observed, “the body cannot be treated without at the same time treating the soul.” (…) that it is impossible to treat the body without possessing knowledge concerning the whole of being. In Greek the whole of being is hole ousia and also the expression of ‘the whole of being’, the suggestion of ‘hale and healthy being’. The being whole of whole and being healthy of the whole, the healthiness of well-being, seem to be most intimately related.”

( Ibid, p: 73) “In Phaedrus, speaks of the well-being of the body, the well-being of the soul and well-being of the whole in a single context.”

When we think of the times we were ill, we could remember the pain, which alienates our body from the self. We feel the pain inside together with our bodily senses as well as with the mentally and emotionally we feel bad. “For here it is a question of tending the ill, which also requires attending to their mental and emotional well-being.”

Origins of Dualistic Thinking

Traditional Western Dualistic thinking, which is called Cartesianism, is coming from Descartes (I think…therefore I am), body and mind are two separate entities: Descartes explicitly identified mind with soul and the latter with spirit; all three being radically different from matter or body. For him, and for much of the subsequent philosophy and theology in the West, there has been a duality between the mind and the body, or between the soul and the body, or between spirit and matter:

2 Ibid. p: 75
3 Ibid. p: 76
**dualism** - Most generally, the view that reality consists of two disparate parts. In philosophy of mind, the belief that the mental and physical are deeply different in kind: thus the mental is at least not identical with the physical.

**mind-body problem** - Most generally, the problem of describing the relationship between the mind and body (or brain). First explicitly raised by Descartes, it is, perhaps, the best known problem in the *philosophy of mind*.

Perhaps the oldest problem in the philosophy of mind, the *mind-body problem* dates back at least to Plato. By some counts, *Plato* was the first *dualist*, with the first *materialist*, *Aristotle*, close at hand. Plato contends that the soul is distinct from the body and is capable of maintaining a separate existence from it. Aristotle, in contrast, feels that body and soul are two aspects of the same underlying substance (form and matter). It should be noted that it is by no means unanimous that Aristotle was not a dualist.

Dualism has been the driving force behind the existence of the mind-body problem and has been by far the majority view until recently. Partially due to the influence of Descartes, the dualist position has reigned supreme. However, by espousing a distinct type of substance for the mind, dualists invite the question: What is it that makes it possible for two contraries (one spatially existing and the other not) to interact as our minds seem to with our brains? In attempting to answer this question, *Descartes* claimed that the pineal gland was the interface between the mind and the rest of the brain; he considered it the seat of the soul. The causal interactions between mind and brain are two-way. In *perception*, the physical states of the world influence our bodies which influence our brains which, via the pineal gland, influence our soul. The reverse is true for deliberate action. However, even on this account, it remains a mystery how states of the non-spatial soul (or mind) are to causally interact with the states of the spatial brain.

Anyway, what must be quite clear is that whenever Descartes argued in favor of the substantial distinction, he also mentioned the particular case of the union of mind and body in the human beings. In a famous passage in the Sixth Meditation, Descartes denies that the mind is merely present in the body. For him, the mind is very closely joined and intermingled with the body. Furthermore, it is through sensations (i.e., pain, hunger, thirst), and not by an intellectual inspection, that we are aware of the needs of our body.

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5 [AT IX 64; CSM II 56]. The editions of Descartes works used here are: F. Alqui (selection, presentations and notes) 1963-1973: Descartes, *Oeuvres Philosophiques* (Paris: Garnier), following the canonic notation from Adam and Tannery (AT); J. Cottingham, R. Stoothoff and D. Murdoch (CSM) 1985: *The Philosophical Writings of Descartes* (New York: Cambridge University Press);
Here, we find that Descartes places our knowledge of the union of mind and body in a phenomenological level, quite different from the epistemological level, in the domain of his metaphysics, where the doctrine of dualism is placed. Descartes answer is supported by his doctrine on the primitive notions. Although he mentions several notions, for the problem we are interested on, the significant ones are: the notion of extension (which includes figure and movement), the notion of thought (including the conceptions of the intellect and the inclinations of the will), and the notion of the union of mind and body (on which depends the interaction that causes sensations and passions).

Under a synchronic interpretation and with Descartes doctrine of primitive notions as well as their mutual independence, it is possible to achieve a coherent understanding of Cartesian dualism and the mind and body union. Both doctrines coexist, and each one corresponds to its proper dominion.

Non-dualistic thinking

The sense of identity is composed of the experiences a person has had in his life, which are in some way stored in body and mind. Culture is not just a mental concept but embedded in our whole being. According to Descartes (I think...therefore I am), body and mind are two separate entities. In traditional western dualistic thinking the body is considered to be an instrument, controlled by the mind. The mind is associated with rationality and civilization, the body with irrationality, instincts and primitivity. According to this, the mind is connected with rationality, and the body with emotions and affections. Likewise in dance, which got its portion from the Cartesian dualistic thinking, the body is often approached as the dancer’s instrument. Training is considered to mould the body and the acquired technique enables the dancer to perform and express his intentions and ideas.

As particularly in Classical Ballet Technique, dancer’s body and the movements are strictly standardized. “They perform movements, announced (in French) by the teacher, originating in, returning to, basic positions. Descriptions of movements and corrections are phrased so to ask parts of the body to conform to abstract shapes; they place the pelvis or head in specific locations, or extend the limbs along imaginary lines in space. The standards of the perfection are so clearly defined for the ideal body. The aesthetic rationale based on the pursuit of classical beauty offers dancers no alternative conception of dance: inability to succeed at ballet implies failure at all dance.”

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6(Zuraya Monroy-Nasr, “Cartesian Dualism and the Union of Mind and Body: A Synchronic Interpretation”)
7(Foster, p: 486-487)
Existential phenomenology

To explain existential phenomenology, I will cite from Sondra Horton Fraleigh, who is existential phenomenological dance philosopher, to explain what a dance is as an act of communication, the supposed relationship between body and mind and the way the long term memory intervenes in the experience of dance.

Existentialism has overturned this dualistic thinking and the primacy of mind. The body is no longer seen as a mechanical object, but as meaningful and intrinsically purposeful. In *Dance and the Lived Body* (1987), Sondra Horton Fraleigh combines this existentialist philosophy (a theory of conduct) of the body with phenomenology (a theory of knowledge and meaning). She focuses on the experience of the body in dance, assuming that aesthetic experiences are created and felt through expression. This ‘new’ existentialism goes beyond the experiences of ordinary consciousness, as it also concerns extraordinary experiences that are for instance ‘sacred’ or ‘mystic’.

Phenomenology depends on immediate experience, hopes to arrive at meaning, perspectives on the phenomena of experience (dance in this case) which can be communicated…

While using the term phenomenology Fraleigh means existential phenomenology, the development of Edmund Husserl’s phenomenological philosophy by later twentieth century existentialist philosophers: Martin Heidegger, Jean Paul Sartre, Paul Ricoeur, Maurice Merleau-Ponty and Gabriel Marcel. The common concern of these philosophers was to describe existence from the ‘horizon’ of being—in-the-world.

“Existential phenomenology is vulnerable because it rests on experiential descriptions of the lived world; more precisely, human experiences arising always in particular contexts of being-in-the-world. But phenomenology does not rely primarily on the uniqueness of experience. Overall, it is propelled by a universalizing impulse, since it hopes to reach a shared meaning, recognizing that this world is indeed ‘our world’, that our being-in-the-world is conditioned by existence of others. Self and the other are terms that take on meaning in relation to each other. Individual subjectivity is therefore understood in view of its intersection with a surrounding world, continued by other objects, natural phenomena and other human beings.”

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9 (Ibid, p: 135-136)
“The dance is more then sense impressions of motion. The essence of the dance is not identical with its motion. It arises in consciousness as the motion reveals the intent of the whole and its parts. Consciousness transcends separate acts of perception to unify our experience of phenomena. (...) “The phenomenologist approaches the task of defining or describing a phenomenon (a dance or a dance experience, for instance) as through seeing it fresh for the first time. Of course this is not possible since we do have conceptions, attitudes and assumptions which color our understanding. Phenomenology is at best an effort to remove bias and preconception from consciousness. It aims to describe through some direct route, not to analyze and theorize (at least not at the begging), but first to describe the immediate contents of consciousness. Phenomenology strives to capture pre-reflective experience, the immediacy of being-in-the-world.” (…)One of the major purpose of phenomenological description is to build towards meaning. The admission of the primacy of consciousness is central to existential phenomenology, distinguishing it from scientific phenomenology; claims to distil (reduce) phenomena to pure essences of ideas (eidos) through ‘eidetic reduction’. A phenomenology which takes for granted our being-in-the-world owes more to insight than to an objective scientific stance. Existential phenomenology is vulnerable because it admits this level of subjectivity. It allows for irrationality and accident as human concerns. It is also paradoxical. (ibid. 139-140)

“Merleau-Ponty (1962) held that phenomenology unite the poles of subjectivism and objectivism in its philosophical approach. It was an also an attempt, in its formulation of existential concept of ‘the lived body’, to mend the subject/object (mind/body) split in Western attitudes towards the body (see Fraleigh, 1987).” 10 (ibid., p: 140)

Body and Phenomenology. Merleau Ponty

“Merleau-Ponty avoids identifying the philosophy of Descartes with either that series of the latter’s texts that emphasize the soul-body divorce or with the Cartesianism of the sciences (which he calls pseudo-Cartesianism)” 11 “For both Descartes and Kant the inability to deal with perception results in a separation of mind and matter, a withdrawal of soul and body. Merleau-Ponty’s conception of the organization of mind and matter leads to an idealization of the body. This diminishes the likelihood of withdrawal: an idealized body seems quite susceptible to relations with consciousness. (…)” 12

11(Bannan, John, F. The Philosophy of Merleau-Ponty, Harcourt, Brace& World, Inc. printed in US, 1967, p: 52),
12 ibid, 53
In describing perception Merleau-Ponty points to the phenomenal underpinning of the soul-body structure, of objects, and even of naturalism. He calls perception “the apprehension of an existence”.

The central problem of Merleau-Ponty in *Phenomenology of Perception* is that:

We must discover the origin of the object at the very center of our experience; we must describe the emergence of being and we must understand how, paradoxically, there is for us an in-itself. 13

The attempt to “discover the origin of the object at the very center of our experience…” begin with an extended reflection on the nature of the body. For Merleau-Ponty the body is “that by which there are objects.” In the course of this reflection he justifies a conception of the body as subject rather than object by an appeal to the international theory of consciousness and conception of phenomena that is integrated with it.

He says that “the body is comparable to a work of art because expression and what is expressed are indistinguishable. For instance, the sexual significance of the body is a certain style of bodily existence and is irreducible to any intellectual conception. He calls the relation between the terms “sex” and existence” one of sign and signification, and also expression and the expressed. 14 “But sexuality is not reducible to existence, nor existence reducible to sexuality. Existence is a more general current which structure itself in various ways…Indeed , Merleau-Ponty’s Phenomenological description of the body has shown us the need to replace such conceptions as ‘purely bodily’ and ‘purely psychic’ with notion of incarnate subjectivity in whom all sectors of experience ‘interfuse’ in such away that each remains distinctive while none is entirely isolable. The traditional notion of the unconscious has no place here; incarnate subjectivity in whom all sectors of experience are not a matter of ‘distinct representations’. The body is the expression of existence.” 15 “As a synthesis of powers the body is always already to some extent a transcendence, a project in which existence, body and world are inseparable.” 16

Horton Fraleigh uses the expression ‘lived body’ to describe the experiencing body. The body is no longer considered to be merely reflective, or a passive instrument of action, because it cannot be reduced to an object. This is confirmed by the way we experience our self and our body. The body does not feel like a mere instrument and our sense of self is not just contained in our thinking.

13Meraleau- Ponty’s “Phenomenology of Perception”p,71
14 (Bannan, 1967, p: 77).
In human experience, the skin is what separates ‘self’ from the world outside. And often movements happen unintentionally, like for instance reflexes or tics. Emotions are always combined with affects: butterflies in your stomach, a shiver or perspiration. It is impossible to separate body and mind, as every mental state involves a physical experience, and every physical experience coexists with a mental state. But that does not mean that sometimes it may feel like body or mind function separately and seem to be two entirely separate entities. This dualistic experience, for instance, takes place when a dancer feels he is not performing the steps the way he intends to and therefore feels he hasn’t got the necessary control over his body. Horton Fraleigh writes:

The lived-body concept attempts to cut beneath the subject-object split, recognizing a dialectical and lived dualism but not a dualism of body-soul or body-mind. A phenomenological (or lived) dualism implicates consciousness and intention and assumes an indivisible unity of body, soul and mind.  

In English, there is only one word (body) to describe the concept of the body. In other languages there are words that express the difference between the body seen as an object or instrument, and the experiencing body. In German for instance the words ‘Körper’(object) and ‘Leib’ (subject) are used to express this difference. Therefore Horton Faleigh uses the expression ‘lived-body’ to refer to the experiencing, meaningful and purposeful body.

**Memory and perception (body & mind relation)**

Perception is not passive, but active. Our senses enable us to perceive ourselves and the world around us, and creating an experience out of sensations involves activity:

The sensations arising in our sense-organs are in themselves meaningless physiological phenomena, but are converted into significant psychological experiences by our mind, which does not just passively receive and record sensations but, in addition, also actively selects, transforms and organizes them to construct and create those experiences which comprise our identity and biography. All experience, then, is a creative compound between sensations passively received and imaginative activity which interprets and organizes them.  

A sensation becomes meaningful only when it is compared, either consciously or subconsciously, with prior experiences. It then becomes part of the chain of experiences that

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constitutes our sense of continuous being-in-the-world. We can recognize movement as being ‘dance’, because we have perceived and experienced ‘dance’ before and we recognize aspects of the movements and their context, that make us fit it in the category of ‘dance’. And with every new perception and experience of ‘dance’, our idea, or schema, of that concept is slightly adjusted, to fit in the new experience. We can also determine whether we like the dance or not, because we can compare it with previous experiences of ‘dance’. And thinking of the concept of ‘dance’ we each can picture a form of dancing.

According to the French philosopher Henri Bergson, the body is a centre of action and every perception is action-orientated. He considers body and mind to be two separate entities. The mind contains the past, which is stored in memory. The body is an image of the brain that is tied up in the present, by actual matter, affections and action. I do not agree with this separation, and don’t consider memory to be strictly restrained to the mind. I however do agree with his idea of perception, in which present and past are always united. The past, through either conscious or subconscious memory, always intervenes in the perception of the present. This happens by means of recollection of past images and experiences and by motor memory. Bergson argues that in reality there is no such thing as pure perception or pure memory, these can only exist in theory. Therefore, one never has a completely new experience, as every perception connects past experiences to the present because of the distortion of the perception by intervening memory. In perceiving the world around us we make choices, orientated on action. It is impossible to perceive all the images that surround us and therefore we only perceive what is relevant, making a selection. The actions that follow change this reality. Actions can be movements, affections of the body, thoughts or emotions.

In addition, as Merleau-Ponty deals with habits, he points out, to learn to type or play an instrument , to become accustomed to a vehicle or a cane or a feathered hat , ‘is to be transported into them, or conversely , to incorporate them into bulk of the body itself’. It is a question ,rather, of the bodily comprehension of a motor significance which enabled him to lend himself completely to expressing the music without having to think about the position of his fingers, or to manouevre his car successfully through a narrow street without having to compare the width of his vehicle with that of the driving lane. Merleau-Ponty’s existential analysis of habits thus draws our attention to a new meaning of both ‘knowledge’ and

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20- 3 Colin Smith, in Langer, p : 47)
‘meaning’ which eludes traditional approaches. The bodily knowledge and bodily significance which become evident in study of habits reveal that ‘the body is essentially an expressive space’ in virtue of which particular expressive spaces can come into existence and be incorporated into it. Bodily spatiality, inherently dynamic, is the very condition for the coming into being of a meaningful world. Thus it subtends our entire existence as human beings.”

Proprioception: a sense of self

I wonder how much the absurd dualism of philosophy since Descartes might have been avoided by a proper understanding of ‘proprioception’.  

Oliver Sacks, A Leg to Stand On (1984)

The sense of our body is an important element in the experience of physical identity. Muscles, joints and tendons contain ‘proprioceptors’ that sent signals to the brain and provide us with information about

1. The static position (posture) or dynamic movement (speed) of the body parts
2. The force (tension) of muscle contractions

This explains why we can close our eyes and still knows where our feet and hands are, and whether the muscles are relaxed or tense. The sense of position and movement of the body is called ‘kinaesthetics’. Neurologist Oliver Sacks writes:

There used to be another old word, still often used – kinaesthesia, or the sense of movement – but ‘proprioception’, less euphonious, seems an altogether better word, because it implies a sense of what is ‘proper’ – that by which the body knows itself, and has itself as ‘property’. One may be said to ‘own’ or ‘possess’ one’s body – at least its limbs and movable parts – by virtue of a constant flow of incoming information, arising ceaselessly, throughout life, from the muscles, joints and tendons. One has oneself, on is oneself, because the body knows itself, confirms itself, at all times, by this sixth sense.

This ‘sixth sense’ indeed seems to be an important argument for the lived-body concept of Horton Fraleigh. The sense of self is not produced by mere mental consciousness of the self, but also by the feeling of the body that separates ‘self’ from the world outside.

21 (Langer, p: 47)
22-4 Sacks, Oliver, A Leg to Stand On (London: Picador, 1991), 47.
23-5 Sacks, Oliver, A Leg to Stand On. 47-48.
Proprioception, combined with the other senses, provides us with the internal experience of the body and is partly responsible for the creation of the ‘body-image’. This awareness of the body makes it possible to feel and move the body and reflect on its state and actions: how does the movement feel? Is the movement executed the way we intended it? Body-image is not static, but can adapt itself to different circumstances, depending on, for instance, mobility, or the use or absence of body parts.

**proprioception**
1. the ability to sense the position and location and orientation and movement of the body and its parts.
2. Sensory awareness of a part of the body. \(^{24}\)

Proprioceptive sense is very important for the development of motor skills. When we execute a movement, our senses provide us with continuous information, so that we can control and adjust the movement. Apart from vision, touch and balance (the balance organs in the inner ear), proprioception provides us with important feedback about the way we move. In the mastery of motor skills, for instance, a dance technique, we adopt kinaesthetic\(^{24}\)\(^{6}\) strategies to understand, remember and execute a movement or pose. Because every motor action is related to sensation, movement is always sensori-motor. Every goal-orientated motor action requires the conscious or subconscious processing of proprioceptive information. This feedback becomes even more important when other senses do not provide any information (for instance in the dark). \(^{26}\)\(^{7}\)

When a dancer first learns a dance step, this usually happens by looking at the example given by, for example, the teacher. This visual information is copied and maybe the dancer checks his reflection in a mirror to see whether the movement looks the same as the example. After repetition of the movement and instructions from the teacher, the execution of the motor action will become easier, faster and more fluent. Repetition of the action is very important, because the dancer will develop a close link between the outcome of the motor action and the proprioception. The movement will become an automatism, and will feel natural. The motor action has been stored in the dancer’s ‘motor memory’, and now he will no longer need a mirror for feedback. He can rely on his proprioception, which is, of course, crucial in performance, when there is little or no visual feedback possible.

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\(^{24}\) [www.seslisozluk.com](http://www.seslisozluk.com)

\(^{24}\)\(^{6}\) Gr. kinesis (movement), esthesis (feeling).


\*\* later will be focused on more in detail, I will give as an example of where we could find unity of body, mind and soul.
So during the development of technique or while learning a choreography, a dancer will have to learn to rely on kinaesthetics. Proprioception, like the other senses, can be trained and some people seem to have more feeling for movement than others do. When dancers execute choreography, the movements are stored in the motor memory. The performance of certain steps is a ‘closed skill’, because dancers mainly rely on internal proprioceptive feedback. A dancer usually does not have to deal with much interference from the outside world during his performance. The movements will remain largely the same, as they are based on internal impulses and feedback.

*Improvised dance is different in this aspect, especially a dance form like contact improvisation*. Here the dancer, like a tennis player, will rely on different movement strategies to deal with the different and unexpected impulses he gets from his partner. But whether a dancer is improvising or performing a pattern of set steps, he will always rely on his motor skills. Even a dancer in a night-club, dancing to whatever kind of music the DJ is playing, will have a specific style, relying on motor skills that have been developed by repetition.

However, a movement can never be repeated in an exact way. There are many, slightly different ways to realize an intentional motor action. Motor skills are not static and every time a dancer executes a certain step, he will use slightly different muscle groups to achieve the same effect. So even though a step is imprinted in the motor memory, it slightly varies with every execution. But in dance and, for instance, gymnastics, it is very important to execute a movement as exactly as possible, because it is the execution that matters, not the result (like hitting an ace in a tennis game). The movement is a goal in itself. So dancers have to have a highly developed sense of proprioception and motor memory, to have absolute control over their movements.

Proprioception and kinaesthetics are linked to existing motor schemes, movements stored in the memory. When we learn a new movement, for example a dance step, we rely on related movement schemes. As Bergson stated, the memory, in this case the motor memory, intervenes in the execution of all new movements. The motor memory is the starting point of all motor action. When learning a dance we rely on our posture and movements from every day life as well as previous dance experience. In dance, the movement of the body is stylized and the new techniques have to be acquired and added to the motor memory by training and repetition in order to develop new motor schemas. The dancer appropriates the new movements and this way they will eventually feel ‘natural’ to her.
Body aesthetics

Like movement in daily life, every dance form is developed according to particular body aesthetics. This implies an ideal body-image that can be realized through the correct use of the technique. It is a question of movement style and motor skills, but also of having the right proportions and the right physique to match the ideal body-image. In her article *Dancing Bodies* (1997), Susan Leigh Foster describes several dance forms and the way the experiencing body tries to match the ideal body-image. She describes the two different bodies the dancer experiences; the perceived body, derived primarily from sensory information, especially from proprioception, and the ideal body. Even more than in every day life, in dance the body is cultivated and ‘created’ to match the ideal, using specific body techniques:

“Each dance technique (…) constructs a specialized and specific body, one that represents a given choreographer’s or tradition’s aesthetic vision of dance. Each technique creates a body that is unique in how it looks and what it can do. (…) Training, thus creates two bodies: one, perceived and tangible ; the other aesthetically ideal. The dancer’s perceived body derives primarily from sensory information that is visual, aural, haptic, olfactory and kinaesthetic… Any of the information about the perceived body may be incorporated into the dancer’s ideal body, where it combines with fantasized visual or kinaesthetic images of a body, images of other dancers’ bodies and cinematic or video images of dancing bodies….Both bodies are constructed tandem; each influences the development of the other. Both result from the process of taking dance classes, as well as watching dance and talking about it. Cumulatively these activities help the dancer to develop skills at attending to, duplicating, repeating and remembering bodily movement.”

A third kind of body, the demonstrative body mediates the acquisition of these skills by exemplifying correct and incorrect movement. Where the ideal body eludes the dancer with its perfection, the demonstrative body didactically emphasizes or even exaggerates actions necessary to improve dancing: it isolates moments in a movement sequence or parts of the body in order to present an analysis of the ideal.”

The teacher in class as a demonstrative body and as an instructor provides the student with the necessary examples and metaphors and guides the student in cultivating body and mind to try and match the ideal expressive body:

Teachers, as they introduce the tradition’s standards for success and rank the students’ performance against them, embody the authority of the tradition’s abstract ideals.  

This, of course, applies to dance techniques that are taught by teachers, but many dance forms are not learned in classes. The ideal bodies of, for instance, hip-hop are also presented in music videos on television, and they are tied up with a way of dressing, customs


and movement (walking, greeting, etc) The perceived body of the dancer provides sensory information about the movement of the body. The proprioceptive feedback is very important for the comparison of the perceived body with the ideal body. Foster describes how the perceived and ideal bodies can increasingly occupy the dancer’s consciousness. The body techniques of the dance form they practice can start intervening with the body techniques of daily, as (hip-hop, ballet, etc.). She also argues that because of their heightened kinaesthetic awareness that has been developed through training and repetition, dancers have a strong sense of what other people’s movements feel like.3,10

As Bergson stated, it is impossible to have a completely new experience, because memory always influences the perception of the present. When dance is perceived by the exterior senses and translated into a kinaesthetic experience, the motor systems of a person are activated. And these contain all sorts of schemes and movement memories created by previous experiences. So the kinaesthetic experience does not rely on ‘imitation’ but on a personal physical experience of the dance, based on the existing motor memory. (...) every physical state goes with a mental or emotional experience. So the movements that are physically experienced will result in feelings and thoughts, as the spectator or dancer associates the movements with existing movement experiences and the mental and emotional states that went with them. So a dance is not just experienced, interpreted and appreciated on a mental level, depending on the associations and memories of the spectator that intervene in the actual perception and experience of the performance, but also on a physical level. The motor memory of the spectator intervenes as the body physically lives the dance with the dancer and the proprioceptors send feedback about the experienced tensions and movement impulses. We can understand dance, because we have a body and know what it feels like to move.

The dancer dances ‘the body for everyone’, as both she and the spectator create the aesthetic object. When the dancer is performing well and can really ‘become’ one with her intentions and actions, body and mind will be experienced as a unity. The perfect execution of the steps, as well as musicality and expressiveness can make a performance transcend beyond the personal. The difference between dance and self disappears and the result is a celebration of the vital existence and the seemingly endless possibilities of the body. To both spectator and dancer it will feel like the body is able to do anything. Within this truly aesthetic experience, the limitations of the body are forgotten, as watching the dancer can make the

3, 10 Foster, Susan Leigh Dancing Bodies (1997). 240.
spectator feel more capable, strong or elegant himself. This is a truly enervating experience, felt through the whole body as the spectator internally dances along with the dancer.¹³¹¹

Fraleigh examines and describes dance through her consciousness of dance as an art, through the experience of dancing, and through the existential and phenomenological literature on the "lived body." She draws upon the work of such philosophers as Colin Wilson, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Paul Ricoeur, and Martin Buber to describe dance through its lived ground, the human body itself. Dance is 'the' existential art. And this art form is complete only when there is an audience. She considers various forms of dance imagery, showing that no matter how abstract it is, dance always reflects life because it is grounded in the lived body.

Instead of asking “What is dance?” as an definitional question, She preferred to ask the question of : “When is dance happening?” descriptively from the dancer’s experiential perspective:

“When I dance , I am subtly attuned to my body and the motion in a totally different way than I ordinarily am in my everyday actions. That is, I seldom take notice of my ordinary comings and goings […] But, when I dance , I am acutely aware of my movement . I study it, try out new moves , study and perfect them , until I eventually turn my attention to their subtleties of feeling and meaning. Finally, I feel free in them . In other words, I embody the motion […] And in this, I experience what I would like to call ‘pure presence’, a radiant power of feeling completely present to myself and connected to the world […] These are those moments when our intentions towards the dance are realized."³¹²

Dance, is a way of expressing the self. When the writing, speaking, language, drawing, painting, music is incapable of expressing. Dance is a way of communication. One style of expression of feeling, thoughts: dance and the body. Dance is an expression of the body-itself.

Contact Improvisation Dance Technique:

“The body is cultivated in contact improvisation is weight and momentous. This technique, developed collaboratively in early 1970s by Steve Paxton, Nancy Stark Smith, Lisa Nelson and others, explore the body’s relation to gravity and other bodies which result from its ability to flow as physical mass. Contact Improvisation gained popularity rapidly in the United States during the 1970s and early 1980s as an artistic and social movement. Its technique classes were complemented by frequent informal practice sessions known as “jams” which allowed dancers to learn from, perform for, and socialize with, one another.”³³

Unlike any of the techniques (Classical Ballet Technique, Modern Dance Duncan Technique, Graham Technique, Cunningham Technique…) contact improvisation sets parameters for how to move but does not designate a set of vocabulary of movements for students to learn. Students explore through improvisation the movement territory established by stylistic and technical rules of the form. Classes include practice at simple skills of weight transfer as well as opportunities to use them through improvisation with others. Exercises present ways to “drain weight” out of one area of the body, to “collect” it in another and to transfer weight across any of the body joints. Certain lifts or rolls are practiced again and again; other exercises direct students to experiment for several minutes at a time with methods of regulating and channeling the body’s weight on their own or with a partner. As in Duncan’s approach, the body is believed to have its own intelligence – through one encumbered by its artificial and ungainly habits. Dancers can be advised on how to roll, jump into another’s arms or land from a great height, but what is more important then these instructions, they are encouraged to “listen” to the body of the their own and the partners’, to be sensitive to its weight and inclinations and to allow new possibilities of movement to unfold spontaneously by attending to the shifting network of ongoing interaction. \(^{34}\)

This “listening” act is very important, because it is the thing which makes this relationship a mutually developed the unity body-soul and a body-mind. The act of listening means not only listening by ears, but also by skin, by eyes, by nose, by taste, by feeling of weight; listening by the whole body with help of all senses … Listen to your body, your tensions, feeling, emotions, but without loosing your consciousness, because at the same time you have to listen the other’s impulses, which came as reactions to your actions or vice a versa. This is an indistinguishable action done simultaneously by your body, your mind. You have to be there present, technically, physically and mentally, unless you possess these conditions, you will fall down for sure. Your consciousness is always awake; your mind should be always open to new impulses. I open up the all possibilities, alternative movements, but do not bother about which to choose. Because the movement tells me what to do, the partner, or the body directs me. There is no fear about the “what is the next movement, ( as it is a general fact in ballet or , in modern dance phrases, there are movements in sequences, you should remember, what is the next, until the motor learning is successfully memorizes the whole sequence, then you do not have to think of what is next, so you could put, meaning or expression in it.)

\(^{34}\) Ibid, 491
In this democratic, unpredictable and highly physical situation, the dancer’s self becomes immersed in the body. The body, however, is not invested with an ongoing identity: its definition is constantly renegotiated in the changing context of the improvised dance. Ideally, its strength should be sufficient to bear the weight of another; but even more important, it must manifest an ability to go with the flow. 35 (Foster, Dancing Bodies, p: 492)

After you get the feeling of the whole awareness of your senses and the perception by the help of contact improvisation dance, you will continue to perceive the world with your all being, with your body and mind. Together with your partner, you two move dependently to each other by listening and hearing each other and yourself together, you become as one unique body, one mind, and one soul at the same time. Dance comes into existence in your bodily expressions. You express yourself with your bodily existence, you feel as free as you feel being-in the world. Dance is the best place, and the most actual time where, we can see/observe the body in its expression of existence, as a unity of body and soul, body and mind together.

I believe in this by heart because I feel it while dancing. I feel my being- being existent while dancing alone or on stage, I feel free to do anything that happens at that time. I reach my desires of being in “here and now” condition. I feel the unity of my body and soul while dancing.

35 Ibid. 492
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