

Moving Together: Theorizing and Making Contemporary Dance

Rudi Laermans

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summary

Sociologist and dance critic Rudi Laermans clarifies the multiple stakes of contemporary dance through a combination of dance studies and sociology. Detailed analyses of seminal dance works by Anne Teresa De Keersmaeker, Meg Stuart and many others inspire the book's first, theoretically-oriented part. The second part of the book focuses on artistic collaboration and co-creation, based on extensive dialogues with choreographers from the thriving Brussels dance scene.

Laermans defines 'the choreographic' as "*the virtual space in which in principle repeatable (series of) movements or non-movements are both recorded and rationalized.*"

Further in the book, there's a brief section in which he elaborates on this definition. These highlights are from p.89-92.

Through choreography, dance participates in the modern scriptural economy that is a fundamental cornerstone of the various forms of rationalization, or calculated goal-directed action, within the domains of the economy, science, politics, education, and so on. 'What is writing, then?', Michel de Certeau asks in *The Practice of Everyday Life*, and he answers: 'I designate as "writing" the concrete activity that consists in constructing, on its own, blank space (un espace propre) - the page - a text that has power over the exteriority from which it has first been isolated. ... The scriptural enterprise transforms or retains within itself what it receives from its outside and creates internally the instruments for an appropriation of the external space. It stocks up what it sifts out and gives itself the means to expand. (...)

Choreography is rationalizing, or selecting and fixing the most efficient means in view of an overall objective, which may y from visual beauty and bodily grace (the ballet tradition), or emotional and narrative expressivity (modern dance), to the questioning of the established parameters defining the danceable (contemporary reflexive dance). *'The choreographic delineates precisely the writing space in which movements and non-movements simultaneously fixed and rationalized, meticulously recorded and efficiently ordered.* Within the process of choreographing, both operations condition each other. (...)

Indeed, a written sign, whatever its nature and however unique, is a mark that is structurally characterized by the possibility of being used again, of being reiterable in principle. 'This power, this being able, this possibility is always inscribed, hence

necessarily inscribed as possibility in the functioning or the functional nature of the mark. ... Inasmuch as it is essential and structural, this possibility is always at work marking all the facts, all the events, even those that appear to disguise it. Just as iterability, which is not iteration, can be recognized even in a mark that in fact seems to have occurred only once. I say seems, because this one time is itself divided or multiplied in advance by its structure of repeatability', argues Jacques Derrida in Limited Inc. The choreographic again and again opens up a writing space that positions ephemeral 'movement events' as re-citable, or as actions - including the action of not-acting - that can principally be made anew in an undefined time still to come. This peculiar type of blank space allows concrete operations of fixing and rationalizing because it records whatever kind of observed action as being a priori repeat-able. In sum, the choreographic explicitly re-articulates the medium of dance according to the principle of iterability that defines writing in general. (...)

For all my highlights in the book, see

https://docs.google.com/document/d/162JMsqbnltwr_wbP_dzzgvzNhtmDQMY-Kewc_gqZZsWA/edit?usp=sharing

preface

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In focusing on both significations of the word 'work of art', I partially question the boundaries still distinguishing the 'internalist', text- or aesthetics-centred traditions in the humanities and dance studies or dance criticism from the externalist, context-or socially oriented approaches dominating within sociology and most other social sciences. At the same time, through the book's two distinct parts, this general dividing line is all in all willingly re-affirmed.

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Notwithstanding the evident minimalism underlying Fase, I particularly stress the specific dialectics between choreographic structure and a partly unintended, partly theatricalized bodily expressivity that comes to the fore during the work's performance.

In this way, the piece's liveness vastly undermines the 'ideality' or 'purity' of the Platonic body presupposed by every instance of written dance' or choreography. I try to give that latter notion some more substance via the concept of 'the choreographic, defined as the virtual space in which in principle repeatable (series of) movements or non-movements are both recorded and rationalized. My discussion of Rosas danst Rosas highlights how making ordinary movements scriptable within 'the choreographic' greatly transforms their status. Yet the quoted and frequently echoed everyday actions are often also markedly feminine. Their recitative identity, thus I argue in line with Judith Butler's views, precisely mimics the at once imitative and

reiterative nature of the male and female renders we continuously embody within the confines

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By way of interim conclusion, I situate this new labour morality within the broader contexts of the current post-Fordist creative economy and the culture of expressive individualism that became institutionalized in the wake of 'the roaring sixties'. Given the precarious status of the majority of artists, who are typical flexi-workers in charge of a highly vulnerable 'Me, Inc.', the question arises if the rather diabolical loop between the desire to be self-expressive and overall meagre material rewards still leaves some space for a genuine criticality.

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can only steer away from a mostly unproductive surplus in social tension or discursive strife by the partly purposeful, partly unintended production of a situational value common, a somewhat stable way of 'talking dance marked by a collective set of appreciative viewpoints on 'what we are actually doing'. Inspired by Hannah Arendt's and Bruno Latour's framing of politics, I contend that the active and usually zigzagging composition of such a common defines a collaboration's micro-politics. This practice of common-ing' is grounded in three essential operations: a sustained concentration on the work at hand and its possible outcomes, a genuine pragmatism that opts against lengthy speculative discussions and for the empirical testing of propositions, and an a-personal lead-ingfollowing' (André Lepecki)

The Virtual Nature of Dance. Basic Assumptions and Hypotheses

The Medium of Dance

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With Exhausting Dance, André Lepecki has accurately baptized the trend within contemporary dance, especially in Europe, to undo movement by doing nothing in the face of the audience's gaze. Halting dance is a critical gesture with wider ramifications since stillness goes against the grain of contemporary culture.

Western modernity indeed unleashes an always more restless and meanwhile globalized mobilization of natural and human re-sources, varying from the forced mobility of labour power to the manipulation of sensory perception by the mass media. 'To the same degree as we modern subjects understand freedom a priori as freedom of movement, progress is only thinkable for us as the kind of movement that leads to a higher degree of mobility', as Peter Sloterdijk observes, adding: Ontologically, modernity is a pure "being-toward-movement". The 'Copernican making mobile' of ever more faculties and resources involves a plethora of social choreographies that couple objects and subjects, commodities and bodily actions,

into assemblages of being-moved and of being-on-the-move. Mobilizing equals activating, putting to work and into movement. This is also the hallmark of ballet and modern dance, as well as of their contemporary successors. Dance and modernity intertwine in a kinetic mode of being-in-the-world', Lepecki concludes. Thus, dance increasingly turns towards movement to look for its essence... Dance accesses modernity by its increased ontological alignment with movement as the spectacle of modernity's being.'

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Culture is the necessary supplement of human nature, understood as an overall generic potentiality that comprises a variety of more particular faculties. The universality of human nature is realized in various cultures: what makes us one (generic potentiality) exposes itself in multiple actualizations (existing potentiality); what unites us (nature) simultaneously divides us (culture). Culture cultivates nature, thus transforming a blank potential into a genuine capacity to speak and to communicate, to sense and to think, to move, et cetera. An existing potential is therefore by definition marked by a culture's normative codification of some possibilities as truly human, at the expense of others. Indeed, every culture is an exclusionary machine that performatively differentiates between valuable and non-valuable possibilities to act and to not-act.

The selection comes down to complexity reduction, and is at once contingent and unavoidable. For no culture, however tolerant, can encompass the indetermination of human nature, its virtual mode of being as pure potentiality or - to borrow another expression from Agamben - naked life.

Art as a Proper Name

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Performing everyday movements within a theatre context hints at the existence of a generic corporeality shared by the performer and the spectator alike, and demands of the viewer the readiness to activate one's ability to watch in a quasi-generic way, even to look 'beyond culture' when looking. 'What is important now is to recover our senses. We must learn to see more, to hear more, to feel more. Our task is not to find the maximum amount of content in a work of art, much less to squeeze more content out of the work than is already there. Our task is to cut back content so that we can see the thing at all', writes Susan Sontag in her famous essay 'Against Interpretation', which ends with the once much quoted line: 'In place of an hermeneutics of art we need an erotics of art.' Sontag's eloquent plea for a genuinely degree-zero spectato-ship was originally published in 1964 and referred, among other things, to the dance work of Merce Cunningham; her essay also captured the then increasingly popular artistic spirit exemplified by many Judson works as well as

Minimalist or 'Literalist Art'.

But is a truly literalist stance actually possible? Are we able to put off at will the spectacles of culture that structure our perception?

This is doubtful. The average spectator of a performance cannot fully undo the act of interpretation but only go against the tendency to read movements, or to transform them into a text, an ensemble of signifiers pointing to possible meanings or signifieds.

An Anxious, Undecidable, and Performed Object

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The overall result is a genuine paradox: as an artistic reality contemporary dance is commonly assumed to really exist independently of any kind of performativity, by performances and other practices that assert 'this is contemporary dance'. The reality of contemporary dance thus primarily consists of the ongoing performative realization of its presupposed realness: like every dance work, it is a performed object.

Making 'Pure Dance' Impure. Notes on the Work of Anne Teresa De Keersmaeker & Rosas

Minimal Dance and/as Repetition

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and lateral light previously seen in Piano Phase. In short, the play of difference and repetition not only characterizes the choreography of the movements in every section of Fase, it also marks the performance's unity. Moreover, the work embodies a particularly structural view of the relationship between music and dance, sound score and choreography. In the short essay 'Notes on Music and Dance', originally published in 1973, Reich himself advocates a drastic renewal of theatre dance after Judson, based on 'a return to the roots of dance as it is found all over the world: regular rhythmic movement, usually done to music.... For music and dance to go together they must share the same rhythmic structure. This common rhythmic structure will determine the length of the music and dance as well as when changes in both will occur. It will not de-

Intermezzo: Defining 'the Choreographic'

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Embodying Structure

Minimal dance shows a close affinity with the wave of structuralism that dominated Continental philosophy and the human sciences during the 1960s. Both privilege langue (or language as a structured system of differences) over parole (or the individual speech act) and operate with the notion of an underlying structure made up of limited possibilities that conditions "the sayable" (or the danceable), Anthropologist

Claude Lévi-Strauss, the founding father of structuralism, thus repeatedly succeeded in reducing a vast corpus of various myths into a series of ordered transformations of a restricted number of narrative elements. Every existing singular myth may therefore in principle be treated as a particular version of a virtual foundational structure. In a comparable fashion, a minimalist choreography consists of a seemingly endless number of permutations of one or a couple of elementary movement sequences. Minimal dance deliberately commits itself to the structural logic of the slightly altered serial copy that tends to outdo the original status of the initial phrase.

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Judson performers did not deliberately stage an action for a witnessing audience whose presence is theatrically taken into account, but acted as if the public was absent by simulating being totally absorbed by the tasks at hand. In doing so, they primarily exhibited or displayed, rather than staged, mundane actions. This mode of representation indeed had a direct affinity with dominant practices within the fine arts. The stage was treated as an exhibition space in which the appropriated pedestrian movements were neutrally exposed, in order to be looked at in a focused way. The matter-of-fact performing style evidently added to this resemblance with the practice of displaying arte-facts known from art galleries or museums. Judson's option for the literal staging of ordinary actions also committed itself to a mimetic logic of quotation that signified a clear refusal to rework

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repeated character, the movements are transformed into choreographic signs gaining in connotative value ('this is dance') and gradually losing in denotative or referential value (these dance movements refer to daily actions'). Or as art theorist Hal Foster, writing on the status of repetition in 1960s Minimalism, perceptively notes: 'Abstraction tends only to sublate representation, to preserve it in cancellation, whereas repetition ... tends to subvert representation, to undercut its referential logic. However, the reiteration of the representing signs does not completely do away with external references. Thus in the first and second sections of Rosas danst Rosas, the movements keep on alluding, with an albeit gradually weakening denotative force, to the everyday world outside the theatre. The signs never change into empty signifiers but retain, particularly from the point of view of the 'ideality' of the choreographic' or the idea of 'pure movement', traces of impurity.

Re/Presenting the Body. Glosses on the Work of Meg Stuart & Damaged Goods

Constructivist Choreography

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Bodies do matter in a twofold way within a society or culture. They literally

matter: they materially enact and exemplify the hegemonic notion of the 'normal' human body. Therefore our corporeality, for instance, conforms to the idea of an integrated or unified organism that is controlled by invisible coordinating movements (taking place in the consciousness, as the modern notion of the subject contends; or solely in the brain, as contemporary neuropsychology suggests). Through the repeated materializing of a culture's ontology of the human body, the particular shape and posture of this symbolic figure becomes normalized, even naturalized. The socially sanctioned culturalized body is actually a performed normative construct but it does not appear that way because it continuously 'matters' in daily life, not to mention in the countless standardized images of female and male bodies appearing in the various mass media. Yet bodies also matter figuratively: they concern us, they are not a matter of indifference. Publicly observable bodies reassure insofar as they are easily legible and more or less fit the prevalent script. Normal bodies possess a familiar intelligibility and inspire confidence thanks to a physicality that behaves according to the dominant symbolic regime. Disfigured, queering or otherwise 'abnormal' bodies often elicit feelings of uneasiness, since they publicly question the supposedly natural

Dance / Image / Montage

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performing bodies are acting in a strongly delayed or a vastly sped-up movie, which they actually construct themselves through the particular pace of their movements and poses. The underlying choreographic stance reaffirms within the theatre a basic lesson of modern film practice: successive images are persuasive primarily through their linkage within a self-referentially produced plane of consistent motions. Cinema is the art of sequencing moving images, hence the expression 'a movie'; in combination with light and sound, choreographed movements can acquire a cinematographic quality through a particular timing or slicing of the performed actions. A sequence of mainly slow movements develops into a first image, which is then punctuated by a rapid action, resulting in a short-lived flashing image; and subsequently a third image starts to unfold through a slightly different mode of slowness. In this way, the locus of movement is constantly doubled: movement is simultaneously happening within and in between the composed body images.

Since Sergei Eisenstein, and other cinematographers who have insisted on a constructivist approach, we know that the essence of film is montage. Stuart's choreographies subscribe to this idea. Her 'pictures in motion' usually consist of long lasting singular body images that are combined into autonomous scenes, which then act as the building blocks of the separate sections that make up a total performance.

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the corporeality (the physical awareness portrayed) on the stage relates to the

physical experience of the onlooker.' Like those of ausch, Stuart's choreographies count on the spectator as an ac-ive and unifying reader who frames the observed actions on the asis of personal memories, bodily traces of pain or enjoyment nd their unconscious remnants, imaginary identifications, rejec-ons, et cetera. The audience is a co-author, the performance a enuine instance of what Roland Barthes calls the writerly text', r the kind of text that positions the reader as an active re-writer. The ever-deferred completion of the 'dance text' in the act of its reception involves the spectator as a virtual co-choreographer whose co-presence during a performance supplements the choreographer's absent presence. The individual spectator is expected to include his own body as a necessary resonance chamber, without the guarantee that every scene will effectively start to produce singular effects within one's own embodied audio-visual archive.

Minimizing Meaning, or Radicalizing Dance Theatre

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Choreography à la Bausch is precisely the art of playing in a sometimes critical, often ironical mode with the difference between bodily signifiers and their established significations.

In her early choreographies, Meg Stuart strikingly intensifies the tension between human physicality and its cultural script-ing. Matter and meaning appear as two separate planes that are juxtaposed to and coupled with the difference between stage and audience. On stage, the enacted movements and poses remain devoid of meaning and tend to become pure signifiers. The neutral, inexpressive performing style primarily sticks to the physicality of

finied body on the floor. The same zero-degree state of meaning gives the bodily interactions between the performers an uncanny character. With a deadpan face, a male performer for instance paws a female body whose visage also shows no sign of personal involvement (the final scene of Disfigure Study). Or a man kicks forward a woman who vainly tries to embrace his body: a potentially dramatic scene, yet the performers only seem to execute

'pure movements' (a notable sequence in No Longer Readymade).

In sum, actions are continually made abstract by annulling their signification in everyday culture. However, in the communication between stage and auditorium, the scraped-off meanings re-surface: the spectator links the movements to familiar cultural scripts. Within the onlooker's culturalized gaze, the staged bodily actions unavoidably transform into significant, often dramatic gestures. In a word, the minimization of meaning on stage finds its elicited counterpart in the maximization of signification by the audience: the choreographic action of de-representation' is crossed out by the spectator's act of re-representation.

Intermezzo: Theatricality and the Gazing Other

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a seemingly profound statement. The momentary connection that corresponds with the audience's gaze may also greatly influence individual perception. The temporal functioning and actual impact of this social reality is vastly conditioned by the general behaviour of the viewing public. For neither individual concentration nor the emergence of a focused collective attention is possible without the silence and diligent behaviour of those attending a performance. In the final instance, modern performance and most of its supposedly postmodern avatars vastly depend on the generally taken for granted existence of a civilized spectator's body whose self-control is sublimated into a predominantly disembodied watching or disinterested pleasure, one that Immanuel Kant already considered as constituting the core of aesthetic involvement.

The collective gaze conditioning a performance is a relatively autonomous social medium that is fundamental to every sort of live performing art. Performers often associate this medial reality with a strange kind of black hole one is dancing or acting for. Yet the hole is not a passive opening or fold in which the performance continually disappears but an actively gazing anonymous Other without a face.

Gesturing Im/Potentiality

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ment vocabulary and performing style, one that subverts the average spectator's expectation that choreographed dance consists of gracefully enacted movements.

Meg Stuart's remarkable solo in *No Longer Readymade* goes one step further and plays out theatricality against itself, which results in a live deconstruction of the theatre dispositive. 'I am tried and tested in front of the audience, who now share in my discomfort of seeing me so exposed, so unprepared for my obligation to entertain, awe and move them. I fail their test. I ask for help. They fail me. I stand there humiliated, letting time pass, waiting and looking for the next place, writes Stuart in one of the short notes

on her solo. The act indeed self-reflexively engages with the visual power relationship between performer and public. The corresponding imbalance is not debunked in a straightforward manner, quite the contrary. At the start of the solo, the house lights are switched on again, nullifying the eventuality of the voyeuristic pleasure that the situation of looking at somebody - literally: some body - in the dark may offer. A principal material condition of the visual inequality marking the relationship between stage and audience is thereby made ineffective. Whereas normally only the performer is situated

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rial medium that surpasses human control.

'The gesture is the exhibition of a mediality: it is the process of making a means visible as such. It allows the emergence of the being-in-a-medium of human beings and thus it opens the ethical dimension for them', Giorgio Agamben asserts in his seminal essay *Notes on Gesture*. To be human is to be multi-medial, to live in - rather than with - many mediums that all define a virtual potential or genuine capacity. Through the failing use of a medium, gestures display that very medium's existence as a never completely controllable potential - as one that makes human life possible but is impossible to fully rationalize according to the logic of means and ends. Although we often experience a medium such as language as a disposable object that can be manipulated at will, it actually constitutes a milieu in which we live. The same holds for the human body and its capacity to move and to not-move.

The moving potential allows its instrumental use by consciously willing subjects, but the ability also regularly fails us. The disfigured or uncanny moving body that Meg Stuart frequently stages in her performances is first and foremost a failing body making gestural movements. Through a coagulated or fragmented move-

Liveness and/or 'the Political'

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to the artistic performance before a film camera. 'For aura is tied to [the actor's] presence; there can be no replica of it. The aura that, on the stage, emanates from Macbeth, cannot be separated for the spectators from that of the actor. However, the singularity of the shot in the studio is that the camera is substituted for the public. Consequently, the aura that envelops the actor vanishes, and with it the aura of the figure he portrays', Benjamin asserts in his famous essay *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*. Yet within the theatre dispositive, the aura surrounding the performers or the impersonated personae is tied to their distant presentness. Their being on stage goes together with an aloofness in their being watched that actually counters the metaphysics of presence underpinning the ideology of liveness. Its effectiveness presupposes the standard theatre situation, which is literally spectacular and transforms every audience member into an almighty gazing subject that enjoys the observed actions from a safe zone. Performers and spectators are co-present but the latter remain physically absent in the visual relationship with the stage: this is the defining condition for the emergence of an au-ratic presence, or the unique phenomenon of a distance, however close it may be' (Benjamin).

The direct togetherness of performers and audience in

'the lounge' paradoxically deconstructs the dancer's eventual aura through the creation of a situation of hyper-presentness or hyper-liveness. The ideology of liveness is indeed literalized by

side the realm or the political. Although the spectators share a situation of personal uneasiness, this collective discomfort does not become a common cause that is openly discussed or negotiated. A personal problem does not translate into a public issue but remains unspoken - since this is just art. In short, a potential political commonality is brought to the fore in a situation that crosses out this very possibility. Through this specific act of representing 'the political' within the realm of the artistic', the first appears as a de-activated potential that cannot be (made) present 'now, here'?

'What binds the spectators together is no more than an irreversible relation at the very centre which maintains their isolation. The spectacle reunites the separate, but reunites it as separate', arch-Situationist Guy Debord writes in *The Society of the Spectacle*, published one year before the legendary events of May 1968. The combination of communicative separateness and a common sensory focus creates a 'being in failing unity'

Performing Postmodern Subjectivity

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Modernity is 'a singularly confessing society', Michel Foucault notes in the first volume of *The History of Sexuality*: 'The confession has spread its effects far and wide. It plays a part in justice, medicine, education, family relationships, and love relations, in the most ordinary affairs of everyday life, and in the most solemn rites; one confesses one's crimes, one's sins, one's thoughts and desires, one's illnesses and troubles; one goes about telling, with the greatest precision, whatever is most difficult to tell. One confesses in public and private, to one's parents, one's educators, one's doctors, to those one loves... Western man has become a confessing animal.'

Intermezzo: Liveness as Re/Presentation

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nature of presence is all the more true for any kind of stage presence: Presence, in order to be presence and self-presence, has always already begun to represent itself, has always already been penetrated. Stage presence inevitably transforms into the representation of presence or a represented presence through the co-presence of a witnessing observer - of a spectator, a gazing audience, an anonymous Other. During a performance, actions are therefore not just taking place but indicate or signify their occurrence in a situation of co-presence. They happen 'now, here', and they reflexively represent this presence through a particular mode of theatricality.

The performer's bodily presence is at once excluded and included in its public representation, which crosses out the possibility of pure action that so many theatre or

dance makers have been after. The doubling can be enacted in several ways: the various modes of theatricality go together with divergent possibilities of representing presence. Or as theorist Cormac Power notes: 'presence is a function of theatrical signification' and must be approached 'in terms of how it is constructed/manipulated/played with in performance.' Presence is indeed performed within a theatre context, resulting in a performative presence that inevitably subverts that which it performs.

The operation of doubling or representing does not nullify the signified presence since the performers are spatially co-present in every moment that their 'being on stage' enters into representation. The performed presence is therefore at once metonymic and metaphorical. There exists a relation of contiguity between stage presence and its staged representation (metonymy), and yet it simultaneously looks as if the performers and their actions are just present' (metaphor). Precisely this paradoxical knot or strange loop defines live performance: liveness is re/presentation, or the performed unity of the difference between presence and representation in a situation of co-presence.

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The theatre dispositive allows a twofold self-deconstruction, but the underlying split unity of re/presentation can never be completely undone: neither presence nor representation is destructible by its other. But then why does an important current within modern and postmodern theatre or dance consistently opt for the practice of 'de-representation'? How to explain the widespread aversion to 'being in representation', or the ever recurrent fascination with the impossible to realize possibility of staging an undivided presence or pure Being that remains uncontaminated by its being watched? What kind of unconscious drive animates the desire to literalize liveness in the direction of Life? What may latently be at stake in the puritanical belief in, what is often called, in a tellingly moralistic vocabulary, (authenticity? Why has the stage become one of the privileged places where a doubtful metaphysics of presence is enacted again and again? Why deny the obvious and try to subtract representation from 'being in representation'?

Is it because live art can be a heaven in a heartless world, a heterotopic practice pointing to the utopia of a transparent and unmediated communication that overcomes the difference symbolized by the hyphen in the word 'co-presence'?

Sound Magic, or the Closure of Representation

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at the bathhouse of the screen. An almost pure

filmic image emerges that only seems to refer to itself and no longer acts as a surface on which an external material reality enters into representation. Presence turns

into absence through the deployed strategy of 'over-representation', which exaggerates to the extreme the stage's doubling nature. Representation is thus brought to a closure that does not end its performativity, quite to the contrary, but literally brings it to a conclusion in which representation loops back onto itself. This self-referential short circuit positions the theatre stage as a space of playful representation in which 'being in representation' crosses out 'pure being' - or 'pure movement' - without (a) drama or the doubling of a pre-given double. Or as Jacques Derrida states in the closing lines of his essay 'The Theatre of Cruelty and the Closure of Representation':

'To think the closure of representation is thus to think the cruel powers of death and play which permit presence to be born to itself, and pleasurably to consume itself through the representation in which it eludes itself in its deferral. To think the closure of representation is to think the tragic: not as the representation of fate, but as the fate of representation. Its gratuitous and baseless necessity. And it is to think why it is fatal that, in its closure, representation continues.'

Coda: 'Being Moved' and 'The Motioning'

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From the spectator's point of view, the movement potential embodied by the dancers) constitutes a performative absence grounding both the split nature of theatre dance (the actuality/virtuality difference) and of liveness (the presence/ representation difference).

During a performance, a dancer's trained capacity to move and to not-move is selectively activated in line with the overall choreography and acts as the material yet unobservable source of all observable motions. Gerald Siegmund therefore speaks of 'the motioning' (das Bewegende) when referring to the bodily reality at once supporting and accompanying all actions in theatre dance. 'The motioning is not invisible and therefore reducible to an abstract idea since it is tangibly corporeal.

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representation and remains forever invisible in every one of its visible manifestations. 'The body of the dancer can take on, can take up, all forms. It is the possible, writes French philosopher Michel Serres in *Genèse*, his extended meditation on 'Being' as the noise of the world'. 'The body of the dancer is the body of the possible, it is blank, it does not exist ... It is Nobody. It is, literally, broken up. The foot can go in all possible directions; the leg, the arm, the hand, the torso can go in all possible directions.

The body is shattered over all the directions of the space. ... Who am I, body that dances? A naked space. Not protected by a fortress of singularities. Without the support of qualities. A body without qualities.'

Dance Beyond 'the Human'. Thinking Through Recent Developments in Contemporary Dance.

Choreography as 'Videography'

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count of the relationship between choreography and performance, which vastly informed the interpretation of De Keersmaeker's early work as discussed in chapter two, is nevertheless somewhat unconvincing here. Something simple but important is missing.

If choreography equals writing (in Greek: graphein), then the video camera nowadays primarily acts as the scripting medium that, with considerable consequences, combines in one apparatus the blank page (the video cassette or, more contemporary, the hard disk) and the pencil (the camera lens). 'The choreographic', or the space wherein dance is written, thus tends to converge increasingly with 'the videographic. Many, though not all, choreographers indeed rely on video recordings when fixing a series of movements or retaking a complete piece. Potential material is first generated and then further explored through task-guided improvisations

...

ment, but about accepting the version completely - that's where the rigor comes in.' The invoked 'rigor' is the disciplinary effect of choreography's scoring nature, which by definition implies restless mastering and mindless repetition in view of the formation of a stable corporeal memory. Yet the body that learns to mimic a series of video images also archives a singular performance of the - score - or at least, it tries to do so. *In sum, choreography has to a great extent become videography, combining ideality' and actuality, a written text' and its contingent bodily interpretation.*

The entanglement of a choreography and its particular enactment within a video recording also guides the dancer who consults an available, more or less authorized documentation of a dance work when preparing to perform it anew. His or her embodiment of this 'written text' remains a singular approximation of an impossible to repeat series of archived traces.

The Name of Reflexive Dance

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ture of all sorts of parameters informing the de facto use or the medium of dance is thus made manifest through various critical operations. 'Conceptual dance' therefore regularly goes beyond the double stake of generic conceptual dance. The alternative identity card, the use of the label 'reflexive dance, was already put on the table in the opening chapter and tries to do justice to this produced surplus.

Reflexive dance deconstructs, in the mode of generic conceptual dance, contemporary dance's material and discursive conditions of possibility through questioning performative gestures, ...

Intermezzo: Performing Ideas

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According to G.W.F. Hegel, fine art acts 'as the first reconciling middle term between pure thought and what is merely external, sensuous, and transient'. A successful art work's appearance points beyond itself and always gives us an idea through its sensually apprehended forms (for Hegel, the beauty of art therefore exceeds that of nature: it is spiritual). Yet in a time dominated by abstract reflection and general maxims, the days of fine art are over. 'Thought and reflection have spread their wings above fine art' to such an extent that 'art, considered in its highest vocation, is and remains for us a thing of the past. ... Art invites us to intellectual consideration, and that not for the purpose of creating art again, but for knowing philosophically what art is', Hegel says in the introduction to his 1820s lectures on aesthetics. Arthur Danto at once re-states and re-dates this both famous and infamous thesis in his influential 1984 essay on 'the end of art'. Not Conceptualism, as one would perhaps expect, but Andy Warhol's Brillo Box — the work that already figured prominently in Danto's eponymous essay on 'The Artworld' (1964) - is the historical tipping point that erased the difference between art and philosophy by focussing on the distinction between art and non-art, a staple of real Brillo boxes containing soap powder and its silk-screened simulacrum in an art gallery. In Danto's reading, Brillo Box is intentionally made to reflect on this conceptual issue, which makes the work akin to the philosophy of art (Hegel would not agree: like religion, art in his view is only a phase the Spirit passes through in its dialectical unfolding in the direction of philosophy). 'The end of art' does not of course mean the literal death of art production. 'Art after the end of art' (Danto), or visual art's

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question What is said here! because the individual art work is an independent, compact communication using the human faculty of perception as its prime medium. 'Consciousness cannot communicate, communication cannot perceive', Niklas Luhmann notes. 'Art makes perception available for communication, and it does so outside the standardized form of a language that, for its part, is perceptible). ... Art integrates perception and communication without merging or confusing their respective operations.' This observation is a variation on the original meaning of the Greek word *aisthesis*, which refers to sensuous experience, by inscribing it within the logic of communication and locating both perceptions and the ideas grafted onto them solely in an observer's consciousness.

The alternative view sticks to the art work and conceives it as a genuine medium of thought. 'Art thinks no less than philosophy, but it thinks through affects and percepts', Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari assert in *What is Philosophy?* Not that the ideas inspiring a dance work have the shape of quasi-Platonic essences

...

Idea-based dance turns thoughts into multidimensional conceptual personae that are part and parcel of the performance.

Thus the notions of scenography and the duration-event acquire, in *La Magnificenza*, the status of active forces that, not unlike actors in a theatre performance, overtly co-direct both the general course and the spectator's experience of the dance work. These conceptual personae have an anonymous nature and are not stand-ins for the individual thinking of the choreographer: no theatrical doubling or representation is implied. What Deleuze and Guattari observe about the philosopher and conceptual personae also goes for the relationship between enacted conceptions and a choreographer or a dancer in an instance of reflexive dance:

I am no longer myself but thought's aptitude to finding itself and spreading across a plane that passes through me at several places. The conceptual persona has nothing to do with an abstract personification, a symbol or an allegory since it lives, it insists. The philosopher is the idiosyncrasy of his conceptual personae.' Consider the conceptual personae of a dance performance as the at once performed and performative thoughts that create a conceptual plane of consistency differing from, but immanent to, the work's sensuous plane of consistency. The conceptual plane consists of the dance idea's becoming, which is only halted at the end of the performance.

Deconstructing Body Humanism

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With the body-centeredness of the reigning dance discourse corresponds a choreographic practice, or at least a self-understanding of making dance works, that necessarily doubles the dancing body in a presence that is simultaneously absent in the partly symbolically coded, partly imaginarily invested representation that the spectator enjoys. Precisely this split is the hallmark of the presumably 'pure dance' of, for instance, Balanchine or Cunningham and their many offspring. This choreographic tradition tries to reduce the dancing body to a tautological expression of itself, but to no avail. 'I dance that I dance', this body supposedly says - yet it is a statement, a representation in which the dancing body does not encounter itself but can at the most indicate its own absence. If the moving human body is regarded as dance's prime medium, the conceptualization of the dancing body tends to coincide more often than not with a limit exercise trying to encircle the real void - in Lacanian

parlance: the void of the Real - in the proverbial slash distinguishing the real body from its symbolic and imaginary realness when dancing on stage. And not only is the real body, in the common-sense meaning, at once present and absent in a dance performance, but so is the body-as-medium. Like language or sound, this medium can only be alluded to: every movement or non-movement instantiates a non-representable po-tential, a virtual infinity of possibilities, only some of which are actualized during a performance.

Co-Writing Dance

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The interaction between the context created by the initial 'dance text' and the iterative nature of the many standardized signs visibly indicating the spectators' co-presence transforms these very symbols into choreographic marks. Or in Jacques Derrida's words, already quoted when the choreographic' was defined: Inasmuch as it is essential and structural, this possibility [to iterate] is always at work marking all the facts, all the events, even those that appear to disguise it. Just as iterability, which is not iteration, can be recognized even in a mark that in fact seems to have occurred only once. I say seems, because this one time is itself divided or multiplied in advance by its structure of repeatability.'

'Dance (or Choreography) in General'

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How to make sense of this post-humanist conjuncture?

Thierry de Duve has coined the notion of 'art in general' in his in-depth discussion of the Duchamp-effect within the visual arts. 'I propose to use the term art in general, or art in the generic sense of the word, to refer to the a priori possibility that anything can be art. ... Art in general is the name, one might say, for the new deal that has become established in the "post-Duchamp" era.

It replaces the old generic term "fine arts", which relates to the situation before Duchamp', De Duve contends. The current situation in the performing arts tends towards a performance art in general that goes on hybridizing the once evident borders between the established genres beyond the postmodernist legacy, while simultaneously exploring alternative modes of performativity in various media. What singles out particular instances of contemporary dance and choreography within this new field is their firm focus on the public performativity of divergent kinds of movements or poses. Thus closer does not only create a symmetrical relationship between the performer's actions and the bodily presence of the spectators. The changing light waves, broken by the bamboo rods, or the technologically mediated sound waves are also rigorously treated from a dramaturgical point of view. Both are

taken up and framed as movements in their own right: they are indeed choreographed.

'Dance in general' re-articulates dance's medium - or the unity of the difference between movement and non-movement - through a consistently symmetrical, non-hierarchical handling of the motion potentials of the human body and those of non-human materialities.

...

The art of composing 'dance in general', so '*choreography in general*', comes down to the making and modulation of assemblages, the explorative associating and final coupling of materially heterogeneous kinds of actions and inactions. Every assemblage, as Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari argue in *A Thousand Plateaus*, extracts a territory from one or more milieus but is simultaneously carried away by various lines of deterritorialization. This is an assemblage's vertical axis, which shows an irresolvable tension between processes of consolidation and destabilization. On its horizontal axis, 'an assemblage comprises two segments, one of content, the other of expression. On the one hand, it is a machinic assemblage of bodies, of actions and passions, an intermingling of bodies reacting to one another; on the other hand, it is a collective assemblage of enunciations, of acts and statements, of incorporeal transformations attributed to bodies', Deleuze and Guattari write.

Making and Valuating Art. On the Social Nature of Autonomous Art Worlds.

Framing Art's Autonomy

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and behaviours dominating established economic practices. Not only are commercial interests in the narrow sense banned to the social unconsciousness (from where they more often than not continue to haunt the involved agents). 'The challenge which economies based on disavowal of the "economic" presents to all forms of economism lies precisely in the fact that they function, and can function, in practice — and not merely in the agents' representations - only by virtue of a constant, collective repression of narrowly "economic" interest and of the real nature of the practices revealed by "economic" analysis', Pierre Bourdieu asserts in his epochal essay 'The production of belief'.

Art worlds exemplify the double negation of both the underlying material or financial economy and the specific symbolic economy regulating all autonomous fields of cultural production and mediation. Economy means scarcity, and what is certainly not abundant in an art world is symbolic capital, or the public recognition an artist or art mediator receives from

The Regime of Singularity

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'Works of art are received and valued on different planes. Two polar types stand out: with one, the accent is on the cult value; with the other, on the exhibition value of the work. Artistic production begins with ceremonial objects destined to serve in a cult', Benjamin observes. He prophesizes that in 'the age of mechanical reproduction' - read: of movies and mass circulating photography, since the essay was written in the mid-1930s - the traditional cult value, even the charismatic aura of the art work, is doomed to fade away. For the exhibition value, or the sheer fact that a photograph is widely published in a weekly magazine or a daily newspaper, and thus made easily available, will outstrip the desire to be spatially close to a unique artefact. Yet the opposite diagnosis possesses perhaps a larger grain of truth: the culture of the readily accessible copy greatly favours the cult of the difficult to witness reproduced original. Art's regime of singularity seems indeed rather strengthened by the worldwide availability of reproductions in whatever form. The live show outdoes its video registration, however accurate, and the innumerable copies of the Mona Lisa only add to the specific aura of Da Vinci's La Gioconda in the Louvre.

... The never fully understood aesthetic otherness of a successful painting or a dazzling dance performance is considered to be the genuine effect of the work's direct agency, which every reproduction necessarily lacks. The artefact deemed art is indeed usually treated as an object that acts as a subject and possesses qualities commonly ascribed to human persons. Art works seduce and convince, come near and run away, speak and remain silent; they also amaze, enchant, compel, delight, entrap, et cetera. In sum, the successful singular art object is construed as a quasi-subject that captivates the spectator. The agency attributed to the art work resembles that of an adored beloved one — hence the expression 'the love of art'- or the influence exercised by a magician or a worshipped religious object.

The Art Work as Fetish

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The venerated fetish is a human creation that bewitches and may also be used to cast a spell on an enemy. At least from a secular viewpoint, its efficacy rests on an act of human projection: within the context of a particular belief system, the object is actively bestowed with its supposed power to mediate between the profane and the sacred world. However, the artefact can only be operative if the collective human action sustaining it remains hidden. The disavowal is crucial to the object's impact and transforms it into a reified one, an autonomous thing (in Latin: res) with a seemingly independent efficacy that in reality fully depends on the misrecognized human act of projection. In sum, to worship a fetish is a performative act whose success paradoxically hinges on the straightforward denial of the act's performativity.

Together with Sigmund Freud, who coined the notion of sexual fetishism, Karl

Marx has given the expression 'fetishism' its letters of conceptual nobility. 'The mysterious character of the commodity-form consists ... simply in the fact that the commodity reflects the social characteristics of men's own labour as objective characteristics of the products of labour themselves, as the sociocultural properties of these things, Marx writes in the famous chapter on 'the fetishism of the commodity and its secret' in the first volume of Capital. 'In order, therefore, to find an analogy we must take flight into the misty realm of religion. There the products of the human brain appear as autonomous figures endowed with a life of their own, which enter into relations both with each other and with the human race. So it is in the world of commodities with the products of men's hands. I call this the fetishism which attaches itself to the products of labour as soon as they are produced as commodities, and is therefore inseparable from the production of commodities. Commodity fetishism equals the forgetting within the act of consumption - in Marx' terms: in the sphere of circulation - of the social labour that lends every priced object a particular exchange value. With the negation of the work necessary to produce the commodity, the social relation of exploitation characterizing the manufacturing of goods within capitalism also disappears.

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'All reification is a forgetting, Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno assert in Dialectic of Enlightenment, their bleak diagnosis of modernity as the ever increasing domination of a calculative, purely instrumental rationality. Commodity fetishism forgets the labour accumulated in most priced objects (handmade goods testifying of craftsmanship may nowadays be a noteworthy exception). The same holds for artistic fetishism, or the negation of the labour presupposed by the hailed singularity of the art work and its concomitant transformation in a reified arte-fact that speaks for itself of itself through itself. As with every commodity, the average work of fine art anticipates its effects, seemingly waiting, within the aggrandizing atmosphere of the white gallery cube or museum, the minimum of attention in order to be able to convince, capture or astonish. There are usually also

Against 'Sociologism'

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The widely appreciated work of Pierre Bourdieu is a prime example of this tendency to debunk the secular myth inherent in the notion of the author-subject, exposing the idolized art work as a collective misrepresentation of the actual functioning of art worlds.

Revisiting Rosas Anno 1995

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A Rosas working day anno 1995 is relatively scheduled but often also quite varied at the beginning and in the middle of the process of creation. Between 9.30 in the morning and 6 or 7 in the evening, the dancers may switch between different sorts of activity: generating material and perhaps showing it to the choreographer and the group, learning already developed phrases from co-dancers, making structured variations on a movement sequence in order to deepen its potential (for instance by reversing the phrase or recounting the constituting elements in a different rhythm), exploring particular material under the direct guidance of De Keersmaecker, rehearsing or teaching an existing repertory piece, et cetera. The specific timing of a working day is collectively decided during the first group meeting with the choreographer around 11 a.m. following the, in principle, mandatory dance or tai chi class. Many dancers regularly skip a class or enter late - a tolerated 'misbehaviour' when it is not too frequent. For that matter, all dancers have a one-year contract. The general company manager negotiates the possible prolongation of the employment agreement in the light of De Keersmaecker's future plans and her personal opinion of a dancer's individual qualities.

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The underlying motivation matters less than the perceptible exterior of actions and inactions, including the various connotations they suggest. In short, the signifier prevails over the original signified or referent. The evaluated secondary meanings can have a direct aesthetic content ('smooth', 'elegant', 'too awkward') or are briefly discussed by the dancers in more cultural terms: 'it is very poses or movements developed according to a rather strict rationale of expressivity form a noteworthy exception. For instance, the making of a love duet insinuating mutual attraction and rejection - a central scene in *Verklärte Nacht* - asks for somewhat strongly coded actions that are immanently motivated by their overall meaning.

While generating or exploring material, the dancers do not work within a socially blank space: the choreographer's gaze - an expression that will be further elaborated in the next paragraph - indirectly informs their work. The performers frequently refer to 'Anne Teresa's taste', which they deliberately anticipate in their activity. From former choreographies of De Keersmaecker, and perhaps also from previous collaborations with her, the dancers have deduced a relatively stable and mutually shared idea about the kind of material she may be interested in. This particular translation of the notion of the legitimately danceable - or 'De Keersmaecker's dance culture' - very much guides them and reduces the space of possible poses and movements while doing research.

'Being Hurt' and the Logic of Symbolic Exchange

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... Pierre-Emmanuel Sorignet links the at once assessing and accrediting

function of choreographers, above all consecrated ones, to a more general uncertainty. Many dancers experience a fragility in respect to their legitimacy to exist within this occupation', he observes, adding: 'This makes the choreographer the one who validates and certifies the dancer's belonging to the dance world.

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Heteronomous autonomy may be an existential condition defining the precariousness of human life as such. '[We] are, from the start, even prior to individuation itself... given over to some set of primary others' and therefore share 'a common human vulnerability, one that emerges with life itself... land] precedes the formation of "I", contends Judith Butler.

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And they are also individual artists who will produce — in Marxian parlance - a difficult to quantify artistic surplus value through their collaboration with the choreographer and co-dancers. In the same vein, **the choreographer occupies the opposite positions of both employer and artistic director**. Yet everything contractual is usually delegated to and handled by the company's general director or the external management office taking care of a project's legal and financial aspects. The performer's and dance maker's twofold social status therefore corresponds with a structural split between 'the economic' and 'the artistic' that reproduces the general disavowal of the first term and the concomitant autonomi-zation of the second one within modern art worlds. Dancer and choreographer can have a purely artistic work relation because their day-to-day collaboration is organizationally purified from everything economic by transferring this 'impurity' to a purely managerial body.

The dance maker therefore does not address the dancers as employees but consistently approaches them in line with the prevailing image of the artist: the performer supposedly acts out of a personal vocation to dance, to create, to develop a singular artistic potential. The company member who does not live up to this commonplace is reproached for having a 'bad work ethic. The negative valuation usually comes with the observation, which may be voiced openly, that 'one is not in a dance company like Rosas just to make a living'? In other words, the individual motivation regularly linked with the employee status is denied the dancers in their relationship with the choreographer. **The 'dance worker' who is not really approached as a labourer therefore has to disregard the possible discrepancy between the market value of the co-produced artistic product and the contractually fixed remuneration. The reality of surplus value creation - or, also in Marxian terms: of labour exploitation - is rather crassly sealed off by this socially mandatory negation**, which may be viewed as a somewhat particular instance of artistic fetishism and, more broadly, as a rather perverse ideological effect of the regime of singularity. Yet this is only half of the story, since the assumingly mere artistic liaison between performer and choreographer

greatly resembles the moral economy of gift and counter-gift qualifying symbolic exchange relations.

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'In all groups we see the archaic form of exchange in the gift and the return gift', Mauss writes. Symbolic exchange characterizes pre-modern societies but indeed lives on in modernity - or postmodernity - beyond the intimate ritual of offering presents and honouring, balancing or outbidding this act through counter-presents. Particularly creative work relationships are co-structured by the moral gift economy informing the threefold symbolic commitment to give, to receive and to meet the accepted accomplishment.

Intermezzo: Situating (Social) Structures

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The word 'structure' connotes both temporal stability and the existence of a minimum of internal order or coherence. Indeed, over a certain period of time a structure of whatever sort reduces the virtual range of possibilities opened up by a particular potential.

... A structure has a virtual nature and only exists through the continual iteration of the acts it simultaneously qualifies. The observable activity of moving, for instance, is the medium that the limiting structure both requires and orders: its sustenance hinges on that which it sustains. Through repeated variations and re-articulations of the supporting medial activity, a structure may be slightly altered or, on the contrary, undergo such a profound modification that the idea of structural change applies.

... Despite the notable differences in attitude they imply, both the 'gradualist' and the 'sudden conversion' approach presuppose the capacity to exercise self-discipline, through the deployment of various 'techniques of the self'. Michel Foucault, who coined the expression, gives this a specific meaning: a series of intentional and voluntary actions by which men not only set themselves rules of conduct, but also seek to transform them-selves, to change themselves in their singular being. A genuine rehearsal of human freedom is implied, one that does not invoke a mythical idea of individual autonomy, but points to a laborious work of re-creating the self through acts of self-empowerment, at once drawing on and addressing a structured potentiality.

'Social structures are expectational structures, Niklas Luhmann contends, in line with a long tradition of sociological thinking. 'Expectations come into being by constraining ranges of possibilities. Finally, they are this constraint itself' A social structure reduces the scope of possible actions, including communications, within the relationships to which it pertains.

Coda: Capitalizing Expressive Individualism

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Modern art's regime of singularity in general and its various romantic manifestations in particular are indeed the historical laboratory of contemporary 'expressivism'. This mode of self-caring has meanwhile supplemented the previously institutionalized forms of individualism. Whereas **economic or instrumental individualism** hails the calculative ego rationally pursuing self-interests, **moral individualism** primarily applauds human being's capability to be self-legislating and to gain in autonomy through a personally willed self-discipline consistently committed to the realization of an ethical ideal. **Expressive individualism** completes this cultural duo with a distinguished emphasis on the self as a potential that may be unearthed in such a way that there no longer seems to exist a gap between what one actually does or says and what one really is.

The current biopolitical economy, which thrives on generic capacities such as communication, imagining or feeling, has meanwhile selectively appropriated 'the expressive revolution' in the sphere of the creative economy (which is a partly ideological notion simultaneously pointing to a real change in the current production of economic value). Expressive individualism is indeed the solid cultural backdrop of the social expectations that frame, in various domains, so-called immaterial labour or, in the words of Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, labour that produces an immaterial good, such as a service, a cultural prod-uct, knowledge, or communication'. Overall, the daily organization of immaterial labour greatly resembles the dominant mode of making dance together: *the semi-directive regime of participatory collaboration is, in today's creative capitalism', a widespread mode of generating economic value and surplus value.*

Talking and Judging Dance Together

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Whatever the specificities informing a participatory collaboration, the cooperating choreographer and dancers collectively produce a work in process that gradually metamorphoses into a final product, a publicly witnessed performance. They thus regularly engage in **'commoning', or the acting in common, which simultaneously produces a common, a tangible collective good and/or a social commonality.** With the notable exception of truly flat or democratic collaborations, which will be addressed later, the common action is marked by a structural power difference: in line with the regime of semi-directivity, choreographers have at times a (much) greater say than the dancers. In general, they also successfully claim the definitive authorship of the collectively created artefact, with or without the public recognition of the performers' constitutive contributions through the ritual formulae made in collaboration with the

dancers' printed in the program booklet. At first sight, the semi-directive regime of participatory collaboration reproduces a crucial trait of current 'creative capitalism'. Nowadays, capital expropriates cooperation', Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri observe, adding: 'Biopolitical exploitation involves the expropriation of the common, in this way, at the level of social production and social practice.' Choreographers may perhaps disprove the argument by contending that they actually initiate, greatly inspire and daily supervise a creation process, for which they also take final

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art works, yet both processes in a paradigmatic way also exemplify the peculiarities of 'the economics of singularities' (Lucien Karpik). Like most cultural commodities of whatever nature, as well as various sorts of personal services, such as the ones provided by specialized lawyers or doctors, art works are traded on markets where quality competition prevails over price competition. Prices can therefore not be explained by supply and demand alone: neo-classical economics no longer directly applies because acts of symbolic appreciation decisively mediate the relationship between offer and consumer preferences. They are inherently risky, because quality uncertainty essentially marks every singularity.

Collaboration's Multiple Micro-Politics

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According to Hannah Arendt, sharing the world with others and trying to compose a common judgment of its most pertinent features constitutes the generic basis of political action and the public life in the polis. The thesis comes with some crucial qualifications. Judging is political insofar as it relates to other opinions in an essentially twofold way: one tries to persuade others of one's standpoint, and simultaneously one takes into account their judgments in view of a possible agreement. A judgment's validity indeed hinges on its possible social generalization or capacity presentatively: they openly acknowledge others' perspectives / representing them in individual thinking or speaking. Or, as Arendt writes: 'The more people's standpoints I have present in my mind while I am pondering a given issue, and the better I can imagine how I would feel and think if I were in their place, the stronger will be my capacity for representative thinking and the more valid my final conclusions, my opinion.' 'Talking dance' therefore acquires a political dimension on the condition that the various participants are willing to broaden their personal view-points through the mutual incorporation of those of the others present.

... 'The progressive composition of the common world ... is the name I give to politics', Bruno Latour contends. The statement may be given a broader twist: 'commoning, or the collective production of a common (a commonality, a common good, is the essential practice through which 'the social' instantiates 'the political', be

it on the macro or micro level. When collaborating, dance artists develop in common a singular movement vocabulary (in the broadest sense) that is performatively linked to the co-creation of a specific discursive vocabulary, a partly self-developed and shared mode of 'talking dance. The social generalization of judgments not only frames or co-conditions but immanently defines this situated micro-politics. In dealing with value dissonance, those collaborating may negotiate, compromise and/or rhetorically convince, thus in fact exemplifying an established cliché image of politics. However, making dance together also rests on two decidedly particular modes of overcoming individual differences in both descriptive interpretation and normative appreciation. Work-oriented 'commoning' is the first one: the piece in the making and the varied activity it demands function as the primary locus of collective attention, and this also when discussing together the actual value of a particular proposition or the potential worth of an unusual idea for a possible task. A distinct ethos is involved, one that does not systematically attribute sometimes vast differences in opinion to a self or subject but assumes that proficient collaboration requires a distanced, rather impersonal orientation to work. In this way, disagreements are thoroughly de-individualized. 'My viewpoint' is not counter-acting or buttressing 'your opinion' because we both first and foremost address an external referent, including at once work (labour) and the work (the envisaged final piece, the task at hand contributing to that object's coming into existence).

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Thus the collaboration instantiates, in a micro-context, the peculiar political configuration of an a-personal leadingfollowing' (or 'followingleading') that provisionally displaces and de-segments the general line of inequality informing a semi-directive work re-relationship. The expression 'leadingfollowing' is André Lepecki's, who in turn uses Erin Manning's perceptive analysis of walking or dancing tango together as a principal source of inspiration. 'I am leading. But that does not mean I am deciding. Leading is more like initiating an opening, entering a gap, then following her response... I am not moving her, nor is she simply responding to me: we are beginning to move relationally, creating an interval that we move together', Manning writes.

Cooperating in the mode of leadingfollowing' brackets the question of both legitimate authority and personal authorship because the collaborators are truly moving together, thus creating an enigmatic kind of social subject. For each collaborator's actions are now grounded in an interpersonal dynamic, not reducible to only individually accountable initiatives or proposals and also superseding the exchange logic of attributable gifts and counter-gifts. Nobody commands or really has authority: there is just the constant altering of leading and following, in which leading also includes following and the latter activity permanently passes over into the first. This Gordian knot functions as a 'choreopolitical plane of composition', Lepecki

observes, adding that 'following-as-leading-as-following requires a kind of a-personal agreement, 'a kind of shifting adherence, an immanent yet precarious, always renegotiated a-personal suturing.

Coda: Defining 'the Collaboratory'

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Creating together, within and outside the arts, deserves its Hegelian moment, so to speak: we are in need of a genuine theory of the collaboratory, or the always contextually embedded, at once partially realized and still virtual potential to co-create. By way of conclusion, some tentative ideas for such a theory, which will by definition be a collaborative effort, may be suggested. In line with already presented notions, commonalism appears to be the appropriate name to single out the primary stakes and principal contours of creative co-operation. All in all, three sorts of commons are involved, Antonio Negri rightly asserts. There is 'the common as a base for accumulation, constituted by material and immaterial forces', which consequently allows 'the common as production, along a retreated border and ever renewed values' (this second form was indeed previously termed 'commoning'). The joint action in turns brings forth diverse commonalities within the context of the collaboration and final products whose eventual status as common goods principally depends on their general accessibility. Are the jointly created end-objects, in the broad sense, capitalistically captured, commodified and privatized through the laws of copyright and authorship? Or do they indeed land in the commons, or the domain of free use transcending the traditional distinction between private and public that affords artefacts' collective re-employment as gratis resources in future processes of 'commoning'? De-commodification, or the various struggles pro the protection and particularly the extension of common goods, distinctively marks all politics inspired by the social reality of commonalism.

'The Collaboratory' actually presumes the pre-existence of an always already common. Co-creation cannot take off without a divergent set of heterogeneous competences, ideas, interests and attitudes that must be presupposed as being shared. The principally assumed capacities have a generic nature: the abilities to think, to communicate, to feel or to imagine that co-defines humaneness. Together with the human body's faculty to move or to stand still in a reflexive way, these general potentials are mostly taken up, without much further notice, as constituent elements in collaborative dance practices. The active collaborator is usually regarded as an autonomous subject formulating ideas, speaking out, having conscious emotions, inventing future lines of action or engendering physical gestures. Yet in doing so, they always actualize common abilities uniting human kind.

... 'The collaboratory qua collaboratory works on problems', states

anthropologist Paul Rabinow: 'Common problems should be a factor of both cohesion and individuation.' They act as shared matters of concern and prompt the personal commitment of those taking part. The collaborators invest in the collectively done artistic labour, and this also in the libidinal sense: they are individually attached to the project's stakes and feel responsible for it. Moreover, the common cause produces a collective focus that works, rather paradoxically, as a uniting producer of a multiple set of differences. For both the general line informing a creation and its recurrent re-specifications elicit descriptive disputes, value dissonance, disagreements on power or authority and perhaps even strife. The common cause both mingles and pluralizes the collaboration, up to the tipping point that the 'dissensus in consensus' may start to threaten the minimum of solidarity every collaborative undertaking presupposes. All engendered relational activity contributes to the processes of 'commoning' and the produced social common, which is perpetually renewed through the vast flow of verbal or non-verbal communication and pushes every collaboration 'now, here' in the direction of unknown futures.

'The collaboratory' defies and repeatedly subverts 'the subjective. Through cooperation, those partaking become other: they experience processes of de- and re-subjectification. Yet the enacted social common operates as the principal subjectum' or bearing surface of joint action. Time and again, it provokes every collaborator's individualized potential to communicate, think, feel or move and to go beyond, even deconstruct its subjective encapsulation. This is the operation of singularization, which in most collaborations has a genuinely paradoxical form: at once unrealizing the personal proclivities associated with one's subjectivity and realizing anew the generic common shared with others in a way that is nevertheless still indirectly marked by the suspended self. A collaborating group is therefore 'an ensemble of productive singularities set to work and - as such - productive' (Negri again). Repeatedly, new improbable thoughts or divergent series of hitherto never executed actions instantiate the state of becoming, the transition from 'being in common virtually' to 'commonly being in actuality'. They are event-like actualizations of the shared generic potentials that both by-pass and temporarily redefine the collaborators' subjectivity. Their unplanned emergence also produces flexible lines of flight within the entertained social common that momentarily de-stratify and intensify the conditioning relational dynamic. The corresponding 'microwaves' are by definition unstable and do not survive the momentary rhizome eliciting their provisional existence. Creative collaboration thus 'produces massively from within itself singularities that are no longer characterized either by any social identity or by any real condition of belonging, singularities that are truly whatever singularities', Giorgio Agamben observes.

... The singularities are neither 'mine' nor 'ours': a distinctive anonymity is at

work. Commonalism indeed honours the multidimensional one-ness that exhausts unity. 'Whereas "we" is posited a priori, "one" exists during the time of an incarnation by X or Y; it reconfigures, one can enter and exist in it', says choreographer Boris Charmatz in one of his recorded conversations with Isabelle Launay.